



**SERVICE TIMES**

Sunday : 9:30 AM  
10:30 AM  
5:00 PM  
Wednesday: 7:00 PM

**ELDERS**

Todd Cox Jimmy Griffith  
Travis Everett Paul White

**DEACONS**

Derek Anderson Bret Cox  
James Dow Patrick Gaughan  
Ryan Griffith Dan Harbin  
Craig Hecht Danny Meek  
Skyler Meek Phil Parker  
Jay Silvers Jason Stannard  
Travis Starling Bryan Tacker  
Steve Turquette Eric Wise

**EVANGELIST**

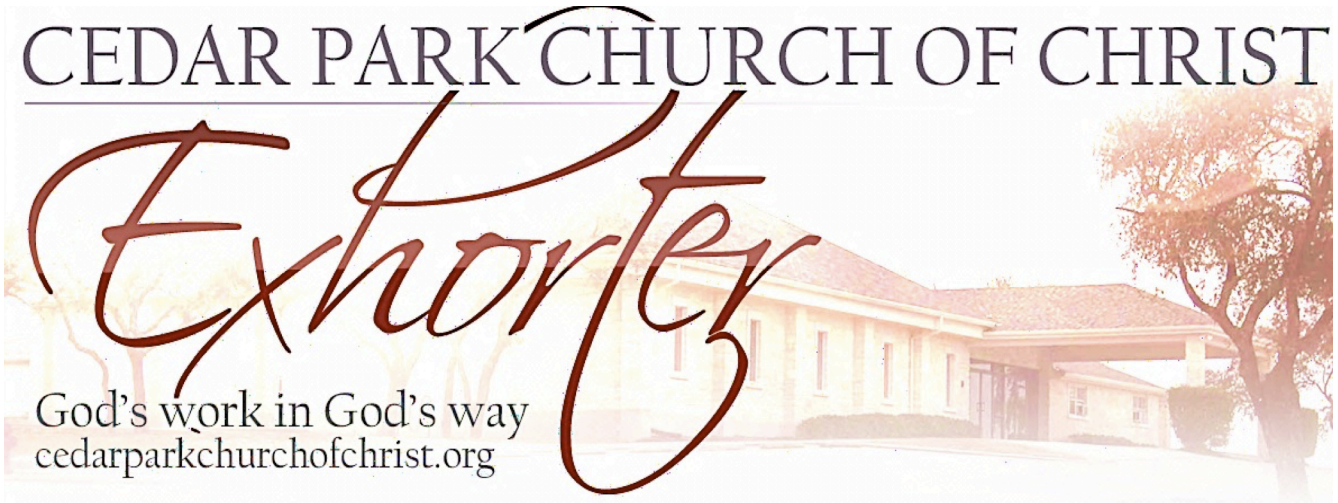
Paul White

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May 2, 2021

**The Forgotten City**

In 400 BC, the Greek general Xenophon was far from his home. Around him were ten thousand of his fellow Greek soldiers. They were deep in enemy territory—surrounded on all sides by Persians—and trying to fight their way back to Greece.

The mercenary Greeks had made their way west as far as the northern deserts of modern-day Iraq, doggedly pursued by Persian armies at every turn. They stopped for the night in the shadow of a huge cliff.

Xenophon stared up at this cliff. It was no cliff at all, but rather a huge wall. Fifty feet thick. A hundred feet high. It ran for seven miles. Ornate, colorful friezes decorated the bricks. Statues fifty feet high flanked the towering gate houses. It was a city. A city in the desert. An abandoned city.

Greeks were already renowned for their architecture, but Xenophon had never seen anything like this. The largest cities and walls in Greece and Persia at the time were a fraction of this size. Nobody could build anything this size. Xenophon asked some of the local herders who were his army's guides through the wilderness. Who built this city? What was it called? How old was it?

The herders didn't really know. Maybe the Medes built it? They just called it Mespila. They were wrong though. The city was never called Mespila, and the Medes certainly did not build it. This was the city of Nineveh. The great capital of the Assyrian Empire. Now it was ruined. Abandoned. Forgotten so completely that even the name itself was lost to the people of that region.

We first hear of problems with Nineveh in the book of Jonah. God told Jonah— "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.... Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!"

The Assyrians—almost shockingly—repent. The King of Assyria told his people— "Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence that is in his hands. Who knows? God may turn and relent and turn from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish."

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

This repentance from violence did not last though, and it could not have been long before the Assyrians were back to their violent ways. No one was safe from the Assyrians—they ruthlessly conquered everything as far as Egypt. They massacred whole cities. Even a hint of rebellion was met with vicious reprisals. The northern tribes of Israel—and many other peoples—were deported to another land. Judah was the victim of a long siege by an Assyrian army, although God delivered them. Israelites, Babylonians, Elamites, Medes, Scythians, Egyptians—everybody was a victim of the Assyrians.

Upon this wicked, violent people, God pronounced another prophecy—a judgement—through the prophet Nahum. "Woe to the bloody city, all full of lies and plunder— no end to the prey."

"Your shepherds are asleep, O king of Assyria... Your people are scattered on the mountains with none to gather them. There is no easing your hurt;

your wound is grievous. All who hear the news about you clap their hands over you." "For upon whom has not come your unceasing evil?"

God's patience had run out.

A few years after Nahum spoke, a coalition of Babylonians, Medes, and Scythians finally took down the Assyrians and destroyed Nineveh. The mighty empire that had ruled the known world for so many years and built such wondrous cities was gone almost overnight. The coalitions' hatred and vengeance on Assyria was so thorough, so complete, that 200 years later nobody even remembered the name, Nineveh.

Those Greeks, staring up at the shattered ruins of Nineveh all those years later, were seeing the ultimate fulfillment of God's judgement.

There is a certain horror—and fascination—in modern people with the idea that our civilization, or way of life, might ever go backward. We have grown accustomed to a world in which "progress" is forever marching forward. Every year our cities are raised up higher, the roads greater, the technology and culture and accomplishments ever more sophisticated. The idea that our own cities might ever lie abandoned and forgotten, or that we would forget how to build our technological devices, is almost impossible to fathom. No doubt the Assyrian people felt the same way.

The New Testament writers are constantly urging Christians to remember that this world and the nations and the things of this world are temporary—the Apostle John reminds us in 1 John 2: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him... and the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."

We must live in the world, and in our country, but let us never forget that we desire a better country, a heavenly one, as it says in Hebrews 11. "Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city."

- Jarrod Nettles