

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

NAHUM 1-3

Let me begin with a quiz: **What does Dan Rather, Morley Safer, Caroline Wyatt, and Nahum have in common?**
Answer: **They were all war correspondents.**

Journalism's toughest job is that of the reporter who goes on the battlefield embedded with the troops. *They travel in armored vehicles - encounter live combat - sleep on the battlefield - eat vacuum-packed MREs.*

Christ Reid, a former embedded journalist for NBC, spoke of his experience, **"I cover Congress now. I wear a coat and tie. I go home every night and sleep in a bed. It's safe and secure... and a bit too predictable.**

I'm afraid whatever I cover in the future will never match the adrenaline-induced, heart-in-my-throat sense of anticipation I felt while embedded with the US Marines on their march from Kuwait to Baghdad."

The Prophet Nahum also reported from a war zone.

Nahum was probably never literally in the line of fire. Verse 1 suggests that what he saw was in a vision, but his prophecy reads like an eyewitness observer.

In his account Nahum is ducking arrows. Swords and spears are clanging in his ears. He writes of the horrors of war. He draws word pictures of shields, uniforms, chariots, weapons, and troop movements...

And when Nineveh falls to the invaders and its army runs for its life - when blood fills the streets and rulers are led away in chains - Nahum is there on site to remind the Assyrians the

reason for their defeat...*they had insulted the God of glory and made Him jealous!*

The book begins with an introduction, verse 1, **“The burden against Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.”** Nahum lived in the 7th century BC. An approximate date for the book is 630 BC.

He calls his prophesy **“the burden against Nineveh.”**

The word **“burden”** refers to a heavy message. It’s a word from God with dramatic implications. There’s nothing **“ho-hum”** about **“Na-hum.”** It’s a heavy revy.

Nahum was born in a town called **“Elkosh.”** Its exact whereabouts is uncertain. There’re three possibilities.

One is a town in Assyria... Another is a small city in the Galilee... The third is a village near Jerusalem...

But wherever Nahum was born, he spent a lot of his time in a town on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. It was later named after him. And this is where Jesus did the lion’s share of His miracles - **“Kafar Nahum”** or **“the village of Nahum.”** The NT calls it **“Capernaum.”**

Capernaum is where Jesus healed Peter’s mother-in-law of a spiking fever - and a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath day - and a gal who’d been bleeding for twelve years. It’s where He raised Jairus’ daughter from the dead... Kafar Nahum was Jesus’ headquarters in the Galilee. It’s ironic, the town that saw *the Lord’s miracles*, first heard *the Lord’s burden*.

Wherever Nahum lived the focus of his prophecy was elsewhere. His eyes were on the superpower of his day - *Nineveh and the Assyrian empire*. Nahum was assigned to cover the fall of its capitol, Nineveh.

*And guess who would've loved to apply for Nahum's job? **Jonah!*** Much to his chagrin, 150 years earlier, Jonah had been the key to Nineveh's revival... *He preached, Nineveh repented, and God spared the city.*

But this was the outcome Jonah wanted to avoid.

Remember Jonah was a bigot. He hated Assyrians. *He figured they'd repent - and he knew God to be so merciful He'd forgive, and give them another chance.*

Nineveh was east, so Jonah boarded a slow boat headed west. *And you know the story...* Jonah was intercepted by a storm, tossed into the sea by desperate sailors, and redirected by a hungry whale.

The revival that Jonah sparked was the greatest spiritual awakening of all time. A million-plus people turned from their sin and followed the one true God.

But that was a century-and-a-half earlier. The revival didn't last. It died out over a few decades. Assyria reverted back to its idolatrous and barbarous ways.

Now Nahum comes to inform everyone that God has said there'll be no more chances for Assyria. Nineveh is set to be destroyed. God will finally judge her evil.

Nahum begins his prophecy, verse 2, with three bold words, **“God is jealous...”** Often, when we think of jealousy we picture the person who's battling their own insecurities, and a

low sense of self-worth. This person doesn't feel lovable, and they find it hard to believe they're loved by others. It's an unwarranted jealousy.

This is a personal paranoia. It's a human character flaw. And it has nothing to do with God's jealousy.

Remember when Tiger Woods was exposed as a serial adulterer. It was a major scandal. Mistress after mistress came out of the woodwork. He was constantly mocked and belittled on the late-night talk shows.

Imagine being his wife? Through no fault of her own, she was humiliated, disgraced, and embarrassed in the most public ways. She was angry - and rightly so! She probably wanted to stick a driver down his throat.

Here was a woman who was no doubt jealous, but her jealousy wasn't born from some insecurity, or weakness, or paranoia. *Just the opposite was true...*

From all indications she was a strong woman who knew she deserved better treatment. How dare anyone dishonor her in such a bold and cavalier way! She'd loved this man - been faithful. She expected his loyalty!

Her jealousy was righteous and justified - not evil.

Well, welcome to the message of Nahum!

This is God's jealousy. God isn't insecure, or weak, or paranoid. Our God has no lack or need. God doesn't need you or I - but He loves us. And in a myriad of ways He's been loyal, and faithful, and gracious to us.

He sacrificed His only Son so we could be forgiven. All other blessings I could list only pale in comparison. Is there any doubt God deserves our allegiance?

And when he doesn't get it, *He is justifiably jealous*. God was angry with Assyria. He had decided on divorce, and He sent Nahum to deliver the paperwork.

In Chapter 1 Nahum paints a grand and glorious portrait of God. If you think of God as aloof, or removed read carefully. Nahum portrays a God who feels, and cares, and hurts - and isn't afraid to respond justly.

The prophet writes **“God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; the LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserves wrath for His enemies.”** Heaven has two warehouses. God has stored up blessings and judgments. In Christ, He has stockpiled every spiritual blessing. *But... “He reserves wrath for His enemies.”*

And who are God's enemies? “Certainly, not me,” you might say! *“I've never taken sides against God. My policy is to mind my own business, stay out of trouble.”*

But in Matthew 12:30 Jesus said, **“He who is not with Me is against Me.”** If you're not His follower you are His enemy. You can't say, *“I'm not really FOR Jesus, but I'm not AGAINST Him either.”* **No!** If you're not living for Him, walking with Him, you **are** against Him. And He has a warehouse of wrath reserved for such people!

Of course, verse 3 tempers the thought a bit, **“The LORD is slow to anger...”** God is amazingly patient.

In Noah's day the world grew so wicked, God had only one recourse: *flood it and start over*. Yet He waited 120 years for Noah to build the Ark and preach His Word - hoping the world would repent. Apparently, God's wrath amasses slowly. He never races down path of the judgment. God pauses and pleads...

Yet don't mistake His *patience* for *approval* or *apathy*. In the end, the wicked will be judged. Nobody gets off *the hook* except those who come to *the cross*.

God tolerated the city of Nineveh's sin for 130 years, but there came a point when God's tolerance ran out.

Nahum says, "The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." The Lord is mighty. When He begins to move His feet kick up the dust!

Frank Sinatra might sing, "I did it my way."

Burger King can suggest, "Have it your way."

But I'd listen to Nahum if I were you. Buck and kick all you'd like, but in the end, "*The LORD has His way.*"

Verse 4 says of God, "He rebukes the sea and makes it dry, and dries up all the rivers. Bashan and Carmel wither, and the flower of Lebanon wilts."

Bashan and Carmel are scenic places - the lush hillsides showcase lush vegetation. Yet God can make it barren. In fact, God's fury reminds Nahum of a volcano... Verse 5, "The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth

heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it.”

One author writes, "Nature rumbles and rattles in seismic agitation at the Lord's coming in judgment while (*supposedly*) intelligent man remains oblivious.”

“Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.”

I love the Lord. I’m thankful for His forgiveness. I know I’m righteous in Christ, but I don’t take His grace for granted. *He could hurt me if that’s what He chose.*

Again, remember verse 3, “*The LORD has His way.*”

Rather than hope God is on your side, make sure you are on God’s side! Submit to His will, and it’ll spare you great grief. Avoid the fierceness of God’s anger.

Verse 7, “*The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knows those who trust in Him.*”

I love this thought. On a planet crowded with billions of people God senses the one person who trusts Him and reaches out to touch the hem of His garment...

At Kafar Nahum Jesus healed a woman because she reached out by faith and touched the hem of His robe. And He’ll do it again for you, if you reach to Him.

The Lord is good... But if you defy Him - make Him jealous - He’ll unleash a tidal wave of judgment. “*But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place, and darkness will pursue His enemies.*”

Verse 9, “What do you conspire against the Lord?”

In Isaiah’s day, when Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem, the Assyrian spokesman conspired against the Lord. He tried to intimidate God’s people by boasting, “Has any of the gods of the nations at all delivered its land from the hand of the King of Assyria?” All the idols of all the nations had feared Assyria. But they had yet to oppose the one, true God.

In Isaiah 10 God rebukes the Assyrians. Rather than acknowledge that they were only an instrument in His hand, to bring judgment on the nations, they boasted in themselves. *They conspired against the Lord, and...*

“He will make an utter end of it. Affliction will not rise up a second time.” I’m sure you’ve heard the expression, “Fool me once, shame on you. But fool me twice, shame on me.” Anyone can trust another person and get snookered. But only a fool gets conned twice.

And this is how God feels. Nineveh played God once, but no more. Next time its judgment, not mercy.

Verse 10, “For while tangled like thorns, and while drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble fully dried. From you comes forth one who plots evil against the Lord, a wicked counselor.

Thus says the Lord: “though they are safe, and likewise many, yet in this manner they will be cut down when he passes through. Though I have afflicted you, I will afflict you no more; for now I will break off his yoke from you, and burst your bonds apart.” Here God is speaking to Judah. The Jews were afflicted by Assyria for 150 years. They were in essence

a vassal state, who paid protection money to Assyrian to be left alone.

But here God promises to break their bonds and set His people free from the Assyrian domination. This He did in the days of Isaiah, when the angel of the Lord slaughtered 185,000 Assyrians in a single night. That night's massacre ends up a major theme in the OT.

But in Nahum's day Assyria was still the greatest empire the Earth had seen. Her kings ruled the world from the Tigris to the Nile - the entire Fertile Crescent.

Yet today, unless you're a Bible student or a Middle East archeologist you've probably never heard of Assyria. Verse 14 tells us why... **"The Lord has given a command concerning you: "your name shall be perpetuated no longer. Out of the house of your gods I will cut off the carved image and the molded image. I will dig your grave, for you are vile."** What an ominous word from God. ***"I will dig your grave, for you are vile."***

"Behold, on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!" Whoever brought word of Assyria's demise was a bearer of good news.

"O Judah, keep your appointed feasts, perform your vows. For the wicked one shall no more pass through you; he is utterly cut off." Nahum encourages Judah to trust in the Lord, to worship Him at the appointed times, keep His feasts, remain faithful to their God...

For the day will come when a messenger arrives with news of Assyria's total destruction. The news came in 612 BC, after

the joint-forces of the Medes and the Babylonians invaded Nineveh and sacked the city.

Chapter 2, “**He who scatters has come up before your face. Man the fort! Watch the road! Strengthen your flanks! Fortify your power mightily.**” As Nahum writes, in your mind you can see the sites and hear the battle sounds... *commanders barking orders - chariots rumbling through the streets - drawn swords clanging.*

Verse 2, “**For the Lord will restore the excellence of Jacob like the excellence of Israel, for the emptiers have emptied them out and ruined their vine branches.**” By this point in history Assyria was Israel’s archenemy. In 722 BC, 100 years earlier, Assyria sacked Samaria, the capitol of the northern kingdom... and they had scattered Israelis across the empire.

But now God is about to crush and scatter Assyria.

The shields of his mighty men are made red, the valiant men are in scarlet.” Nahum is describing the army that will invade Assyria. Scarlet and red were the battle colors of the Medes. Apparently, ancient armies liked red - it was the color of intimidation. Like Bulldog jerseys in the autumn sun it made the enemy quake.

Of course, red uniforms also concealed the spilling of blood. It camouflaged wounds. Your bleeding was hid, lest it emboldened the enemy. *Which reminds me of a story you’ve heard before... but I still love telling it...*

One day the first mate on a British battleship rushes into his Captain's cabin and announces, "Captain, Captain, there's a Spanish galleon on our port side."

The brave Captain barks out his orders, "*Quick, bring me my red vest and man the battle stations.*"

The next day, the first mate runs into the captain's quarters again and shouts, "Captain, Captain, there's a Spanish galleon on our starboard side." He answers, "*Bring me my red vest and man the battle stations.*"

Well, the sailor had to know... "Captain, why do you ask for your red vest?" The courageous Captain replied, "*Well, if I'm ever hit in battle I don't want my men to see me bleeding and lose heart.*" *What bravery!*

The next day the first mate rushes into the cabin with terrible news, "Captain, Captain, you'll never believe it, we're surrounded by the whole Spanish Armada."

The surprised Captain shouts, "*Quick, bring me my red vest, my brown pants, and man the battle stations.*"

Verse 3, continues, "The chariots come with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the spears are brandished. The chariots rage in the streets, they jostle one another in the broad roads; they seem like torches, they run like lightning." Nahum sounds like a war correspondent reporting live from the battlefield.

Nahum gives some prophetic play-by-play of Nineveh's fall. "He (the King of Assyria) remembers his nobles; they stumble in their walk; they make haste to her walls, and the defense is

prepared. The gates of the rivers are opened, and the palace is dissolved.”

The ruins of ancient Nineveh are visible today - just across the river from the modern Iraqi city of Mosul, 250 miles north of Baghdad. The walls of the ancient city stretched 8 miles and rose as high as 60 feet.

Two tributaries of the Tigris River flowed under its western walls. Nineveh's 1800 acres provided for a population of 300,000. It was the great city of its day.

The Greek historian, Diodorus Siculus, lived around 20 BC. He wrote that the fall of Nineveh was due to abnormal flooding of the Tigris River. Nahum confirms this in verse 6, *“the gates of the rivers are opened...”*

Two tributaries of the Tigris flowed under the city walls. When the river swelled its banks, the flooding washed out a 2½ mile stretch of the wall that surrounded the city. The gaping hole was used by the invaders to enter the city. *Nineveh was easy pickings.*

It's amazing, that God gave to Nahum a detailed prophecy predicting the downfall of the Assyrian capitol twenty years before it actually occurred. Another proof, the book you hold in your lap is of supernatural origin.

Verse 7, *“It is decreed: she shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up; and her maidservants shall lead her as with the voice of doves (a weak and pathetic coo), beating their breasts.”* The city mourns.

“Though Nineveh of old was like a pool of water, now they flee away. “Halt! Halt!” they cry; but no one turns back.” Notice again, Nineveh was like a pool of water...

She was flooded, and everyone abandoned the city.

Nineveh was once a beautiful, refreshing pool around which everyone would gather. Now the city’s inhabitants are fleeing, they’re trying to escape.

Verse 9, “Take spoil of silver! Take spoil of gold! There is no end of treasure, or wealth of every desirable prize. She is empty, desolate, and waste! The heart melts, and the knees shake; much pain is in every side, and all their faces are drained of color.”

The secular historian, Diodorus wrote of Nineveh’s fall, “They plundered the spoil of the city, a quantity beyond counting.” In all his accounts of the conquest of various cities this is the only occasion where Diodorus used this phrase, “**a quantity beyond counting.**”

Through all her victories, the Ninevites had become the richest city on earth. But in the end, the city was looted and pillaged. All her wealth was gone forever.

“Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion walked, the lioness and lion’s cub, and no one made them afraid?”

From here until the end of the book, Nahum uses four metaphors to illustrate and emphasize the significance of the fall of Nineveh. Some teachers have called Nahum, “**the Master of the Metaphor.**” You’ll see why as we continue. But the four comparisons he draws are that of the lion, the

prostitute, the drunk, and the locust... **a beast, a brothel, a boozier, and a bug.**

“The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, killed for his lionesses, filled his caves with prey, and his dens with flesh.” Assyria had been the king of beasts among the nations. Like a lion she ravaged her prey. But now God's judgment, will see to it that the lion is devoured.

“Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts, “I will burn your chariots in smoke, and the sword shall devour your young lions; I will cut off your prey from the earth, and the voice of your messengers shall be heard no more.” Here's the scariest words a person will ever hear... *“I am against you,” says the Lord...*”

But I have a contrast for you tonight. Here, God is speaking to those **in Nineveh...** *but what does He say to those who are **in Christ?*** Romans 8:31 asks the question, **“If God is for us, who can be against us?”**

On your own, attached to this lost world, *God is against you...* He opposes your plans. He sabotages your schemes. He brings you to the end of your rope. He hopes to wake you up to your need for His Son.

But once you embrace Jesus His strategy changes. *He is for you! He intends for you life to reflect His glory.*

The state of California is a place of geographical extremes. Death Valley is the lowest point in the US at 282 feet below sea level. But just 135 miles up the interstate is enormous Mt.

Whitney, 14,494 feet above sea level, the highest point in the continental US.

It's interesting, all that separates the highest point on the continent and the lowest point is a two hour drive.

It's **latitude** not **altitude** that makes the difference.

And this is true in life. **Latitude not altitude** is what's needed to leave behind a life of sin, and begin a relationship with God. You can go from washed out and ragged out - to a citizen of heaven - in a single prayer!

From the depths of bitterness, and guilt, and unhappiness, to the pinnacle of joy and blessing **is a lateral move**. It doesn't happen by *moving up morally*, but by *moving out spiritually*. It's not a climb. It's a shift.

I put my trust in Jesus. I lock on to Him. And in a moment I move by faith from **in Nineveh** to **in Christ**.

Chapter 3 begins, **“Woe to the bloody city! It is all full of lies and robbery. Its victim never departs.”** Assyria was infamously cruel. It goes down in history for its violence toward its fellow man. The Assyrians were barbarous, and bloody, and brutal. Nineveh angered God by attacking the image of God in their fellow man.

In the ancient world, Assyrian kings like Tiglath Pileser and Shalmaneser - *not exactly household names today* - were feared by millions of people.

They not only committed shameful atrocities - they bragged of it afterwards. Throughout the ruins of Nineveh archeologists have found inscriptions of the brutal boasts of the Assyrian kings. Here's a few...

“Many within the border of my own land I flayed, and spread their skins upon the walls.” Prisoners were skinned alive and their flesh was used for wallpaper.

“I cut off their heads and formed them into piles.”

“Three thousand captives I burned with fire.”

“I cut off the limbs of the officers, the royal officers who rebelled...” “From sons I cut off their hands and their fingers, and from others I cut off their noses, their ears, and their fingers - of many I put out their eyes.”

“I bound their heads to posts round about the city.”

Assyrian kings liked to bury their enemies alive inside the walls of their buildings... Defeated kings were led around on dog collars, and housed in kennels... Heightened interrogation tactics were perfected by Assyria. They were masters of torture.

Here’s a famous Assyrian practice... a spear was thrust through a man’s gut, and out the top of his head. The other end was stuck into the ground. The victim was left to squirm in pain until he died. This was the precursor for what later developed into crucifixion.

And here’s what all this means to us... God cares not only about how we treat Him, but how we treat our fellow humans. Every person you come in contact with in the course of a day - male or female, young or old, married or single, black or white, born or unborn, handicapped or whole, straight or gay, rich or poor, jailbird or free bird - Christian, or Jew, or Muslim, or Mormon, or Hindu... Every human carries in them at some

level the image and likeness of God. And for that reason alone humans are owed a degree of respect.

This is why the notion of human rights is distinctively Christian. It doesn't stem from Islam. The Koran refers to Christians and Jews as infidels... Hinduism assigns and enslaves folks to a tiered caste system... Even Judaism treats Gentiles as unclean and outside of God's love... Only Christianity acknowledges a common Creator, and because we were made in His image, every human is owed certain alienable rights.

Yet sometimes I think we live in "*the bloody city!*"

When over a million innocent babies die each year - their only crime being conceived in an uncaring womb - *how can there not be blood on somebody's hands?*

The politician or judge who permits the abortion...

The voter who puts that politician into office...

The society that doesn't care for the unwed mother who's in trouble... *there's blood on somebody's hands!*

And then there's the violence that's occurring in our inner-cities. Drugs, and gangs, and guns create a bloody mixture. Nightly in Atlanta someone is slain in our streets. Our city could be called "*the bloody city.*"

And what about the cycle of domestic abuse that accounts for much of the violence in today's society?

Have you ever ignored a situation with a battered friend, or an abused child, you should've reported. It was easier to walk away instead of getting involved. *Don't all of us bear at least some of the blame?*

Recently, when an 18 year old gang member in Milwaukee murdered a 15 year old girl, the boy was quoted, “This is going to wreck my whole summer. It’s not like she was the president or anything. She was just a girl...” Hey, the fathers who raise sons to think that way about women have blood on their hands...

And what about your own anger? Toward your spouse, or boss, or co-worker? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, “You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment,” but I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.” Certainly, the consequences of pulling a revolver, and putting a few slugs in a guy, is more severe than yelling at him in traffic - but *the deed* is just a seed allowed to grow.

None of us should get smug and self-righteous.

Don’t assume we lack violent tendencies. We might be too law-abiding - or lack the nerve to bury a blade in somebody’s back - yet the same anger can boil in us.

Have you ever murdered a boss with cold-blooded gossip? Or stared a hole through a co-worker? Or used violent words against your spouse? How close do you live to *the bloody city*? God will judge *the bloody city*, and Nahum describes His judgment on Nineveh...

“The noise of a whip and the noise of rattling wheels, of galloping horses, of clattering chariots! Horsemen charge with bright sword and glittering spear. There is a multitude of slain,

a great number of bodies, countless corpses - they stumble over the corpses...”

God will bring a violent army against Nineveh, but it's not against an innocent city. These people are guilty.

And here Nahum depicts the pandemonium of the siege... the crack of the whip, the snort of the horses, the screams and moans of suffering, even the crunch of bodies beneath the wheels of invading chariots...

And here's why this judgment has come... “because of the multitude of harlotries of the seductive harlot, the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.”

Here Nahum uses another metaphor. He compares Nineveh to a harlot. She used her military power and the threat of brute force to blackmail the nations around her into worshipping her pantheon of idols.

Nineveh was the Mafia of the ancient world. With the threat of war, Assyria made the surrounding nations buy “*protection*” - with their worship of their false gods.

“Behold, I am against you,” says the Lord of hosts; “I will lift your skirts over your face, I will show the nations your nakedness, and the kingdoms your shame.

I will cast abominable filth upon you, make you vile, and make you a spectacle. It shall come to pass that all who look upon you will flee from you, and say, ‘Nineveh is laid waste! Who will bemoan her?’ Where shall I seek comforters for you?”

Here's how the ancient world punished a prostitute.

Village leaders lifted her skirt and exposed her nakedness. She was shamefully paraded through town. People would come out of their houses and pelt her with all kinds of filth. It was a public spectacle.

This is how the nations will treat Nineveh and the Assyrians when they fall and are brought to shame.

And here we should note another contrast... Think of the custom that brought shame on a prostitute; *then the way Jesus treated the woman taken in adultery.*

The Jews wanted Jesus to condemn. Instead He forgave. He said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more." Rather than throw filth, Jesus pardoned her, and forced the Jews to throw down their rocks.

Verse 8, "Are you better than No Amon that was situated by the River, that had the waters around her, whose rampart was the sea, whose wall was the sea? Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was boundless; Put and Lubim were your helpers."

Nahum compares Nineveh with the Egyptian city of *No Amon* - or better known to us as *Thebes*.

"No" means "the city of" and "Amon" was the Egyptian sun god. Thebes was dedicated to the sun.

The ancient city of Thebes was a magnificent city. Remote, wealthy, large, well-fortified, it was situated on the Nile so it had plenty of water and fertile farmland. No one would dream it could be reduced to ruins.

“Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed to pieces at the head of every street; they cast lots for her honorable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.”

The great city of Thebes fell and suffered greatly, *and guess at the hands of who? The Assyrians!*

The Assyrian King Ashurbanipal marched through Egypt setting fire to its villages and crushing the Egyptian army. In 662 BC he surrounded Thebes and in short order sacked the city. He knew he couldn't rule over a city so far from his home so he made an example of Thebes by sentencing its population to slavery and slaughtering its children in the streets. He wanted to scare other Egyptian cities into submission.

*Who would have thought that the glorious city of Thebes would suffer such a devastating defeat? **No one!*** And that's the point God is making - neither would anyone living at the time believe Nineveh could be destroyed. Yet Nahum predicts that God will judge her.

Verse 11, “**You also will be drunk; you will be hidden; you also will seek refuge from the enemy.**” This also happened on the Saturday night before the Sunday morning the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Many of the American officers had gotten sauced the night before and had woke up that morning with a hangover.

The historian, Diodorus, says this is what occurred the night Nineveh fell to the Medes and Babylonians. The Assyrian officers were as drunk as a skunk.

“All your strongholds are fig trees with ripened figs: if they are shaken, they fall into the mouth of the eater.”

In other words, Nineveh was ripe for the pick’n.

“Surely, your people in your midst are women!” This is an insult. Nahum says the men of Nineveh fight like girls. They’re cowards and sissies. They’re effeminate.

“The gates of your land are wide open for your enemies; fire shall devour the bars of your gates.”

Archeologists working the ruins of Nineveh have found layers of ash where the city was burned.

Verse 14, “Draw your water for the siege! Fortify your strongholds! Go into the clay and tread the mortar! Make strong the brick kiln! There the fire will devour you, the sword will cut you off; it will eat you up like a locust. Make yourself many - like the locust!

Make yourself many - like the swarming locusts!

You have multiplied your merchants more than the stars of heaven. The locust plunders and flies away.”

The Assyrian army had roamed the world like a swarm of locust. They pillaged the nations, and left as quickly as they came, with their national treasures.

Verse 17, “Your commanders are like swarming locusts, and your generals like great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges on a cold day; when the sun rises they flee away, and the place where they are is not known.” At night the cold causes the wings of a locust to grow stiff, and keeps them grounded. But when the morning sun shines the heat

reinvigorates the wings of the locust and they become airborne.

“Your shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria; your nobles rest in the dust. Your people are scattered on the mountains, and no one gathers them.” *“Shepherds”* are a reference to the Assyrian officials - their leaders.

“Your injury has no healing, your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, for upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?” Recall the old nursery rhyme, *“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. All the king's horses and all the king's men, couldn't put Humpty together again.”* Nahum is saying that nursery rhyme will soon apply to Nineveh. Great will be her fall.

Nahum's prediction goes beyond the fall of Nineveh. He's predicting Assyria will disappear as a people.

The previous verse says she'll be scattered on the mountains and no one will gather them back together.

Listen to the following entry in the Cambridge Encyclopedia of Ancient History, *“The disappearance of the Assyrian people will always remain a unique and striking phenomenon in ancient history. Other, similar, kingdoms and empires have indeed passed away, but the people lived on... With the Assyrians a nation which had existed two-thousand years and had ruled a wide area, lost its independent character.”* The historian marvels, but God predicted it in advance.

Historians are baffled by the disappearance of Nineveh and its people, but it's not hard to figure out...

Whenever a person, or people, love only themselves and care little about how they treat others - God sees to it they end up defeated, and forgotten themselves.

Ultimately, how we treat other people determines how we get treated. Matthew 7:2 says it best, “and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you...” Nahum saw it, and God brought it to pass!