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**C1110 – March 30, 2011 – Nahum 1:1**  
**Reign Of The Assyrian Kingdom**

If you'd open your Bible to Micah 1. We're developing the historical background for the Book of Nahum. Nahum is three chapters that deal with a single event that occurred in 612BC, the destruction of the city of Nineveh. Nineveh was the great city that God sent Jonah to preach to around 760BC. That generation of Ninevites believed the gospel as it was known in Jonah's day. Nahum is the sequel to Jonah. He comes on the scene 150 years later, about four generations. He tells us what happened to the Assyrians after Jonah preached to them and how they fared spiritually, whether they propagated their newfound faith or whether they returned to their old ways and how God handled this Gentile kingdom and what this means so far as the problem of evil is concerned and what we can expect so far as the tension between an all powerful, all loving God and the continuation of evil in the world.

We're trying to develop the Assyrian-Israeli interaction during this 150 year time period. We're weak on the Kingdoms in Decline and the Kings that ruled during this time. We know generally how they fared spiritually. They were mostly gimmick guys. So they were declining spiritually and because of that God removed the blessing and injected the cursing. This cursing was divine discipline designed to stimulate conviction of sin, confession of sin and restoration to fellowship. The discipline God used was the rod of men and so He stirred up the Assyrians and the Egyptians and the Philistines and the Arameans and the Edomites and other people groups in the region to make military incursions into the Promised Land. As these military incursions increase it gradually erodes the security and power of both Jewish kingdoms and forms a power vacuum in the region. It's in that vacuum that Egypt and Assyria become the dominant powers vying for supremacy

Last time we watched these two powers and we observed how Israel and Judah vacillated between Egypt and Assyria. They couldn't decide who the bigger boy was but by 721BC Assyria was clearly the bigger boy. So we'll call this phase one: the Rise of the Assyrian Kingdom. That history covers the period from Jonah's preaching in 760BC until the Fall of Samaria to Assyria in 721BC when they're clearly dominant. Phase two we'll call: the Reign of the Assyrian kingdom. That history will cover the period from the Fall of Samaria in 721BC to the Fall of Nineveh in 612BC, in this period they're at their height and everyone is afraid of Assyria.

Let's review the Rise of the Assyrian Kingdom. We can't review this history too much because it's very unfamiliar to most of us. Jonah was sent to preach to the city of Nineveh around 760BC. It wasn't the capital city at the time but it was a large city and an evil city and Jonah didn't want to go. Personally I think Jonah knew that God was raising up the Assyrian Kingdom to be a rod of discipline against Israel and that's why he didn't want to go. Jonah wasn't stupid. Jonah was well-informed politically and he knew that if God wanted him to go preach to the Ninevites it was because they were going to respond positively to his preaching and rise to dominate the region. So he went and the whole city of Nineveh responded positively, including the Assyrian King, Ashur-Dan III, also known as the biblical Pul. Then the Lord stirred up the spirit of Pul to make a military incursion into Israel and the king of Israel at the time was Menahem. Menahem bowed the knee and paid annual tribute to Pul, becoming his vassal. Then a new Assyrian warlord rose to power, Tiglath-Pileser III, he begins the Assyrian conquest, kings of northern and southern kingdom capitulate and bow the knee to him. He basically solidifies Assyrian dominance in the region. He was very strong, very influential, he conquered large regions and had everyone paying tribute. When he died Shalmaneser V became the new Assyrian king and this shift in administration led Hoshea, king of the north to rebel and turn to So of Egypt. Shalmaneser attacked the northern kingdom of Israel and set up a three year siege against Samaria. By 721BC the northern kingdom was totally defeated and went into Exile. During the same time Hezekiah also rebelled against Shalmaneser and so we suggest that Shalmaneser was on a campaign to defeat both kingdoms but he died in the siege against Samaria and so he never made an attempt to take Jerusalem and the southern kingdom of Judah. So Sargon II comes to the throne of Assyria. He's actually the king that sends the Jews from the northern kingdom into Exile and has them

colonized. By 713BC his administration is stabilized, his son Sennacherib is his Tartan and so Sennacherib comes to the southern kingdom of Judah to set Hezekiah straight. Hezekiah had rebelled years before and so now Sennacherib is going to teach Hezekiah a lesson.

So tonight we're going to look at the Reign of the Assyrian Kingdom that really begins with Sargon II and his son, Sennacherib. Sennacherib is given more treatment in the Bible than any other king of Assyria because of his interaction with king Hezekiah of Judah. His dynasty is going to reign in Assyria for several generations and he is the one king that is singled out in the prophecy of Nahum so he obviously did something that really made the LORD angry. This man is extremely arrogant and since arrogance is the cardinal sin then when a creature is arrogant it becomes the source of all kinds of malicious sins. If you think about it, the malicious sins are not the root issue, they're merely the fruits, but the root is arrogance and it's fundamentally a theological sin. There's a problem in the realm of the Creator-creature distinction when arrogance is manifested in a person. What essentially is arrogance? Arrogance has no respect for authority because arrogance says I am the authority. Arrogance is not so much a moral sin as the mental attitude sin that I am the authority, I am ultimate and I'll do whatever I want and I can get away with it. So it's the mental attitude sin of rebellion; rebellion against authority. And Sennacherib is very arrogant; this is what leads to his fall. What's the old saying? Pride cometh before a fall. Well, that's the danger when you get to be a big boy on the block. So Sennacherib is a big boy, he gets arrogant. What happens? He falls. It's nothing new. Where did this pattern start? With Satan. Satan thought he was a big boy and he inflated and then he fell flat on his face. Always watch arrogant people because a lot of people think they want to be like them but if you watch long enough they'll follow this same pattern. Rise to power, get arrogant and fall flat on their face. And the reason they follow this pattern is because they're energized by Satan. These people are just mimicking Satan's fall over and over and over, ad nauseum. Satan doesn't like being alone see, so he gets everyone else on the bandwagon so he has some company. They're a bunch of losers; don't fall for it. So you have arrogance on one side. What's the opposite of arrogance? Humility. Humility is essentially saying what? I am the creature and I submit to God's authority. He calls the shots and I'm responsible to him. And finally everyone can be classified either as humble or arrogant. I know of no other category. There are those who submit to the

gospel, they've humbled themselves and said, yes sir, and there are those who rebel against the gospel, they hate it, they're arrogant. There are no other kinds of people when all is said and done and the gospel is like a knife that cuts both ways.

Well, here we have an arrogant ruler, Sennacherib. His history is a lot like Tiglath-Pileser. He was a warlord, a conquering king; he led a series of campaigns. By his fourth year as king he was already leading his third campaign and on this campaign he came first against Phoenicia, on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. After conquering Phoenicia he moved his army south along the Via Maris. Since he already controlled Megiddo, the Jezreel Valley and Samaria, he moved his troops into those areas and set up garrisons. From there he deployed south to Joppa. He wants Joppa because it's the only sea port and he wants to control the logistics and economics of the sea. So he takes Joppa and from there begins his eastern campaign to invade Judah. He's going to invade Judah because Hezekiah stopped paying tribute several years ago.

Micah prophesied this. It was revealed to him that Samaria would be invaded and destroyed and we've already seen that. Shalmaneser did that. It was also revealed that Jerusalem would be invaded and destroyed. Jerusalem was the capital city of Judah and he was from Judah so in verse 8 he laments, "Because of this I must lament and wail, I must go barefoot and naked; I must make a lament like the jackals And a mourning like the ostriches. <sup>9</sup>For her wound is incurable, For it has come to Judah," what's he saying there? There's this wound and the wound is idolatry. It started up in the northern kingdom but it festered, it never got taken care of and now it has spread to the southern kingdom of Judah. And he says, "It has reached the gate of my people, Even to Jerusalem." So we have a problem here; the wound has reached the gate of Jerusalem and so something has to be done. And the amazing thing is that the something that had to be done was actually done and we'll see what it was later. But Jerusalem is going to escape Sennacherib. 46 other cities of Judah did not escape Sennacherib. They are going to be surgically removed. And Micah lists some of the cities in his immediate region. Verse 10, "Tell it not in Gath, Weep not at all. At Beth-lephrah roll yourself in the dust." These are all plays on words, they're puns and they describe aspects of the battle that occur when Sennacherib arrives with all his forces. Verse 11, "Go on your way, inhabitant of Shaphir, in

shameful nakedness. The inhabitant of Zaanan does not escape. The lamentation of Beth-ezel: “He will take from you its support.” <sup>12</sup>For the inhabitant of Maroth Becomes weak waiting for good, Because a calamity has come down from the LORD To the gate of Jerusalem.” Notice again it just comes up to the gate of Jerusalem. Verse 13, “Harness the chariot to the team of horses, O inhabitant of Lachish—“ and a special note is made here. See the dashed line in the text? There’s something about Lachish that sets it apart from the rest of the cities of Judah. “She was the beginning of sin To the daughter of Zion— Because in you were found The rebellious acts of Israel.” So Micah’s point is that the incurable wound of idolatry in the northern kingdom had entered the southern kingdom at Lachish. Lachish was the first city to adopt the pagan idolatry of the northern kingdom and from there it began to infect the southern kingdom of Judah. So Lachish is a key city. Lachish becomes Sennacherib’s prize victory. He’s going to go back home and put an 80 foot relief of the battle in the throne room of his palace in Nineveh. In his annals he writes, “Sennacherib, king of the world, king of the land of Assyria, sat on a throne; the booty of Lachish passed before him.” Notice the arrogance because this is the key underlying sin that leads to Assyria’s fall. Arrogance got entrenched at Lachish.

Now, we said Sennacherib took Lachish but he didn’t take Jerusalem. He comes right up to the gates of Jerusalem and something happened so that Jerusalem was spared. This something is given extensive revelation in Scripture. Turn to Isa 36. 2 Kings records it, Micah alludes to it, 2 Chron records it. We’ll look at Isaiah’s account. Isa 36 picks up the scene right at the time Sennacherib has sent his ambassadors to Jerusalem with propaganda...they didn’t have TV and the internet in those days, but they had their propaganda machine nevertheless. In Isa 36 here comes Sennacherib’s propaganda team. “Now it came about in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.” What he’s done, clever military strategy, the Jews had defense cities around Jerusalem so he’s taken out all these fortifications so he can set up a perimeter around Jerusalem. So their outer defenses are gone. Verse 2, “And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh<sup>1</sup> from Lachish,” Lachish we just saw was one of the defense cities that fell, “And the king of Assyria sent Rabshakah to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah with a large army. And he stood by the conduit of the upper pool on the highway of the fuller’s field. <sup>3</sup>Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiyah, who was over the household, and

Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came out to him. <sup>4</sup>Then Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Say now to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, ‘What is this confidence you have?’ <sup>5</sup>‘I say, ‘your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words. Now on whom do you rely,’ and here comes the arrogance, this guy is going to make a big strategic goof and it’s going to get him in deep trouble, but watch the propaganda; this is exactly how Satan gets to us, this is the voice of Satan coming to us to undermine our trust in the Lord to take care of all our needs. It starts in verse 4, right there is the issue.

“What is this confidence you have, <sup>5</sup>‘I say, ‘your counsel and strength for the war are only empty words. Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me? <sup>6</sup>Behold, you rely on the staff of a crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh King of Egypt to all who rely on him.” The Assyrians took on Egypt and they whipped them, and that was scary because Egypt was a big power, and for the Assyrian army to come in and beat Pharaoh’s army meant Assyria was a bigger boy. So they say, go ahead, make an alliance with Egypt, I dare you to try. Verse 7, “But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God, is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to Judah and to Jerusalem, You shall worship before this altar?’” Verse 8, “Now therefore, come make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them.” See the sarcasm. I’d give them to you but you can’t even find two thousand people around here who can ride them if I gave them to you. Verse 9, “How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master’s servants, and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? <sup>10</sup>And have I now come up without the LORD’s approval against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it...” He’s manipulating, he already knows some of the words, some of the OT, he borrows their terminology, he had good intel.

Verse 11, the officials are standing there listening to this and they realize this guy is getting louder and louder, he might get overheard. “Then Eliakim and Shabna and Joah said to Rabshakeh, ‘Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” So who is listening in? Who’s sitting on the wall? The common people. So the three Jewish officials see

what's happening. They see this is a propaganda piece and they say, hey man, talk to us in Aramaic. The common man didn't know Aramaic but these officials were multilingual, so they're trying to stop this propaganda from going out. But Rabshekah is on a mission here, a mission to psyche the people out. Then the whole thing will be a piece of cake. Propaganda is a powerful tool in military conflict. Verse 12, "But Rabshakeh said, 'Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?'" That communicates, that's dirty language and its more propaganda. Verse 13, "Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, and said, 'Hear the words of the great king, the king of Assyria.'" So look what he did, oh, you don't want those guys on the wall to hear, sorry, I'm going on loudspeaker and I'm going to say it in Hebrew so everybody can hear me. Verse 14, "Thus says the king, 'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you.'" Don't listen to Hezekiah, he can't help you. Verse 15, "nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria." Hezekiah was a great believer, he instructed his people to trust in the Lord. And here comes Rabshekah with this propaganda piece. Now watch the argument here. If you were sitting on the wall and you were a weak believer, and you listened to this stuff, and your wife and kids were sitting back there, you might be very inclined to start making deals here, bailing out. So he pitches the deal, verse 16, "Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, 'Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of us his vine and each of us his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern. <sup>17</sup>until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards.'" It sounds real nice, got a nice deal going here, everything's going to be fine, that's the line. Verse 18, "Beware lest Hezekiah misleads you, saying, 'The LORD will deliver us.' Has anyone of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?" Now here's where he screws up. Had he threatened Hezekiah that would have been one thing, but here he overextends himself, just like Goliath did with David, he defied the God of Israel. And when they overdo it like that it's over. Verse 19, "Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim? And when have they delivered Samaria from my hand? <sup>20</sup>Who among all the gods of these lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?" Now what has he just done? He's likened

YHWH to all the other gods of other nations. He put YHWH on the same plane as all the other gods. What do you think YHWH thinks about that? You think this guy's in trouble?

Come to Isa 37:1, here's Hezekiah's response. He's a great leader, he's a perfect model to follow when you're in a jam. "When King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered into the house of the LORD." The first thing he does is he's not going to answer these clowns, he is not going to dialogue on their basis, he's going to pull out of the situation and go to the LORD. A great maneuver, because if he tries to solve the problem he's going to get out-manuevered and he'll just be another gimmick guy, so he goes to the temple; I'm going to have a little talk with the Lord about this one. Verse 2, "Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah, the prophet, the son of Amoz," see who he wants to see? Who's Isaiah. One of the big prophets. Isaiah is a very powerful prophet, now he's being consulted. Verse 3, "And they said to him, 'Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver.'" They describe the whole situation. Verse 6, "And Isaiah said to them, 'Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the LORD, 'Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.'" See that language, do you see what's happened here? There's a bigger thing going on than just Hezekiah and the Jews at stake. Hezekiah and the Jews are associated with YHWH God in the eyes of the pagans. The pagan mind can't separate the people of God from God. We are identified with our God, and the attacks that Satan motivates against you, and against us as a body, are motivated not necessarily because he has it in for you personally, the attacks come because we are identified with the Savior, and he's shooting at the Savior. That's why these attacks come, it's because we're associated with the target, so when we get attacked it's really God that's being attacked.

So Isaiah says look guys, the real issue is that the king of Assyria has blasphemed God and God isn't just going to let that fly. Verse 7, "Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land." Now, we don't know exactly how He did it, but He did something to the Assyrian king's spirit. And to make a long story short because we don't have time to go

through all the details, we just want to get the gist. What has happened so far? It's a stressful situation, Jerusalem is surrounded, Rabshekah is talking smack. How does Hezekiah handle it? He goes to the word from God through the prophet. What would be analogous for us today when we get ourselves in a jam like that? Go straight to the word of God. Then Isaiah tells him the Lord is going to take care of it. So what in verse 15 is the second thing he does? He starts to pray one of the great prayers of Scripture. This prayer tells us several things that have gone on in Hezekiah's head. He's really got his act together here. He's got a crisis on his hands but he doesn't panic, he's upset, but he doesn't fall apart. He doesn't let his emotions rule. He has emotions, there's no denying that, this is a high intensity situation, but his spirit says I've got to hear the word of God and I've got to have time to talk to the Lord about this and so whatever his emotions are they aren't dictating his actions. This man has enough doctrine to hold it together and spend time with the Lord in prayer. Verse 16 he begins the prayer. "O LORD of hosts the God of Israel, who art enthroned above the cherubim, Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Thou hast made heaven and earth." What event and doctrine does he go to first? Creation, because creation defines the nature of God and you can't really pray to God without a clear idea of who He is. He goes right back to basics. So right in the first part of his prayer he's hitting the framework. He comes in, he goes to the creation, he says God, You have made heaven and earth, if you made all that you made the Assyrians. Aha, ha. See what going back to creation does? It reduces the Assyrians down to an ant. The Assyrians are nothing to You. You're the Creator of the universe. And that means You are in charge of this situation.

Now he has another neat thing. Notice what he says in verse 17, "Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open Thine eyes, O LORD, and see; and listen to all the words of Sennacherib, who sent to reproach the living God." Sennacherib reminds you of David. Remember what David said? Lord, do you hear what this uncircumcised Philistine is saying? Why He's defying the armies of the living God. What made David angry was what Goliath was doing to the nature of God; it was false propaganda about who God is. That made little David angry in his spirit, that's righteous anger. You want a picture of righteous anger; David with Goliath, Hezekiah with Sennacherib. Notice also in verse 17 something else about OT praying; you see this in the Psalms very powerfully. These guys, when they went into God's presence, were very insistent that God listen to them. We get kind of pious about this

and we kind of feel embarrassed about walking into the Lord and telling Him hey, listen to me, just open your ears and listen, I want you to hear this! It sounds impious to us. But whether it sounds impious to us or not, it's in the Psalms repeatedly. The only thing I can conclude is to the guy praying it seems like maybe God doesn't care about his situation. So Hezekiah is doing the right thing; he's coming to the Lord, he's angry, he's upset, so he says, now you hear this Lord, and you look at this letter, I'm laying it right out in front of Your eyeballs, now read it.

Then he comes up with this neat explanation, because remember what the insult was? Well, where are the gods of Hamath, where are the gods of Arpad, but what Hezekiah says is yeah, I know, their gods couldn't defend them but here's why. Verse 18 says "Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria have devastated all the countries and their lands, <sup>19</sup>and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them." Of course they have. <sup>20</sup>"And now, O LORD our God, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou alone, LORD, art God." That's Biblical praying. It's hard to get praying like this, strong prayers, not wimpy prayers, but when you do you know you're rocking, because what started out as a military crisis that could have been treated just as a purely military crisis, a negotiation problem, see what's happened, it's attained cosmic significance now.

He's not praying this prayer just to get himself off the hook. He's not praying this prayer just so he can look like a great Judean king. He's not praying the prayer just to help the people that are falling apart on the wall. He's not doing it just for that. He cut to the quick, he's recognized that in the middle of this pressure situation an insinuation has been made about the nature of God our Savior, and it's because of his heart loyalty to YHWH God that he's offended by that and the offense over what is being done to God is so overwhelming compared to the propaganda concerns down on the wall, that when he goes to pray, look at the issue that comes out. Show Yourself God, make Your name known, do something neat to show Yourself; these clowns have gone into one nation after another, and they think they're pretty hot stuff. God, show them what happens when they pick on You. And boy did God show them. So verse 21, "Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent word to Hezekiah, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria,' look at this, a great answer. See the

Lord responded immediately to that prayer, that kind of prayer got results. And immediately the answer comes to the prophet. Verse 22, "This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him; she has despised you and mocked you, the virgin daughter of Zion; she has shaken her head behind you, the daughter of Jerusalem! <sup>23</sup>'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised your voice, and haughtily lifted up your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel. <sup>24</sup>Through your servants you have reproached the Lord, and you have said, 'With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, to the remotest parts of Lebanon; and I cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypresses. And I will go to its highest peak, its thickest forest.'" It goes on with this long episode describing the Assyrian arrogance. Arrogant, arrogant little creatures to think they can do this and get away with it in YHWH's universe. Verse 36, how did the Lord take care of the Assyrian problem? "Then the angel of the LORD went out," do you know who the angel of the Lord turns out to be? The angel of the Lord is none other than the pre-incarnate Christ. So the Trinity is in the OT. And when you see "the angel of the Lord" in the OT, it's the pre-incarnate Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus has a very mild, meek side, but if you want to see the wrath of the Lamb, you've got it right here. Here's the Lord Jesus Christ and look what He does. He "went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians;" now that's the Jesus people don't want to talk about. That's Jesus surgically removing a mass of cancerous people, 185,000 of them, dead in the camp. So, who got the last word?

To show you how embarrassing this was for Sennacherib I want to read from an inscription discovered by archaeologists. The inscription is on the Taylor Prism held in the British Museum. This is from the Assyrian side. It's describing the 46 fortress cities he took and the subsequent march to Jerusalem. 'As for Hezekiah, the Jew, who did not submit to my yoke, of his strong walled cities...I besieged and took...Himself, like a caged bird, I shut up in Jerusalem, his royal city...as for Hezekiah, the terrifying splendor of my majesty overcame him...' Ah, ah, ah, see the arrogance. But guess what? That's the end of the document. It comes to an abrupt halt right there. I'm so great, I've got Hezekiah caged like a bird and then there's no victory document following it, it's a missing element. It's always amazed historians that read Sennacherib's campaigns that this one has no report of victory. The most this guy could record was I had victory at Lachish. I put a great big relief on the wall. Yeah me. But no relief of Jerusalem.

So the thing you want to catch is that this dynasty was arrogant. This guy goes to the height of arrogance to the point he's willing to go head to head, toe to toe with the God of the universe. And every king in this dynasty is just as arrogant. Sennacherib is going to have four generations of sons sit on the throne of Assyria and they all think they're somebody. Listen to Esarhaddon, he's the next guy to sit on the throne. "I am powerful, I am all powerful, I am a hero, I am gigantic, I am colossal, I am honored, I am magnified, I am without equal among all kings, the chosen one of Asshur, Nabu, and Marduk" (ibid., 2:226).<sup>ii</sup> So did he change the familial sin pattern? No, what a braggart. Then his son Ashurbanipal comes to the throne and look at his inflated ego: "I [am] Ashurbanipal, the great [king], the mighty king, king of the universe, king of Assyria... . The great gods ... magnified my name; they made my rule powerful" (ibid., 2:323-4). See, what goes on in this family is they have a sin problem just like every family has a sin problem. The issue isn't do you have a sin problem, the issue is do you learn the lesson and bring it under control. God was teaching Sennacherib a lesson back there at Jerusalem and Sennacherib didn't get the lesson. And he raised arrogant sons and they raised arrogant sons and this sin of arrogance got entrenched in this family and became habitual. And what does God say when a sin pattern becomes habitual in the Ten Commandments? I allow it to go on for three or four generations and then that's it, I wipe it off the stage of history, it's a malignant cancer and I cut it off and that's what Nahum is all about.

Here's where we want to capitalize. Right here we see this arrogant kingdom governed by this arrogant family and it starts producing a lot of trash. These people were nasty people. They'd rip your testicles off, we have record they did it. They'd chop your husbands head off and make you carry it. And in that situation, when you're surrounded by that kind of evil that is so terrifying you can get pretty dismayed. You can be very discouraged and the Jews have had to face some of the most petrifying forms of evil. The Middle East is still ruled by tyrants like Sennacherib that do horrible things. And in that kind of a world what is God's response. This stuff looks like it's out of control, it looks like its going to overwhelm, it looks like Satan is more than just a big boy, it looks like he's winning, and it looks like evil will prevail. In that situation that's where Nahum gives us hope. Nahum says, yeah, it is bad, it's nasty, but God has it under control; God is allowing it to develop for a little while but not forever. He's giving these guys an opportunity to repent but there's a

limit. It doesn't just go on and on and on - finally He will have His say, finally grace will end and God will judge. Always, always grace before judgment. Never forget it, God gives grace and everyone loves the grace because they can seemingly get away with sinning and they develop it in all kinds of complex, even thematic ways, but finally He resolves the evil problem. And so our response is to rejoice. Our God reigns. We should clap our hands that God has given us this historical precedent, because we can look at Nahum and say, aha, God solved that little evil problem in Assyria and all the hot air and baloney talk. And therefore He'll solve the bigger evil problem of the entire Cosmos that works through the demonic hordes. So don't be discouraged by evil. It's coming to an end. God only allows it to develop so much and then he cuts it off. In the meantime we live in a day of grace and we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>i</sup> In Assyrian literature "Tartan" is a title meaning Second in Rank, Rabshakeh meant "Chief Officer" and Rabsaris may have meant "Chief Eunuch".

<sup>ii</sup> Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-). *Vol. 1: The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (1494). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

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