

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***

*107 East Austin*

*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*

*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**C1109 – March 23, 2011 – Nahum 1:1**  
**Rise Of The Assyrian Kingdom**

If you would turn in your Bible to the Book of Nahum. We've been working through the Book of the Twelve chronologically. The order in your OT is not chronological. It follows a different organization scheme. But we're using a chronological scheme to follow the flow of Israel's history. The next book in the flow of Israel's history is Nahum. One of the things that make this group of books difficult is the fact that they are shorter books and therefore contain less context, less historical background, and less biography on the authors than all the longer books. So it really helps to get all the historical background you can to understand this section of Scripture. All of these guys are classical prophets and the classical prophets typically write in the lawsuit format. They're prosecuting attorneys and they're accusing the nation of violating the Mosaic Covenant. They use a variety of techniques to convict of sin but the point is that the majority of these classical prophets have to minister to the Kingdoms in a period of Decline and God is disciplining them. His discipline is administered through the rod of men and so we see a lot of threats at military defeat leveled at Israel during this period.

However, a few of the classical prophets are not acting as prosecuting attorneys against the nation. For example, Jonah is not prosecuting the nation. Jonah is given another task, to go and show the love of God for all nations, even the nasty Ninevites of Assyria. It's not a task he was too interested in fulfilling but he did fulfill it and they did repent, they did believe and so God relented of the judgment He threatened against Nineveh. That's the last thing we've seen about the city of Nineveh; it was a great city full of believers. Nahum comes as the sequel to Jonah. Nahum is answering the question, what happened to the Ninevites? In the following decades and centuries did they pass on the word of God to the next generation? Did they

propagate the belief system of the OT? Or did they fail to learn loyalty to God and return to their old ways?

If you were an Israelite living during this time you knew Assyria. They were your neighbor next door. But we don't know much about them and so to really understand Nahum we have to get into the historical situation. One of the aspects of grammatical-historical interpretation is the historical background. If you don't study this you read your own background into the text and misinterpret. If we were first hand observers we wouldn't have to do this; what Nahum says would be firsthand knowledge. But we don't and so what was immediately obvious and apparent to the people then and there is not obvious and apparent to us here and now. So we have to dig in and re-create the historic environ in which this was written. Tonight and next time we'll spend most of our time doing this to set up the book.

If you're reading through Nahum, and I encourage you to read it a few times, the big idea is the problem of evil. The problem is that God is good but then we look at the world and evil prevails, and it seems that evil is often an equal and opposite force of God and that somehow evil is winning and that can put doubt in your mind as to whether God really is good or whether He really is powerful enough to defeat evil. The Psalmist cast the problem this way, "Why do the wicked prosper?" And it bothers all of us that wickedness often results in prosperity and righteousness results in poverty and oppression. It's not a new problem but it's a serious problem. And so Nahum, or rather God through Nahum, is answering this problem. So we'll be dealing with that theme as we work through Nahum, What about evil? Why is there evil in the world? Why does God put up with evil for so long? And is He going to do anything about it? If so, what? How does the word of God address these issues?

So let's get the historical background. Nahum writes about 660BC. We'll defend that later, for now just make a mental note about where Nahum is in history; the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. So let's back up to the 11<sup>th</sup> century and work our way up to the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Let's see if we can recreate the flow of history. If we go back to the time of David and Solomon the nation was at its spiritual zenith. The kingdom was united, all twelve tribes formed one kingdom, and a large subset of the population was spiritually mature, they responded to the word of God, they had believed as Abraham and entered into the promised

blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. They also loved the Mosaic Law, they meditated on it day and night and they obeyed it. So we have a strong spiritual base in the nation - a large number of believers and a large number that have learned loyalty to God. That's the root. Out of a good root comes good fruit and the fruit was God's blessing in every area of life: agriculture, economy, education, business, philosophy, science, the arts, you name it Israel developed it in unheard of ways in the ancient world. So the fruit of spiritual maturity was a tremendously godly culture; they were reaching out into every area of life and asking how does the Bible apply to art? How does it apply to music? How does it apply to architecture? The sciences? Economics? It was a tremendous time in Israel's history. Solomon built the Temple, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World; travelers said it glistened like snow in the sun's radiance, a marvelous accomplishment. He also built a royal navy and established trade and commerce with foreign nations to export goods and services as well as import from the orient. He studied and investigated design structures and functions in nature and unveiled fantastic truths about the God who designed it all. Israel was at its peak. It was the Golden Era and as a result, when foreign businessmen and travelers passed through this kingdom, geographically located in the center of the world, the word spread to every nation on earth of the wonders and splendor of the Jewish kingdom. So Kings and Queens from all over traveled to see God's kingdom and learn of the wisdom of Israel's God. We have the queen of Sheba, who in her own annals records that she travelled to the land of Punt, which is the land of God where she was overwhelmed with the wealth and wisdom of Solomon. Israel was fulfilling her God-given role to be a kingdom of priests, to mediate on the knowledge of God and transmit it to all nations. And there is no question she was the uncontested superpower of the world.

But in the latter days of Solomon he began to marry foreign women and you don't just marry the women, the women carry baggage and foreign women carry pagan baggage and so Solomon began to mix paganism with biblical truth. He allowed high places of foreign gods to be set up in and around Jerusalem. This mixed apostasy set a spiritual rot in the culture that caused it to decay. And consequently God promised to rip the kingdom apart but because of David He would not do it in Solomon's day. This decay into apostasy occurred in three steps. First, the Davidic Dynasty was Rejected. What happened was Rehoboam, Solomon's son came to the throne. When he was faced with sociological problems left by his father he rejected the wisdom

of the elders and in a moment of incredible stupidity, took the advice of his high school buddies and cut himself off from the ten tribes of the northern kingdom. Consequently, they would not have a descendant of David rule over them and so the Kingdom was Divided into northern and southern kingdoms.

Second step down. Since the north was now a separate kingdom they needed a separate king. And God authorized two kingdoms; it was just that if there was going to be two kingdoms there had to be one religion, centered at the Temple in Jerusalem. So God chose Jeroboam and promised him an everlasting dynasty like David's if he would learn to trust and obey Him. However, Jeroboam could not trust that God would consolidate his kingdom as long as his people traveled to Jerusalem to worship YHWH at the Temple. So he disobeyed by establishing a man-made counterfeit religious system that revolved around worship of the Golden Calf at two convenient high places in the northern kingdom. So the second step down was that not only had the northern kingdom rejected the Davidic dynasty but they also rejected Temple Worship in Jerusalem.

The third step down came during the reign of King Ahab. And this step is they rejected the LORD Himself. Ahab married a foreign girl named Jezebel, not only was she an unbeliever, but she was zealous for her father's religion of Baalism. Jezebel imported prophets of Baalism and it became the supreme state religion over all others. Instead of a mixed apostasy like Solomon or a man-made counterfeit of biblical religion like Jeroboam I, Ahab completely rejected the word of God and capitulated to pagan religion. This was the third step down; they had rejected the Lord himself.

Now, as the northern and southern kingdoms went into spiritual decay God pulled back the blessing and started with the cursing. Gradually they lost their status as the uncontested superpower in the region. In this environment it quite naturally created a power vacuum. And that's the environment we want to key in on in order to understand the background of Nahum.

Nahum is the sequel to the book of Jonah. Jonah went to preach to the kingdom that eventually filled this power vacuum created by the decline of the two Jewish kingdoms. And he didn't really want to go preach to this kingdom. But finally he did go and this kingdom responded positively to his

message. What kingdom did Jonah preach to? Assyria. You can actually argue that the reason Assyria filled the power vacuum is because that generation responded positively to the gospel message as it was preached in Jonah's day. But the main point is that a power vacuum was created and Assyria is going to step in and fill the vacuum. Actually for awhile it's unclear who exactly is going to fill the power vacuum and you'll see this in the Books of the Kings. On one hand you have Egypt which is to the SW of Israel and they are vying for supremacy in the region. On the other hand you have Assyria to the NE of Israel and Assyria is vying for supremacy. Notice where the Jewish kingdoms are? Right dead center between them. Then at times you see the Chaldeans or Babylon and they're sort of a third power that increasingly comes into play and vies for the region. But early on you can see in the Book of Kings the conflict is between Egypt and Assyria as to who is going to dominate the region. Eventually Assyria prevails and for about 100 years is going to be the big boy on the block. Then she'll fall, creating another power vacuum and by that time the Babylonian kingdom will have risen. Nahum is about the fall of the Assyrian kingdom to Babylon at the battle of Nineveh in 613/612BC. So almost everything in the book centers on those two years, 613/612BC. But there's a historical progression to get to Nineveh's destruction and to appreciate and understand the purpose and theme of the book we have to look at the rise of the Assyrian kingdom to fill this power vacuum left by the Jewish kingdoms. Now, to do this I will mention a whole series of Assyrian kings. If you'd been living in that time these would have been household names. Some of them you probably read about because they interact in the biblical text with the Kings of Israel and Judah, but others you may have never heard of. But don't be dismayed, it's a history that is very important for understanding Nahum the way the original Judahites would have understood Nahum. The most important Assyrian King will be Sennacherib and his dynasty which continues five generations starting with Sargon II. But we're going to start before this dynasty begins with Jonah and his preaching.

Jonah preached about 765BC during the reign of the Assyrian king Ashur-Dan III. The Assyrian kingdom was in a period of weakness and the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam II, enjoyed an increase in prosperity due to their weakness and Jonah's prophecy recorded in 2 Kgs 14:25 that the borders of Israel would be extended as far as "the entrance of Hamath" in the north and "as far as the Sea of the Arabah" in the South.

This brought the Kings Highway within the jurisdiction of the northern kingdom of Israel. The Kings Highway was a major trade route and taxation on goods exported through this newly acquired territory resulted in a revitalization of the northern kingdom. Due to the economic prosperity Jonah became famous and probably rich, a household name in the northern kingdom. It was at this period of increased Israeli power that the word of the Lord came to Jonah, saying, "Arise, go to Nineveh the great city and cry against it, for their wickedness has come up before Me." Nineveh was on the brink of God's destruction. The iniquity of the Assyrians was full. And it was nearing the time for God to pour out his wrath. God always gives grace before judgment. So God, in his grace, commissioned Jonah to go and cry out against Nineveh. You know the story; Jonah went 180° the opposite direction. He paid a fair to sail to Tarshish in the south of Spain. And the Hebrews were not a seafaring people. They feared the sea. So obviously Jonah was in rebellion against the Lord. After God gets Jonah's attention and he confesses and is spit back on the shore the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time and this time "Jonah arose and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. And he began to go through the city crying out, "Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Then the people of Nineveh believed in God; and they call the fast and put on sackcloth from the greatest to the least of them. When the word reached the King of Nineveh," and this was Ashur-Dan II, also the biblical Pul, "When the word reached the King of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe and him, covered himself with sackcloth and sat on the ashes. He issued a proclamation and he said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and relent and withdraw his burning anger so that we will not perish." When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked ways, then God relented concerning the calamity which he had declared he would bring upon them. And he did not do it." So Nineveh and the Assyrian kingdom was almost destroyed in Jonah's day but due to their belief in God, and turning from their wicked ways God relented from bringing destruction upon them at that time. The New Testament commentary on that generation of Ninevites is given by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 12:41. "The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and they will condemn it because they repented at the

preaching of Jonah;" and so according to the Lord Jesus Christ the Ninevites genuinely repented. And what this resulted in historically is the rise of the Assyrian kingdom to fill the power vacuum.

The king of Assyria then was Ashur-Dan III, also known as Pul in 1 Chron 5:26 so let's turn there. Most scholars reject this identification by saying that the biblical Pul is Tiglath-Pileser III. And what I'm doing here is injecting a different chronology than I've used before. I've alerted you at times that I'm not satisfied with the chronology I've been using. I've been using Thiele's chronology and it's the standard work among scholars that is cited in all the commentary literature but there are some serious problems with it. So you will hear some different dates; just be prepared. Dates like 721 and 586BC as the fall of the northern and southern kingdoms will stay the same but other dates like 701BC for Sennacherib's campaign against Hezekiah does violence to the biblical text. Why I don't accept Thiele is because Thiele's accepted the Assyrian annals as the absolute chronology. And once you've accepted that you've put the accuracy of Assyrian records above the Scriptures. And when the Scriptures don't fit the Assyrian records what do you do to the Scriptures? You fudge the text to make it fit the Assyrian records rather than adjusting the Assyrian records to fit the Scriptures. It's always the same story of Christians capitulating from the inerrancy of the Bible and then the conservative Christians come along and they read this stuff, and, well, that's what the scholars say and so they accept it and then you get into the text and you find glaring contradictions so you have to re-interpret the Bible or translate it differently to make it fit what the scholars say, trying to salvage some vestigial validity of the Bible. So this has gone on in our circles and it's ruined the field of biblical chronology, just absolutely ruined it. And how they ruin it here is they say Pul is Tiglath-Pileser III. The reason they say that is because, well, Thiele said that Tiglath-Pileser received tribute from Menahem and the Bible says Pul received tribute from Menahem so Tiglath-Pileser must be Pul. Then they come along and they translate the Bible to make it say that. So look how they translate verse 26, "So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, *even* the spirit of Tilgath-Pilneser king of Assyria..." notice the word "even," that's the Hebrew word usually translated "and," and if you translated it "and" it would distinguish Pul from Tilgath-Pilneser, but if you translate it "even" you're trying to identify Pul with Tilgath-Pilneser. The difference may not mean so much to you but for a language person like myself the conjunctions and and

even are significantly different. By translating this word as “even” what they’re trying to say is, Pul, that is, Tilgath –Pilneser, and it really bothers me that they do this because they know exactly what they’re doing but it’s done subtly and most people don’t catch it. And this is a wrong translation. And the only reason they do it is because they’ve been reading Thiele and remember Thiele is the scholar who says that the Assyrian annals give an absolute chronology. So they’re reading Thiele and Thiele says that in Tiglath-Pileser’s annals we find a reference that says that he received tribute from Menahem and yet the Bible says it was Pul that received tribute from Menahem and so Pul must be Tiglath Pileser. It all sounds pretty convincing until you read the Assyrian annals for yourself, which most of these translators never do. The annals do not say that Menahem paid tribute to Tiglath-Pileser. [Menahem] is in brackets in the translation of the inscription. And that means it’s not in the original text but the translator supplied it. He made it up. It doesn’t say Menahem. We don’t know whose name was in there. But because Thiele said it they translate 2 Chron 5:26 to give the impression that Pul is Tiglath Pileser. But it should read “and,” and would separate the two kings. And we know it should read “and” because the Hebrew language has a double use of the direct object, meaning there are two distinct spirits here: the spirit of Pul and the spirit of Tiglath-Pilneser. So the Hebrew Bible says they’re two separate men. They ruled together in Assyria at this time. So we conclude by saying that Pul is the Assyrian king prior to Tiglath-Pileser III. And we think that Pul is actually Ashur-Dan II who ruled in Jonah’s day. He did exact tribute from Menahem. 2 Kgs 15:19 says so. Turn there to see the real story.

So we have Pul, Pul is Ashur-dan III in the Assyrian annals, he was there in Jonah’s day, he was there in King Menahem’s day and here it says, “Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver...” so Menahem did pay tribute, he’s coming under the hand of Assyria. Verse 20, “Then Menahem exacted the money from Israel,” that is, he raised taxes, but he liked to tax only the rich, “even from all the mighty men of wealth, from each man fifty shekels of silver to pay the king of Assyria.” And look at the end of the verse. Very important. “So the king of Assyria returned and did not remain there in the land.” So did Pul attack the northern kingdom? No. He exacted tribute but it satisfied him and he went home. God did stir up Pul against Israel but he backed down when he got paid off.

Now we come to Tiglath-Pileser and again Pul is not Tiglath Pileser. Pul is before Tiglath-Pileser. And Tiglath Pileser is not going to accept a pay off. He's going to invade the northern kingdom. Before he does he starts a reign of terror in 745BC. This guy is of dubious lineage, may not have even been Assyrian, who knows where some of these rulers come from but he rises as a conquering warrior and he begins to vie for supremacy in the region. In 744BC he leads military campaigns east and from 743-740 he leads military campaigns west. He's expanding Assyrian influence. 738BC becomes a key year for Assyria because in that year he conquered 19 regions, removing the prisoners from these regions and selling them into foreign lands for colonization. You'll see this again and again; this was standard operating procedure for the Assyrians. Defeat you, exile you and colonize you. That way you lose your national identity and you can't mount any real threat. So Assyria used the tactic of colonization to secure their dominancy in the region.

Tiglath-Pileser is using military campaigns to extend his empire. Come down to 2 Kgs 15:27, here's Pekah. Pekah was king of Israel, verse 28, "He did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin. <sup>29</sup>In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah, and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria." So this is a partial exile, this isn't the Exile of 721BC; this is only a partial exile. And you can see these are all areas in the northern kingdom of Assyria. You can also see that Pul is not Tiglath-Pileser. Pul reigned during Menahem's reign and he exacted tribute and did not invade. Tiglath-Pileser reigned during Pekah's reign and he did invade and he sent some of the captives into exile for colonization. So we have Assyrian ascendancy in the region.

Then Hoshea is set up. To see Hoshea turn to 2 Kgs 17. Hoshea is going to rule the northern kingdom of Israel and he's subject to Assyria. He's having to pay out of the royal treasury boo koos of money annually. And while he's paying boo koos of money there's a change of administration in the Assyrian Kingdom and when you have a change in administration what happens? Everyone that has an agenda comes in and tries to get their piece of the pie. So it's a time of chaos and instability in Assyria. Hoshea says aha, this is my

opportunity to get out from under the yoke of Assyria. But verse 3, “Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him,” Shalmaneser is the new Assyrian king, he comes down to check out Israel, “and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute.” So he bowed the knee there, “But,” verse 4, “But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year;” - so what does this show us? What does this mean so far as the power balance in the region? It means that Egypt is also a pretty big boy on the block and there is uncertainty as to whether Assyria or Egypt is the bigger boy. So it shows that Hoshea thought So was the bigger boy, he shifts his loyalty, but look what happens at the end of the verse, “so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison. <sup>5</sup>Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria,” so Hoshea was wrong. Shalmaneser goes up against Samaria, the capital city of the northern kingdom. He “went up to Samaria and besieged it three years.” And verse 6 spells out the end of the northern kingdom. “In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.” That’s the colonization procedure of the Assyrians. Why kill them all off if you can colonize them and use them to work for you? The year was 721BC when this happened and it’s the end of the northern kingdom so far as any kind of viable kingdom in history. And it’s because they had gone apostate, they had turned to gimmick after gimmick, they never learned to trust and obey the Lord and therefore they kept turning to gimmicks, and that’s the lesson of this period for us as Christians. When we have problems and struggles in life, don’t turn to gimmicks; gimmicks don’t work, gimmicks are gimmicks, turn to the Lord, trust His solutions. But they never did that, they depended on foreign alliances and that very clearly fell through.

At this time Assyria becomes the dominant power in the region. Nobody is going to stop them now. Egypt is not going to stop them. Babylon is not going to stop them. By 721BC Assyria is the world’s greatest superpower.

But before we trudge forward let’s go back to Tiglath-Pileser and the southern kingdom. Because we’ve seen how the Assyrian’s handled the northern kingdom. Now the northern kingdom is out of existence but the

southern kingdom is going to go on so we want to pick up and spend the rest of our time on the southern kingdom.

Tiglath-Pileser also interacted with the southern kingdom of Judah as well. Notice Ahaz in 2 Kgs 16:7. Ahaz was a deal maker. He liked to wheel and deal because he couldn't trust and obey the Lord. And thought he could get security. Who can give him security? Assyria's a big boy? Assyria's on the rise so he turns to Assyria. Who's YHWH? All these guys are losers, spiritually speaking; they can't trust God for security. So they trust Assyria. Verse 7, "So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, saying," and see if this doesn't rub you the wrong way, "I am your servant and your son;" now wait a minute, I thought you were God's servant and God's son, you're David's house. What is wrong with you? What's wrong is they hated the word of God. That's what's wrong. So Ahaz sends a message to his god, Tiglath-Pileser, saying, "Come up and save me from the hand of the king of Aram and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me." See, here's the deal, the king of Aram and the king of Israel have made an alliance because they see that, hey, Assyria is getting to be a pretty big boy and we don't like him being so big, we want to shift the balance of power way from Assyria. But to do it they need another army, so they ask Ahaz, King of Judah, hey, you want to make an alliance and together we'll all take on the big boy Assyria. And Ahaz was under some pressure from the nobles and he said no. So the king of Aram and the king of Israel say, alright, fine, you don't want to ally with us, we'll force you to ally with us, we'll lead a military campaign against you. And Ahaz says, fine, you want to mess with me, I'll turn to Assyria and make a deal with them. That's what verse 7 is all about. Verse 8, "Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria." He's going to buy him off. Verse 9, "So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it," Damascus was the capital of Aram, "and carried the people of it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death." Rezin was the king. Assyria had a way of taking care of business.

Now turn to 2 Chron 28:16. So far Ahaz was blowing it so far as trusting the Lord is concerned. He's trusting in gimmicks like Assyria to save him and this didn't make the Lord too happy. And so the Lord sent the Edomites from the East and the Philistines from the West to attack Judah and their raiding

and pillaging and killing and they end up killing 120,000 Judeans and carrying away 200,000 POW's. So Ahaz is in a bind. What does he do? Verse 16, another gimmick, "At that time King Ahaz sent to the kings of Assyria for help. <sup>17</sup>For again the Edomites had come and attacked Judah and carried away captives. <sup>18</sup>The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the lowland and of the Negev of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, and Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages, and they settled there. <sup>19</sup>For the LORD humbled Judah because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had brought about a lack of restraint in Judah and was very unfaithful to the LORD. <sup>20</sup>So Tilgath-Pileser king of Assyria came against him and afflicted him instead of strengthening him." So much for the plan, it backfired. He thought Tiglath-Pileser would strengthen him but he afflicted him. Verse 21, "Although Ahaz took a portion out of the house of the LORD and out of the palace of the king and of the princes, and gave *it* to the king of Assyria, it did not help him." Gimmicks never help. They seem to help for awhile. Then they fall through. Verse 22, "Now in the time of his distress this same King Ahaz became yet more unfaithful to the LORD." And so he gets even worse, it goes on to describe all his idolatry. Ahaz was a champion of gimmicks but down in verse 27 he has a son named Hezekiah and Hezekiah is not a gimmick guy. Hezekiah is going to be the greatest king since David.

Now here's where I have a big problem with Thiele's chronology. 2 Kgs 18:1 always bothered me. If you look at the chart I've always used you see Thiele's chronology, the one assumed to be true in all the commentaries which is based on an absolute reliance on the Assyrian annals. Then we come to the Bible and try to fit it. In the left column you have the kings of Judah, in the right column the kings of Israel. Look at the bottom of the right column, the last king of Israel, Hoshea. What are his years of reign? According to Thiele 732-722. The Bible says he only reigned 9 years but any way he has Hoshea's end and the Fall of the northern kingdom in 722. Now look in the left column and find Hezekiah. When did he reign? 715-686, according to Thiele. So Hezekiah doesn't even begin to reign until seven years *after* Hosea and the Fall of the northern kingdom in 722. Does everybody get the picture? Thiele says Hezekiah isn't around until *after* the Fall of the northern kingdom. If that's true then how can 2 Kgs 18:1 say what it says? "Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king." The Bible says Hezekiah began to reign

as king in the third year of Hoshea, not seven years after Hoshea. So you can see Thiele is several years wrong on that. And what is Hoshea going to do? Hoshea is going to bring in a mass of reforms. Notice verse 3, “He did right in the sight of the LORD according to all that his father David had done. 4He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. 5He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. 6For he clung to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. 7And the LORD was with him; wherever he went he prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.” So the year he came to be king, which was actually 726BC. It was the third year of Hoshea so Hoshea began to reign in 730, Hezekiah in 726, in the first year of his reign he issued in all these reforms. He gets the Levitical priesthood prepared, he cleans out the Temple, and he prepares the first Passover. And who does he invite to the first Passover? The tribes of the northern kingdom. Now if Thiele’s chronology is correct the tribes of the northern kingdom are in Exile! So how can that be? It can’t be. And it shows you that the northern kingdom is still there. They reject the invitation but he invites them nonetheless and it says in v 7 he rebelled against Assyria. It would have been the Assyrian king Shalmaneser he rebelled against. So what does Shalmaneser do? Verse 9, “Now in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel,” so we very clearly have these two guys ruling at the same time, “Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it.” He probably intended it to be a quick battle but Samaria was well-fortified, it sat up on a hill. Verse 10 says, “At the end of three years they captured it; in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was captured.” And they go into Exile to Assyria. Shalmaneser was killed in that battle and so a new king, Sargon II and his son Sennacherib came to rule.

In verse 13 we come to the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah. Remember, Hezekiah had rebelled against Shalmaneser years before. Now Sennacherib comes against Hezekiah. “Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them.” Okay, it’s here that he takes 46 fortress cities of Judah.

This was a tremendous move against the southern kingdom and it looked like it was going to go out of existence. But look what Hezekiah did in verse 14, “Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, “I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.” Does this sound like the godly Hezekiah? It sounds like a gimmick to me. “So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. <sup>15</sup>Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king’s house <sup>16</sup>At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.” So he paid tribute and apparently Sennacherib left. Next week we’ll continue the saga. I know it’s a lot to take in but let me assure you, the whole thing will make Nahum abundantly clear, it will pay dividends to work through this history. Something is being set up and Sennacherib is the key player. We’ll spend most of next week dealing with him because he’s given the most attention in the inspired biblical record.

So just to review what we’ve said, the larger flow of this whole thing is the two Jewish kingdoms are falling due to spiritual corruption and in that power vacuum comes the Assyrian kingdom. In the time of Jonah, circa 760BC the Assyrian King Ashur-Dan III, also known as the biblical Pul, it’s his generation that repented at the preaching of Jonah, the Lord stirs up his spirit and Menahem pays tribute to him, then comes the Assyrian King Tiglath-Pileser III, he’s the first Assyrian warlord and he begins to conquer the region, kings of northern and southern kingdom capitulate and bow the knee to him, then comes Shalmaneser V, Hezekiah rebels against him and so does Hoshea. He comes down and totally defeats the northern kingdom in a three year siege against Samaria and they go into Exile but he’s killed in the battle so Sargon II and his son Sennacherib eventually return to try and set Hezekiah straight. And next week we’ll get to the real issue with Sennacherib and what he did that results in the prophecy that Nahum was given against Assyria.

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