

Commentary on Nahum Chapters 1 and 2 by Chuck Smith 6.5.24

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May memory verse Romans 6:8 (NKJV)

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him,

June memory verse Romans 6:9 (NKJV)

knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him.

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Includes John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - Nahum

Chapter 1

He introduces the subject of the prophecy in the first verse and that is:

The burden of Nineveh ([Nah 1:1](#)).

Nineveh was the capital of the Assyrian empire. For many years, the records of Assyria were so obliterated that the Bible critics used to say that those references to Assyria were only made up, and that Assyria did not exist except in the imagination of the writers. But, as the Bible critics so often have proved to be wrong, in this case it was also so. Those brilliant men who laughed and scoffed at the Bible and led many people into unbelief because of the dispersions that they cast upon the veracity of God's word were proved themselves to be wrong in more recent archeological discoveries in which they had discovered, actually, the great city of Nineveh. It is all that the Bible said it was, a huge city, perhaps one of the greatest of the ancient world. Sargon, one of the kings mentioned in the Bible, for so long a matter of scoffing by the Bible critics. The whole annals were found as they uncovered his palace and the records of Sargon. Again, the Bible comes out true, smelling like a rose, and the phony scholars come out as they are, just a bunch of phony eggheads.

The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite ([Nah 1:1](#)).

Now, we are not helped with Nahum, as far as identity, any place else in the Bible. This is the only place he appears. However, as we read the book of Nahum, it is obvious that he was writing about the same time as did Micah and Isaiah, during the reign of Hezekiah. Because in chapter two he makes reference to the blasphemies of the Rabashak who came as the spokesmen for the Assyrian king Shalmaneser, or Sennacherib. He makes mention of these blasphemies of Rabashak which took place during the time that Hezekiah was king. So, we can place the prophecies of Nahum around 713 B.C., during the time that Hezekiah was reigning in Jerusalem.

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Elkoshite is thought by most Bible scholars to be a reference to a little city of El Kosh which was around the Sea of Galilee. Most of the scholars conclude that Nahum came from the region of Galilee.

Now, there is a city where Jesus spent most of His ministry on the Sea of Galilee and it's called Capernaum or we say Capernaum. But Capernaum means the city of Nahum. So, it is thought by many that is where Nahum came from, and the city Capernaum actually took its name from the fact that this is where the prophet had originated. Capernaum.

The message is that of God's judgment that is going to come against Nineveh and against the Assyrian empire. A hundred years plus earlier, Jonah had been called to Nineveh. But the people of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, and Nineveh was spared for another hundred and fifty years or so. But now God is proclaiming the judgment that is gonna come against Nineveh and against Assyria. And it is to fall, not to rise again. He begins his message against Assyria by declaring,

God is jealous ([Nah 1:2](#)),

Now, we, in trying to understand God, can only understand Him in human terms. And even at that we fail to understand completely. Jesus said to Nicodemus, a teacher of the Jews, "If I speak to you of earthly things and you cannot understand them, how could I ever speak to you of heavenly things?"

Now, there are things in heaven of which we don't even have words. We don't even have mental concepts. God, being infinite, could not be defined, described, or even brought into our minds except just in part and by human terminology. How can we describe the vastness of God, the character of God, the greatness of God? All we have are human words. But surely all of them come short of really describing God. So, we must use human terms to describe God. Thus, jealousy is a human term. But it is a term that is used to describe how that God does not want your affection to be going to any other god or idol or, any other ideal.

Now, every man has a god, even the man who claims to be an atheist. For a person's god is the master passion that governs his life. And whatever is the master passion governing your life is your god. But God doesn't want any other master passion governing your life. He wants to be the master passion of your life. And if you allow anything else to be as a substitute for Him, He is displeased. His displeasure is described in our human term of jealousy.

However, with God there's a whole different motive than what we think of as jealousy from the human stand point. For thinking of jealousy from the human term, I become jealous because my territory is being threatened. And jealousy in a human term usually has a selfishness behind it. It is listed as one of the works of the flesh in Galatians five.

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But because this is the term we have to use to describe God's displeasure, if you have any other master passion or love that is dominating your life.

Jealousy from God's perspective, is His displeasure because of His tremendous love for you and He knows that you can't come into what is the best for you as long as you are following after some other ideal or God. And so in the use of it, we must not think of it in the purely human terms, which is a jealousy because my territory is being threatened. But God is jealous for you because God loves you so much. He wants nothing but the best for your life, and He knows that if you have any other love or passion above Him, you're gonna come in second. You're not going to achieve or attain that which is best for you. And God's desires towards us, as He declares, are always good. The purpose and the intent of God for your life is good. God is jealous and

the Lord avenges ([Nah 1:2](#)),

Now, God does take vengeance. He declares, "'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' saith the Lord." There is a day of judgment coming. You cannot sin against God and think that you'll never have to answer for it. God does not always bring justice swiftly. For the Lord is very patient, very longsuffering, very kind. But many people have misunderstood or mistaken the longsuffering of God as weakness, and they feel that God will not judge. Not so. God will judge and He will bring vengeance and retribution upon those sinners who do not repent and do not turn to Him. Now he is describing God's attitude towards this wicked, horribly wicked city of Nineveh that is filled with occult practices, fierce, cruel, inhumane people.

and [the Lord] is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserves wrath for his enemies ([Nah 1:2](#)).

As we read in Hebrews, "It is a fearful thing to fall in the hands of a living God." Now, there are those who object to thinking of God at all in the terms of judgment or vengeance, or wrath, or anger, and they like to think of God only in terms of love. It is true that God is love. That there is no other love in the universe that can compare with God's love. We cannot even understand God's love, it is so far deeper and richer and more complete than anything we experience on the human level.

In a sense, I have a loving nature. But because of my loving nature, I can get very stirred up if those that I love very deeply are threatened. If my children, if my wife are threatened, though I am by nature a loving person, yet I can change in a hurry when there is a threatening situation that would be threatening those that I love so much.

The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind [Now he goes into some very descriptive, picturesque kind of poetic speech, "He has his way in the whirlwind"] and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet ([Nah 1:3](#)).

He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth ([Nah 1:4](#)).

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He can create a drought if He so desires.

The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him ([Nah 1:5-6](#)).

Describing the activities of God in a very picturesque way. But in the middle of this declaration of God's judgment, he then declares, and it stands out in such contrast, he's just talking about God throwing down the rocks and God being a fire and burning and hills melting, and "Who can stand before His indignation?" and suddenly he just declares,

The Lord is good ([Nah 1:7](#)),

That is a basic foundation of theology that we must, all of us, incorporate into our own understanding. God is good. If you don't know anything else, know that God is good. It's important that you know that, and that is something that I accept by faith. Believing the word of God, I accept by faith that God is good, because not always would my circumstances indicate that God was good. And Satan is constantly assailing the truth of the goodness of God. And so often, as I'm looking at adverse situations, I'm prone to say, "If God is so good, then why is this happening?" Don't you hear that so very often from people, "If God is good, why are there so many people starving in Cambodia? If God is good, why does He allow this to happen in the world? Why does He allow a little nine year old girl to get kidnapped if God is good?" There are always those challenges to the goodness of God that are thrown at us. Satan is always challenging that truth. And thus, I need to have that truth deeply, firmly ingrained within me. God is good, that I know.

There is a very interesting Psalm, it's about the seventy-third Psalm, where the psalmist begins by the declaration, "Truly the Lord is good unto Israel, and unto all those that fear Him." And he begins that psalm with that basic premise. But then he said, "As for me, man, when I tried to understand the world around me, I was almost wiped out, my foot almost slipped when I saw the prosperity of the wicked and I saw how well they got along. I looked at my own problems and everything else, and here I'm trying to serve God. I've tried to have a clean heart. I've tried to do the right things, and everybody's just pushing me down, and I'm in trouble. Here are these guys cheating, lying, stealing, blaspheming, and they seem to have no problems at all. Everything seems to fall in line for them. When I sought to know this," he said, "it was too painful for me; I almost was wiped out!" Satan can really play games with your mind. Especially in regards to the goodness of God. He challenges that continually. The psalmist said, "I was almost wiped out when I tried to understand it," he said, "until I went into the sanctuary of God. And, then," he said, "I saw their end. I was jealous of the wicked; I was jealous of the ungodly man. It seems he has everything, until I went into the sanctuary of God." And then what happened? His vision was corrected. In the sanctuary of God that nearsightedness was corrected, and he began to get the long view of things. You see,

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the goodness of God is that which is always challenged by our nearsightedness, when we are only looking at the immediate things that surround us. It is then that I'm prone to challenge the goodness of God. Things are going bad for me today, "If God's so good, how come things are going so bad today?" See, it's today, and it's my hurt right now, and it's the pain I feel right now. I don't look down the road; I'm only looking at that which is right in front of my face. "Until I went into the sanctuary of God, and then I began to get things in perspective, and then I began to get the eternal view, and the sight of eternity comes into view, and somehow in that eternal view things begin to balance out." That's our problem is that we don't have the long-term view, and we get confused. Satan can really upset us. But how many of those things as you look back in your own life that you thought were disasters, now as you look at them, you can see the hand of God and realize how important they were for your development, or how important they were even for your future. God put me in some places in the ministry that you just can't believe. I mean it was just plain tough. Preaching your heart out to twenty-five people and making half of them mad and they don't show up the next Sunday. People decide to get rid of the pastor by starving him out, withholding their tithes. And in those situations, down on my knees before God, the questions, the challenging of the goodness of God, "God, if You're so good, why do I have all these problems? Why did You put me here, God, in this place with these people?" And yet, now as I look back on it, oh the invaluable lessons that God was teaching me. How important those lessons that I learned. I could not have the ministry that God has given to me today had I not gone through those experiences. There were things that God had to work out of my own life before He could really use me effectively. And though I cried, and though I just went through torture mentally, yet as I look back, now I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything, for the lessons and the value that they've brought to me. As God was working though, I could not see it and I could not understand it. Now I look back and I say, "Oh, the Lord was so good to me!" But I sure didn't think so at the time. I thought He had forgotten me, forsaken me, and yet, God is good. I need to remember that. Don't forget that. "And all things work together for good to those who love God" ([Romans 8:28](#)). Not only is God good, the prophet said,

[He is] a stronghold in the day of trouble ([Nah 1:7](#));

God doesn't promise that you're never gonna have trouble. In the book of Job it says, "As sparks fly upward, so man was born for trouble." Now, I don't know of anybody who hasn't had trouble some time in their life. Trouble is just a part of life itself. In Psalms we read, thirty-four, "Many are the afflictions of the righteous." Now, somehow we think because we're righteous we should never have any affliction, everything should go well, after all, I love God and I'm trying to do the right thing, everyone should love me and treat me nice. Nothing evil should ever happen to me because I love God and I'm willing to serve God and I'm wanting to please God, therefore everything should always be wonderful and beautiful around me. Well, it wasn't so with Jesus was it? Jesus said, "Hey, if I being your Lord, and they haven't received Me, they persecuted Me... Servant's not greater than... They're not gonna receive you. They're not gonna open up and accept you with open arms. The world's gonna hate you because you love Me!" You're gonna have trouble. But whenever the trouble comes, the Lord is a stronghold.

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I've got a place I can run, I've got a place where I can find strength, I've got a place where I can be protected. The Lord is a stronghold to those that are in trouble. The thing is, if you're not a child of God, when trouble comes, you have no place to go. But the child of God always has a refuge. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it, and is safe." Then he declares,

and he knoweth them that trust in him ([Nah 1:7](#)).

God knows those that are trusting. God knows you, isn't that great? God knows me. Not only does He know me, and of course, this is just boggling to my own mind, and it's just, again, that gap between the finite and the infinite, and the ability for... inability for us to really bridge it. But God not only knows me, He's thinking about me constantly. That just blows my mind. That God would be constantly thinking about me. David said, "And if I should number thy thoughts concerning me, they are more than the sands of the sea." How I love to go down to the beach and just take and pick up sand and let it run through my hands and watch the little grains make a little pile on the beach there. And as I do, I think, "Every one of those grains of sand there is a thought that God is thinking of me." Fabulous! Then I look up the beach and I see all those grains of sand. I think, "Oh, God, who can fathom Your love, and Your wisdom, and Your glory, that You should think of me?" How many grains of sand are there in the earth? Someone has estimated there's ten to the twenty-fifth power. That's an awful lot of thinking. It'd take an infinite God to have that many thoughts. God is thinking about you. God knows you. God knows the situations that you're in. God knows the trials that you have. God knows the problems that you face. Really that's all that I need to be reminded of when I'm in trouble and I start to despair. All someone has to say is, "Hey, don't worry, Chuck. God knows all about it." Oh, thank you. I needed that. God knows the way of the righteous. His ears are open to their cries.

Now he goes back to talk about the judgment of God that's coming upon the Ninevites. He gives this little word of encouragement to the people of God. "You know, you're gonna see some real problems, the Assyrian forces are gonna come and they're going to encircle the city, and you're gonna see God do a work of vengeance upon them. But don't worry, God is good; He knows those who trust in Him."

But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies. What do ye imagine against the Lord? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time. [They won't come back again, they're gonna get wiped out.] For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry ([Nah 1:8-10](#)).

Very interesting prophecy. For when we finally did uncover the history of Assyria, we found that Assyria, that great city, or Nineveh the great city, the capital of Assyria was destroyed by a confederacy of the Medes and the Babylonians. And they got together and they came against the great city of Nineveh. As they came against the city of Nineveh, the army of Nineveh came out against them, and on three occasions just really wiped them out, defeated them thoroughly. They retreated and regrouped and came

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back again. And after the third time that the army of Nineveh had defeated this invading confederacy of the Medes and the Babylonians, the soldiers, celebrating their great victory over this invading army, went out and went on a big drunken orgy, just celebrating their victory. And while they were drunk, the forces of the Medes and the Babylonians regrouped, attacked again, and caught them in that drunken state and wiped them out. "For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." And that portion of Nahum's prophecy was literally fulfilled as the forces of Nineveh were destroyed outside of the city of Nineveh. They still had to take the city of Nineveh, but this is a prophecy of the battle outside.

In verse eleven, he is making this reference to the Rabashak who came with his blasphemous letter from Sennacerib, blaspheming the God in whom the Israelites were trusting.

There is one [that is] come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, he is a wicked counselor. Thus saith the Lord; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. [The angel of the Lord passed through and a hundred and eighty five thousand of them were cut down.] For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder ([Nah 1:11-13](#)).

So, the siege that the Assyrians had against Jerusalem was broken when God passed through and destroyed their forces.

And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile ([Nah 1:14](#)).

Now he leaves the immediate scene, and his prophecy goes into the future, on even future from our present day, into the glorious day of the kingdom of God.

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! ([Nah 1:15](#))

Now, the immediate prophecy was, "When Nineveh falls, oh how great will be the tidings of the messengers that come running with the news that Nineveh's been destroyed. The world will rejoice." But yet, it is, in its secondary sense, a prophecy of the future. And you remember Isaiah made a similar prophecy in the fifty-seventh chapter I believe it is, nope, fifty-second chapter, verse seven, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that brings good tidings, that publishes peace, that brings good tidings of good, that publishes salvation. That saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"

Now, Paul quoted from Isaiah, in Romans the tenth chapter, as he's talking about, "Whosoever shall," let's see... he's talking about how that, "How shall they believe except they hear, how shall they hear except someone preach? How shall they preach except they be sent, as the scripture says? How beautiful on the mountains are the feet

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of those that bring their tidings of peace." So, Paul quotes that in Romans the twelfth chapter.

Now, Isaiah and Nahum lived about the same time, and these verses are quite similar as they... as Isaiah is talking of the future age, and Nahum of the destruction of Nineveh and the glorious news that will come.

O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, [Israel of course is already perished, they've already been destroyed by Assyria.] perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off ([Nah 1:15](#)).

The Assyrians aren't gonna come back again; they've been utterly cut off. Of course, later on the Babylonians came under Nebuchadnezzar and did destroy Jerusalem. But as far as the Assyrians, they're utterly cut off. Have any of you met an Assyrian lately? They've been cut off.

Chapter 2

Now he is describing the siege of Assyria by the Babylonian and Mede confederacy, referring to these men as those that dash in pieces.

He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition [your fortress], watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily. For the Lord hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches. The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet ([Nah 2:1-3](#)):

the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings ([Nah 1:3-4](#)).

He was talking about the chariots of the Babylonians and of the Medes that would be going through the streets of Nineveh and bringing destruction to Nineveh.

He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defense shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved ([Nah 2:5-6](#)).

Now another fascinating prophecy, for as you read the historic account, though they were besieging the walls of Nineveh, yet they were unable to penetrate. But there came a tremendous storm, several inches of rain fell in a short period of time. The Tigris River that flowed through the city of Nineveh came into flood stage, and the flooding of the Tigris River undermined the foundations of the walls, and a great portion of the walls of Nineveh were destroyed by the flooded Tigris River. And before they could rebuild the walls, of course, the flood receded; the armies came through the breach

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made in the walls made by the floods. There again, "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved."

The foundations were dissolved. Of course, the king went into his treasuries with all of the wealth and all of his kingdom, and he torched himself and his treasury. But of course, they just took the melted gold and silver then from it.

And Huzzab [means "and that which is determined," or "that which is destined"] shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon [as they are smiting on] their breasts. But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, they shall cry; but none shall look back ([Nah 2:7-8](#)).

A panic will take hold; the people will begin to run, and the others will call, "Come on stand, stand!" But panic will have overtaken them, and they will flee. And of course, you read the historic record and you find that's what happened.

Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store [Tremendous wealth was gained by the Babylonians and the Medes in the conquest of Nineveh] and glory out of all of the pleasant furniture. She is empty, and void, and waste: and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and [there is] much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness. Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid? ["Where is that city of Nineveh that was like a lion conquering all?"] The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions: and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard ([Nah 2:9-13](#)).

Rabakshak and those other messengers cut off forever.

John MacArthur :: Bible Introductions - Nahum

Title

The book's title is taken from the prophet of God's oracle against Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Nahum means "comfort" or "consolation" and is a short form of Nehemiah ("comfort of Yahweh"). Nahum is not quoted in the NT, although there may be an allusion to [Nah. 1:15](#) in [Rom. 10:15](#) (cf. [Is. 52:7](#)).

Author and Date

The significance of the writing prophets was not their personal lives; it was their message. Thus, background information about the prophet from within the prophecy is

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rare. Occasionally one of the historical books will shed additional light. In the case of Nahum, nothing is provided except that he was an Elkoshite ([1:1](#)), referring either to his birthplace or his place of ministry. Attempts to identify the location of Elkosh have been unsuccessful. Suggestions include Al Qosh, situated in northern Iraq (thus Nahum would have been a descendant of the exiles taken to Assyria in 722 B.C.), Capernaum (“town of Nahum”), or a location in southern Judah (cf. [1:15](#)). His birthplace or locale is not significant to the interpretation of the book.

With no mention of any kings in the introduction, the date of Nahum’s prophecy must be implied by historical data. The message of judgment against Nineveh portrays a nation of strength, intimating a time not only prior to her fall in 612 B.C. but probably before the death of Ashurbanipal in 626 B.C., after which Assyria’s power fell rapidly. Nahum’s mention of the fall of No Amon, also called Thebes ([3:8–10](#)), in 663 B.C. (at the hands of Ashurbanipal) appears to be fresh in their minds and there is no mention of the rekindling that occurred ten years later, suggesting a mid-seventh century B.C. date during the reign of Manasseh (ca. 695–642 B.C.; cf. [2 Kin. 21:1–18](#)).

Background and Setting

A century after Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, she returned to idolatry, violence, and arrogance ([3:1–4](#)). Assyria was at the height of her power, having recovered from Sennacherib’s defeat (701 B.C.) at Jerusalem (cf. [Is. 37:36–38](#)). Her borders extended all the way into Egypt. Esarhaddon had recently transplanted conquered peoples into Samaria and Galilee in 670 B.C. (cf. [2 Kin. 17:24](#); [Ezra 4:2](#)), leaving Syria and Palestine very weak. But God brought Nineveh down under the rising power of Babylon’s king Nabopolassar and his son, Nebuchadnezzar (ca. 612 B.C.). Assyria’s demise turned out just as God had prophesied.

Historical and Theological Themes

Nahum forms a sequel to the book of Jonah, who prophesied over a century earlier. Jonah recounts the remission of God’s promised judgment toward Nineveh, while Nahum depicts the later execution of God’s judgment. Nineveh was proud of her invulnerable city, with her walls reaching 100 ft. high and with a moat 150 ft. wide and 60 ft. deep; but Nahum established the fact that the sovereign God ([1:2–5](#)) would bring vengeance upon those who violated His law ([1:8, 14](#); [3:5–7](#)). The same God had a retributive judgment against evil which is also redemptive, bestowing His loving kindnesses upon the faithful (cf. [1:7, 12, 13, 15](#); [2:2](#)). The prophecy brought comfort to Judah and all who feared the cruel Assyrians. Nahum said Nineveh would end “with an overflowing flood” ([1:8](#)); and it happened when the Tigris River overflowed to destroy enough of the walls to let the Babylonians through. Nahum also predicted that the city would be hidden ([3:11](#)). After its destruction in 612 B.C., the site was not rediscovered until 1842 A.D.