

## Zephaniah- Hidden Things

### Chapter 1- Everything Must Go (vs. 1-6)

Turn in your Bibles with me to the Book of Zephaniah. "Whom the Lord hides". That's what the book is about. And the first chapter begins to talk to us about the fact that there needs to be a fire sale. Everything has to go. There are things that are obvious that need to go. Then there are those things that aren't so obvious that have to go. God hides certain things at different times in His grace, in His sovereignty. We hide things. When we hide it's not good. When He hides, it is. And we begin to realize that in this particular setting. God is setting aside this one individual Zephaniah to be a prophet during a very difficult day. We look for genealogy and really the only genealogy that we have is in the very beginning of this book of Zephaniah and it tells us that he's actually related to the king. Specifically, it takes his lineage all the way back to Hezekiah. To the best of our recollection, when we go into Scripture, we can't see that genealogy. Because to the best of our understanding according to Scripture, Hezekiah has a child by the name of Manasseh. Right, and Manasseh has a child by the name of Amon. But we don't see any other children besides that. However, that doesn't mean that there weren't. So, when Scripture begins to not reveal certain things, it's just as sovereign as the things that He lets us know. Go back to Deuteronomy 29:29, the hidden things belong to the Lord. Things revealed belong to us, and there are things that He reveals to us. But oftentimes God hides in respect to protection, and in this particular case, God was preserving a witness during these very difficult times to those that were in control. Those who were the kings. Zephaniah would have had influence on Josiah, and we understand at the very beginning of the Book of Zephaniah that it was during the days of the king Josiah. Josiah was about 8 years old when he took the throne. So, he's a pretty young guy and we really don't see him doing anything till about maybe eight years later. He doesn't do anything really intense until about 18 years later in his reign. He will reign for 31 years.

He reigned for 31 years, and Josiah will make a lot of reforms. He becomes king at a very difficult time because we know that his grandfather was Manasseh, who actually was the worst king in Judah that ever existed. In fact, the way that it's put in Scripture, at the time in which Manasseh was king, Judah did worse than all the other nations that were surrounding them. So, God's people were actually worse than all the other nations. Where their responsibility, their job, was to be a testimony of God, they were literally just the opposite. So sometimes we wonder, well, why were they taken into captivity? Well, that would be a good reason. And God was displaying He is not a respecter of persons. So, His own people can't be worse than the nation that they're proclaiming that message to. So, God will take them into captivity. At the time in which this book is written, Israel has already gone in, that is, the northern tribes have already gone into captivity. They've been in captivity now, probably 80 to 100 years since. So sometime the Northern tribe has been taken in by Assyria. So, we have up at the top here, Assyria that has come down. Babylon is forming. They are not the world power yet. They are a nuisance to Assyria because Assyria is the world power. Assyria has come in, taken control of Syria, which is kind of a northern country but not related to Assyria. I was reminded of that when I was talking to a Syrian and they go, "We're not Assyrian. We're Syrian!" Which the Syrians were kind of cousins to the Jews, where

the Assyrians were of course, of the wicked followers, and they're really pronounced Assur. Which makes reference to the god in which they followed, but Assyria had become the world power and was coming down and just swallowing up everything. If you remember, they ultimately probably a few years after Jonah, they will make their capital Nineveh. Nineveh will be their capital shortly after Jonah, of course. Jonah is sent to Nineveh. He doesn't like the Assyrians. Why? Because they are attacking his northern tribes. And so, you know, to send somebody to help somebody be saved that you want dead is kind of the opposite of what you're wanting to do. So, Jonah goes to this place, of course, to much of his chagrin, his desire is to go up onto the hill and watch everybody get slaughtered. Of course, his initial reaction is "I'm going to run, I'm going to hide, I'm going to go the opposite way." So, he heads to Joppa. He catches the boat. Hopefully he's going far away, maybe towards Spain is where he's kind of heading. But God had a big fish. You know the story. So He sends him to this place. To his chagrin, he goes and he gives the message. I don't think he, you know, was really convincing, but it was sort of like, "You're all going to die. Get right with God, I don't care." So he goes on the mountain, they go, "We surrender! Are you going to give us up?" So, it was an amazing thing in which God revealed, you know, shouldn't I be compassionate on all these children that don't know their right hand from their left? I mean, so we see the compassion of God in all of that. And yet this amazing, powerful, horrific and hateful group of people called the Assyrians are coming and literally peeling flesh off people's bodies as they began to parade them around. No wonder people hated them. So, as they begin to come down, they're beginning to put pressure now on Judah. Pressure is starting to come on Judah, and actually during the days of Hezekiah, which are quite some days before Josiah. I don't want you to get confused with kings, but during those days they surrounded Jerusalem and the thought was Jerusalem's dead. Of course, Rabshakeh, who is the general, yells out to the people of Jerusalem and goes, "Don't rely on this king. He doesn't know what he's doing. What I took in Israel I took in Syria. What do you think you are? No problem, I'll come in just like an eagle comes in and swoops and takes the eggs out from a nest that's not guarded. I have no problem killing all of you. So, surrender." Of course, Hezekiah falls on the ground, begins to cry unto the Lord and you know that story. God sends an angel and 185,000 die that night. So that pretty well took care of that problem for that time. Hezekiah, then has this wicked son by the name of Manasseh. For a number of years, Manasseh just ruins everything that Hezekiah had done in following the Lord and had just put wickedness throughout the country. So now it's back to a mess. His son takes over and what's also interesting is towards the end, and we're going to look at this in the Book of Chronicles, towards the end of Manasseh's life, he actually repents.

In fact, let's turn there, 2 Chronicles, Chapter 33. Of course, you already knew that. But 2 Chronicles Chapter 33, it actually talks about the fact that Manasseh, who was the King of Israel at this particular juncture, Josiah's grandfather, misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil, verse 9 reads this way in 2 Chronicles 33, verse 9, "Thus Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel." So, wow, that's pretty bad, because the nations were pretty bad. Then it says this in verse 10, "The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention."

But you know, sometimes God's so gracious He gets out the hammer. I mean, we won't listen to His grace, but you'll listen to a hammer. So, it says this in verse 11, "Therefore the LORD brought the commanders of the army..." Of what? "...The king of Assyria against them." So now they're coming all the way down to Jerusalem, where the king Manasseh is, and they captured Manasseh. Well, they put hooks in him. That's what they would oftentimes do. They'd actually put hooks in the body, and then they drag them like big fish. Remember, one of the gods that Assyria worshipped was the fish god. That's

in, you know, you see Jonah plop out of a fish and you go "Whoa, there's a god." So, you're obviously going to listen to it. So, they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains and they took him to Babylon. And when he's in distress, watch this. This is the most wicked king that Judah ever had. But when he was in distress, he entreated the Lord, His God and humbled himself greatly. You go well, you know, some sins are just unpardonable. Well, obviously not. When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem, to his Kingdom. That's an amazing thing, isn't it? I want you to see as we follow this, a hidden thing. And that's what we're going to be talking about tonight, because really Zephaniah, whom the Lord hides, whom Jehovah hides, who Yahweh hides, is what Zephaniah's name means. In some respects, you're going to see God's desire to preserve His own people, but we're also going to see the flip side of that in the sense that man has hidden things and his perception is that the hidden things actually don't really matter. I mean, just as long as nobody sees what you're doing...God doesn't see right? He doesn't know what's going on. So, hey, everything's ok. The bizarre thing is, that the bottom line is we're more concerned about how other people perceive us than we are how God sees us, so that if nobody sees what we're doing, the perception is everything's ok.

I want you to keep your finger here because we're going to come right back to 2 chronicles 33, and I want you to skip to the book of Amos. I probably shouldn't jump around as much as I do but wow, it just all comes together, doesn't it? Amos Chapter 4 and now we're going back some years. Here again, I don't want to confuse you with the whole-time scale, but Amos was actually sent. He was from Judah, but he's actually sent to the Kings of Israel before they went into captivity by Assyria. So just a brief synopsis, but if you look with me in Amos Chapter 4. Amos was sent to the rulers of Israel, which at that particular time they were in the region of Samaria, more specifically the city of Samaria. So that was their little Kingdom. Amos is the last guy you would think to send to a king because Amos is a day laborer. So, he really has no clout and he tells God this, he says "I'm not a prophet. I'm not a son of a prophet, I work in the fields and sometimes I watch sheep." So, it was kind of a hired day laborer kind of guy. And God says "You're just the guy for it, because what Israel needs to do is they need to humble themselves. So, they're going to need to listen to you." So, in the context of the beginning of Amos, they're all building these high towers and Scripture says I just want to let you know, it's in the days just two years before the great earthquake. So, you have all these high towers and people are saying "We're safe, we're safe, we're safe!" And God says "Against earthquakes?" So anyway, He sends Amos. It's God's graciousness to warn us. So, there are signs that He sends. Well, what's interesting about Amos is, of course, Amos is just an average Joe and he states the obvious. Of course, if you're really smart, obvious just goes over your head, right? "It's going to rain today." "How do you know?" "There's dark clouds there." "Well, I don't know. I listened to the weather and the weather said this and weather said that and the percentage of chance and..." Ok, but they're dark clouds, right? So that would be kind of an Amos statement. So, God brings down a basket of fruit, summer fruit, and goes, "So what do you see?" And Amos says, "I see a basket of summer fruit." He's a genius. The guy is a genius. So, all the way through what we're seeing in the book of Amos is just simplicity of common sense and he is sent to the kings.

In Amos Chapter 4, God says to him, "Now, I want you to talk to the leaders and I want you to ask them something" And "So what? What do I ask them?", "Well, ask them, did they notice anything different about their lives?" You see things happen in our lives and it's not an accident. Unfortunately, we can't seem to take a hint. So, the passage reads this way in Amos chapter 4, verse 6, "I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities and lack of bread in all your places. But you didn't return to me," declares the LORD. "Furthermore, I withheld the rain from you." It hasn't rained in a long time. You'd notice that. One

who's in control of the rain. While there were still yet three months until harvest, one of the things that God had promised His people is He said, "You come during this harvest feast that I have designated, and I'll make sure you have plenty to bring to Me." So, if it didn't rain, what is He saying? He's saying that "You're not coming to me". So did you notice verse 7... "That I would send rain on one city and on another city, I would not send rain." I mean that would be kind of an obvious thing, wouldn't it? And then on top of that, one part would be rained on. While the part not rained on would dry up. Can you imagine? Could you imagine paying a heavy water bill to water your lawn, watching your neighbor's yard get rained on and it's not raining on yours? You have to, "I got to water my lawn again." ... "I smote you with scorching wind and mildew; and the caterpillar was devouring..." Where did all these caterpillars come from? I don't know. "...your gardens and your vineyards, your fig trees, your olive trees. Yet you didn't return to Me...I sent a plague like the manner of Egypt; I saw your young men by the sword along your captured horses, and I made the stench of your camp rise up in your nostrils; still you didn't return." The point of the matter is, that there are things in our life that we're not taking care of because nobody else sees. Our perception is everything's ok. Then things start happening in our lives and we go, "Why are these things happening to me?" You don't think God is sovereign in your life? So, you go a little bit further in chapter 5, verse 18, it says this, "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the LORD, for what purpose will the day of the LORD be to you?" You know how people go, "You know, I'm just looking forward to the Lord and His ruling." He goes, "Why? It's not going to go good for you." It'll be darkness and verse 19, "As when a man flees from a lion..." Finally, beats the lion and then what happens? "...a bear meets him." Talk about a bad day, right? "Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall and a snake bites him." The day of the Lord will be darkness. His point is, and if you look in verse 21, they have their festivals, but He goes, "I hate your festivals..." because none of it's real. Now, once again, the reality of one's heart is not easily seen or given. But just look around you. Are there problems? You see, and the Lord begins to stir because the hidden things matter to God. If you go back to 2 Chronicles 33, God had heard the prayer of Manasseh and Manasseh had humbled himself. But very interesting in verse 14. You know, there's something about us that we get right with God and then just in case, we'll buy extra insurance. We believe God will take care of us; but just in case He doesn't. So, you buy extra insurance, right?

The passage reads this way, if you look with me, 2 Chronicles 33 verse 14, "Now, after this Manasseh built the outer wall of the city of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even at the entrance of the Fish Gate..." Now the Fish Gate was on the northwestern side and it would be where the Assyrians came down. So, he got right with God. God freed him from the Assyrians. But just in case they come back again, we'll build another wall. And they called it the Second Wall. Or in some ways, we'll actually see it in Zephaniah, called the Second Quarter. So, it encircled this area and on top of this, he removed the foreign gods and the idols and all the things that were certainly going against God. He set up the altar of the Lord, and he got those things kind of straightened. But verse 17 talks about the hidden thing. See, you can get everything in order externally but it's still there nevertheless. You know those nevertheless things. Those are hidden things. So, it says this in verse 17, "Nevertheless, the people still sacrificed in the high places..." Now what they did was they brought in the worship of God in their high places. But the point is that they were trying to blend their faith with worldly honor and glory. Does it sound familiar? It's a little thing. You know, I always thought it was not kosher, incorrect, I'll go a step further, blasphemous, to stick an American flag in a church, I always felt that was true. Not because I don't like America. God bless. I'm so thankful that I'm an American; but it doesn't belong in the church. God is to be worshipped. See, we're not here pledging our allegiance to the nation. That really, at this

juncture, is a very Godless nation. We're here pledging our allegiance to God and God alone. You don't want to mix Him with somebody else. See, that's where problems begin to ensue. So, what begins to happen is, that they're exalting man, machine, method, money, whatever, and they're blending it with their faith. It's a little thing. It's a hidden thing, but it's a big thing with God.

Josiah in Chapter 34 of 2 Chronicles becomes king. If you look at the very beginning verse 1, it says he's how old? Eight years old now. Now his father had just been murdered by his own servants. So, you can imagine that an 8-year-old is probably just very discombobulated. What's going on? What's happening? He was probably five or six when his grandfather, Manasseh, was doing all the changes. So, he may have, I don't know, begun to assimilate some of those things. I don't know how much. What does a 5- or 6-year-old kid know? Not a lot. So, he's 8 years old, his father was a wicked king, he gets murdered by his own people and the people who murdered his father were killed by some other people and then they put him in office. So, 8 years old, he's in office. The passage says that he starts doing right. Now what we know is that somewhere in this neighborhood, and I personally think that Zephaniah...you see in 2 Chronicles chapter 33, verse 25. You see that last verse there? And then you see 2 Chronicles 34, verse 1? Ok, see that white space there? That's where I think Zephaniah is. Because Zephaniah comes in at a time in which he's royalty, so he's part of the family. He would have an audience with this little 8-year-old, right? God pulls Zephaniah aside and He says, "You need to tell these people everything's got to go. Everything has got to go. Now where else would little Josiah get the idea that everything's got to go? Because if you look at the passage, it says that he did right in the sight of the Lord. How could he do right? He had a wicked father and a wicked grandfather, how could he do right? "For in the eighth year of his reign..." Now we're at 16 years old. "...while he was still a youth, he began to seek God of his father David; and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem..." and he began to take out the high places, the Asherim, you know, kind of like the God of nature, carved images, the molten images. They tore down the altars of Baals in his presence, the incense. They chopped down all these things. If you look in verse 5, he burns the bones of the priests and their altars and purged Judah and Jerusalem. Then he goes north to the people remaining in Israel after most of them have been taken into captivity, there's still some there, and he starts purging that area. And if you look, it says he took care of the cities in verse 6, "...the cities of Manasseh, Ephraim, Simeon, even as far as Naphtali..."

If you've been coming to church on Sundays, you know where that is; and if you haven't, I'm not going to tell you. "...in their surrounding ruins, he also tore down the altars and beat the Asherim and the carved images into powder..." That's verse 7, "...and chopped down all the incense and altars throughout the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem."

So, he's cleaning house. What's making him clean everything out? Well go back to Zephaniah chapter 1 and if you look at the very beginning in verse 1, "The word of the LORD came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi...", which we believe that he probably had some ties to Africa. Remember Cush, so his mother was probably African, Ethiopian, or Egyptian... "...son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah", This shows that he's part of the lineage of the king in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, who was that wicked king that only reigned 2 years, his father, king of Judah.

Now verse 2, what does it say? What's his prophecy? "I will completely remove..." What? "All things" and in case you're a little confused about this, "...from the face of the earth", declares the LORD. "I will remove man and beast; birds of the sky and the fish of the sea..." and if you know what's happening, we're actually going the reverse of creation. We're starting with man; we're going in reverse. And then it states this in in the passage, "...and the ruins along with the wicked." The best way I can put that is "*maḵšēlâ*". The word for the ruins there is making reference to stumbling blocks. So that which would

ruin you has got to go. And that is really the point of the book.

There are things that are ruining God's people, things that are ruining you, that have got to go. You know, we see God starting to take things out and we go "How mean can you get?" and God goes, "These are things that are ruining you. It's bringing decay into your life.", "...I will cut off man from the face of the earth", declares the LORD. 'So I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants...' Of what? Of Jerusalem. So, we know who He's talking to. Now, can you imagine this prophecy? Could you imagine sitting down with the 8-year-old and going "Ok. Everything's going, and that includes this city." Could you imagine a 16-year-old? I mean, he's been telling them these things. Josiah has been listening and the passage goes on; it reads this way, "And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place and the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests." (verse 4) Why is He making mention of these things? Well, He's actually going through those things which come in and are stumbling blocks and actually cause us to leave God. So, the question is, what is it that causes us to leave God? Well, if you look with me in verse 4, "I will cut off the remnant of Baal..." You see that? I will cut off the remnant. What is that telling us?

Is your finger still in Chronicles? Go back to 2 Chronicles 34. What we know is Josiah started cleaning house. And as he began to clean house, strangely enough, in the 18th year of his reign, which means now he's 26 years old, he turns to the priests at that time and he says, "You know what we need to do, we need to rebuild the temple that was basically torn down. We need to collect money for all of this." And so, they start doing that and they start going back to where the temple was. Well, lo and behold, while they're going back to the temple...we talked about this last week. What did they find? They found the Old Testament, right. They found the Law. The priest goes, "Hey, look what we found." And I'm going, ok, you're a priest. You don't know where the Law was? Which is kind of telling us something. But they came out and the person who finds it, it's very interesting to me, verse 14, when they were bringing out the money, in Chapter 34 of 2 Chronicles, "When they were bringing out the money which had been brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses." Wow! That'd be amazing. Found the law that was given to Moses. Who found it? Hilkiyah. It's very interesting. You all know who he is, right? It's Jeremiah's dad. Read Jeremiah chapter 1. It's Jeremiah's dad who's a priest. Now, at this particular juncture, Jeremiah has been called into office and has been in the office five years. Jeremiah was young when he was called. In fact, that's part of his argument with God. God goes, "Jeremiah, I'm going to send you to the kings of Judah." And Jeremiah goes, "Oh, I'm too young. I'm too young." Do you know that if you figure his age, along with Josiah, they would have been just about the same age. You see the wisdom of God. So that he would be able to have some sort of connection with him and we know that he does because when Josiah finally dies, it is recorded in Chronicles that Jeremiah takes up a lament for him and begins to write a song of lament for him. So, we know that they were close.

What's amazing to me, if you read with me in verse 15, is "Hilkiyah responded and said to Shaphan the scribe, 'I have found the Book of the Law in the house of LORD.' And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan." Another priest. Now this is what's bizarre to me, I would think you'd give it to Jeremiah. This is very clear that God had called Jeremiah for this particular work, and he's already been in office five years at this juncture. Because it's the 13th year of Josiah's reign that Jeremiah was called in the office, this is now the 18th year of the reign. So not only does his own dad not recognize Jeremiah, but on top of that, when it comes time to seek out a prophet, because Josiah goes, "We need to hear from a prophet. We've got to hear from a prophet." Hilkiyah not only skips over his own son but will go to a woman. And so, if you look with me in verse 22, "So Hilkiyah and those whom the king had told went to Huldah..."

Now, I'm not exactly sure what her name means, but most of the translations call her weasel. So, I'm not going to go one way or the other on that one. "She was a prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tokhath, the son of Hasrah the keeper of the wardrobe." I guess that's her connection.

"(Now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter)" Those walls that maybe Manasseh had built. "And they spoke to her regarding this." You know the wonderful thing about God is, what we understand according to text, is Josiah really wanted to know what God wanted. Though the people that were in office at this particular juncture were not necessarily wanting to follow God. They went to another source. Be it as it may or not, unlike Saul, when he calls to a Necromancer to bring up Samuel from the dead, and this woman goes "OK, I'll give her a try". And so she does. And Samuel comes up from a grave and God goes "Ha! Didn't think that was going to happen, did you?" Of course, she's scared to death. She goes, "Whoa. Why didn't you tell me that this was going to happen?" but anyway. So in this particular setting, what happens is something similar is that this prophetess just goes, "OK God just told me what He wanted you to hear." So she begins to tell him the prophecy and the prophecy is basically this, "God's going to punish you for all the evil the nation has done. However, Josiah, because you humbled yourself God has put a stay on it in your lifetime." It's a great passage. It says this in verse 27, "Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before God. When you heard the words against this place and against its inhabitants because you humbled yourself before Me, you tore your clothes. You wept before Me. God's truly heard, declares the Lord. I'll gather you to your fathers. You'll be gathered to your grave in peace. Your eyes will not see all the evil that's going to come on this place." God sees and he sees the heart, doesn't he? Hidden things God sees. So as the passage goes. You know the king, Josiah desires to follow the Lord and desires to do the right thing. He begins to celebrate in probably a great way. Like Hezekiah, the Passover. This is during his 18th year in office. Now he's going to reign 31 years, but his 18th year all this stuff is happening and if you look in Chapter 35, he begins to celebrate the Passover and he does it in a big way. God really never asked for volume, but you know man in his pomp begins to do things. Solomon did the same thing. So Hezekiah did the same thing. But what's interesting shortly after Solomon does his great worship series and shortly after Hezekiah does his, and now shortly after, Josiah will do his, trouble will come. And Scripture's reminded us that worship is not about pomp and circumstance. I mean, if you look at the passage, wow, a Passover offering 30,000 + 3000 bulls, I mean that's verse 7, right? I mean 2600 from the flocks, it goes on with Hilkiah donated... I mean, everybody's being grandiose at this particular worship, and it couldn't be any more of a grand celebration. In fact, they even had the choir singing. And you know if the choir is singing, it's got to be holy. So verse 15, the singers, the sons of Asaph were there and gatekeepers. I mean, this was a major event. It says in verse 19, "in the 18th year of Josiah's reign. By the way, that's how I knew that. In the 18th year of Josiah's reign, this Passover was celebrated. Now, at this juncture, for the rest of his thirteen years. We know hardly anything about him. Things get quiet. What begins to happen is this whole pomp and circumstances, the only thing it did was it covered up the hidden things. Because there's still hidden things going on. And it's one of the reasons why Jeremiah was so hated by his own father and the priest, because he was bringing to light the hidden things. You see, when Jeremiah first comes into office is during the time of Josiah. Josiah is making all these changes, and you're seeing all these external things that are, and you're saying, wow, this is revival. That's why I've just never really been into that whole... I mean, it's a wonderful thing to see people make decisions to the Lord. Don't ever get me wrong about that. People start making it an event and it's not an event. It's you one by one, getting right with God. And if you'll get right, if you'll humble yourself. See the problem with revivals, the problem with big celebrations like this is it's a magnet for pride. I mean, it just doesn't take much for the pride to come in

and it's that humility that literally caused everything to be right. I mean, the thought is how do we get these Assyrians off our back? Just humble yourself. God will get the Assyrians off your back, see. Manasseh's going, "We got to build bigger walls." Forget about the walls. Get right with God. Those things get off your back. So anyway, as we come to this passage, Josiah had set the temple in order. We see that verse in 20. Right? 2 Chronicles 35:20. After all this, Josiah had set the temple in order, and then what would happen? What do you think happens? After everything we got everything in order. Good for me. Time to celebrate. OK, so. Maybe there's something hidden. Josiah, as holy as the guy you are. Maybe there's something hidden. Hezekiah was declared this righteous king. Hezekiah did right. He made things right. But when it all was said and done, when God rescued him, He gave him 15 more years of life. It says Hezekiah did not give God thanks, but instead he courted Babylon. God has a way of revealing the hidden things. You know, and don't let the whole grandiosity of events fool anybody. God never stops looking at the heart. Josiah is feeling pretty powerful because he's gotten everything in order. And then when the Egyptian king goes up to heading towards Megiddo. Armageddon, that particular valley and he's going to do combat. It'll be in this time that he'll, the Egyptians, will literally overtake the Philistines, and they're going up to push back Assyria. Now why exactly is Josiah going, "You guys can't be here in my neighborhood." I'm not sure. But he has set a resolve, "I'm going to fight you guys." So he goes to war against Neco the king or the pharaoh of Egypt, king Pharaoh, and as he's going up, the king says, "You don't want to mess with me because I've been sent by God." Now what we know is that Egypt was not a follower of Yahweh, obviously. However, that doesn't mean that God doesn't talk to them. If you remember Abraham and you remember he goes down to Egypt and tries to pass off his wife as his sister, and then God talks to Pharaoh and Pharaoh goes, "Whoa!" and he backs off. "Your God talked to me and said I shouldn't do this." Same thing happens with Abimelech? So does God talk to foreign kings? Yes. What's interesting is, and I don't want to get too much of this, but Exodus, chapter 1, verse 11 begins to mention certain cities that the Pharaoh was having Israel help build. There was one city in particular that is mentioned. It's just a side note, but if you could look at it with me in Exodus chapter 1. Remember, the children of Israel are put to forced labor? And so it says in verse 11, "So they appointed taskmasters over them to afflict them with hard labor and they built for Pharaoh storage cities, Pithom..." You see that? "...and Raamses." Pithom is actually the house of the god Atum. Now the reason why that's interesting is Atum was Egypt's, even before Rah, Atum was their oldest god. In other words, declared their first god. He was declared the god of creation. He was referred to as "the living one". Which is interesting because of course Yahweh has the connotation of the only uncaused cause, the one who has no beginning, has no end. The I am. The living one. It wouldn't surprise me that they got a message from a tomb. It's sort of like Acts 17, you know, Paul goes in Athens, he goes, OK, you have an unknown God here. That's the one, and your poets even say in Him you live and breathe and have your existence, and God has never been without a witness to people. And so anyway, that's sort of a side note. So the Pharaoh says don't mess with me. I'm on a mission from God and Josiah being brilliant disguises himself. I'll go to battle. Nobody will see. And so the passage reads, go back to Second Chronicles 35. The end of verse 21 "stop for your own sake interfering with God, who's with me." "However," verse 22 "Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to" make war. What do you think happens, Josiah? This will be when he dies. If you look in verse 25, what will happen? Jeremiah will mourn his death, because he was a good king. But he'll forfeit his life by not listening to God, the point of the matter is pride came in. He goes, I don't have to listen to God anymore. I'm the one that makes things right. And he doesn't. So he dies because he decides not to listen to God. What's interesting is, is the hidden thing. What's the hidden thing? Disguise, if I disguise myself, then I can do



what I want to do. And everything will be OK. God says no, I see it. So all the way through not only with Zephaniah, but the book of Jeremiah, much of what's being said, because we know that a lot has been changed and a lot of good has happened on the external, but God is not happy. And the problems still exist as we begin to see people like Hilkiah avoid his own son and go to other sources. We still see pride ruling in the realm. We still see them going to their other gods. "Well, they come to church..." If you look at me in Jeremiah Chapter 3, you begin to see that it is the hidden things that Jeremiah begins to deal with. Once again, one of the reasons why they nail him to the door. The priesthood door of the gates of Benjamin, which is the tribe in which he's from, which is where the rulers are from. More specifically the priesthood. So it says in Chapter 3 as God is bringing an indictment against Israel as well and Jeremiah, They were faithless to me, but they were at least faithless in an open way. In other words, I don't love you and I don't want to be with you anymore. And they were open about it. You know, you can kind of deal with it but Judah, it says in verse 10 of chapter 3 in Jeremiah, "And yet, in spite of all this, her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but rather in deception." Does that sound like maybe the king? I mean, you could do good. I'm doing all these good things. Yeah, but where's your heart? Man looks at the outward appearance. God's looking at the heart. The question is what's hidden? So as you go through the prophecies of both Zephaniah and Jeremiah, as they're pretty much correspond at the very beginning, you begin to realize that they're trying to deal with those hidden things because much of the reform has already taken place externally. So if you look at me in chapter 4 of Jeremiah and just drop on down to verse 14, "The cry is 'wash your heart.'" See the passage. "Wash your heart from evil Old Jerusalem that you may be saved. How long were your wicked thoughts lodge within you?" What is he talking about? He's not talking about the external things. They got all those things in order. It says you've rebelled against me and in verse 18 your ways and your deeds have brought bitter things upon you. It's one of the things you're going to see over and over again, the people are going to ask why are bad things happening to us? And God says you're faking it. I know what is going on. You're playing, we'll call it, playing both sides against the middle, but if you look in chapter 5, verse 2. Well, at the beginning of chapter five He goes What I need you to do Jeremiah is start roaming through the streets and try to find somebody that's genuine. I've been in churches like that. I mean, I've roamed and I'm trying to find somebody genuine. Is there anybody that really loves Jesus? You know, they're here for this conference. They're here for that conference. It's bizarre. So roam through the streets trying to find somebody that is genuine. See if there's someone that does justice who seeks truth. Israel, I'll pardon specifically Judah, Jerusalem. Watch, verse 2, "Although they say as the Lord lives surely, they deal falsely. Oh Lord, do not thine eyes look for" truth. What, do you think God is OK with the external? So you look in Chapter 5 in verse 30 and He says this "an appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophecy falsely as the priest rule on their own authority" and the people say great, they love it. Why? Well, chapter 6 then goes on. It says in verse 13 " from the least of them, even the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for gain and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals.." What? That's the hidden thing, right? They go around telling people everything's OK, peace, peace, peace. But it's not. And that's why, you know, it brings us ultimately to Chapter 7 and he goes, stand in the gates of the city and start, you know, telling people if, if they'll truly amend their ways. Because at this juncture, they're going to the feast. They're doing all the things that they're supposed to do. You know, showing up for church, whatever. But it says in verse 3, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel. Amend your ways and your deeds and I will let you live in this place. Do not trust in deceptive words.." Don't think that you could just say "Oh yeah, me and God are like this." It's kind of like 1 John, isn't it?

Verse 5 and 6, "If you truly amend your ways and your deeds. If you truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor. If you don't oppress the alien or the orphan or the widow, you don't shed innocent blood." See, the problem is, verse 8, you're "trusting in deceptive words," you steal, you murder, you commit adultery, you swear falsely. You're loving other gods and then you come to church and you go. God is with us. I mean, we're in the House of God, right? It's actually where we get that passage in the New Testament where Christ goes, and he casts over the money changers. Verse 11, "Has this house which is called by My name become a den of robbers in your sight?" And of course, the people were coming in, they going well, this is the House of God. This the House of God because we're in the House of God then obviously everything's OK and God says no. You're trusting in deception. Chapter 8, verse five then goes on and it asks the question, "Why then has this people of Jerusalem turned away in continual apostasy?" "They hold fast to" what? "Deceit. They refuse to return." It's really all about that. Not only can you not trust them to be honest before God, but you can't trust them with each other. I mean, don't you just hate it when somebody you know has a fish logo on their business or, you know, a dove or something, talking about loving the Lord and then they cheat you in some way? It says in Chapter 9 of Jeremiah verse 4, "Let everyone be on your guard against his neighbor. Do not trust any brother, because every brother deals craftily, every neighbor goes about as a slanderer. (verse 5) Everyone deceives his neighbor, doesn't speak the truth, they've taught their tongue to speak lies. They weary themselves, committing iniquity. (verse 6) Your dwelling is in the midst of deceit. Through deceit, they refused to know Me." Everything's a lie. And that, fundamentally, is what Zephaniah is dealing with. Why does everything have to go? See what is the message that he's really giving? Because once again, our perception is when we got everything taken care of externally, everything's OK and Zephaniah goes, no, everything has to go. And you begin to deal with things like the remnant of Baal. What is the remnant of Baal? If you go back to Zephaniah chapter 1, the remnant of Baal. What is the remnant of Baal? Well, what it's saying is that you've cast out the altar of Baal but you're still worshipping him. Now one of the things we know about Baal is that the worship is directly tied to possessions. And so it really is that greed. You know those things that I mean, you can talk about being generous and loving God, but the fact matter is you really have a greedy heart. And of course, as it comes to the end of this particular chapter, he goes, if you look at me in verse 18, "neither your silver nor your gold will be able to deliver" you the day of wrath. But what we're dealing with are all these things that are hidden in our heart, that remnant of Baal. See, that's a kind of a Philistine ownership avarice thing that is inside of you and you worship those things. If you look at it and the names of idolatrous priests. We talked about this. We touched upon this last week, but Chamerims, the idolatrous priests that are being used once again would wear all black. One of the reasons why is that it produced a sense of ascetism, that is to say, it made them look like they were mourning over their sins. it's one of the reasons why the priests, even to this day, wear black. They're really following godless history, not God's history, because God never even told you what to wear, right? I mean, you should be wearing things proper, but I'm talking about as far as those kind of things. So it's that wearing black that caused that sense of monkish ecclesiastical worship, you know, it's kind of a picture of humility. Well, what you're doing is you're gaining a name for yourself. And that's why he says, "And the names of the idolatrous priests." You know those really righteous people? They go in the ivory towers and they sit there in their black. Wow, are they special? They have a name for themselves, but what you're really dealing with is self righteousness. It's a hidden thing. Self righteousness is a hidden thing, isn't it? But it always you know, it's those long prayers that Matthew 6 talks about. And it's letting people know what you've sacrificed and how you sacrifice, that you're fasting. It's all those things that really, are alluring to you. That's a hidden thing. What he begins to do is

he begins to pull out all the hidden things. And those who bow down on the housetops. What is he talking about? I mean, when's the last time you opened up a paper? Got to be on the Internet. Looking to what the stars are saying, see. Looking for advice and direction instead of going to God for direction, you go to every resource and every source other than God. Powers of the host and it could be the stars. It could be the important people in your life, but it's going to other resources instead of God. And then he says not only this, but they bow down and they swear to the Lord. And yet, they swear to Milcom, kind of another word for Molech, which is another word for king. It's a worship of man and a worship of power and a willingness to sacrifice your children for those things. Because it's all about you, right? It's all about getting those things. You know, a lot of these things would be hidden, but the fact of the matter is that it is the heart and it's what God looks at. So the passage actually ends this way, "Those who have turned back from following Me..." Really dealing with the backsliding or apostasy. "...and those who have not sought the Lord." The picture of desire. OK, so now we're getting a little bit personal, but the question is are you desiring a relationship with God? We're not talking about, do you read your Bible? We're talking about what do you desire? Is there something that is in you that stirs, I just got to have a closer walk with God? Because that's where the problem is. It's a hidden problem. But the problem is you've not sought the Lord, nor have you gone to Him when you have a problem. You don't go to Him, go to the experts. You go to this source because you bow down to all kinds of other idols. If you look at and follow this point through what does God want His people to do? If you look at me in chapter 2 of Zephaniah in verse 3, "Seek the Lord you humble of the earth" A minor detail? "Who have carried out his ordinances. Seek righteousness" Desire to do the right thing. Seek. When's the last time you actually sought humility? You know, humility is one of those things where God gives us, I have found, the opportunity every single day to be humble. If you're seeking it, you'll find it. If you're wise, you'll embrace it. You'll say to yourself, this is a moment I get to serve somebody else. This is what I've been looking to do. You know, those are the kind of things that we naturally avoid. But now, if our hearts right, we're actually pursuing these things. Seek righteousness. Seek humility. Perhaps look at verse 3. Perhaps, What? "You will be hidden". You got to get all these things that are in your life that you're hiding. You take care of those things. God will preserve you. God will hide you.

So it's an interesting book that begins to get us to look deeply into that, which is really important and that which is really valuable. Actually, when you consider Josiah is probably 22 years away from Jerusalem being completely leveled and destroyed and burned down, so they have 22 years before that will happen. God, in his grace, is beginning to show through Jeremiah and God will even graciously begin to send a prophet to the people in captivity because they'll be taken to captivity. God will raise a guy by the name of Ezekiel, and Ezekiel will be the Prophet to the children of Israel while in captivity. God longs to be gracious to us.

Father. We give You thanks for this book. As You began to reveal to us hidden things, hidden things. Hidden things don't seem really important. Because it's the hidden things of the heart that matter to You? Thoughts on our minds? You tell us in Your word that You, through Your Word, take it like a sword and You cut into the bone and You begin to reveal things and nothing is hidden from your eyes. You tell us that in Your Word. Sin that comes into our life so easily comes in and weighs us down and so You tell us; Let us lay aside every encumbrance. And sin, which so easily entangles us. Because if we just let one thing reside, it just destroys and decays everything else. It is a cancer. And which one of us would ever say? And leave a little bit of cancer in me. It is Your graciousness that begins to reveal things hidden. And You tell us in Your Word that. That whatever makes us feel lofty and arrogant. Have to go. We pray that You do and operate in our lives today. We pray this in Jesus' name.