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Zephaniah

Chapter 2 – Hidden Humility

Whom the Lord hides is his name, and what his name means. So, as we come to this book, we're going to be seeing things that are hidden. The first chapter really deals with the things man hides, and man has a way of hiding his agenda. He has a way of hiding his motivations. What is interesting, of course, is this particular prophet is given to the tribe of Judah. Which is a distinction between the tribe of Judah and Israel in that Israel was very overt about their sin. Judah was very subterfuge about their sin, that is to say they were very good at hiding it. They would go through the process of the worship and all those things, but God says, "But I see the things that you're hiding." Zephaniah 1 is written in the way that God says everything has to go. It talks about, as we were talking about, a fire sale. Everything has to go and you go, "Why does everything have to go? Why does He have to destroy everything?" Because man will worship anything and everything other than God.

The bizarre thing that you read in Romans 1 is that man began to worship the creation rather than the Creator. The purpose of creation was that we would glorify God. Psalm 19:1 says, the "heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows forth His handiwork;" but man will worship the stars, he'll bow down to the moon, and his perception is that this is the source of grand majesty. It's God the Creator who made these things. So, as you oftentimes see in Scripture, in Jeremiah, it is God who made heaven and earth. Why wouldn't you worship Him? He's God. He gave you the rain. Why wouldn't you worship Him? But man has a tendency of going to almost anything and everything.

Zephaniah 1:2. "I will completely remove all things
From the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

Zephaniah 1:3. 'I will remove man and beast;
I will remove the birds of the sky
And the fish of the sea,
And the ruins along with the wicked;
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,' declares the LORD."

Once again, creation in reverse; but to the point, it's clear that man worships the creation rather than the Creator. The influence of the world upon us therefore becomes that which is the greater contention in God's eyes. That is to say, not only do we worship the things of the earth, but we allow the people and things of the earth to tell us what is important, where we should go, what we should do; and we find ourselves in dire straits because we're listening to the world. The Book of Jeremiah. If you look with me in Jeremiah 10, just to show you a couple

of examples of this throughout Scripture. Jeremiah is proclaiming the words of God, and God is telling His people don't follow the traditions of the world. Interesting texts.

Jeremiah 10:2. "Thus says the LORD,
'Do not learn the way of the nations,
And do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens
Although the nations are terrified by them;"

Now, He goes on and says what their ways are. What are their ways? Well, they're terrified at the different signs that are happening around them. One of the things that you read at the very beginning of the book of Joshua is don't be afraid of these things. God's with you, you don't have to be afraid of these things. The Creator, the one who sustains is your God, so you don't have to be afraid; but the world is telling you, be afraid of this, be afraid of that. I would say this, on the world's defense, that fear sells. So, if you want to make a lot of money, just to scare the bejeebies out of people and you've got a product that can maybe help them or in their minds, find some facsimile of an answer. We know that there is no answer from the world to all the fears that they proclaim, but it does help them reinvent different products. So, you begin to understand.

Jeremiah 10:3. "For the customs of the peoples are delusion;
Because it is wood cut from the forest,
The work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool."

I was a psychology major to begin with, and I thought it was interesting even in the psychology field their declaration was maybe 50% of the people, if they go to a psychologist, are going to get better; but if you didn't go to a psychologist, about 50% of the people would actually get better. So, you begin to realize, ok, so they don't obviously have any answers. That was one of the disenchantments of psychology to me because the interesting thing about psychology is it has good observation skills, and I'll pat them on the back for that. They do a really good job with that; but what they don't have is the answers. They throw up their hands really quick on this, I would say in today's world because they just throw pills at you. "We don't have the answers, but we have a pill."

Anyway, the point is that you have the world's customs and they're telling you how to solve problems. Of course, Ecclesiastes says money is the answer to everything (Ecclesiastes 10:19). So, what do you do? You just throw money at it and that's going to solve the problem. Yeah, you have an unruly kid, and you just throw money at him. That's not going to help. Just thought I'd let you know that just in case you were listening to the world. All the way through Scripture there's all these ways of thinking that they try to tell you. In fact, if you look with me in Matthew Chapter 20. It's a great passage. Jesus turns to His disciples, and it's at a time when they're arguing who's going to be the greatest. Of course, where did they learn that from? Well, the world, right? Because they clearly didn't learn it from God. Why do you have to compete with one another, if in fact God is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him? So, what does

competing with somebody else have anything to do with anything? See, but man tries to find his fulfillment in the realm of that. So, he's obviously very concerned about what everybody else thinks, and he's very concerned about being... What is that word? #1?

Matthew 20:25. "But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

Matthew 20:26. It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

Matthew 20:27. and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

Matthew 20:28. just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

So, that goes against conventional thinking and what Christ was conveying to His disciples is that you don't want to listen to them. Fundamentally, what He's telling His disciples is that's the reason you're arguing with each other; because you've been buying into the world's way of thinking, and when you do that, you're going to find yourself sorely disappointed, as well as miserable.

So, as we come to Zephaniah, what we understand is that everything has to go. In particular, the things and the ways of the world. Now, man covers up through religion. I think the interesting thing to me is that the difference between a religious person and a non-religious person is a non-religious person is pretty open about his sins, a religious person hides them. That's pretty much the difference, because both of them are sinners; but religious people like to look like they're really worshipping God. So, they'll go into the realm of worshipping in the temple or whatever, according to the passage. What you're going to see is, when they go to their housetops, they worship the same gods that everybody else does. They're focusing on their microwave dish. That's probably not what they're talking about here, but they're worshipping the gods of the heavens on their house tops as well as, as you go on, their focus is money. One of the reasons why He says in Zephaniah 1:10,

"On that day,' declares the LORD,
'There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,
A wail from the Second Quarter,
And a loud crash from the hills.'"

The Second Quarter is a place where they do business and His point is you're going to be sorely disappointed, those of you who worship money. The point of the matter is that God's people have bought into the world's way of thinking, and they've tried to hide it, but God says, "I see it," and He calls them on the carpet with it in Zephaniah 1.

When you come to Zephaniah 2, God begins to reveal to them whom He hides, and you have something hidden, I have something hidden. At the very beginning, He says, "I'm going to hide

the humble.” In fact, if you look in in the passage, He calls upon His people when He says in Zephaniah 2:3,

“Seek the LORD,
All you humble of the earth
Who have carried out His ordinances;
Seek righteousness, seek humility.
Perhaps you will be hidden
In the day of the LORD’S anger.”

Now, if you go back, they've been seeking everything but that; but He says if you go after humility. I have to admit, that's a bizarre way of thinking because it's not natural for us to think that way. The world has told us what's important. We've allowed them to influence us. I've oftentimes told my wife, if I get in my mind that I want to do something and somebody comes into my world and interrupts my pursuit to do that, I get very upset at them. If I get in my mind that I'm supposed to be serving them, then I don't get upset at them. See, it's pretty interesting, isn't it? So, a lot has to do with what you perceive is that which is valuable. That's what you have to deal with. So, if in fact you actually believe that servitude is one of the greatest things you could ever do, then if you're called to serve and you don't get a chance to take a vacation, it's not a problem. Connie and I were talking about that the other day. “We're going to take a vacation.” We're probably not going to take a vacation this year. It's probably not going to happen; but that's good because I'm actually able to do something better. Now, see, the world wouldn't perceive it as better, but they've gotten into our heads and they programmed us, “Well, you’ve got to have this, you need to have this. This is time for yourself, you've earned this. You work so hard for all of this.” Wait a minute. You've been listening to most of the world. The greatest will be the servant. Different way of thinking.

As we go through the passage, we're going to be dealing with those influences that have come into Judah's life in particular, and how they have influenced them. He's actually going to go and focus on, I would say, three specific people groups. Lord willing, as we have time, we'll cover them. The first people group will be the Philistines, the second People group will be the Moabites, and the third will be the Assyrians. As he covers these three groups, he'll begin to convey just how they have influenced us. Now, what's also interesting within Zephaniah 2 is you begin to see the plans of God, and the workings of God, despite what the world is doing; and to me, what is interesting about it is it's virtually hidden to the world. The world can't see what God is doing.

One of the statements that Jesus makes in Matthew 13:14, He says, while having ears, they don't hear; and while seeing, they can't perceive. Now the point is that, as Paul will say, in 2 Corinthians 4:4,

“In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

His point is that there's a force that is not allowing them to see. Is it that it's not visible? For instance, the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament show forth His handiwork. Ok, is God's handiwork not visible? No, it's there, it's pretty obvious, "*How Great Thou Art*" as we sing the song; but the world can't see it. This is one of the statements made by Isaiah, in Isaiah 26. He says, look, the wicked, even if he's shown favor, can't see the graciousness of God. It's out of his sight. It's impossible for him to focus on that. The only thing he sees is, "Good, another opportunity to do something bad." That's the way he perceives it, but it doesn't mean that what God is doing isn't visible. It's like Isaiah 40, God says, "Do you not know? Have you not heard?" God sits in the heavens, and He does whatever, and you go, "I wonder why they don't know that." Once again, it's not because the truth isn't obvious, it's because the God of this world has blinded the minds.

When you look at eschatology, which is pretty interesting, when you look at the final days, the last days, and you begin to see it in prophecy, there are a number of basic themes. One main thing that jumps off the page to me is that the wicked aren't going to see it coming. One of the statements that's made is, like in the days of Noah, they were eating and drinking and getting married and then it rained. They're going, "We didn't think it was going to rain." Well, what did you think he was building? What do you think he was proclaiming all this time as Jude conveys. So, we know that truth is out there, but man can't see what God is doing and what's wonderful, is that God has revealed wonderful things to us as His children.

In John 15, one of the great passages, He turns to His disciples, and He goes, "No longer do I call you slaves. I call you my friends, and as my friends, I'm going to tell you what's going to happen." You realize in Ephesians that God begins to convey that things that have been hidden from eternity past I'm now revealing to you. Even Peter speaks of things that prophets were prophesying, things that they didn't understand, but now are revealed through Christ; and how wonderful it is that Christ, God has been doing a work all along. We couldn't see it, and it's kind of hidden from us, and you're going to see that within the pages as we begin to see God revealing the influence of the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Assyrians. But what you're going to see underneath that is God saying, "but this is what I'm doing. They think that they're doing this, they think they're accomplishing this, but don't listen to them. I've got a bigger plan, and this is the way it's going to turn out." Man makes his plans, but God turns it out; and you can think that you've got everything down, but it's not going to happen.

So, if you come to Zephaniah 2:4-7, we're going to be looking specifically at the Philistines. Now, the reason that we know that we're dealing with the Philistines,

- 1) The text will tell us.
- 2) The cities that are mentioned are the cities of the Philistines.

What's also interesting is that the cities that are their main hub, the great cities of the Philistines, these cities always have a connotation of strong or powerful or something like that.

For instance, Gaza actually means *strong*, and God says the strong will be abandoned, or more specifically, the strong will fail, is an interesting way of putting it.

Ashkelon, if you look in the passage, will be a desolation; and once again, *dealing with a kind of power or strength, more specifically a kind of weight*, but we won't go into the specifics of that. The emphasis is that by their judgment and their control, they're the ones that are in charge.

Ashdod is one of the great capitals of the Philistines and is dealing with *powerful*.

Every one of these names deals with some kind of control or some kind of power, some kind of strength. This is what they named themselves.

What's also interesting is we end with the city Ekron. The city Ekron means *to be torn up by its roots*. So, what does God say? "Ekron will be..." What? "Uprooted." Yeah, so, don't for one moment think that the names don't mean anything. They have meaning, and when God pronounces His judgment, He goes, "What you've been doing is what I'm going to do to you." But you're going to see man's agenda in this as well.

Zephaniah 2:5. "Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast,
The nation of the Cherethites!
The word of the LORD is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
And I will destroy you
So that there will be no inhabitant."

"Cherethites," there's been a lot of debate about what this name means, but there's a number of facts that tie it together and help us understand who exactly they are; but they are almost always in some way tied with the Philistines and obviously are part of the Philistine group. What is that about? Well, we understand historically that the Philistines were basically vagabonds. We would call them pirates that probably came out of the realm of Egypt. Ships began to settle in an interesting place which we called Crete. Have you ever heard of Cretans? Ok, so in a place we call Crete. We believe "Cherethites" is another translation for the word "Crete." It actually is that particular place. So, these are the ones that are from Crete.

Now, if you look at the passage, it's talking about those that are sailors, more specifically those that are tradesmen and invaders. The philistines name means immigrants. The thought is, well, immigrants aren't necessarily bad. They just want to move to a new place. That's actually not the word "Philistine." What it's talking about are invaders, and what they want to do is they not only want to come into your home, but they also want to take your home; and that's the way the Philistines began to infiltrate the lands. They ultimately then came into the land of Canaan, and they began to build these great empires and take over. Of course, they're in the land of where God's people ought to be. So, you have then the giants of the Philistines that are the bane of existence of whether it be Joshua as he comes in, or as David is king, he has to deal with this great force that comes in.

“O Canaan, land of the Philistines” - Once again, the conclusion we have is the cities first that begin to refer to the great power and the great strength, and then we have the clarity that this is the land of the Philistines; and that God is against them. That is to say, God has prophesied against what they're doing. In other words, they have an agenda to... What? Invade, take over and uproot the people from their land. If you think about it, that's a pretty intense word, just pulling them up by their roots and could care less about what happens to them.

So, He goes on, and says, “I will destroy you so that there will be no inhabitant.” Watch verse 6.

Zephaniah 2:6. “So the seacoast will be pastures,
With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.”

So, “the seacoast” once again, where are they coming from? Yeah, from Crete, from the seacoast.

Zephaniah 2:7. And the coast will be
For the remnant of the house of Judah,
They will pasture on it.
In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening;
For the LORD their God will care for them
And restore their fortune.”

Now, what you see in the passage is God's intention. What is their intention? To uproot. What is God's intention? To shepherd. You have these tradesmen. You have these invaders that go throughout the world taking and uprooting whatever they want for their own greed. So, what you have is an interesting picture of avarice unleashed. And they just go throughout the world, taking whatever they want, uprooting whatever they want, and claiming whatever they want, wherever they go. God says “Ok, that's your agenda with the seacoast, but let Me tell you something hidden from you. This is going to be pastureland, and I'm going to shepherd My people. You know those great buildings that you're building on the seacoast? Sheep are going to lie around there.” Then you have this interesting picture of peace in the midst of all of that intensity of pulling up and destruction, God says, “It's not going to happen. My words against you. I've worked a different plan.”

As you read in Ezekiel 28, we read of an interesting picture of Tyre and Sidon. Of course, those seacoast cities that the Philistines had a great power in, and you realize that this begins the description, literally, of Satan himself. What's stated in Ezekiel 28, is that by virtue of the greed of Satan himself, it says that he was internally filled with violence. Now, what the passage is revealing to us is that you have these people that go from one place to the next, getting whatever they want, selfishly acquiring whatever they want, pulling whatever they want out of Sidon; and you have a picture of greed and avarice, there's no doubt about that. That is conveyed once again, in Ezekiel 28. The point is that when you go into the realm of greed, that greed then eventually turns into violent behavior. So, not only are you learning greed, but

you're becoming violent in that; and what you're going to see is how they've created in, once again, Judah, this sense of avarice.

Go back to Zephaniah 1, it's all about the Fish Gate, and it's all about the Second Quarter. If you drop on down in Zephaniah 1 and go a little bit further, he begins to say, "Ok, the day of trouble has come."

Zephaniah 1:18. "Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to deliver them
On the day of the LORD'S wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth."

"Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them" on that day. You would think that people would be repulsed by the violent behavior of greedy people; but it seems to work just the opposite. It's kind of like Paul when he's talking to the Corinthians, he goes, "Would you like me if I just popped you in the face? Would you like me more? Because you seem to like people that take advantage of you." What a bizarre phenomenon that is. You know, you watch all these rich people, and these rich people are making their money off the backs of poor people, and we go, "I want to be like them." You're going, "Why would you want to be like them?" Because they get to take advantage of people. "Well, did you understand what they just did to you, just did to your family?" "Yeah, but I like to be with them," and you see that interesting picture at the beginning of the Book of Proverbs. The influence of the world.

You're seeing the fact that we are oftentimes dissuaded by the plans and the business of the world, we're dissuaded by those things. Those things begin to uproot us from our foundation, and our walk with the Lord, and our desire for that which is truly valuable. So, that you come to a passage like Matthew 6, which once again, you know the passage. It's dealing with clearly a lot of fears that you and I can have, and let me just reiterate with the Philistines in the land, you're going to be afraid; and your question is, "Why am I going to be afraid?" I would say, because these are giants that are trying to tell you that avarice is good, and once you begin to fall into that play, then you begin to be prey to the anxiety of the world. Scripture will talk about the deceitfulness of riches, but it really is kind of a giant in our life. What's bizarre about it is that the desire for things or wealth which the world just really hammers is very oppressive. You wake up one day, and you're going, "Why am I so anxious?" It's because you're trying to acquire the things that the world is telling you that you have to have. So, if you look at Matthew 6, of course Jesus is going, "Why are you anxious about the things you're going to put on? Why are you anxious about your clothing, about your food that you eat?" If you look in Matthew 6:28,

“And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin...”

Matthew 6:30. “But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith!”

Matthew 6:31. “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’”

All of these things, the world seeks. Where did that come from? It's the influence of the world doing business and they're traveling from here and there and get whatever they can. I mean, you have to look out for #1 if you're going to survive in this world, right? So, now everybody's biting their nails, saying, “I don't know, I'm never going to make it.”

Well, Matthew 6:24 really summarizes it, “No one can serve two masters.” Now, I want to stop here. What is he telling you? Money is a master. Let me put it another way, money is oppressive and is telling you what to do. Now, God is a master, He'll tell you what to do; but He's saving you. Which master do you want to have? The one who saves you? What is the agenda of our Master? To help you lie down in green pastures. Wasn't that what He was saying? What's His agenda? To care for you. That's what He's wanting.

Matthew 6:24. “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

Money, things, possessions, you can't serve the two. Once again, in in the text, he's fundamentally saying that if you go for the money, you're going to have anxiety. I'll put it another way, you're going to have fears, it's going the way of the Giants. So, pretty interesting picture as you begin to see what God is pursuing in the midst of what man is pursuing; and Zephaniah 2:5 says the word of God is against you. God has a different plan than you do, and you see that.

Now, if you look in Zephaniah 2:8-11, you begin to see that not only is man dissuaded by aggressive avarice or greed, but you begin to see that man is disparaged by those around him. Anxiety is a part of the influence of the world, but discouragement is as well; and there is an interesting phenomenon that takes place through the, we'll call it peer pressure, but it is the disparagement. More specifically, it is the condescending, critical behavior of others. Now, you probably remember this like the first few years you were in school, and you go, “I thought the other kids were going to be nice,” and you begin to hear all the criticism and all the hate, you go, “I can't believe it starts that young.” I remember going into it with some kind of innocence in the whole thing, and after a while you get to know what's coming and how to avoid it, or how to fight it. In this text, we're going to be dealing with the Moabites and how they use disparagement. Specifically, using the criticism, condescending attitude of really nailing people down, oppressing them. The world is very oppressive, very critical, very hostile. It's amazing how hostile they are.

Zephaniah 2:8. "I have heard the taunting of Moab
And the revilings of the sons of Ammon,
With which they have taunted My people
And become arrogant against their territory."

Now, lest you think that some things aren't hidden from man, you read a passage like Psalm 10, and it seems like the world is going, "Well, I don't think God's really listening." We'll first say, "He heard you." It's like the criticism of Miriam and Aaron, and in that particular passage, they began to criticize Moses and the very next phrase in Numbers is, "and God heard them." Our thoughts are that we can say anything we want to, we can oppress anybody we want to, and it's not going to matter, but God hears; and don't think for a moment that it's going to pass Him. He's going to do something about it. So, the passage reads this way,

"I have heard the taunting,"

You could put in there *the scorn* "of Moab."

Now, we won't go into all the background of the Moabites and the Ammonites, but we also know that they were illegitimate sons of Lot. So, it's not a good family tree. I was reminded that Ruth was a Moabite, and God is redemptive in that; but God redeems in spite of us, not because of us.

"I have heard the taunting of Moab
And the revilings of the sons of Ammon,
With which they have taunted My people
And become arrogant against their territory."

So, I don't know if you got it right off the bat or not, but the issue here is clearly that their derision and disdain for others and they become very critical and hostile towards others. It's intimidating to us if you think about it. In some ways, we're influenced by the fact that the world seems to be so wealthy, and they try to wield that particular genre on us and then on top of that, they seem to try to control us with criticism and scorn. It's bizarre, if you do the right thing today, the world already has names picked out for you; whether it be racist or whatever, they already have names picked out for you and they'll use them. "You're a..." That's what they'll say. Then you'll go, "Oh no, I'm not, I'm not," and everybody starts backing up. What are you doing? What are you afraid of? Just tell them the truth. Tell them what the word of God says. "Oh, you're just a Bible thumper." "I don't want to be that." "Yes, I am. Thank you very much. I appreciate it." But you hear the taunting, and you can hear the scorn and people make doing the right thing a bad thing, "You're a goody two shoes!" I don't think they even know what that is anymore, but you're going, "Don't call me a goody two shoes." Why? It's a great thing to be called, I guess, I don't know what the "two shoes" are about.

Zephaniah 2:9. "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts,
The God of Israel,
'Surely Moab will be like Sodom
And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—
A place possessed by nettles and salt pits,
And a perpetual desolation.
The remnant of My people will plunder them
And the remainder of My nation will inherit them."

Once again, just to let you know, the Moabites lived in that particular area and of course, the sons of Lot were taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah. So, it's kind of like God going, "You don't remember what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah?"

Zephaniah 2:10. "This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts.

Zephaniah 2:11. The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place."

Interesting, God's agenda is very different, and I don't know if you happen to see it, but "You're taunting, you're going to fall on your face, you're going to give Me praise." That's an interesting switch, isn't it? We go from taunting to worship, and God says, "You think you control this, I control this."

If you were to go to Jeremiah 48, just to cement this way of living by the Moabites; let me just reiterate, it was the Moabites, according to Jeremiah that were, I think the way that it's put, "undisturbed on his lees." Do you remember that? So, the Moabites go, "We don't have to be afraid. We're the greatest warriors of the earth." God goes, "You haven't even fought yet." "Yeah, we're going to beat Him. We're going to beat Him, we're pretty tough." If you think about it, the taunting is about their desire for greatness; and the world will try to get you to think that you have to be greedy to somehow get somewhere in this world, and it's going to tell you that people have to look up to you, and you have to be majestic, and you have to be wonderful in order for you to succeed. That was fundamentally the Moabites. So, their thought is, "even though we've never fought, or we've never been great, we're going to say we did and we're going to magnify ourselves." So, it's this self-magnification, if I can put it that way, that is seen in particular in Jeremiah 48.

If you look at the end of the verse:

Jeremiah 48:1. "Concerning Moab. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,
"Woe to Nebo, for it has been destroyed;
Kiriathaim has been put to shame, it has been captured;
The lofty stronghold has been put to shame and shattered.

Jeremiah 48:2. There is praise for Moab no longer;
In Heshbon they have devised calamity against her:
'Come and let us cut her off from being a nation!
You too, Madmen, will be silenced;
The sword will follow after you."

As you go through this particular chapter, you're going to see they're bragging on their own achievements.

Jeremiah 48:7. "'For because of your trust in your own achievements and treasures,
Even you yourself will be captured;
And Chemosh will go off into exile
Together with his priests and his princes.'"

Of course, you drop down to Jeremiah 48:11,

"Moab has been at ease since his youth;
He has also been undisturbed, like wine on its dregs,
And he has not been emptied from vessel to vessel,
Nor has he gone into exile.
Therefore he retains his flavor,
And his aroma has not changed."

It talks about, "Moab has been at ease since his youth; He has also been undisturbed," *on his lees*, which means that he hasn't had a battle to fight. Yet, because of that, his thought is that "nothing can hurt me." Recently we heard of an individual that we've known for a number of years, and has been very successful in their business, found out that they have a kind of cancer that's not curable, which basically I think that's true of all cancers; but it's not curable. So, at this juncture, our hope is that this individual is going to get real about faith, has not really perceived a need for God up to this point. You know, you go your whole life, and you haven't had any sickness, you haven't had any issues, you haven't had any problems; now all of a sudden, you're almost dying. See, that's a big switch.

So, as you drop on down, the question that God poses in Jeremiah 48:14 is, "How can you say that 'we're mighty warriors' when you don't even know how to win?"

"How can you say, 'We are mighty warriors,
And men valiant for battle'?"

They talk about their scepter of Glory and everything like that. He then turns to them, and He says in Jeremiah 48:27,

"Now was not Israel a laughingstock to you? Or was he caught among thieves? For each time you speak about him you shake your head in scorn."

Jeremiah 48:29. “We have heard of the pride of Moab—he is very proud—
Of his haughtiness, his pride, his arrogance and his self-exaltation.”

Isn't that what the world tells you to do? I mean, you got to toot your own horn. You've got to let people know just how wonderful you are. In fact, according to Jeremiah 48:42, they've even become arrogant towards God, which of course is a part of that. He calls them in Jeremiah 48:45 “riotous revelers,” and all the way through, you begin to see the arrogance of their heart.

The point of the Moabites is that the world has tried to manipulate and it's trying to manipulate you through disparagement, through criticism, through scorn, embarrassing you. If they can manipulate you that way, they will. It kind of reminds me of 2 Peter, and if you're familiar with 2 Peter, he basically goes to him and says, “Look, the world is wondering why you're doing what you're doing.” He goes on and says in 2 Peter, “and they're mocking you. They're throwing mockery out there.” He actually gives the example of Balaam, they've gone “the way of Balaam.” If you remember, Balaam was hired by the Moabites to curse the children of Israel. So, the goal was to undermine them. The point is that the world is going to use any means that they can to oppress you, and I know the thought is “well, they're just trying to get me over to their side.” No, they're trying to oppress you, to use you; that's the only thing they're trying to do. “The world is my friend.” The world is not your friend, Christ is very clear about this; and they're there to take advantage of you, and that's what the world does. The Philistines are there to uproot you. The Moabites are there to elevate themselves by stepping on you, that's how they do that. It's bizarre how they'll try to do that in such a way that we become embarrassed. We're doing what's right.

As you go on a little bit further, he begins to deal with the Ethiopians and more specifically, the Assyrians. If you look, Ethiopians, you can put in there Egyptians, would basically be from Cush. The Cushites would be the Egyptians.

Zephaniah 2:12. “You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword.’

Zephaniah 2:13. And He will stretch out His hand against the north
And destroy Assyria,
And He will make Nineveh a desolation,
Parched like the wilderness.”

Which, once again, Nineveh is the capital of Assyria.

If you look in Zephaniah 2:15, how does he describe the great city of Assyria?

“This is the exultant city
Which dwells securely,
Who says in her heart,
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.’
How she has become a desolation,
A resting place for beasts!

Everyone who passes by her will hiss
And wave his hand in contempt.”

So, the point of the passage is that there's a great arrogance, and there's a great sense of intimidation because of the great power of these nations.

One of the passages that actually convey this is Isaiah 10, and if you just look there with me, I'll just show you a couple of passages in Isaiah. Isaiah 10 will reveal to you the great power of Assyria, or more specifically, the area of Nineveh and the great leader at that particular time. In the passage, he begins to convey and taunt in the sense that “by the power of my hand and by my wisdom, I've defeated all these other nations,” and you can hear in Isaiah 10:13, the great arrogance of Assyria.

If you look in Isaiah 10:5, we know it's Assyria that he's talking about because he establishes that; but he says in Isaiah 10:13,

“For he has said,
‘By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did this,
For I have understanding;
And I removed the boundaries of the peoples
And plundered their treasures,
And like a mighty man I brought down their inhabitants,’”

Well, you know, you deal with somebody that's extremely powerful and influential, and you start getting intimidated. Have you ever walked up to somebody that was perhaps a personality, maybe somebody from show business, or maybe somebody that was a senator, or a leader, or a great individual, very popular, and people are going, “You know who that is? You know who that is?” David would probably say, “Yeah, it's dust.” It's amazing how we'll allow people to intimidate us by virtue of what they've accomplished or what they owned or what they control, and they'll do that. When you read interesting books like Galatians and Colossians, you begin to realize that Paul's trying to get them out of that mindset. He goes, “Look, you've got to break away from this because these people will oppress you and they'll interject fear in your life.” See, the things of the world that influence us, that the world is saying, that money is a good thing, and God says, “Well, they're encouraging greed, and greed is going to cause you to be anxious.” That's what it's going to do for you. “Why are you so anxious?” It is really the repeated theme in both Matthew 6 and Luke 12. Why are you worried? See. The same thing is true with, “Yeah, but you don't know what they're going to say about me. I mean, if I do that, what will they think of me?” Why are you afraid of that? What does it matter what they think of you? The judgment comes from God, not them; and look if our ways are pleasing to Him, He can make your enemies to be at peace with you. I mean, God can do that, but I just want to please Him. Without faith, it's impossible to please Him, and if you look in the Old Testament repeatedly, God says, “Do not be afraid of them, do not.” Yet, how many times are we afraid, because what, they said something bad about us or they threatened to say something bad

about us? It's amazing how we're controlled by these things, or maybe it's just the powerful and the influential like the Assyrians. I mean, how great the exultant city dwells securely, they say in their heart, "I'm the greatest," and we believe them. How do we know? Because they said it. And God says, "You want to know how great they are? Every single animal alive I'm going to have just relax in their great Kingdom." That's the way it reads.

Zephaniah 2:14. "Flocks will lie down in her midst,
All beasts which range in herds;
Both the pelican and the hedgehog
Will lodge in the tops of her pillars;
birds will sing in the window,
Desolation will be on the threshold;
For He has laid bare the cedar work."

"Pillars"- *capitals* "Oh, we built this great big capital." Yeah, for what? The animals? What is He talking about? What He's talking about is it's going to be desolate, and the only things they're going to be enjoying are the animals.

We get this interesting picture of great cedars, and He goes, "Ok, so, what's the big deal about it?" I mean, how interesting it is that God is showing the weakness of these and He says, "And I just want to let you know that when it all ends, everybody's going to pass by and will see you with contempt. Everybody, not just some people." Isn't that how the chapter ends?

Zephaniah 2:15. "This is the exultant city
Which dwells securely,
Who says in her heart,
'I am, and there is no one besides me.'
How she has become a desolation,
A resting place for beasts!
Everyone who passes by her will hiss
And wave his hand in contempt."

Man thinks he's in control. He thinks he's powerful. He thinks that he is, and there's nobody else greater than he is. Babylon is in the same neighborhood of the Assyrians, you could actually include Babylon within this.

If you look at Isaiah 47, It says,

Isaiah 47:5. "Sit silently, and go into darkness,
O daughter of the Chaldeans,

For you will no longer be called
The queen of kingdoms.”

Isaiah 47:7. “Yet you said, ‘I will be a queen forever.’
These things you did not consider
Nor remember the outcome of them.”

Isaiah 47:8. “Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,
Who dwells securely,
Who says in your heart,
‘I am, and there is no one besides me.
I will not sit as a widow,
Nor know loss of children.’

Of course, both those great cities, do you know what the prophecy was? There will never be anyone that lives in you again. You want to know how you know the word of God is true? Just go try to prove it a liar. You know that for years they looked for Nineveh? They said there is no Nineveh, there was no Nineveh, and then they dug deep enough, and they found it. Do you know that nothing, no one has ever lived there again, ever? You know the original Babylon? No one has ever lived there. Now, there were some people that tried to do it. When Scripture tells you something, you can bank on it. That's the wonderful thing about God's word. Though every man be found a liar, God is true; and it's amazing how we allow the world to be a threat to us when God is really the one that controls all this. God says, “You think you're intimidating? I'm going to put a little mouse in your kingdom, and he's going to live there, and you're not.” So, what makes you think you're in control? All the way through you begin to see just the majesty of our God.

There's a couple of passages that I just want to touch upon in Galatians as well as in Colossians. It's just to me a good reminder. If you look in Galatians 1. Once again, many of us are familiar with this passage, not simply because it's probably one of my favorite verses and I've repeated it so many times, but certainly I'm sure that you've embraced it. Paul's declaration, if you look with me in Galatians 1:10 is this,

“For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.”

Once you start trying to please men, once you worry about what they're going to say about you, once you worry about their reputation, just how impressive they are... Look, don't deride them as the world derides, don't criticize them. That's not what we're talking about. What we're talking about is don't let them have power over you, whether it's through money, or through threatening, through derision. Don't let the world have power or dominion over you. That's where your anxiety is going to come. In fact, if you look in Galatians 2, it says this, as Paul began to deal with those that were really taking advantage of new believers, and they were

saying, “well, we know so much more than you,” and really subjecting them to their great presence; but if you look in Galatians 2:6, Paul writes this:

“But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me.”

Think about how freeing that verse is. “Do you know who they are?” It doesn't matter. That's the one thing that was a little disheartening to me going to pastor's conferences and hearing, “You know who's here? You know who's here?” I'm going, “Jesus?” Isn't He the one that we're supposed to be worshipping? I never could, and I can't grasp why Christians would have book signings. I don't get it. The only name I want to see is Jesus on my book and if He signed it, that's great with me; but man wants to elevate man and he wants to oppress others by virtue of the status, the whole status thing. Paul has to deal with this with the Colossians as well. If you look with me in Colossians. I love the way that he puts it in Colossians 2.

Colossians 2:14. “having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Colossians 2:15. When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.”

Now watch what next thing he says in Colossians 2:16,

“Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

Colossians 2:17. things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Colossians 2:18. Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,”

You have this interesting picture of spiritual places where you walk in the door and somebody goes, “I had a dream. I had a vision. I was with God.” Good, good for you. So were we, Jesus has come in my heart. So, I celebrate with you. The thought is that I'm on a higher plane than you and that's not true. We've been saved by His grace, and it doesn't matter if somebody's a pastor. It doesn't matter if somebody is a Deacon. You could have as close of a relationship, or an even closer one than I do, by virtue of you just loving Him. So, how interesting it is that the world has infiltrated even the church in their way of thinking. We know that the world has infiltrated the church with money because if you're a successful church, you have a lot of money. So, the whole process of these things reveals to us that the Philistines, the Moabites, and the Assyrians came in and influenced us.

Once again, I want you to go back to Zephaniah, I'm just going to bait you for Chapter 3; but if you look at Zephaniah 2:15, It says,

“This is the exultant city
Which dwells securely,
Who says in her heart,
“I am, and there is no one besides me.”
How she has become a desolation,
A resting place for beasts!
Everyone who passes by her will hiss
And wave his hand in contempt.”

Now once again, if you go to the context, who is he talking about according to verse 13? Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Great Nineveh. This is the exultant city. I am and there's no one like me. I'm great. Of course, Babylon will say the same thing. So, the exultant city. If you look in Zephaniah 3:1,

“Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled,
The tyrannical city!”

Who do you think He's talking about? Jerusalem. The point was that you've learned how to be tyrannous like those over you. We learn from the world, and it infiltrates us, and it becomes a part of us. I'm going to end with Isaiah 26 in all of this. I think one of the reasons why we love this particular text, especially in the King James, the way it puts it, is that it will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Him because he trusts in Him (Isaiah 26:3). I like the way that King James puts that within the passage. Sometimes you read a particular passage and you get so attached to a particular verse that you don't read the whole context. So, what is the context of this? Well, the context of this, if you back up, is in Isaiah 25:10,

“For the hand of the LORD will rest on this mountain,
And Moab will be trodden down in his place
As straw is trodden down in the water of a manure pile.”

But the hand of the Lord is against the Moabites. You see that? It's interesting. Remember the Moabites, that they were full of derision and scorn?

Isaiah 25:11. “And he will spread out his hands in the middle of it
As a swimmer spreads out his hands to swim,
But the Lord will lay low his pride together with the trickery of his hands.”

Watch verse 12:

Isaiah 25:12. “The unassailable fortifications of your walls He will bring down,
Lay low and cast to the ground, even to the dust.”

So, what is he talking about? Obviously, the things that they put their trust in, and one of the things that the world puts their trust in, is their ability to oppress people by the things that they say. Once again, we're seeing this probably more now than any of these things, is that the

Christians are being oppressed by threats of the world. So, they say terrible things against you and then the Christians start backing up and I'm going, "Stop! Go forward, don't back up."

Then it says in Isaiah 26:1,

"In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah:

'We have a strong city;

He sets up walls and ramparts for security."

Who's our city? God.

Isaiah 26:2. "Open the gates, that the righteous nation may enter,
The one that remains faithful.

Isaiah 26:3. The steadfast of mind You will keep in perfect peace,
Because he trusts in You.

Isaiah 26:4. Trust in the LORD forever,
For in GOD the LORD, we have an everlasting Rock."

That's our defense. Our defense is God.

Isaiah 26:13. "O LORD our God, other masters besides You have ruled us;
But through You alone we confess Your name."

In other words, we've been through a beating with other masters. We know who's going to take care of us. We turn to You. Do you remember how in Zephaniah God says, seek humility and I'll hide you?

Isaiah 26:20. "Come, my people, enter into your rooms
And close your doors behind you;
Hide for a little while
Until indignation runs its course."

"I'll take care of them for you." That's an interesting picture and I don't want to get too much into the eschatological end of this, but what you're going to see is in Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 12 really culminating and in a way, this is a prophecy at this time that will ultimately be fulfilled in the latter days; and that is that God's people will be protected, i.e., the 144,000 during the time of the great tribulation. He will literally hide them in the mountains. He'll actually say, "Run to the mountains. I'm going to hide you," and that prophecy is given in Ezekiel 38, where God sends this great earthquake, and He begins to open up [the earth]. And the nations of Gog and Magog actually come against His people, and He goes, "Come on." Then He opens it. It just stops them dead in their tracks and God preserves His people. In fact, the way it's described in Revelation 12, the woman runs and hides, and the dragon is after her. It's an interesting picture, and God preserves her. The point is that He's our strong city. He'll take care of us. What do you have to do to be protected? Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and that

doesn't mean that you acquiesced to the world. You don't want to do that. That's not humility. Humility is being obedient to God. The world's going to say you can't say that, and you go, "Well, whether it's right in your eyes or not, I'm going to say what God wants me to say." So, it really is a fearless way to live because you don't have to be afraid. The world will say, "we have an agenda. We're going to take over the world" and we'll go, "Alright." God is in control, and guess what? He has a different agenda and it's going to turn out the way He says.

Closing Prayer:

Father, we give You thanks for Your word, and for the encouragement that You give us. Even though we have all of these forces that are telling us to live another way, telling us to pursue another lifestyle, we realize that You'll keep us in perfect peace if our mind is stayed on You. We'll do this in Jesus' name. Amen.