**Zephaniah 2:8-15 “I have heard the reproach of Moab, And the insults of the people of Ammon, With which they have reproached My people, And made arrogant threats against their borders. 9Therefore, as I live,” Says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah – Overrunwith weeds and saltpits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them.” 10This they shall have for their pride, Because they have reproached and made arrogant threats Against the people of the Lord of hosts. 11The Lord *will be* awesome to them, For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; *People* shall worship Him, Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations. 12“You Ethiopians also, You shall be slain by My sword.” 13And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness. 14The herds shall lie down in her midst, Every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern Shall lodge on the capitals *of* her *pillars;* Their voice shall sing in the windows; Desolation *shall be* at the threshold; For He will lay bare the cedar work. 15This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, “I *am it,* and *there is* none besides me.” How has she become a desolation, A place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist.**

We’re back with Zephaniah tonight, continuing our run up to the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem. In the first seven verses of chapter 2, we heard a call for repentance, a recount of the coming judgement, and a promise that there will be mercy on a remnant of God’s people. In the verses tonight, God speaks of other people to be judged. God is God of all people, not just those that acknowledge Him.

I heard a story of a man who had a dog. When he’d give a command the dog liked, the dog acknowledged him – come eat, go for a ride, want a treat – all were met with tail wags. When the man gave a command the dog didn’t like, it looked away and pretended not to see the man – surely, if he didn’t see the man, he couldn’t be held accountable for the command. Many people live life as though, if they pretend to not see, hear, or understand God, they won’t be held accountable at life’s end…. It wasn’t true of the man’s dog and it’s not true of God either.

Verse 8 - *I have heard the reproach of Moab, And the insults of the people of Ammon, With which they have reproached My people, And made arrogant threats against their borders.* Five years after Jerusalem is destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar will destroy Moab and Ammon. They were judged for insulting the Jewish people, delivering insults, threatening the borders, and encroaching on Judah’s territory. Nebuchadnezzar is a tool in God’s hand. Just as those who stood against Israel then are judged, those who stand against Israel today will be judged. The covenant between God and His people will never be broken. God is God – He changes not.

Verse 9 - *Therefore, as I live,” Says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Surely Moab shall be like Sodom, And the people of Ammon like Gomorrah – Overrunwith weeds and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, And the remnant of My people shall possess them.* God assures Zephaniah and those hearing the prophecy that there will be utter destruction. The Jewish people recognize the complete destruction and total desolation in Sodom and Gomorrah. On the coast of the Dead Sea, archaeologist Dr Steve Collins found Sodom and Gomorrah in 2015. The sulfur and white ash still make the cities uninhabitable. The sulfur is so thick that bugs won’t even live there. It is completely desolate. Israel did indeed possess Moab and Ammon even as late as the 300 - 50 BC.

Verse 10 - *This they shall have for their pride, Because they have reproached and made arrogant threats Against the people of the Lord of hosts.* God is saying – they shall receive utter destruction in return for their pride, because they’ve made proud and arrogant threats again God’s people. Proverbs 16:18 *Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall.* Proverbs 6:16 *These six things the Lord hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood.* Proverbs 16:5 *Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; Though they join forces, none will go unpunished.* God is no fan of a man or woman who lifts up in pride.

Verse 11 *The Lord will be awesome to them, For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; People shall worship Him, Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations.* God will show Himself to be the One True God. Dagon, Chemosh, Molech, and other manmade gods will be shown to be powerless. All nations will worship God through Jesus Christ. Every knee shall bow. Every tongue shall confess. The world will witness His return.

Verses 12 & 13 details the destruction of other nations. *You Ethiopians also, You shall be slain by My sword.” And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness.* Ethiopia is to the south, Assyria to the north. Nebuchadnezzar will conquer and subdue them all. But the Ethiopians will one day be slain by the sword of the Spirit. It is still a devout Christian nation even today and has been instrumental in keeping the worldwide United Methodist Church from deserting Biblical truth.

Verses 14 *The herds shall lie down in her midst, Every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern Shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars; Their voice shall sing in the windows; Desolation shall be at the threshold; For He will lay bare the cedar work.*The herds shouldn’t be understood here as sheep and goats. These are herds of wild beasts, of every nation. The pelican and bittern will lodge in Nineveh’s once grand pillars. Their voices will echo off the walls and windows, with the idea that these birds will be lodging inside! The cedar will be laid bare – Assyria was known for importing cedar to build palaces and government buildings. Cedars were coveted and prized by the Assyrians, particularly those of Lebanon. The prized cedar will be left exposed by the enemy for the animals and birds to lodge in.

Verse 15 - *This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, “I am it, and there is none besides me.” How has she become a desolation, A place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist.* Nineveh, the rejoicing city, that dwelt without fear, that exalted itself to compare to God – I am it and there is none besides me! Now is fallen into desolation. Beasts lie down in the streets and open areas. In Russia, around Chernobyl, there are entire cities abandoned after the nuclear disaster there. Now, when people drive through, by special permit only, reindeer occupy the porches of grand houses. Wolves wander the streets and alleyways. God brought Nineveh to desolation through His use of Babylon. The verse finishes - *Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist.* Recall with me that Nahum, speaking of Nineveh said something similar in Nahum 3:19 - *Your injury has no healing, Your wound is severe. All who hear news of you will clap their hands over you, For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?*

As we move from chapter 2 into 3, we will see a shift from Nineveh to Jerusalem and her wickedness, hear a promise of a remnant to remain, and see God’s faithfulness to those who continue in His name. All of Jerusalem and Israel will not be saved, but a faithful remnant. May we remain part of a faithful remnant here in the United States, come what may, so God will remember us as His faithful people.