



*“His Ways are Everlasting”*

## Show Notes & Transcripts

### Podcast General Description:

Follow Him: A *Come, Follow Me* Podcast with Hank Smith & John Bytheway

Do you ever feel that preparing for your weekly *Come, Follow Me* lesson falls short? Join hosts Hank Smith and John Bytheway as they interview experts to make your study for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ *Come, Follow Me* course not only enjoyable but original and educational. If you are looking for resources to make your study fresh, faithful, and fun--no matter your age--then join us every Friday and Saturday.

### Podcast Episode Descriptions:

**Part 1:** Are Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah about doom or redemption? Dr. Joshua Matson examines these minor prophets, discusses the Dead Sea Scrolls, and evaluates the Lord’s mercy to all people.

### Part 2:

Dr. Matson continues to explore the Lord’s mission of mercy and deliverance and how the Lord speaks to each person in their language to warn, to love, and to teach.

## Timecodes:

### Part 1

- 00:00 Part 1–Dr. Joshua Matson
- 01:34 Introduction of Dr. Joshua Matson
- 03:29 Minor prophets
- 07:50 The Dead Sea Scrolls
- 10:44 The Pesharim
- 12:36 The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls
- 17:27 The Dead Sea Scrolls comment on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah
- 19:00 The Rule of the Community
- 21:08 Historical context of Nahum
- 25:34 Nineveh will fall
- 28:45 Nahum’s 7 cantos
- 34:00 Hope after destruction
- 36:52 Flood metaphor
- 40:32 Vengeance in the scriptures
- 44:43 Hope amidst wickedness
- 47:41 Nahum 2 references
- 50:36 Nineveh’s strength will become its metaphorical downfall
- 53:13 Why lions?
- 57:18 Nahum 3 and a taunt
- 1:01:11 God’s expectations and view of sexual sin
- 1:07:55 The only Lamanite sermon
- 1:10:34 End of Part 1–Dr. Joshua Matson

### Part 2

- 00:00 Part II– Dr. Joshua Matson
- 00:07 Introduction to Habakkuk
- 03:33 Two questions
- 05:17 Sheri Dew and “Will You Engage in the Wrestle?”
- 06:21 Dating Habakkuk
- 09:25 Two prayers in Habakkuk
- 13:37 Introduction to the wrestle
- 16:43 Justice comes with Babylon
- 18:35 Parallel to the Book of Jacob
- 19:49 Genesis and the rib story
- 23:10 Watchman on the tower
- 26:36 Write the vision in your own words
- 30:51 Five woes

- 35:12 Definition of sin
- 39:28 Drunkenness and sexual promiscuity
- 41:44 Worshiping gods of stone and wood
- 45:53 Walking with God in high places
- 47:41 Background to Zephaniah
- 50:14 Key announcement of doom for people of Judah
- 53:45 What cities should we inhabit?
- 55:12 Elder Bednar and the Parable of the Wedding Feast
- 57:59 Dr. Joshua Matson shares his journey of faith and scholarship
- 1:04:09 End of Part II—Dr. Joshua Matson

## References:

Ball, Terry B. “What Is in a Name? Lessons from the Names of Old Testament Prophets: Religious Studies Center.” What Is in a Name? Lessons from the Names of Old Testament Prophets | Religious Studies Center. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-15-no-2-2014/what-name-lessons-names-old-testament-prophets>.

Bowen, Matthew L. “Ominous Onomastics: Religious Studies Center.” Ominous Onomastics | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/prophets-prophecies-old-testament/ominous-onomastics>.

Brown, S. Kent. “History and Jeremiah's Crisis of Faith: Religious Studies Center.” History and Jeremiah's Crisis of Faith | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/isaiah-prophets/history-jeremiahs-crisis-faith>.

Calabro, David M. “Gestures of Praise: Lifting and Spreading the Hands in Biblical Prayer: Religious Studies Center.” Gestures of Praise: Lifting and Spreading the Hands in Biblical Prayer | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/ascending-mountain-lord/gestures-praise-lifting-spreading-hands-biblical-prayer>.

Hales, Robert D. “Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done.” The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2011/10/waiting-upon-the-lord-thy-will-be-done?lang=eng>.

Holland, Jeffrey R. "Personal Purity." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1998/10/personal-purity?lang=eng>.

Holland, Jeffrey R. "He Hath Filled the Hungry with Good Things." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/1997/10/he-hath-filled-the-hungry-with-good-things?lang=eng>.

Huntington, Ray L. "Jeremiah and the New Paradigm of The Gathering: Religious Studies Center." Jeremiah and the New Paradigm of the Gathering | Religious Studies Center. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-9-no-1-2008/jeremiah-new-paradigm-gathering>.

Muhlestein, Kerry. "Old Testament Aids." Out of the Dust. Kerry Muhlestein. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.outofthedust.org/old-testament-aids/>.

Nelson, Russell M. "The Everlasting Covenant." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/liahona/2022/10/04-the-everlasting-covenant?lang=eng>.

"November 28–December 4. Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah: 'His Ways Are Everlasting.'" November 28–December 4. Nahum; Habakkuk; Zephaniah: "His Ways Are Everlasting". Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/come-follow-me-for-individuals-and-families-old-testament-2022/49?lang=eng>.

Oaks, Dallin H. "All Men Everywhere." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/general-conference/2006/04/all-men-everywhere?lang=eng>.

Oaks, Dallin H. "Our Strengths Can Become Our Downfall." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/ensign/1994/10/our-strengths-can-become-our-downfall?lang=eng>.

Pike, Dana M., and Donald W. Parry. "Dead Sea Scrolls Come to Utah: Religious Studies Center." Dead Sea Scrolls Come to Utah | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/winter-2014/dead-sea-scrolls-come-utah>.

Van Dyke, Blair G, and D. Kelly Ogden. "Amos through Malachi: Major Teachings of the Twelve Prophets: Religious Studies Center." Amos through Malachi: Major Teachings of the Twelve Prophets | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/vol-4-no-3-2003/amos-through-malachi-major-teachings-twelve-prophets>.

Welch, John W. "The Calling of a Prophet: Religious Studies Center." The Calling of a Prophet | Religious Studies Center. Religious Studies Center of Brigham Young University. Accessed November 14, 2022. <https://rsc.byu.edu/book-mormon-first-nephi-doctrinal-foundation/calling-prophet>.

## Biographical Information:



Dr. Joshua M. Matson is a scholar of the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls and a Religious Educator with Seminaries and Institutes of Religion, currently teaching at Bingham High School. Josh received a Bachelor of Arts degree with University Honors from BYU in Ancient Near Eastern Studies, a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies from Trinity Western University, and a PhD in Religion from Florida State University. While completing his dissertation on the Minor Prophets in the late Second Temple Period, Josh was a researcher with the *Scripta Qumranica Electronica* project at the University of Haifa and an Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls Scholar at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Josh is married to the former Erin Barnes and is the father of Lydia, Emma, Brigham, and Jacob.

## Fair Use Notice:

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* may make use of copyrighted material, the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright holder. This constitutes a “fair use” and any such copyrighted material as provided for in section 107 of the US Copyright Law. In accordance with Title 17 U.S.C. Section 107, the material on this podcast is offered publicly and without profit, to the public uses or the internet for comment and nonprofit educational and informational purposes. Copyright Disclaimer under Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976, allowance is made for “fair use” for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research. In such cases, fair use is permitted.

No copyright(s) is/are claimed.

The content is broadcasted for study, research, and educational purposes.

The broadcaster gains no profit from broadcasted content. This falls under “Fair Use” guidelines:

[www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html](http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html).

**Note:**

The *Follow Him Podcast with Hank Smith and John Bytheway* is not affiliated with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor Brigham Young University. The opinions expressed on episodes represent the views of the guest and podcasters alone. While the ideas presented may vary from traditional understandings or teachings, they in no way reflect criticism of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day leaders, policies, or practices.



|                |          |  |
|----------------|----------|--|
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:01 | Welcome to followHIM, a weekly podcast dedicated to helping individuals and families with their Come Follow Me study. I'm Hank Smith.  |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:09 | And I'm John Bytheway.   |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:11 | We love to learn.  |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:11 | We love to laugh.  |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:13 | We want to learn and laugh with you.   |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:15 | As together, we follow Him.  |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:20 | Hello, my friends. Welcome to another episode of followHIM. My name is Hank Smith and I am your host. And I am here with my everlasting co-host, John Bytheway. John, I was reading out of the Come Follow Me Manual and it said this week's lesson is called His Ways Are Everlasting. And guess who popped into my head? Everlasting, John Bytheway. |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:43 | That's the best old-age joke you've ever made about me.  |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:47 | It's a compliment about how everlasting you are. I don't know if I've ever told the story about when I first saw John Bytheway. I was 12 years old, you were speaking at a BYU Youth conference.   |
| John Bytheway: | 00:00:58 | Wow.   |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:00:58 | I still remember it. I was over on your left hand side. It was a great moment, it was a great deal. If you would've told me, "Man, one day you are going to do a podcast with John Bytheway, I would've said, "Wow, what is a podcast?" Right?   |
| John Bytheway: | 00:01:13 | What's a podcast? Exactly. I knew that was coming.   |
| Hank Smith:    | 00:01:19 | Anyway, John, this week we are in Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. And when I read where we were going to be this   |

week, I thought, "We need a Bible scholar." And we have one. Who is with us today?

- John Bytheway: 00:01:34 We do. I'm so excited for everyone to meet Dr. Joshua M. Matson. He's a scholar of the Bible and we're going to talk about this, the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- Hank Smith: 00:01:43 Great.
- John Bytheway: 00:01:45 He's a religious educator with seminaries and institutes of religion, he's at Bingham Seminary right now. Josh received a Bachelor of Arts degree from BYU with University honors in Ancient Near Eastern studies, a master of Arts in Biblical Studies from Trinity Western University, and a PhD in religion from Florida State University. That's where Robert Millet got his PhD, I believe. While completing his dissertation on the minor prophets in the late second temple period, Josh was a researcher with the Scripta Qumranica Electronica projectica. No, project. At the University of Haifa. And an Orion Center scholar at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.
- 00:02:28 These qualifications are just awesome. Josh is married to the former Erin Barnes and is the father of Lydia, Emma, Brigham, and Jacob. I'm very excited for everybody to get acquainted with Dr. Matson. And I'm excited personally to see how the Dead Sea Scrolls can relate to these books we're looking at today. Welcome, Dr. Matson. Thanks for being with us.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:02:50 Thanks for having me.
- Hank Smith: 00:02:51 I've known Josh for a couple of years, John, and he is energetic, he's fun, he's kind, he's everything you'd hope he'd be. And he's brilliant. How do you want to go about this? These are books that I would guess most of our listeners are not very familiar with. In fact, when my sons were learning the song of the books of the Old Testament, when it says Jonah, Micah, they wanted to say Nahah because it just seems to fit.
- John Bytheway: 00:03:17 Jonah, Micah, Nahah?
- Hank Smith: 00:03:18 Yeah. And then they said, Nahum? Who's Nahum? I was like, "Well, I'll tell you in a couple weeks after I interview Josh." So how do you want to go about this, Josh, with these three books?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:03:29 I mean, the interesting part about these being grouped together is they're part of this larger collection that we call the minor

prophets. I joked with my wife when I got your message to come on, I said, "I think the only reason that I got the phone call was because I'm one of three people that actually study the minor prophets and the other two have retired. I'm just kind of filling in." These minor prophets, I think of a story. We had a rabbi visit us once at BYU and asked all of our class this question, "What's the difference between a major prophet and a minor prophet?" And I'll never forget that I was a little too ambitious and I raised my hand and gave some convoluted statement. And the rabbi looked at me and said, "You could not be more incorrect. The only difference is the length of the books, but these prophets are just as much prophets as Jeremiah, or Isaiah, or Ezekiel that we're familiar with. The only difference is we only have a small portion of what they taught."

00:04:28 Having the opportunity to be able to delve into them, especially this section. We've got three books right in a row that are three chapters each, it's a chapter a day and a little bit more, and you can get through it in a week. And you can see the whole breadth of what these prophets are teaching, but I think there's something instructive in following the order in which the texts are preserved, so I'm totally fine to start with Nahum and work our way through Habakkuk and Zephaniah. No, they're not the three plagues of the apocalypse, John, sorry. I wondered that myself too.

John Bytheway: 00:04:59 Hey, I've always had a question when I've seen this because we all are familiar with one of the places in Lehi's journey was when Ishmael died, buried in a place which was called Nahom. And I know there's lots of different spellings and things. Does it mean the same thing that we've learned kind of a place of consolation or mourning or something, his name?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:05:21 Yeah, absolutely. So again, in Hebrew, one of the things that we see is we don't have vowels in the ancient text, the only thing that we're looking at is the consonants. And here we get that N-H-M, which it's the root for this idea of showing consolation or being compassionate. You're exactly right, that same word that we see in the Book of Mormon and that we draw some great lessons with the passing of Ishmael, we can say the same thing though, although it is kind of confusing for those who have already read Nahum, you might say, "I don't see anything consoling or compassionate about this text. This text seems to be misnamed."

John Bytheway: 00:05:59 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:06:00 One of the hopes today I hope, as we explore this together, is that we can show that there is actually a message of compassion and consoling in a text that otherwise seems very dismal and destructive.

Hank Smith: 00:06:12 I was actually reading in the manual and it said in dreadful detail, these three prophets foretold the downfall of cities that at that time seemed strong and powerful, Nineveh, Babylon, and Jerusalem. That was thousands of years ago. Why is it valuable to read these prophecies today? So what do you think, Josh? Why is it valuable to read these prophecies today?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:06:34 These are three texts that among the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient Jewish texts that date from the second century BC to the first century AD, these are three texts that we actually found commentaries for. There's ancient Jewish people who found these texts to be of enough value that they wrote commentaries on each of these three books. One of them, Habakkuk, that we'll talk about here in a little bit, is actually one of the crown jewels of the Dead Sea Scrolls because it's one of the most complete scrolls that we have. And so we get this great insight into how the Jewish community, 400 or 500 years after the text is being written, is interpreting the text for their day.

00:07:18 And what I think that tells me in answer to your question, Hank, is that this is a text that wasn't just intended for Nineveh, and Babylon, and Jerusalem, but that these were warnings to modern day cities, we could attribute them to great cities in our own day. But even more so than that, they're warnings to each and every one of us that if we try to set ourselves up in opposition to God, then we will be destroyed spiritually in the same manner that they were.

Hank Smith: 00:07:50 Awesome. I think we would be remiss, since we have an expert here, if I'm a Latter-day Saint and I hear you say Dead Sea Scrolls, and I've definitely heard the name before and I've definitely nodded when people have said, "Oh, it's in the Dead Sea Scrolls." And I've nodded, "Oh yeah, of course it is," but I really don't know what you're talking about, could you tell me like I'm five years old, what the Dead Sea Scrolls are so all of our listeners can be informed?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:08:14 Absolutely. So the Dead Sea Scrolls, interestingly enough have been quoted in General Conference. In the April 2006, General Conference, President Dallin H. Oaks actually referred to the Dead Sea Scrolls as one way in which God is going to reveal more scripture in our day. That statement from President Oaks

actually is what interested me in the Dead Sea Scrolls. I went straight from that priesthood session to the local Deseret Book and bought the only book they had on the Dead Sea Scrolls on the shelves. I bought that book and read through it. And the synopsis in that book, and as I would say now, is The Dead Sea Scrolls are ancient Jewish texts that are written by ancient Jewish communities that give us an insight into what Judaism looked like in the days of Jesus Christ, starting at about 150 BC up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

00:09:04 These texts tell us about how scripture was written, how they interpreted scripture, and also a collection of texts that told us how their community sought to live their faith. They're very Jewish texts and about 40% of them are biblical in orientation, they're biblical texts, so what we have in our Old Testament. Another 30% are texts about the Bible and about people in the Bible, so it's kind of expanding our view of what the Bible has to say, including these commentaries on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. And then another 30% that tell us just about their life. We get receipts, and records, and discussions about how the community is organized. So it's almost this lens into the ancient Jewish world that the Savior was a part of.

John Bytheway: 00:09:53 I think we've heard before, it included like every book in the Old Testament. Is it except for Esther?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:09:59 Yeah, except Esther and Nehemiah. Nehemiah, they usually work around because Nehemiah and Ezra usually circulated in ancient times as one text. We have the Ezra text, but we don't have any Nehemiah text. And we don't have Esther, and there's a plethora of opinions about why that's the case, whether it's the name of God is never used in The Book of Esther, or that Esther's following a different calendar than the regular Jewish communities, and would then have holidays landing on the Sabbath, which was a big no-no. There's a number of reasons that scholars have tried to postulate why Esther's not there, but you're exactly right, John, that every text except Nehemiah and Esther, we have at least an attestation of the text there in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

John Bytheway: 00:10:44 And another thing, I think a lot of our listeners have heard the terms, Mishnah, Talmud. Can you talk about that? Because you said commentaries on Habakkuk. Is that part of one of those, Mishnah or Talmud?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:10:56 Yeah. So a lot of scholars early on thought that that's what this was, but they actually are called something completely different at Qumran, they're called pesharim, and it comes from the

Hebrew word, peshar, which is to interpret. What they would do is they would actually go line by line and say, "Here's the line of scripture." And then they would say pishar, peshar, which interpreted means, and then they would give their interpretation, which is a little more direct and a little more textually based than Mishnah, which is more just general commentary on a text and what's happening. So there's two different kinds of pesharim. You get one that's thematically based, we get some texts that are talking just about themes, including the theme of the Messiah. One of the most famous texts is a text all about the Messiah, and it's one of these pesharim where they're taking Messianic texts and trying to interpret what that looks like. That's 4Q175.

00:11:54 And then the other type is just what we call continuous pesharim, where they just start at verse one and they just go through and start saying, "This verse, this is what it means, this verse, this is what it means," which is a completely different aspect than what we see in rabbinic interpretations. So it's this new genre that the Dead Sea Scrolls gave us and give us another lens into how people in Jesus' Day are interpreting these scriptures, including scriptures that the Savior's going to quote and give us a better idea of what his audience would've heard.

Hank Smith: 00:12:24 Excellent. Josh, I think our listeners, some of them might be surprised to hear that in the world of biblical scholarship, this is pretty new stuff. When were the Dead Sea Scrolls actually discovered?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:12:36 Yeah, so the scrolls were discovered in 1947, and there's a number of stories or myths that talk about how those scrolls were found. And through a really intricate way of backdoor dealings and sales from the Bedouin who were finding these, and to those who are interested in antiquities, they end up being sold to various faith traditions or to various museums, and eventually purchased by the State of Israel through a New York Times article. There's a famous picture of the Dead Sea Scrolls for sale from the New York Times and a number of private entities worked together with the Israeli government to purchase the majority of those texts.

00:13:20 And then between 1947 and the mid 1960s, it led to an absolute rush, think of the California gold rush, but there was a rush of Bedouin in the Judean Desert who are just searching cave after cave, and you get archeologists who are trying to get in on the game as well and start excavating caves. And over time they find thousands and thousands of fragments and a couple of complete manuscripts that today we call the Dead Sea Scrolls.

John Bytheway: 00:13:50 So they were in caves, in jars. It looks like the conventional wisdom to hide them, to preserve them, they hid them in the cave. Is that how it happened?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:13:59 Yeah, there's a number of varying opinions about why they were storing them if they were longtime storage or if a lot of the accounts have to do with the Romans approaching. For those who've been to the Holy Land, Masada is not too far from Qumran. Actually, during the archeological studies of the site of Qumran, we find that it was an outpost for Roman soldiers at various points in time. The Romans are using this area for travel and whether they're taking these texts and trying to preserve them in that way from destruction or this was their natural way of storing text, and then when they left, they just kind of left their libraries behind, the texts were there in the caves. And by the grace of a very arid climate and the fact that they were out of the sun and in a protected area, they were able to be preserved for thousands of years.

Hank Smith: 00:14:50 Wow.

John Bytheway: 00:14:50 Amazing.

Hank Smith: 00:14:51 So let me make sure I get this right. If I'm listening at home, there was a group of Jews who lived outside of Jerusalem, 20-odd miles outside of Jerusalem down by the Dead Sea. They are doing a lot of writing, a lot of reading of this ancient scriptures, and they're preserving these texts as you call them, in scrolls, in jars. And they're not found. And then these people disappear, what? Around 70 AD? Their community is destroyed, gone?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:15:20 Yeah. Well, and it comes with the destruction, yeah. The Romans coming in and destroying Jerusalem and the surrounding regions just completely destabilize any regular routine.

Hank Smith: 00:15:30 Then the texts sit there for 2,000 years, 1,900 years until they're found in the 1940s. And what's so fascinating about them to Bible scholars like yourself? What makes them so interesting and fun?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:15:43 I think there's three primary things that the scrolls help us better understand the Bible with. The first is that they give us an insight into what biblical texts look like in the first, second century BC and in the first century AD. It gives us a better idea of the scriptures that were used in the days of the Savior. And I know I've used that phrase a lot, we have no connection

between these texts and the Savior. I don't want to give any idea that the Savior was walking around Qumran. The idea is that in the climate and the day, these groups were in communication with each other. So that's the first one, this gives us a better sense of what the biblical text looked like. Before we found the Dead Sea Scrolls, our oldest biblical manuscript dated to the 10th century AD, so it was almost a thousand years older. And you can think of everything that can change and alterations.

00:16:36 We talk about in the Book of Mormon frequently that there were things that are adjusted in biblical texts over time. That thousand year gap gives a great window into how texts did change. So that's the first one. The second one is it helps us better understand what Jews were doing and what their beliefs were in the time of Jesus, what were the communities arguing about? One of my favorite Dead Sea Scrolls text is actually an angry letter written from the Essene community back to Jerusalem, telling them how they're doing everything wrong at the temple and in the city. And it's almost a protest letter saying, "We're not coming back until you fix these problems." I almost think of Luther's 95 Theses, "I'm going send you this letter because I want things to change." And that was the Dead Sea Scrolls community.

00:17:27 The last insight for me is the fact that the Dead Sea Scrolls make real the world that we don't have a lot of texts for. When we finish the Old Testament in Malachi, there's one page and then you're automatically in Matthew, and that one page is a 400 year leap. We don't have any scriptural texts in our Bibles that tell us what's happening during that 400 year period, being able to get some insights into how things are evolving, how do we go from the Persians being in control of the world to the Romans? How did that all happen? What's happening interculturally? Where did the Pharisees come from? Who are the Sadducees? What are these debates about what resurrection is or who can operate in the Temple? And the Dead Sea Scrolls start to clear that picture up for us and give us a better insight into what happened from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Hank Smith: 00:18:20 All right, and this brings us full circle. These three books are some of the most discussed in those Dead Sea scrolls.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:18:26 Not necessarily most discussed, but we have commentaries for these three books.

Hank Smith: 00:18:30 Okay.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:18:32 What's nice is we have texts that are saying, "Here's the interpretation of Nahum, and Habakkuk, and Zephaniah." We know that they were reading these texts in the days of the Savior, that they were trying to make sense of them and how they were applicable in their own day.

Hank Smith: 00:18:47 Fantastic.

John Bytheway: 00:18:48 Quick question, when Jesus said, "You've heard it said of old time, love your neighbor, hate your enemy." It was written, but we don't know where. And I've heard that that might have been a teaching of the Essenes?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:19:00 Yeah. So there's no direct correlation between that statement and the Savior. What we do know from the Essenes, so one text that we have in the Dead Sea Scrolls is a text called The Rule of the Community. And the community itself was very isolated and was almost that you're with us or against us, and there's no middle ground. It helps give us a picture of really the factions that had grown and that had become very prevalent in the New Testament times. When the Savior is talking about the friction between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, or even the Jews and the Samaritans, these texts help us see the rhetoric that's between these groups and where they would say something, "We're keeping the law and you're not, so we can despise you."

Hank Smith: 00:19:45 Awesome. I think our listeners are going to be well acquainted-- don't you think, John?-- now with the Dead Sea Scrolls, they've kind of got a better idea of what these are.

John Bytheway: 00:19:54 Right. And if memory serves, BYU had something to do with some of the scanning or the preservation of those texts or something, didn't they?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:20:03 Yeah. So BYU was one of the first institutions to digitize the texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls in a format that was searchable, computer programming was a big part of it. And for those who are listening, some may be screaming at the podcast device that they're listening to saying, "Wait, my grandfather or my parents had a big role to play." Numerous critical additions of the Dead Sea Scrolls are dedicated to Latter-day Saints who are from Utah, who donated a great deal of money for the publication and the presentation of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the general audience. In the late '90s, all the Dead Sea Scrolls scholars in the world actually came to Provo, Utah for a conference. And even when I interact with Dead Sea Scrolls scholars today, they often talk about how fond their trip to Utah to talk about the Dead Sea Scrolls was.

Hank Smith: 00:20:53 Wow. That's fantastic. All right, Josh, so let's bridge the gap now between the Dead Sea Scrolls, these three books, and our listeners.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:21:03 Let's go.

Hank Smith: 00:21:03 The task is up to you. Yeah. How are we going to meld these three together?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:21:08 Well, let's start with Nahum. And I think giving some historical context will help give people an understanding. Nahum is a text that when I read it, it's one of those texts where it's like, "Oh, I'm comfortable because I'm not the focus of the text." Anybody who reads Nahum from the first verse, we read, "The burden of Nineveh, the book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite." That's an introduction, so we don't know whether or not that was added later to the text of Nahum to give context to what's going on. And we actually don't get a reference to Nineveh until much later in the text. This may just be a summary, kind of like our chapter headings in the LDS editions of the scriptures. It's not actually scripture, it's a heading to give you an idea of what you're about to read. For you and I, we read that and we go, "Oh yeah, this is Nineveh." But to an ancient audience, they might actually be asking the question, "Who are they talking about?"

00:22:04 When we look at the text, we start to go through and we see, "Well, wait a second, God's talking about this city and those that are going to be destroyed, but who is it?" And for me as a modern reader, I love kind of taking away that understanding that this is Nineveh and saying, "Is God talking to me?" That famous question that's asked at The Last Supper by the disciples, "Lord, is it I?" And that statement that's been reiterated in our day with Elder Uchtdorf in that wonderful General Conference address that he gives that says this is an introspective question we should be asking. For an ancient and modern audience who's reading Nahum, the first question we can ask is, "Are they talking about me? And what can I learn from this text as it relates to my situation and my standing and my relationship with God?"

00:22:51 Then we'll get into some details that make it very clear that Nineveh is the focus, but at least at the outset we can ask that question, "Lord, is it I?"

Hank Smith: 00:22:59 Awesome, great way to approach it.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:23:01 Moving forward, kind of the historical setting, unlike other prophetic books, if you remember when we studied Isaiah or Ezekiel, we get this long introduction, the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz given in the days of King Ahaz, etc. It gives us a specific date. Nahum doesn't do that. We have to infer from the text when this text was actually written and we get some insights if we go to Nahum chapter three, verse eight. The King James text is a little difficult to understand. It starts and says, "Art thou better than populous?" And when you read that and even with the lowercase P, you think, "Whoa, what? Better than populous?" Are we talking about a populous group or are we talking about a population? But in the Hebrew, the word is actually No-Ammon, which is the Hebrew name for the City of Thebes.

Hank Smith: 00:23:54 Oh, okay.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:23:55 In Nahum chapter three, verse eight, our first indication of the dating of the text is the fact that verses 8, 9, and 10 talk about the destruction of Thebes, which takes place sometime around 663 BC. And why this is important for our study of Nahum is that it's Ashurbanipal, one of the military generals of the Assyrians, who's the one who's going to overthrow Thebes, and Nineveh is going to become the capital of Assyria. This connection is that Nahum is trying to say, "You all talked about how great Thebes was." And for our listeners to give you an idea, those who have seen pictures of Luxor or Karnak, that was Thebes. Even today we think of the grandeur and the greatness of the City of Thebes. People that I've taken on tours or have talked to, when they go to Thebes and they see Karnak and Luxor, that's often the highlight of their trip, to see these ancient temples and these ancient spaces.

00:25:00 The destruction of Thebes is discussed and recorded in verse 8, 9, and 10 of chapter three. So the text is reviewing and saying, "You've already sacked Thebes." So Nahum was written after that date, but as we continue reading through the text, Nineveh hasn't been destroyed by the Babylonians yet, which will take place in 612 BC. Nahum is somewhere in that window of roughly 50 years between 660 BC and 612 BC. Thebes is destroyed, Nineveh hasn't quite been destroyed yet.

Hank Smith: 00:25:34 Okay, so somewhere between 660 and 606, this book is written. I hate to spoil the ending, but is it saying, "Look, Nineveh's going to become like Thebes. You all thought Thebes was amazing, well watch what happens to Nineveh"?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:25:47 No, and that's actually the irony of this text is it's because the Assyrians overthrew Thebes and said, "Look at how great we are," I like to actually think of this text in that context that Nahum is writing and saying, "You all are still celebrating that you destroyed Thebes, but the same destruction is about to come to you." It's at that height. The destruction of Thebes is really when the Assyrian or the Neo-Assyrian empire is going to hit its apex. To say that at this time of jubilation is actually kind of a buzzkill for these Assyrians. If they're reading this text, they're saying, "There's no way this is going to happen because look at what we just did."

00:26:26 And I can't help but think of the parallel with the Book of Mormon. How many times did the Nephites later on say, "Look at how great we are, nobody can destroy us because of how amazing our armies are and our tactics." I think Nineveh is saying that same thing. To read this text in that context makes it so much more lively as we see the many images that are going to come forward.

Hank Smith: 00:26:50 Is it pretty natural to see the fall of Nineveh as like the fall of the adversary, the fall of Satan?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:26:57 Yeah, I think we can take that, but I would almost even say this is the fall of the enemies of God. So anyone who's fighting against God, and obviously Satan and his minions fall into that category very much, but anyone who's in that position of fighting against God is going to be destroyed.

Hank Smith: 00:27:16 Okay.

John Bytheway: 00:27:17 And Nineveh is where, our listeners will remember that Jonah was supposed to go prophecy against and he left, but he finally went there. So this is sometime later?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:27:27 Yes. And actually, that parallel, John, is so important. Even the name of Jonah shares some of the same letters as Nahum. Many scholars actually say that we should read Nahum and Jonah very closely, they both focus on Nineveh and they both have this message that actually diverts. The end of Jonah is this message of, "I'm going to save Nineveh, I'm going to allow Nineveh to repent and change." Here we're going to say Nineveh is going to be completely wiped off the face of the map.

Hank Smith: 00:27:57 Wow, that's interesting. Two separate endings to the same city.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:28:01 Yeah. So two endings. And if we take it back to that modern application, I can't help but think, "When I'm reading Nahum, what's the ending of my story? Is my story going to be one of redemption and forgiveness or is my story going to be one of destruction and standing in opposition to God?"

Hank Smith: 00:28:19 Jonah's story saves Nineveh. Nahum's story condemns Nineveh. It's almost like a choose your own adventure. Which one are you going to be?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:28:28 Yeah, and historically speaking, we know that Nineveh is destroyed in 612, but I think putting ourselves in the context of this not happening yet, gives us that opportunity to say, "What are we going to do?" And I think as we read the text we can get some of that insight.

Hank Smith: 00:28:43 Great. Let's do it.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:28:45 Awesome. So the text of Nahum's really interesting because it's actually seven cantos or separate verses to a song. One of the things that makes the minor prophets, and prophetic literature in general, difficult to read is that it's all written in poetry. When we're looking at this text, even in Hebrew, scholars who study this stuff their whole life say, "There's some things we actually have to kind of put a question mark on," because it's written in a poetic way that the audience in antiquity would've been able to fill in the details. When we read through Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, we have to keep in mind that these are poetic texts. And Nahum whom in particular has these seven cantos or seven verses that separate the text so that individuals can see the transitions from one topic to another.

00:29:34 And that verse one actually is one that I find most applicable for us today. It starts in verse 2 of Nahum chapter 1 and is going to progress to verse 10. But the whole focus of this section is to describe Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, as a warrior. Jehovah is going to fight the battles for his covenant people. And as I say that out loud, I can't help but think of Doctrine and Covenants section 105 verse 14, where the Lord promises the saints that he will fight their battles for them. That's what's going to happen here. So we read in verse two, "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth, the Lord revengeth and is furious. The Lord will take vengeance on his adversaries and he reserveth wrath for his enemies." And the words that are used here in Hebrew are interesting. You start with God in verse two, this is the Hebrew word El, which is shared with other ancient societies as a name for deity.

- 00:30:36 And then we're also going to have Lord both in the sense of Jehovah, the divine name, but we also get Lord in the sense of Ba'al, a word in Hebrew that means master. We're seeing that the author of Nahum is actually using deity language that would've resonated with those outside of a Jewish community. And saying, "Our God is the God who rules and reigns over all deities in the entire world." And that's where we're going to start to continue forward, continuing in verse three, "The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet." This divine warrior imagery is present in other texts we've already talked about. Exodus 15, Deuteronomy 33, Judges 4 and 5. Jesus is presented as a warrior who's ready to fight for his people.
- Hank Smith: 00:31:32 And he already has, he rebuked the sea. That sounds like the Red Sea. He makes it dry, he dries up the rivers, the Jordan River.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:31:39 Yeah. And that's exactly what this is a hearkening back to, is we are talking about the events of the Exodus. And I know it's been mentioned on the show before, but that Exodus event seems to be this focal point that prophets are constantly coming back to. And Nahum is right in line with those other prophets saying, "This is where these events need to be remembered among the people."
- Hank Smith: 00:32:04 This is fantastic. If you wanted to see the Lord as all powerful, these are your verses. "The clouds are the dust of his feet." Think how massive that is if the clouds are just the dust of his feet.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:32:14 Yeah. Well, and then he continues on in verse five, "The mountains quake at him and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein." And this verse here, some scholars actually refer to this as Nahum's Theophanies. This is his vision of God. And we see words that are similar to other theophanies. I think of Isaiah chapter six, or one that we're much more familiar with, which is Joseph Smith's First Vision. Remember that Joseph Smith says that he thought that the whole forest was going to burn around him because of the light.
- Hank Smith: 00:32:51 Yeah, this is fantastic. Keep going.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:32:54 That theophany language then continues in verse six. "So who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the

rocks are thrown down by him." This is the question, "Am I sufficiently worthy to stand in the presence of God? And if I am not, this is what I have to look forward to, is that I cannot abide his presence." And we were familiar with that statement that Joseph Smith corrects in the Gospel of John that no man can see God at any time and live. This is why for an ancient audience, they sat there and said, "No, I'm not worthy enough to be in His presence. Of course, I can't stand in God's presence."

00:33:38 But Joseph Smith gives us that great insight in the Joseph Smith translation that they have to be quickened by the Holy Ghost. If we have not received the fullness of the Holy Ghost, we can't see what Nahum is seeing. We need that divine presence of a member of the Godhead to be able to be in His presence. Because if we're not, then we are part of those who are destroyed by that presence.

Hank Smith: 00:34:00 And then there seems to be a message of hope there just before the destruction of Thebes. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and he knows them that trust him. So this is Jehovah defending and protecting his covenant people.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:34:13 Yeah. And one of the aspects of studying this text in Hebrew, you get this other insight, that last line that you read there, Hank, that trust in him, the Hebrew actually better reads, "To those who seek refuge in Him."

Hank Smith: 00:34:27 Oh, okay.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:34:28 So it's not just that I trust God or I know God can do these things, but it's this intentionality of finding refuge in God and that's what's going to separate the righteous covenant people and those who are going to be destroyed in the latter texts is who comes to seek refuge from him as opposed to finding refuge in other places.

John Bytheway: 00:34:51 Yeah, I was going along here and it looks like that's one of the more positive statements. It's talking about his power, and his presence, and then thank heavens for verse seven to come along, "He knows them that trust in Him." It reminds us of Nephi, "I know in whom I have trusted" and "trust in the Lord with all thy heart." He knows those that are trusting Him. That's the positive verse in the middle of all that. Whew, this sounds bad.

Hank Smith: 00:35:16 Sounds intense.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:35:18 Who's on the Lord side? Who? Maybe we can start singing here. I won't do that, but who's on the Lord's side? Who? Now is the time to show. We ask it fearlessly, who's on the Lord's side? Who? That's really the question of Nahum, "Are you on the Lord's side or have you sided with others who are not seeking refuge in the Lord?"

Hank Smith: 00:35:39 I realize that for some people the Lord destroying can be a very difficult thing to process, but when you think of the fear that Nineveh strikes into the covenant people, you want someone to come and defend you.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:35:54 Yeah. Well, and verse eight, Hank, I don't know if you knew this, but as you were saying that, that's actually what makes verse eight so scary is we start to get specific references to the Neo-Assyrian empire and to Nineveh. In verse eight it says, "But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof and the darkness shall pursue his enemies." In Assyrian literature, they actually would refer to their armies as an overrunning flood. Now we're starting to get language and we'll see this through the rest of Nahum, is Nahum is using pointed language that the Assyrians were using towards their enemies. And Nahum is saying, "God is stronger than your rhetoric and your actions." And what's really interesting to know the ancient history of Assyria here because you see bits and pieces of their rallying cries being utilized by Jehovah against their own people.

Hank Smith: 00:36:49 Got it. I'm stronger than your rhetoric.

John Bytheway: 00:36:52 Didn't Isaiah do that too? "Because you refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, I'm going to send you a flood"? And he meant the Assyrians.

Hank Smith: 00:37:02 Yeah, he even says the King of Assyria.

John Bytheway: 00:37:05 Yeah. What I love about Shiloah is in the New Testament, that's Siloam, the water that the man born blind went to wash in and, "You refused the living water, so I'm going to send you a tsunami of the Assyrians."

Hank Smith: 00:37:20 And that's interesting, that that's their own rhetoric. That's how they refer to themselves. I didn't know that.

John Bytheway: 00:37:24 Isaiah did that. That's cool.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:37:26 Well, and I love that because it gives us this insight to the antiquity of the text, is the people who are writing these texts

are intimately familiar in the same way that you and I are familiar with rhetoric in our day, that people will draw upon and say, "Oh, that's a pointed reference specifically to them." As we slow down and we seek to understand a little bit better these statements, we can see that come to fruition and help us better understand the text in our day.

- Hank Smith: 00:37:53 Correct me if I'm wrong here, Josh, but is the Lord saying, "I've seen your commercials, I've seen your rhetoric, I know how you refer to yourself, but that doesn't stop me"? Or Nahum is saying, "That's not going to stop the Lord."
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:38:06 Yeah. And that question's such a good one, Hank, because I think it comes back, Nahum 1 starts with this interesting phrase, "The burden of Nineveh." And this is that Hebrew word, Massa. And it's so interesting because you would think the vision of Nineveh or the prophecy of Nineveh, but we get this idea of burden. One scholar actually says that maybe a way that we should translate burden is the prophetic exposition of divine revelation. So Nahum is receiving a revelation of what's going to happen to Nineveh and using his ability and his language. And himself, he's going to expound on that vision in language that people will understand. And I love that image of a prophet because the prophet then is an agent who's independently acting in his own time and place and isn't just mimicking words that he's receiving from another source.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:02 Got it. So he's received a revelation, but he's got to put words to it, words and descriptions.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:08 Isaiah uses that in the burden of concerning Babylon, Isaiah 13 or 2 Nephi 23. And I've always thought that the burden, the message that he had to give, that wasn't a happy one, so that's how I've always looked at burden. But say that name again that you have for it, exposition?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:39:26 Prophetic exposition of divine revelation.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:30 Wow.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:30 Well, that's such a great way of describing that, Josh, because we would think, "Oh no, the Lord is giving this word for word," when perhaps he's giving him something that we can't describe and he's got to put words to.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:39:41 Yeah. And it helps because then when you get the sections where you actually have the Lord speaking like verse 12, "Thus

saith the Lord," then you can say, "Oh, here's the quotation of what the Lord's saying," and then we can see where the prophet is adding his own description of what he saw. And for me, that's just an empowering way to say, "This text is one that an individual who's been called by God is giving to people with the best of his abilities." Sometimes we get really critical of prophets and not saying things the right way or doing things the way we'd want them to do them. And we sometimes ask, "Well, if they're speaking for God, then they should act a certain way." But in the text here, it's giving them that leeway to say, "Here's Nahum's words, this is Nahum's exposition on what he saw. And he's just doing the best with his own abilities."

- John Bytheway: 00:40:32 Oh, I love that. There's a good paragraph in the manual here that says on page 213, "Some might find it difficult to reconcile the scriptural teaching that the Lord is good, Nahum 1:7, with the teaching that he will take vengeance on his adversaries, Nahum 1:2." In the Book of Mormon, Alma's son, Corianton, had similar questions concerning the justice of God and the punishment of the sinner. To learn more about God's mercy and how it relates to his justice, read Alma's answer to Corianton in Alma 42. So I think we're reading that he's going to take vengeance on the adversaries and also that God is good, but we all know that he gives us time. All behavior is going to have a consequence, but God is long suffering. And eventually that day of grace runs out, to use a Book of Mormon phrase. And I think that's what we're seeing here. There's going to be a consequence eventually.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:41:27 Yeah. And I think we can start to see that in verse 14, John, Nahum says, "And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee." I love that the Joseph Smith translation went back and tried to take these pronouns and give us exactly who it is. That's not the case here, but the thee here seems to be the Assyrian King. So the Lord is giving a direct commandment to the Assyrian King, "That no more of thy name shall be sown. Out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image. I will make thy grave for thou art vile."
- John Bytheway: 00:41:58 Wow.
- Hank Smith: 00:41:58 Wow.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:41:59 It's this impending statement that, "Hey, your day is going to come and the gods that you trust in are going to be cut off. What you think is coming from these gods is no longer going to come." And I think it's even more impactful because the phrase right before that, "No more of thy name be sown." That's an

idea that your posterity is going to be cut off, that your name and your heritage eventually is going to come to an end because of the fact that you are putting your trust in these graven images and the Lord will not be mocked in this essence of, "You think that you are greater than God but God is greater than you."

- Hank Smith: 00:42:43 And the Assyrians are a bunch of bullies. I don't know, it's kind of nice to see the bully meet a bigger force.
- John Bytheway: 00:42:49 And look how positive verse 15 is next. This is Isaiah, "Behold upon the mountains, the feet of him that bringeth good tidings that publisheth peace. Oh Judah, keep thy solemn feasts." So here's the burden of Nineveh and then kind of a little advice for Judah here at the end. Am I getting that right?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:43:08 Yeah. And actually a very joyful message, that last phrase that you read, John, this idea of keep thy solemn feasts, "Hey, it's time. The war is over. That friction, that anxiety that exists because of Assyria is over, it's time to get back to your routine." And those solemn feasts that are referenced there, this is the holidays that were pilgrimage holidays. So this is Passover, this is the festival of Pentecost, the festival of Tabernacles or Sukkot. The idea is it's time to come back to Jerusalem. If maybe you've been trepid because you've been hearing all these rumors about what Assyria is going to do and maybe you remember the Assyrian conquest of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and their besieging of Jerusalem.
- 00:43:54 And maybe you said, "I'm not going to participate in vows and ordinances because of that destruction." The message here is to those who are of the covenant, come back. And to modernize this, as I was reading this, I couldn't help but think we've been through an interesting time the last couple years where things have been rough, and our routines and traditions have been interrupted. As I read this verse, I almost read it as a way of saying, "Let's get back to normal, let's get back to going to the temple, let's get back to giving our vows and our oaths to God. That interruption is over, now it is time for us to continue to keep God's commandments."
- Hank Smith: 00:44:39 You need to no longer fear Assyria. That's awesome.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:44:43 And that's the last part too, "For the wicked shall no more pass through thee. He is utterly cut off." If you've noticed, this is kind of bracketing what's happening because you get this reference to the wicked that we saw back in verse 11. So verse 15, the wicked, and then you have this wicked counselor who's against

God. We start with the reference to this wicked one and then we end with it. The word here in Hebrew is Belial, which in Qumran tradition and in later Jewish tradition, this is a servant of the adversary. And so we get a number of texts that are talking about this wicked one who's fighting against God. We start with him standing in opposition to God in verse 11, and then we get the promise in verse 15 that he will no longer interfere with your life and that he is utterly cut off from the righteous.

- Hank Smith: 00:45:35 Yeah, this is a hopeful chapter. With all the destruction that's in it, it's still a hopeful chapter for the covenant people.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:42 Yeah. I look at 7 and 15 and say, "Those are some positive notes in the middle of, okay, we know how powerful God is, we know what he can do, what he will do, but stay firm in the faith and you'll be okay." "He knoweth them that trust in him."
- Hank Smith: 00:46:00 That's a great summary, John.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:46:02 So there you go. Nahum's not maybe quite as weak or boring as we may have originally thought.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:08 Yeah, this is fun. Yeah.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:46:08 As I was preparing, I found it fascinating that the Book of Nahum is only quoted in General Conference a handful of times. If you do a search on Nahum, the Book of Nahum is quoted nine times in General Conference in the entire history of the church.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:25 Wow.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:46:26 And if you look at it, that's actually the lowest amount of quotations of any Old Testament book.
- Hank Smith: 00:46:33 Poor Nahum. And we're finding out this is pretty good stuff.
- John Bytheway: 00:46:37 Yeah, so don't say that, that's not the minor prophet definition though, right?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:46:42 Yeah. Only nine references to Nahum and what we've gone through right there, there's so many themes that we have heard. And maybe that's the message of hope for Nahum is that Nahum's messages are being heard in our day just not directly from his prophetic exposition.

John Bytheway: 00:46:57 We've talked about this before, but I'd love our listeners to get acquainted with [scriptures.byu.edu](http://scriptures.byu.edu) or the app is called Citation Index. And that's I think probably where you went, isn't it? To discover how often Nahum had been mentioned in Conference?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:47:14 Exactly. John, you revealed my secrets. So somebody out there was probably thinking, "Wow, that was pretty cool." And no, I second that wholeheartedly. It's an amazing resource.

John Bytheway: 00:47:25 So helpful. Yeah, I have my students look at that, that if you ever have to give a talk on a verse of scripture, why don't you just use this? And boy, those who do that, they're not done, they have to update it again every six months. Thanks to them for keeping that wonderful database going.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:47:41 Absolutely. Well, should we move on to chapter two if we didn't have enough fun with chapter one? Chapter two is going to start to narrow down exactly who we're talking about. Again, if you look back through chapter one, you're not seeing any direct reference to Nineveh. You get these allusions and using their propaganda language, but now we're going to start to actually see more direct language about Nineveh. And maybe where we can start is where it's talking about Nineveh and then we can go back and see how the Lord's talking about this. But if we go to verse six in chapter two. So Nahum chapter two verse six, it says, "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." For us as modern readers, we may not be familiar with the fact that the gates that are referenced there, are gates that were built by Sennacherib, one of these great leaders of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and actually the one who establishes Nineveh as the capital of Assyria. Nineveh was not a capital for Assyria for very long.

00:48:47 It was established by Sennacherib at the very end of the eighth century BC, or the late 700s. And then it's going to be destroyed in 612. And so for less than a hundred years, Nineveh is the capital of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Knowing that this capital is fairly new, one thing we know is that when Sennacherib set up Nineveh as the capital, he used gates to regulate the amount of water that was coming in from the Tebiltu and the Khosr rivers that are branches of the Tigris River. There's rivers running through the city, but they created gates to prevent flooding of the city. That reference to gates right there is very pointed to Nineveh. And the prophecy is saying, "Okay, so be familiar that this is what we are going to see, is your city is going to be destroyed by the very things that you trust to not destroy your city by water." And for a modern audience to read that and to

think, "Do I trust in things that I'm in control of that God may actually take away if I'm not putting my trust in Him?"

- Hank Smith: 00:49:58 Oh, what a great application. Thanks for that. All right, what do you want to do next, Josh?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:50:03 So now that we know that we're talking about Nineveh, and we actually will get a direct reference to Nineveh in verse eight, we get that reference to gates, it starts to get us thinking about a city with gates that's controlling water, but then we get verse eight, "But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water, yet they shall flee away, stand, stand," in the Hebrew, it actually says, "Stop, stop, shall they cry but none shall look back." People will flee the city as it's being destroyed. We do know from historical records that Nineveh was destroyed by water.
- 00:50:36 So the name Nineveh is fascinating because it means house of fishes. So it gives you this idea that Nineveh is famous for these pools and this connection to water. And so there's an irony to the fact that people who had learned so well to manage water and to become a city that's renowned for its utilization of water, would then be destroyed by that very thing. One scholar, he actually says, "The token of its strength is now a simile for its downfall."
- John Bytheway: 00:51:07 Wow.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:51:08 And how often do sometimes we get puffed up in our own pride of who we are or what we are doing, and that it ultimately leads to our distancing ourselves from God and then our own downfall.
- Hank Smith: 00:51:20 It says that the Lord can make our weaknesses our strengths, but we're the ones who often make our strengths our weaknesses.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:51:27 So good.
- John Bytheway: 00:51:28 Remember President Oaks' talk, our strength can become our downfall. And it just helps you to see that this is art, this is literature beyond just a report of what's happening. This is crafted and it's beautiful and it's symmetrical and elegant sometimes when you see what you just described, the very thing they were famous for is what's going to destroy them. And I think Isaiah did that too, "You refuse the waters that go softly, so I'm going to bring upon you a flood."

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:51:56 And John, that's the beauty of these prophets. People don't study them because they are hard to understand, but sometimes the most beautiful things in life take effort to understand. And again, we do have this humility of we don't know everything that Nahum's trying to say. If you read a commentary, a modern commentary on the book of Nahum, I'm surprised at how often scholars say, "Well, here's all the potential interpretations, but we're not quite sure and we don't quite understand." And how amazing is that for you and I as we study this text with the Holy Ghost, as we prayerfully seek to get insight, to be able to say, "God will reveal to me that meaning, and I'm not going to limit myself to someone else's interpretation of the text." And the prophets preserved their messages, I think for that very reason, so there wasn't just one clear cut interpretation, but that the interpretation would be able to penetrate the souls and the hearts of those who would read it.

John Bytheway: 00:52:56 Well, that's exactly how you asked us to start. Is this a message for me? And then the application becomes something that can be tailored by the Holy Ghost for our ears and read it as if, "What do I do with this? What does this mean for me? Am I Nineveh in this case?"

Hank Smith: 00:53:13 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:53:13 That actually with 8, 9, and 10, we end the third canto or that third verse of Nahum's song. And verse 11 in chapter 2 picks up with the fourth. And again, we're going to get very pointed references to Nineveh. In verse 11, we read, "Where is the dwelling of the lions and the feeding place of the young lions where the lion, even the old lion walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid?" As you read that, you're like, "Whoa, wait, we just got done talking about a city and rivers and now we're talking about lions? What's going on here?" But the Assyrian king uses a lion as the symbol of his kingship. And we actually see this in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 24 through 30. So if we go to Isaiah 5, we're going to see the same language that's going to be used against Assyria.

00:54:05 Isaiah in chapter 5, verse 29 is actually going to use the same language. "Their roaring shall be like a lion. They shall roar like young lions. Yea, they shall roar and lay hold of the prey and they shall carry it away safe and none shall deliver it." Verse 30. "And in that day, they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea. And if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow and the light is darkened and the heavens thereof." So this is quoted in the Book of Mormon, but those verses are

actually directly applicable to Assyria. So we get bookends in Isaiah chapter 5, verses 29 and 30. We're saying, "Assyria is on the horizon to come and destroy Israel, so you better get your act together because they're going to come." And then Nahum is going to use the exact same language to say, "Where are you now? Where's that great lion that destroyed the northern kingdom of Israel? Where's the one who's tearing and bringing food and spoils back to his nation?"

00:55:06 Well, verse 13, "Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts. I will burn her chariots in the smoke and the sword shall devour thy young lions and I will cut off thy pray from the earth and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard." We get Assyria used as a device to punish ancient Israel for their unfaithfulness to God, but Nahum's going to come and say, "Your strength is no longer there and now you are going to be left desolate just like you've left others."

Hank Smith: 00:55:41 Josh, I'm noticing with the overrunning flood, with the gates of the rivers, with using lions as a symbol, the Lord knows Nineveh, Nahum knows Assyria and what they've used as their most, I guess you would say, their pride. They've referred to themselves as an overrunning flood, they have the technology of damning the river, the king is using the symbol of a lion as himself. And here the Lord is using all of this to let him know, "Your time has come to an end."

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:56:11 Yeah. And I think that message is prevalent throughout scripture. I had the opportunity to be in Turkey this last week, and we were standing in Laodicea and thinking about the letters that John sent to each of the churches and how personal the message from the Lord was. I can't help but think these are negative messages, but does the Lord give me individual messages that are tailored specifically for me? My wife and I when we first got married, one of the things that I'm sure many Latter-day Saints couples do, we exchange patriarchal blessings to read what the other's patriarchal blessing had to say. I will never forget my wife looked me in the eye and she said, "Josh, that blessing is so you. That blessing is so you."

00:56:55 I think that we need to remember that in our day, is God speaks to his people in their language. And that's not always languages in Spanish, or Japanese, or English, or Portuguese, or that way, but in the language that we understand and that speaks to our heart. And these words here would've spoken directly to the heart of the Assyrians if they were humble enough to listen.

Hank Smith: 00:57:18 Wow. Does it continue into chapter three, the same message?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:57:22 Yeah. So things get a little bit different here. And actually, chapter three is what some scholars will actually call a taunt towards Nineveh. Nahum kind of pulls the Elijah card and mocks what's about to happen to them and actually uses some language that's pretty harsh.

John Bytheway: 00:57:41 Man, verses 4, and 5, and 6, you're like, "Whoa." Is that what you're talking about?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:57:47 Exactly. Nahum again, he's going to use things that they were familiar with, but 4, right? "Because of the multitude of thy whoredoms of the well favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts that selleth nations through her whoredoms and families through her witchcrafts." And this isn't just pointed to the city, but the patron goddess of Nineveh was Ishtar, and Ishtar was a goddess of sex and war. These words here are actually almost leveled to Nineveh's patron goddess. In the ancient world, you have to remember that cities were oftentimes built around the God or goddess that they revered and the temple in the middle of the city would be for that God or goddess.

00:58:31 And the strength of the city was directly tied to that goddess or God, and the people viewed it if that goddess or God and that temple was destroyed, it shows that we are weaker than the God of the people that destroyed us. I love what J. D. W. Watts said, "With lustful visions of riches and power, Ishtar beguiled nations into war and conquest. Like the Devil in Christian thought, she tempted and demonized all who came within her influence." Now we're getting the outcome of what these people have venerated for almost a century is that they're going to pay the price for putting their trust in a false God.

Hank Smith: 00:59:18 A lustful false God. Yeah.

John Bytheway: 00:59:21 Look at verse six. "I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a gazingstock." I hate it when people cast abominable filth on me.

Hank Smith: 00:59:33 Or set me as a gazingstock.

John Bytheway: 00:59:34 Yeah, it takes a lot of laundry detergent to get that out, but that's really strong words.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:59:41 And then verse seven, it continues. "And it shall come to pass that all they that look upon thee, shall flee from thee. And say, "Nineveh is laid waste. Who will bemoan her? When shall I seek

comforters for thee?" This is where I want to bring in my Dead Sea Scrolls discussions. In the commentary on Nahum that we found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, they quote this verse, and part of me when I first saw this, I went, "Whoa, of all the verses to quote from Nahum, why are we quoting chapter three? And what's going to happen here at the end?" But this is what they say, so after quoting verses six and seven, as we just read, it says, "This refers to the cities of the east, for the skirts are the Gentiles in their filth and in their abhorrent idols. I will throw your abominations at you, I will treat you with scorn, I will make you repulsive so that everyone who sees you will avoid you."

01:00:37 This is where it gets really interesting and how people are making scripture apply to themselves. So they quote verses six and seven, and then the Qumran community, and the authors of this text, they say this, "This refers to the flattery seekers." Now, for most of our audience, that word flattery seekers isn't going to mean anything, but this was a veiled reference to the Pharisees and those who another translation for flattery seeker is seeker after smooth things.

John Bytheway: 01:01:09 Well, that's an Isaiah verse.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:01:11 Yeah. These are individuals who are seeking to make things smooth. God doesn't expect things of you. I think of the Elder Holland quotation that we make a God in our own image who pats us on the head and tells us to go pick marigolds and to not have expectations. That's these flattery seekers. For the Qumran community, they viewed the Pharisees as people who were making religion easy with no expectations. But then look at this, and I don't want to perpetuate this as prophecy, but I think when we're trying to find application in ancient texts, we can use this. The community continues and says this, "In the last time, their bad deeds will be manifest to all Israel and many will perceive their wrongdoing and reject them and be disgusted with them because of their criminal arrogance. And when the glory of Judah is made manifest, the simple hearted folk of Ephraim will withdraw from their company and abandon the ones who deceived them and ally themselves with the God of Israel."

Hank Smith: 01:02:13 That sounds like Jesus to me, Josh.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:02:17 Doesn't it?

Hank Smith: 01:02:19 And those who followed him, right?

- Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:02:21 Yeah. "The simple hearted folk of Ephraim." And as Latter-day Saints, we often talk about the connection between the ancient tribe of Ephraim and the modern covenant people. And while Ephraim does get a bad rap in this text, I don't want to overstep that the prideful in Ephraim actually get called out for their lies and their deception and trying to tell people that they're more righteous than they are. This simple hearted folk of Ephraim will withdraw from their company. And man, if there's a group that I want to be a part of, it's that simple hearted group of Ephraim.
- Hank Smith: 01:02:55 It reminds me of Peter, James, and John, the fishermen of Galilee, the simple hearted folk of Ephraim. They followed the Lord, turned their back on the Pharisees. What a great commentary. That's right out of the Dead Sea Scrolls?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:03:09 Yep, that's directly from a text called peshar, Nahum, which is numbered 4Q169. But that's what it talks about, I can't help but fill akin to a text like that and wanting to say, "Yeah, that's who I want to be. I want to be a simple hearted folk of Ephraim." Maybe that's what we can call this episode, simple hearted folk of Ephraim.
- Hank Smith: 01:03:32 I wanted to read something from Elder Holland because we talked about that the Lord is going to bring down this lustful city. He described how serious this was way back in the 1900s, way back in October of 1998, he talked about sexual sin, "Exploiting the body of another," which means exploiting his or her soul. And he said, "In doing so, one desecrates the atonement of Christ which saved that soul and which makes possible the gift of eternal life." And then he said this, "And I can see why the Lord is coming down so hard on this particular sin." He says, "And when one mocks the Son of righteousness, one steps into a realm of heat hotter and holier than the noon day sun. You cannot do so and not be burned." And it sounds like Nineveh has reached the breaking point.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:04:27 Yeah. And I think this is the right time to bring it up. In Habakkuk chapter two, we're going to get the exact same warning as Habakkuk is speaking, but in Habakkuk chapter two verse 15, we read, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness." We get these twin sins of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity. So it's another message that's going to continue as we move through the prophets, we get a glimpse of it here with Nineveh. But Nineveh is not by any means the only nation in the history of the world that is guilty of these sins. I think we can look in the world today and we can say the exact same thing. Those words of Elder

Holland weren't just being said in 1990, but are equally important in 2022.

- Hank Smith: 01:05:19 Absolutely. The fall of Nineveh, that's the book of Nahum. Josh, what's the major takeaway then from Nahum? If I'm at home listening, what would you say, "Okay, I've read my three chapters because of Josh's help, I was able to understand it, at least some of it. What's the major takeaway then?"
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:05:40 I'm always one who loves people's last words. And I don't know if these were his last words or not, but in verses 18 and 19, I have cause to pause as I read these verses. He says this, after everything has been destroyed and Nineveh is now no longer the grandeur that it was, he says, "Thy shepherds slumber, Oh king of Assyria. Thy nobles shall dwell in the dust, thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them. There is no healing of thy bruise, thy wound is grievous. All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee, for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" I pause because the idea here is that the shepherd of Assyria has forsaken them.
- 01:06:28 And the fact that we're bringing in shepherd language that we see in other places such as 1 Kings 22:17, or Zechariah 10:2, this shepherd has left them. But the ultimate message is going back to the beginning of the text, "And our shepherd will not leave us." Going back to verse seven in Nahum chapter one, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And he knoweth them," and again, I'm going to use this other translation, "to those who seek refuge in him." Nineveh put their trust in the wrong shepherd. And because of that, they were led astray. But we are disciples of the Good Shepherd, who if we find refuge in Him, we will be protected.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:13 Yeah. Man, after you read that verse 19, it almost felt like a, "Thus we see," was coming from Mormon. This is Alma 30:60, "Thus we see the end of him who perverted the ways of the Lord, thus we see that the Devil will not support his children at the last day, but thus speedily drag them down to hell." And then you did your own thus we see, Josh. Thus we see those who put their trust in the true shepherd will be okay, will be safe. Well, wow. Nahum is quite a book, isn't it?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 01:07:44 I think we should quote it more in General Conference.
- Hank Smith: 01:07:45 Yeah, it needs to be quoted. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble. And he knoweth them that trust in him. What a message.

John Bytheway: 01:07:55 The only Lamanite sermon that we have preserved in the Book of Mormon, Samuel the Lamanite, the actual words of some of the Lamanites when they were righteous. And Samuel the Lamanite, this is Helaman 13:38. This sounds like the flavor of Nahum to me. "Behold, your days of probation are passed. Ye have procrastinated the day of your salvation until it is everlastingly too late and your destruction is made sure. You have sought all the days of your lives for that which ye could not obtain. You have sought for happiness in doing iniquity. Which thing is contrary to the nature of that righteousness, which is in our great and Eternal Head." And I don't know, I just keep thinking that this sounds kind of harsh with the things that God is prophesying here, but there comes a time when it's everlastingly too late. That's what I was thinking of.

01:08:46 And the consequences do come. And of all of the lies that the adversary tells us, I think of 2 Nephi 28. There's no devil, there's no hell. The one that's not stated there that I think is implied is, there's no hurry, take your time. And I think all the consequences are now coming for the wickedness. And so maybe I was looking at it a little more negatively than you guys were, because I love those verses in there too about he knows those who trust him, but when I apply it to myself, I think get your act together now, don't procrastinate that as Samuel the Lamanite said. The time comes when it's everlastingly too late and there's always a grace period, but the grace period runs out even on your credit cards, right? The grace period comes to an end.

01:09:34 Please join us for part two of this podcast.



|                    |          |  |
|--------------------|----------|--|
| John Bytheway:     | 00:00:03 | Welcome to Part II of Dr. Josh Matson. Josh, what have you got for us for Habakkuk?  |
| Dr. Joshua Matson: | 00:00:10 | I think it would be appropriate to start with my story of Habakkuk. I actually ran into Habakkuk as a 19-year-old pre-missionary, getting ready to leave on my mission. I was attending a temple session in the Idaho Falls Temple for the first time. And as you walk past the recommend desk into the temple, the doorway that goes into the chapel above it is a reference to Habakkuk chapter 2 verse 20. And I remember as a 19-year-old looking up and reading the words of Habakkuk 2:20, "But the Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him," and asking, "Who is Habakkuk?"   |
| Hank Smith:        | 00:00:52 | Yeah, who is that?   |
| Dr. Joshua Matson: | 00:00:54 | "And why was he so important that we're putting his name up on the wall of the temple in Idaho Falls?" That was my introduction to Habakkuk. I actually have loved the book ever since. We'll talk about the context of 2:20 because it's going to make a lot of sense of why that verse is there and also why it's really impactful for a temple.   |
|                    | 00:01:13 | But the name Habakkuk is the first thing that catches my eye. The root for Habakkuk is somewhat unknown, but it's really close to a word that's used frequently in Genesis to unfold, clasp or embrace. Habakkuk has something to do with this idea of embracing or clasping or unfolding. And I found it used in two different ways in Genesis. The first way is embracing clasping or embracing in kinship. And so we see this between particularly Jacob and Esau, Jacob and his wife, and Jacob and his grandchildren, Ephraim and Manasseh. When Genesis 29:13, Genesis 33:4, and Genesis 48:10, the same root for the name Habakkuk is used to describe how Israel interacts with his relationships of others. And for me, I get excited about the idea of viewing God as one who embraces us in an embrace of kinship and love. |

|                    |          |   |
|--------------------|----------|---|
| John Bytheway:     | 00:02:19 | Absolutely.   |
| Hank Smith:        | 00:02:20 | Yeah, that's beautiful.   |
| Dr. Joshua Matson: | 00:02:22 | And the fact that each of these references reference Jacob or Israel, I also love the idea of the people of Israel, us, the covenant people of Israel, that we do the same thing with everybody who's in our community, that we have a clasp and embrace or we unfold any member in a clasp of kinship. That's the first take that we can take from Habakkuk and it's very instructive and I love it.   |
|                    | 00:02:50 | The other one I think actually fits the text a little bit better, and that's from Genesis chapter 32, verse 24, when we get a reference to a clasp in regards to wrestling, when we get Jacob wrestling with the angel and he's going to clasp or embrace or unfold in wrestling the angel. Habakkuk is amazingly fit for this idea of a wrestle because the entire book... Well at least chapters 1 and 2 are a back and forth between Habakkuk and Jehovah, between God, as Habakkuk prays and Jehovah responds.  |
| Hank Smith:        | 00:03:33 | He's wrestling with a question, right?  |
| Dr. Joshua Matson: | 00:03:35 | With two questions that God is going to bring to him. I love this idea that our relationship with God is a wrestle. Sometimes we approach heaven too obliquely. We say, "Oh, I can't get upset with God, I can't argue with God, I can't wrestle with God." And one thing that I like to tell my students all the time is, "Friends, I think God can handle it." If we're frustrated with God or if we don't understand something, I think God can handle it if we shake our fists sometimes and say, "God, why can't I understand this? Or why are you doing this?" And that's what Habakkuk is doing, is he's coming to God and he's saying, "Let's wrestle. Let's wrestle with what I'm struggling with." So I think the name fits perfectly for what we're about to read in the text of Habakkuk. |
| John Bytheway:     | 00:04:26 | Awesome. I love looking at Old Testament names because so often they do seem to indicate something of their mission. I kept thinking of a clasp or embrace as also kaphar, isn't that a similar...  |
| Dr. Joshua Matson: | 00:04:39 | Yeah. And that we're looking more is directly with a hand clasp because you've got kuf or kaph in the Hebrew, which actually means hand or fist. Interestingly enough, that word is going to be used here in Habakkuk and is going to give us another level of understanding as we read through it. But yeah, I love this   |

idea of a wrestle. And we can draw the obvious parallels between Jacob and Genesis or Enos in the Book of Mormon and this idea of, do we wrestle with God? Do we really want to engage in that wrestle so that we can truly learn truth directly from the source of truth, our Heavenly Father?

- John Bytheway: 00:05:17 You just used the phrase engage in the wrestle. Sheri Dew gave a talk up at BYU-Idaho. You can go to BYU-Idaho's website, I think it's called Will You Engage in The Wrestle? She later wrote a book called Worth the Wrestle, just about that very idea. If you want to get your answer you can, but are you willing to engage in the wrestle?
- Hank Smith: 00:05:37 Yeah. She says, "Questions are not just good, they are vital because the ensuing spiritual wrestle leads to answers to knowledge and to revelation and also leads to greater faith." We can link this talk in our show notes, John. Just go to followhim.co. We'll put Sheri's talk there in the show notes because it's a great reference to what Josh has been talking about.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:06:00 And it's endorsed by Elder Holland's who was at BYU Idaho the next week and actually said, "You should listen to everything Sister Dew just taught you."
- Hank Smith: 00:06:08 Oh, that's great.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:06:09 I love that prophetic endorsement.
- John Bytheway: 00:06:11 And you'll also get extra credit points in my class. I find if I want my students really want them to do something, I just make it extra credit.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:06:21 So good. So Habakkuk, we understand his name. Now to give a historical setting, like Nahum, we have to do some investigative work to find out when Habakkuk is written because just like Nahum all we get about Habakkuk is the burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see. And there's some interesting parallels there that we can draw from. But the investigative work that we need to do actually is in verse 6. So in verse 6 of Habakkuk, "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs." The Chaldeans here is a reference to the Neo Babylonians who are going to come and take over stewardship of what we would call the holy land from the Assyrians.

- 00:07:09 They're going to destroy Ninevah in 612, so you can see the natural flow from Nahum to Habakkuk. We move from the Assyrians to the Babylonians. It's interesting with verse 6 and then if we would continue in verse 7, 8, 9, this makes it seem aware that Habakkuk is describing that people are already aware that the Babylonians have destroyed Nineveh and that they are marching across nations including the Battle of Carchemish, which takes place in 605 BC, that people are familiar that they're starting to be on the move but they haven't yet made their way to the kingdom of Judah and to Jerusalem. So we're kind of in this sweet spot of some time between 605 BC and the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem in 586, 587 BC.
- Hank Smith: 00:08:00 That's Lehi's time period, right?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:08:02 Exactly. So Habakkuk could very much be one of those contemporaries with Lehi. And everything that we're seeing here is part of that context that we're familiar with.
- John Bytheway: 00:08:17 I'm so glad you said what you said a second ago because I've always thought Chaldeans equals Babylonians, but you called them Neo Babylonians so it means they kind of took over.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:08:28 We do this with the Assyrians as well. We have the Neo Assyrian Empire and we have the Babylonian Empire. So the reference to Neo Babylonians is the fact that we have people inhabiting Babylon well before the rise of the Babylonian empire. For scholars, a way to be able to delineate between people who are inhabiting Babylon let's say in the second millennium BC and this Neo Babylonian empire that's going to come and destroy Nineveh and destroy Jerusalem and continue to expand as an empire, they're referred to as the Neo Babylonians because they're new, that's Neo, so the new Babylonians because they're closer to our time. And so that delineates from the older Babylonians who would've existed prior to that.
- Hank Smith: 00:09:16 It sounds to me, am I reading this right, that Habakkuk is struggling with the idea that the Babylonians are going to be successful?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:09:25 Yeah. So there's two things. The outline of Habakkuk is Habakkuk gives two prayers, one at the beginning of chapter 1 and one at the end of chapter 1. So in Habakkuk chapter 1 verses 2 through 4, we get Habakkuk's first prayer to God and he says this, "Oh Lord, how long shall I cry and thou wilt not hear? Even cry out unto thee of violence and thou wilt not save. Why dost thou shew me iniquity and cause me to behold grievance? For spoiling and violence are before me and there

are that rise up strife and contention. Therefore, the law is slacked and judgment doth never go forth for the wicked doth compass about the righteous. Therefore, wrong judgment proceedeth."

00:10:12 What Habakkuk is saying in this first prayer is, "God, why aren't you listening to me? I'm constantly praying." And maybe it's not just Habakkuk, maybe it's children of Judah and the people that are living as covenant Israel, "But how long are we going to cry and you're not going to hear?" And I can see it on John's face that he already knows exactly the parallel in the modern days that we want to go with, right?

John Bytheway: 00:10:36 Yep, it's right there in the footnote.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:10:41 So this is Joseph Smith's plea in Liberty Jail. "Oh Lord, where art thou? And where is the pavilion that covereth thy hiding place?" What I also find fascinating is these same words are in Psalm 13 while we get them in the Doctrine and Covenants and we're familiar with them there and now we're being introduced to them here in Habakkuk. When we go to Psalm 13 and we look at verses two and three, we see the similar language. "How long shall I take counsel in my soul having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? Consider and hear me, oh Lord, my God. Lighten my eyes lest I sleep the sleep of death."

Hank Smith: 00:11:23 Poor guy is struggling.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:11:24 Habakkuk is perhaps drawing upon that language of the Psalms and trying to say, "Lord, am I just wasting my time?" As I think of the numerous people that I've talked to and that I've interacted with who say, "Josh, I just don't feel like my prayers leave my bedroom. I kneel down at the side of my bed and I pray to God and I feel like it hits the ceiling and it falls right back down on the floor. I don't feel like God is listening to my prayers." And that's Habakkuk. Habakkuk has just reached the point where he looks and he goes, "God, are you just never going to listen to me? Are you never going to answer my prayers and the needs that I have in my life?"

00:12:07 The needs that people have, and that's verse 4, the word judgment is actually probably better translated here as justice. It's the Hebrew word mishpat. "The law is slacked and justice to never go forth. Therefore wronged justice proceedeth." Habakkuk's not just saying, "Why aren't you listening to me and what I need, but don't you see all of the injustice that's happening in the world? When are you going to wake up and

take care of us?" I can't think of a more connective way to see Habakkuk than to think of the millions of people who've prayed the same prayer that we see in Joseph and in Habakkuk and in the Psalms.

John Bytheway: 00:12:50 I'm so glad you brought that up because that is so many people's question as you have said. I just don't seem to get answers. Isaiah says it in his call in Isaiah 6 when the Lord says this, "Your mission's not going to go well." Well, how long? Well, until the cities are wasted without inhabitant. I think Alma and Amulek say it when they're in prison, "How long?" It's not, "I don't believe in you anymore," it's, "I believe in you, but how long do we have to wait?" And probably more places than that. Liberty Jail one and Psalm 13:1 is beautiful that you quoted, but I'm glad you brought it up because many have that question. And so just knowing this to know, "Hey, you're not the only one who has asked this, but hang on."

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:13:37 And what an introduction to the wrestle. The wrestle that we're going to have is a very intimate one. People who I've had this conversation with and even the conversation I've had with myself is that is a hard hitting question, that is high adventure as we may say. That's not a 100 level class question. That's a 900 level class where we're saying, "We really want an answer to this." That's Habakkuk's first prayer is verses 2 through 4. And then God is going to respond in verse 5. And I love how in the King James text we see this little paragraph mark in verse 5. That's one thing that can help us keep track of these prayers and the responses from God, is as we see those paragraph markers, that shows in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts that were used for Habakkuk or any of the texts in the Old Testament, there was a break there in the manuscript. So the oldest versions of Habakkuk said, "We need to think of it differently verse 5 from verse 4. We need to change thought." So that's just helpful as we're looking through the text.

00:14:44 So now God's response is going to be verses 5 through 11 because verse 12 will start a new section. John, as you said, Habakkuk struggling with the fact that it's the Babylonians that are going to happen because God's answer to that heartfelt plea of, "Where are you? Why aren't you listening?", is, "I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you."

John Bytheway: 00:15:07 Verse 5. Mm-hmm.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:15:08 And we even get language if we went further back, "That wonder marvelously for I will work a work in your days, which you will not believe, though it be told you."

John Bytheway: 00:15:18 That's just kind of like, "I'm going to answer your prayer and in a way that you did not think it was coming." Is that what that means?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:15:25 Yeah. And it says, "I'm even going to tell you it and you're going to be surprised." And that's why we need to know the context that this is prior to the Babylonians coming in and in an essence executing justice upon the kingdom of Judah who has abandoned God.

00:15:41 And so that very question he says, "I'm going to do this." And then what he does is he foretells. Starting in verse 6 all the way through verse 11 is it's a very detailed idea of, "I'm going to raise up the Chaldeans or the Neo Babylonians." And what they're going to do is they are going to be terrible and dreadful we read in verse 7. "Their judgment," again connect that verse to verse 4, this is justice, "Their justice and their dignity shall proceed of themselves. And they're going to be swifter than leopards and more fierce than the evening wolves and their horsemen shall spread themselves. Their horsemen shall come from afar and they shall fly as the eagle that hasteneth to eat. They shall come all for violence. Their faces shall sup up as the east wind..." Keep in mind that east wind was always terrible because that's the hot wind that's going to bring plagues and is going to bring famine. And so they're going to come and they're going to be just as impactful as plagues and/or famine in your lives and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

00:16:43 The answer to Habakkuk's first prayer is, "Where's your justice, God?" and God saying, "Well, the justice is about to come with the Babylonians."

Hank Smith: 00:16:53 Which is fascinating because the Babylonians aren't exactly the righteous...

John Bytheway: 00:16:58 Yeah. He's using others, the Babylonians, as an instrument to accomplish what he wants to do even though the Babylonians might not be aware of it, the Neo Babylonians.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:17:07 Exactly.

Hank Smith: 00:17:08 I'm trying to put myself in Habakkuk's position going, "What? Well, yeah, you're answering my prayer but not with them, please. No, not with them."

John Bytheway: 00:17:17 That's verse 5, "which you will not believe, though it be told you."

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:17:22 And to be honest, what you've just demonstrated is that we all have the same reaction, and so does Habakkuk. So now we get to Habakkuk second prayer that starts in verse 12 and he says, "Wait a second, art thou not from everlasting, oh Lord my God, mine holy one? We shall not die. Oh Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and, O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction?" I actually put a question mark in there. It seems much more like a question in verse 12. "Them? Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I just want justice, but not this way."

Hank Smith: 00:18:01 I didn't want this answer.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:18:03 Yeah. Then he says, "Wait a second," verse 13, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." Wait a second, Lord. You know about the Babylonians. How can you not only look upon them but utilize them to execute justice? "Wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" So he's saying, "Aren't we more righteous than the Babylonians?"

Hank Smith: 00:18:33 "You wanted justice, right?"

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:18:35 Yeah. And this parallel is so good with the Book of Mormon because isn't this what Jacob tells the Nephites? "Aren't they more righteous than you even though you think of yourself more righteous than them?" We're getting that same human tendency of saying, "I'm righteous and they're wicked. And if God's going to execute justice, God's got to do it but he can't do it through them because they're not righteous enough to do that."

Hank Smith: 00:19:00 Wow.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:19:01 So Habakkuk is now back to that struggle. It's back to that wrestle. "You're saying you're going to do this, but wait, I still need clarification. I still need to better understand what's going to happen." And he seeks to get understanding in a way that for me is fascinating.

- 00:19:20 If we continue reading in verse 14 of Habakkuk chapter 1, "And make us men as the fishes of the sea as the creeping things that have no ruler over them." This is direct reference back to Genesis chapter 1, verse 26. So if you remember when God placed man in the garden of Eden, and I use man there as mankind, because in Genesis 1, remember God's creating Adam and Eve at the same time.
- 00:19:49 The rib story is coming in Genesis 2, but in Genesis 1 he's making man and woman at the same time. But look at the wording in verse 26. "And God said, 'Let us make man in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.'"
- 00:20:12 So God created men in his own image. In the image of God created he/him. Male and female created he/them. This isn't just a statement of men, but this is mankind. This is men and women that we would know from Genesis chapter 1 verses 26 and 27. "You set us up as like covenant people to be over everything. Why are you letting the Babylonians come in and overtake us? What happened to your promise?"
- 00:20:40 So now we're getting to a new question. The new question is no longer, "God, why aren't you executing justice and why aren't you listening to me?" It's now, "Why are you doing it in this way?" He then says, "They," meaning back to the Babylonians, "Take up all of them with the angle. They catch them in their net and gather them in their drag. Therefore, they rejoice and are glad." So he is using fishermen language.
- John Bytheway: 00:21:04 Fishermen are called anglers. That's cool.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:21:07 So they, these Babylonians, they're going to take all these people up that you said are going to be rulers over the earth and over the people. And then he gets at one of the problems in verse 16. "Therefore they sacrifice unto their net and burn incense unto their drag because by them their portion is fat and their meat is plenteous." So he is saying, "Wait a second, you're going to use these people who worship the items that they use to conquer other people. They are worshiping their own hands or the images of their own hands or the work of their own hands instead of God. And then he ends with this question, "Shall they therefore empty their net and not spare continually to slay the nations?"

Hank Smith: 00:21:51 This is fascinating to me that it's so human. "Are you going to hear my prayers?" "Yes, I'll answer your prayers." "Not that way."

John Bytheway: 00:22:00 "Yeah, not that way." It's like Jonah, I guess, in the series to repent. And they do and he's mad about it. But here in the summary at the beginning of the chapter, he's troubled that the wicked can be thus employed. There's something that doesn't make sense to him about that.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:22:15 As we go back to that and we go back to that word, massa, this idea of a burden, I think that that's part of it too. If we do look at it in this traditional interpretation, not just prophetic exposition, but here Habakkuk is having a burden of knowing that God is utilizing other nations to bring about his work against Israel, covenant Israel in this sense, or the nation of Judah. There's a prophetic burden that comes with that.

00:22:44 One thing I love about studying Hebrew is when we translate it into English, it's okay to have these multiple interpretations because the word is trying to act in this way and in that way. We can have that prophetic exposition in Nahum and then we can have this idea of a heavy burden on the shoulders of Habakkuk because of what he knows.

Hank Smith: 00:23:07 What happens next, Josh? Does the Lord answer again?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:23:10 Yeah. So this is one of the places where chapter breaks actually do us a disservice because verse 1 in chapter 2 actually belongs with the end of the prayer in verse 17 and it's kind of this in between. So Habakkuk has just given the prayer. Now he's going to say something that's really important for the rest of Habakkuk, but he says this, "I will stand upon my watch and set me upon the tower and will watch to see what he will say unto me and what I shall answer when I am reproved." He ends with the question, but he says, "I know I'm called to be a prophet, to be a watchman on the tower," Ezekiel 3:17 language, "And I will do what God has asked me to do. I will watch as God has asked me to watch. And even in this case I will even stand reproved if God wants to reprove me."

John Bytheway: 00:24:02 It's like, "I know I'm going to get reproved, but I still want to know what he's going to say."

Hank Smith: 00:24:06 Yeah, he's not going to love what I just said so I'm waiting patiently to hear the answer.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:24:10 And with this I just think one of my favorite things that I'm sure both of you do the same thing in your classes, I love in the Bible Dictionary the discussion about prayer. And I know it's frequently discussed in classrooms, but when we look at where we are in Habakkuk and we take a pause for a second and we go to what it says about prayer in the Bible Dictionary, I think we find something very impactful.

00:24:35 In the second to last paragraph, "As soon as we learn the true relationship in which we stand toward God, namely God is our Father and we are His children, then at once prayer becomes natural and instinctive on our part. Many of the so-called difficulties about prayer arise from forgetting this relationship. Prayer is the act by which the will of the Father and the will of the child are brought into correspondence with each other. The object of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to secure for ourselves and for others blessings that God is already willing to grant but are made conditional on our asking for them. Blessings require some work or effort on our part, wrestle, before we can obtain them. Prayer is a form of work and is an appointed means for obtaining the highest of all blessings."

John Bytheway: 00:25:23 That's great stuff.

Hank Smith: 00:25:25 Yeah, that fits this book exactly.

John Bytheway: 00:25:27 There's a verse and the King James English is a little hard for me to understand, but the way it says it, and we all know James 1:5, we're not sitting here without James 1:5, but James 4:2 says "Ye have not because ye ask not." And that sounds like that. You just had to ask what you just read there.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:25:46 Yeah. And Habakkuk is I think coming to that. He starts with this indignation and says, "No, why aren't you doing justice God?" And then he says, "Wait a second. That's not how I would do it, but now I understand better that your ways are better than my ways. And I am willing to submit my will to your will. And I am willing to understand that what you are doing is with a grander perspective than what I would do if I was in your shoes." In essence, he gives that willing to submit in verse 1. It gets lost because you transfer chapters. Sometimes when we read chapter 1 on a Wednesday and then on Thursday we start chapter 2, we forget how it's tied into that prayer that Habakkuk is praying to God.

Hank Smith: 00:26:34 And the Lord answers him again.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:26:36 Yeah. And this is a great place because not very many places in scripture do we get what comes next. And verse 2, "And the Lord answered me and said, 'Write the vision and make it plain upon the tables that he may run that readeth it.'" And going back to what we talked about prophetic exposition in Nahum, look at what the Lord says, "Write the vision. Write what you see and make it plain upon tables. So you use your language to help make it more understandable so that he may run that readeth it."

John Bytheway: 00:27:09 Great.

Hank Smith: 00:27:10 The prophet's got to use his own mind to take this revelation, put it into words that people can use.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:27:17 And not just use, but do. It's not enough just to know we could quote all of Habakkuk, but if it doesn't cause us to run or to start to move forward along the covenant path, Habakkuk is a book that's intended to be a book of action. And then we get this next part. So the Lord hasn't quite answered yet, he's saying, "Okay, you stood up and you said you're going to be the prophet that I need you to be. I need you to write what you're about to see. I need you to make it more understandable," But then he says this fascinating line in verse 3, the Lord says to Habakkuk, "For the vision is yet for an appointed time. But at the end it shall speak and not lie, though it tarry, wait for it because it will surely come. It will not tarry."

John Bytheway: 00:28:01 I underlined the "Wait for it." I just thought that's awesome. It's the Lord saying, "Wait for it. It's coming. All of these how longs will be answered eventually. Just wait for it. It won't tarry, it'll come."

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:28:16 And I love going back to these commentaries. As we had said at the beginning, one of the best preserved commentaries from the Dead Sea Scrolls is actually a commentary on the book of Habakkuk. And I think this is an appropriate time to insert what we see right here.

00:28:30 So after he says, "Write these things down and see them," it's interesting how the Qumran community interpreted it. They said, "This refers to the fact that God told Habakkuk to write down what is going to happen to the generation to come. But when that period would be complete, he did not make known to him. When it says, 'So that with ease someone can read it,' this refers to the teacher of righteousness to whom God made known all the mysterious revelations of his servants, the prophets."

- 00:29:02 In an essence, the Qumran community is saying, "What Habakkuk saw was going to be understood by them who experienced what he's trying to describe. In his own day, he's probably not going to understand why he's saying what he's saying." As interesting as that part is, they then go on, "For still the prophecy is for a specific period. It testifies of the time and does not deceive." Their interpretation of this says, "This means that the last days will be long, much longer than the prophets had said, for God's revelations are truly mysterious."
- 00:29:36 It's easy for us to say, "Well the Babylonians are going to come in the next 20 years and wipe out Judah and Jerusalem and that's going to fulfill everything." Even the Qumran community is saying, "Wait a second, yes that happened, but in the Latter-days God is going to stretch out the time." We can't be prideful in thinking we know that this is exactly done. We need to continue to ponder it and look for this in our own lives. I think that makes the connection between antiquity and today that we can say, "As I read these texts, how can it be fulfilled in my life as I'm striving to live the gospel as best I can."
- 00:30:14 Verse 4 in that context then is, "Behold his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith." So that's the answer. But now God's actually going to answer the prayer. So he's saying, "Here's what you need to do, Habakkuk. Get ready." And he is going to answer it by pronouncing five woes upon his people. We see the word woe in verse 6, in verse 9, in verse 12, in verse 15, and in verse 19. These five woes we can then separate and say, "Here are the actions that are going to cause justice to come upon the people of Israel."
- Hank Smith: 00:30:51 Wow, that's the dreaded five woer, John. That's as woe as you go, isn't it? There's a lot of woes here. So what are the woes, Josh? What do the woes mean? It means that these are things that God doesn't like?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:31:08 Yeah. And this is God's approach. It's saying, "This is what I'm noticing that you're doing." Even though verse 5 doesn't have a woe, it really ties into verse 6. So if we start in verse 6 where the woe comes in, "Woe to him that increases that which is not his." The idea here usury or interest. And if you'll remember in the law of Moses, the Jews were prohibited from charging interest on one another or getting rich off of one another as a means of taking advantage of one because of their situation. The references to that are Deuteronomy 20:19, Exodus 22:25, Leviticus 25:35. These are each commandments given by God to tell the Israelites that they're not supposed to get rich off of their brothers and sisters.

00:31:59 You may be reading this and saying, "Josh, wait a second, you said verse 5 has to do with verse 6." Well verse 5 says, "Because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, whom enlargeth his desires as hell and is as death and cannot be satisfied, gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth upon him all people."

00:32:21 Now in my scriptures I've circled the word wine because the word wine is not in our oldest manuscripts of Habakkuk. The word wine here is spelled with three Hebrew letters, a heth, a yod, and a nun. The difference between the word wine and the word wealth is a waw instead of a yod in between the heth and the nun. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, they actually have wealth. So instead of wine, we should read verse 5 to say, "Yay also because he transgresseth by wealth."

John Bytheway: 00:33:01 Interesting.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:33:03 And it's the wealth that causes him to be proud. Not the wine, but the wealth. "And it keepeth him at home and he enlargeth his desires." He can't get enough of it. He needs to accumulate more wealth and more wealth and will never be satisfied. Verse 6 and verse 5 actually go together really well, but if you don't know that the word wine there is a mistranslation through history, you might think, "What does wine have to do with-

Hank Smith: 00:33:29 That's a great connection. How often do we try to do that, to try to make money off of other people's difficult situations?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:33:37 I think the Lord knew what he was talking about in the law of Moses when he's saying, "This is not how you are to accumulate possessions and wealth, is off the backs of your brothers and sisters."

John Bytheway: 00:33:49 Not a Zion way to do things.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:33:51 Yeah. And John, I love your reference because of Moses 7:18, "There was no poor among them." What does poor have to do with building Zion? It's because of the fact that we often talk about consecration, but we also need to give the idea that Habakkuk is giving us that we're not trying to build wealth off of our brothers and sisters.

00:34:12 The next one in verse 9 is, "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house." This actually connects again with what we have. A better translation of coveted here is a translation that I read that actually changes the word to

fraudulent profits. So woe to him that gets fraudulent profits an evil covetousness to his house that he may set his nest on high and he may be delivered from the power of evil." Now that word power comes back to what we talked about... I told you that we'd come back to this grasp, the kaphar, the word there is kaph or fist or reach or hand. So what this individual is doing is he's trying to amass enough profit to protect himself from the powers of evil, saying, "If I get rich enough, evil cannot impact me."

- Hank Smith: 00:35:07 Seems like a backwards way of thinking, but okay.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:35:09 And Habakkuk is saying, "This is a false hope, that you will not be able to ever run away from evil if you're participating in these abilities of gaining profits."
- 00:35:21 Verse 10 then makes more sense when it says, "Thou has consulted shame to thy house." Another word for consulted there, if you look at the footnotes on 10 is devised or schemed. So, "Thou has schemed shame to thy house by cutting off many people and has sinned against thy soul." The idea here is that you're not going to get away with this. The more people that you fraud out of money... And this is one of those times where I remember talking about the outer darkness or telestial kingdom with my students and I say, "This is reserved for people who are whoremungers and who love to make a lie and people who make fraud and telemarketers and all of those" only half joking. But that's what this idea here is, that if you're going to try and defraud people out of their money, then you're going to sin against your soul.
- 00:36:14 And I think that there's an innate belief within all people that if they participate in those activities, they know that they're taking advantage of someone and that their soul is bearing testimony to them that they should not do what they're doing. And that idea that they're sinning against their own soul, I love the definition of sin.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:36 "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." That one?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:36:41 Yep.
- John Bytheway: 00:36:41 Yeah, James. It's in the book of James, I think.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:36:44 That idea of the fact that sinning is openly rebelling and knowing what you're doing is wrong. And that's what he's

saying here, is that, "If you're fraudulating people out of this, that's the case." I don't know how much comfort that brings to the person who's being frauded, but at least God is being aware. And we're going back to that justice. "Is there not justice for these people?", and the justice is there.

00:37:06 The last note that I might make on just this woe is verse 11 is fascinating to me because it says, "For the stone shall cry out of the wall and the beam out of the timber shall answer it." And I can't help but think of the Savior on Palm Sunday when people are telling him, "Hey, you need to keep these crowds down. You're going to get this attention of Rome that we don't want." And he says that if they should hold their peace, the stones shall cry out.

Hank Smith: 00:37:33 The stones shall cry out of the wall. Wow.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:37:36 I think we get a great connection there with what the Savior was trying to teach, is that even what we may call inanimate objects are going to bear testimony against those who are wicked but also bear testimony of truth to those who are righteous.

Hank Smith: 00:37:51 Yeah. It's like, "If these walls could talk." Let's keep going through these woes.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:37:55 We can move a little faster. I think these are fairly straightforward. In verse 12, we get the next woe from 12 and 13, "Woe unto him that buildeth a town with blood." This idea of political arrogance. "I'm going to buildeth a town on the blood of the people and establish a city out of iniquity."

00:38:13 There's numerous examples from the ancient world and even our modern world of people who build great names to themselves, but on the backs of innocent individuals. "The Lord of hosts that the people shall labor in the very fire and the people shall worry themselves from the vanity." The phrase Lord of hosts, this is Jehovah, the God of Sabaoth, the hosts or the armies of heaven. He's aware and your city cannot stand against him.

00:38:43 Verse 14 really doesn't fit. And some people actually think that verse 14 actually belonged in chapter 3 and not here. But I think that there's actually something instructive here of the Lord then saying, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." That all the world, no matter where you're at, is going to know the glory,

the kavod, that presence of Jehovah, that divine presence that existed over the tabernacle that led the children of Israel in the wilderness, all the world will know about it.

- Hank Smith: 00:39:16 Yeah, you can build a town on blood and establish a city by iniquity, but it's still on the earth, which is the Lord's.
- John Bytheway: 00:39:23 Right. And one day everybody will know.
- Hank Smith: 00:39:26 All will know.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:39:28 We talked about the next woe in verses 15 through 17 in this idea of drunkenness and sexual promiscuity. And then the last one, verse 19, we get a, "Woe onto him that saith to wood, 'Awake,' and to the dumb stone, 'Arise'." Here's the idolatry that is present throughout the ancient world, including Israel. I remember talking to an archeologist and I said, "What's the most common thing outside of pottery that we find in Jerusalem, in the surrounding area?" And I was blown away by the response that one of the things that we find most in Jerusalem are idols.
- John Bytheway: 00:40:03 Wow.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:40:03 And for us it's easy to put distance between us and idols. We go, "Oh, I don't build an idol and put it in my bedroom or go to some temple." But in an essence, this is anything that we put our trust in that's not God. And for us, it may even be gold and silver, just not in the form of a small statue.
- John Bytheway: 00:40:22 President Kimball kind of did that thing about some might be surprised to think that the boat, the vacation, I can't remember all the things he said, that that could be idol worship because like you said, it's anything that's not God that you're giving your reliance and devotion to.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:40:37 Yeah. So God's saying, "Here's your last woe if you're adulterous." And then verse 20, we already talked about it and it's presence in the Idaho Falls temple, but, "The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before him." The end of his response to Habakkuk to me is awe-inspiring because all of the earth includes Habakkuk. God is in an essence saying, "Habakkuk, you have now received your answer and it would be inappropriate for you to continue to be angry with me because I am in my holy temple and I have given you my answer."
- Hank Smith: 00:41:15 "I answered your prayer."

John Bytheway: 00:41:17 So, "Let all the earth keep silence. That includes you, Habakkuk." Is that what you mean?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:41:23 Yeah. I just think this is such an instructive story for you and I because we can wrestle with the Lord. But when the Lord gives us an answer, it's inappropriate for us to continue to rail and say God is not answering our prayers. When we know that we've received an answer, it's time for us to keep silence before him.

00:41:44 What's fascinating to me in this sense is that in the Dead Sea Scrolls in the commentary on Habakkuk, it actually ends with verse 20 and there's plenty of space on the scroll where they could have continued into chapter 3. But Habakkuk chapter 2, verse 20 is the last verse that's on the commentary of this. And I love what they say in regards to this last verse.

00:42:10 In the peshet Habakkuk it says that, "This refers to all the gentiles who have worshiped stone and wood. In the day of judgment, God will exterminate all those who worship false gods as well as the wicked from the earth." The silence is not people choosing to be silent, but that God eventually will silence all of those who are going against him and he will stand alone in his temple and will have silenced all the other gods and all the other voices. Eventually, all of the tumult and all of the naysayers about God, eventually they will be silenced by the God of Israel.

Hank Smith: 00:42:50 I can see that. The Lord is not an idol, he's in his temple. So chapter 3 then is Habakkuk responding but responding with praise?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:43:00 Yeah. Habakkuk chapter 3 is this just enigma in the Old Testament because if we read the first verse, "A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, upon Shigionoth." What a great word. What that word is, at least most scholars have come to the conclusion, that's the melody. So what Habakkuk is actually giving us is he's giving us a song. So he's just prayed, he's just had this experience, this wrestle with God. And now Habakkuk is going to sing a song.

Hank Smith: 00:43:33 I think I feel a song coming on. Okay.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:43:39 The melody of that song is this Shigionoth, but Habakkuk is now going to give us a psalm. And you see the language, if you look at verse 3, right in the middle, we get that word selah. And if you remember from the Psalms, remember we had "Selah, selah, selah." We're now singing a song. And Habakkuk is going

to give this song, which is his way of taking everything that he just learned from the Lord and making it so that the people can understand and they can run with it.

- Hank Smith: 00:44:11 Yeah, they can remember it too. If you think how... I mean, you can hear a song that you haven't heard in 10, 15 years and all of a sudden you know all the words again. So it makes it easier to remember.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:44:23 Exactly. And the way it's written poetically in ancient Israel they would've been able to recall this as well. We see this and we can get some great insights. A lot of it is just recirculating. What we've seen is that God is displeased with the world and will eventually destroy it, whether by the hands of the Neo Babylonians or others, but also the fact that we need to rejoice. And if we skip forward to verse 13, and I know that's missing a lot of other things, but I think with that context it gives people a good chance to understand. But verse 13 in Habakkuk chapter 3, "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed, thou woundedst the head out of the house of the wicked by discovering the foundation upon unto the neck. Selah" Habakkuk is sitting here and he's saying God is going to work for the salvation of his people and especially for his anointed.
- 00:45:18 And that's any covenant member of Israel who is participating actively in what God has commanded for them to do. And that anointing for us in a modern context takes on even more relevance as we think about the ordinances of the temple.
- Hank Smith: 00:45:35 Oh yeah, that anointed. I'm reading now. This is great stuff.
- John Bytheway: 00:45:41 It does sound like a Psalm, even like 18, "I will rejoice in the Lord, I will join the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength." Sounds like one of our hymns
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:45:53 Yeah. And I mean as we conclude Habakkuk, I think this is a good place. I loved what you discussed with Aaron Shade and his discussion with Hosea and Joel and how he was talking about the idea that when we walk with God, God is helping us to walk. "I love here that God will make me to walk upon mine high places." And that idea of high places is the presence of God and in exalted places like temples. "And God is going to make me walk in his presence. He's going to teach me how to walk, halak, to go in his places." And that's where he ends it. He says, "God is going to teach me." Habakkuk's wrestle turns into a song of jubilant praise and joy that what he learned is that God is actually fighting for justice and is listening to his people's

prayers and that we simply need to trust in him and rejoice in him so that we can have joy.

- Hank Smith: 00:46:54 That's interesting. Josh, I look at chapter 1 verse 2, "Oh Lord, how long shall I cry and thou will not hear?" And then you get to the end and he says, "I heard." That's verse 16. "I heard the Lord is my strength." What's happened between the beginning and the end is this wrestle that has turned out with him saying, "God is really there. He does hear our prayers. He does answer our prayers." It might not be in the way we think, but he does answer our prayers and he does see the injustice that's happening on the earth and he will do something about it.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:47:25 Absolutely. I love that bookend. We see the progress of a prophet. And for me that's really invigorating. It's really encouraging that if I have struggles, if I think that God's not listening to my prayers, if I continue to wrestle, I eventually will hear him.
- Hank Smith: 00:47:41 All right. We are two-thirds of the way done. But Zephaniah, it's three chapters. How is it different than our other two books?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:47:49 From the very beginning, we actually see Zephaniah is different than Nahum and Habakkuk because it starts with the word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah, the son of Cush, the son of Gedaliah, and the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah in the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah. Unlike the other ones where we had to go dig to find context, we don't have to dig very hard here. We've got an exact reference. The Superscription here sets the prophet as prophesying in Judah between 640 and 609 BC. Chapter 1 appears to give us a parallel with 2 Kings chapter 22. So if we want to reference this back into the narrative of Israelite history, we can go back to 2 Kings 22.
- 00:48:34 However, one thing that's interesting about Zephaniah is it appears the text is being written and given prior to Josiah's reforms in 622 BC because we don't have a lot of reference towards the idea that the reforms are happening. And according to verses 2:13, which if we read 2, verse 13 it says, "And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria and will make Nineveh a desolation and a dry like a wilderness." Well we've already talked about Nineveh and Assyria being destroyed back in Nahum. So Zephaniah actually probably would be better placed between Nahum and Habakkuk chronologically speaking.
- Hank Smith: 00:49:17 Oh wow.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:49:18 Because Nineveh is still in power and Josiah hasn't quite reformed yet and that's going to happen in 6:22. So if I was king of the minor prophets, I would move Zephaniah to be more chronologically fit between Nahum and Habakkuk.

Hank Smith: 00:49:34 Well, you can be followHIM's King of the Minor Prophet. We will give you that title.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:49:41 I don't know. You've had some good people on that I think know the text better than I do, so we'll wrestle for it. How about that?

Hank Smith: 00:49:49 What's the essence of this book?

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:49:50 So unlike the other two books where we've had kind of a back and forth or we've had clear delineations with what's happening in the text, Zephaniah could probably be read as one single chapter. We could just start right at the beginning of Zephaniah and continue reading on and it would just continue to flow as one general text. There are some key moments in Zephaniah.

00:50:14 So in verses 2 through 9 of chapter 1, we get this announcement of doom that's about to come upon the people, particularly the people of Judah. There's this announcement of doom that's going to come. And then verses 10 through 18 then describe what that doom is going to be. We get anticipation of doom, an announcement, and then we're going to see exactly what's going to happen, and that's chapter 1.

00:50:40 Chapter 2 verses 1 through 4 is probably where we want to be the most because that's where the prophet Zephaniah says, "You have one last chance to repent. Here's your last chance. Please, please listen and take your chance to repent." And then once we get to verses 5 through 15 in Zephaniah chapter 2, it's prophecies about how the other nations are going to be destroyed. Chapter 3 verses 1 through 13 sets up this city that has puffed itself up in pride.

00:51:11 Again, we can go back to our very first question, "Am I part of this city?" We don't know for sure what city it is, but chapter 3 verses 1 through 13 is that there's this great city that's puffed up that is going to be destroyed by God. Lots of woes there again with chapter 3 verse 1, "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted to the oppressing city." Some people will actually call this the woe against the oppressive city because we don't get any other insights into what the oppressive city is from verse 1 to verse 13. So any city that's being oppressive, this is what God is going to tell you is going to happen.

00:51:50 And then verses 14 through 20 in Zephaniah chapter 3 is a song of rejoicing for Jerusalem, is that Jerusalem the city of peace. So we're getting this juxtaposition between this oppressing city and Jerusalem city of peace that we're going to have two differing outcomes as we move closer and closer to the day of the Lord or this coming of the son of man. Which city do we want to take up residency in? Do we want to be part of the city of oppression or do we want to be part of the city of peace? And Zephaniah is really trying to just set it out there and say, "You choose. Which one do you want to be a part of?"

John Bytheway: 00:52:32 "Here's a no brainer. Which one do you choose?"

Hank Smith: 00:52:36 Yeah. And I love the description, The filthy and polluted versus the city where God is. He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love. He will joy over thee with singing." Lehi like, "Which one do you want? Do you want misery and death or do you want happiness in eternal life? Which one do you want?"

John Bytheway: 00:52:54 Liberty and eternal life. Ooh, that's a tough one.

Hank Smith: 00:52:57 Yeah.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:52:58 If we take everything that we've talked about today and as we talk about what we've studied as we take this as kind of a progressive read, from Nahum through Habakkuk to Zephaniah, what better place to end after all of these woes and destructions than this idea of singing as members of the city of Jerusalem or the city of peace? And even themes that we saw in the earlier texts are going to come up. For example, verse 15 in Zephaniah chapter 3, The Lord hath taken away thy judgements. He hath cast out thine enemy, the king of Israel, even the Lord is in the midst of thee. Thou shalt not see evil anymore."

00:53:37 We had Habakkuk who said, "Wait a second, I'm seeing evil things in my life," if we go to Habakkuk chapter 1 verse 3, "Why dost thou shew me iniquity and cause me to behold grievanceness?" Now we're saying we're not going to see that anymore once we get to the city. And so I really love how these were put together with "Come, follow me" because they're leading us towards where we want to inhabit. And after reading all of these cities and all of these nations being destroyed and all of these woes, what better way to end our week of reading than to see all of these great blessings and especially the blessing that God is in the midst of those who are part of this city?

Hank Smith: 00:54:14 It's a beautiful way to finish. It's nice that these three books were together and it finishes in such a positive note.

John Bytheway: 00:54:19 The manual says, "You might compare these verses to the experiences described in 3 Nephi 17 and ponder how Jesus Christ feels about his people including you."

Hank Smith: 00:54:29 I love that. Verse 19, Zephaniah 3:19, "I will undo all that afflict thee. I will gather her that was driven out. I will get them praise and fame in every land." It reminds me of the Lord saying, "I can do my own work."

John Bytheway: 00:54:43 Yeah.

Hank Smith: 00:54:44 Wow.

Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:54:45 And what that work is, I love... Zephaniah actually kind of shows his hand a little bit in Zephaniah chapter 1 verse 7, because we're going to get to that piece and we're going to get to that. But verse 7, again we're going to draw on that Habakkuk language, "Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord God." There's Habakkuk 2:20 again. "For the day of the Lord is at hand. For the Lord hath prepared a sacrifice. He hath bid his guests."

00:55:12 This most recent general conference I think of Elder Bednar's discussion of the Parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew 22:1-14, Zephaniah is saying that exact same thing, is that, "At the end of days God is going to hold a sacrifice, a feast, and he hath bid his guests to come." Zephaniah is going to go on and talk about these woes and the doom and destruction, but he's ultimately saying, "Wait, don't worry about that part of it. God is going to invite you to be a guest as part of his sacrifice." And we're going to read that and we're going to talk about that at the very end. So don't get too depressed by the doom and gloom in what I'm about to say.

Hank Smith: 00:55:54 Because the end will come.

John Bytheway: 00:55:56 And a way to apply that to us, we have been bidden to feast at the Lord's table.

Hank Smith: 00:56:01 It reminds me of this quote from Elder Holland, October 1997. Wow. We were quoting Elder Holland from the 1990s today. He Filled the Hungry With Good Things is the name of the talk. He says, "Now, if you feel too spiritually maimed to come to the feast, please realize that the church is not a monastery for

perfect people. Though all of us ought to be striving on the road to godliness, know at least one aspect of the church is more like a hospital or an aid station provided for those who are ill and want to get well where one can get an infusion of spiritual nutrition and a supply of sustaining water in order to keep on climbing."

- John Bytheway: 00:56:38 We've been bidden to the feast. And even if you feel spiritually maimed, well it's not a monastery. It's more like a hospital for those who are ill.
- Hank Smith: 00:56:46 Beautiful.
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:56:47 I think taking that and that idea of come, and be a part is the language of Zephaniah too. "Gather yourselves together. Yea, gather together O nation not desired. Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the Lord come upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment." Again, you can read justice there. "Seek righteousness, seek meekness. It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger." Again, I love this idea of the simple folk, the tender, the meek folk of Ephraim if we are willing to be humble, to be able to come to the Lord.
- Hank Smith: 00:57:29 Yeah, I hear that. Repent before it's too late. You still have time. Take advantage of the time that you have, right? Before the decree, before the day of the Lord's anger come upon you. You still have time.
- 00:57:44 Josh. This has been a fantastic day. I've got notes all over. John, do you have notes all over? And now in Nahum and Habakkuk where my pages used to be blank, I've now got colors and notes.
- John Bytheway: 00:57:55 Exactly. Notes where I never had a note before.
- Hank Smith: 00:57:59 Yeah, this has been a great day. I think our listeners, Josh, would be interested in your journey as a Bible scholar and a believing Latter-day Saint. What's that journey been like for you?
- Dr. Joshua Matson: 00:58:11 Well, it actually started humorously. Hank, at the beginning you talked about hearing John Bytheway for the first time when you were 12. I was about 12 years old and I was watching the History Channel on a Sunday. Our family rule was no football until after church. The only two things we could watch before

church were church movies or the History Channel because it had churchy stuff on it.

00:58:33 I remember vividly watching the History Channel and a biblical scholar was being interviewed and talking about the event we talked about earlier, the parting of the Red Sea by God for the children of Israel to leave Egypt. This scholar presented what is very popular among scholars' discussions today that, "There wasn't a parting of the sea. It didn't actually happen, and here's all of our evidence for why that's the case." And my 12-year-old self started yelling at the television. My mother came down and asked, "Josh, what's going on?" At least how I remember it. She may be listening and think, "I don't remember that, Josh." But as I remember it she said, "Josh, why are you yelling at your brother?" And I said, "Because he's lying." And she thought I was talking about my little brother, but I was talking about my brother on the television.

00:59:22 And I remember vividly just committing in my heart and saying, "You know what? I want to have all the credentials that that man has. And I want to have the opportunity to use my education to help people grow in faith and not diminish faith." I, in an essence, wanted to read all the books and get the degrees and the titles not because those mean a lot to me, but because I know there are people out there who find comfort in knowing that somebody can get an education and can get letters before or after their name and still have faith, that they can still believe.

01:00:00 I think if we don't ingest what we've just talked about and we don't really think about this idea of humility and meekness and putting ourselves before God, if we lift ourselves up like these ancient cities and these ancient people, if we think we know more than God, then we set ourselves up for the same type of spiritual destruction that awaited them.

01:00:24 Throughout my journey, my intention has been to want to be a source of faith. And people can say, "Hey, I've got questions about Habakkuk, which plague of the revelations is that?" And be able to say, "Hey, let's look at this from a perspective of faith." And I can tell you what those who are approaching it from a perspective of doubt are thinking and saying, and I want you to be aware of what they're saying, but they don't have to be right.

01:00:52 Scholarship constantly changes. That's one of the challenges. The predominant theories of today are going to be the outdated theories of 20 years from now. But the one thing that doesn't go

out of vogue is the truth that comes from the source of all truth, our Savior Jesus Christ. I know that there are things that are absolutely true.

01:01:14 For me as a teenager and as a young adult, I looked up to people who had put the work in to really know these things, but also people who were willing to say, "I'm humble enough to know that God knows more than I do." If there's one thing that I've come to know more surely throughout my life, it's the fact that the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a real event and that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ on the earth is a means by which God is bringing salvation to his children. I love the idea of being part of the gathering of Israel as President Nelson is encouraging us all to be a part of. There's no greater work in the world.

01:02:02 And I view what I get to do and what I've studied and what I try to do on a daily basis as a means of gathering Israel. And that's the ultimate purpose of the restoration, is to gather Israel on both sides of the veil. I have seen how studying the Bible, coming to become proficient in its languages and in the language of scholarship, how that helps gather Israel. I get excited about the fact that gaining an education is encouraged by the restoration, but it's also part of building the restoration for all of God's children to come unto Him.

Hank Smith: 01:02:37 Beautiful. Thanks, Josh. What a great day. What a great day. Never thought I would be excited about some of these minor prophets who are not minor any longer.

01:02:50 We want to thank Dr. Josh Matson for being with us today. What a treat. We want to thank our executive producers, Steve and Shannon Sorensen, and our sponsors, David and Verla Sorensen. We hope you'll join us next week. We have another episode coming up of followHIM.

01:03:09 We have an amazing production crew we want you to know about. David Perry, Lisa Spice, Jamie Neilson, Will Stoughton, Krystal Roberts, and Ariel Cuadra. Thank you to our amazing production team.

## WHY DO WE READ ABOUT SO MUCH DESTRUCTION?



- Hank Smith: 00:05 Hello, my friends. Welcome to another followHIM Favorites. My name is Hank Smith, and I'm here with the amazing John Bytheway. Welcome, John.
- John Bytheway: 00:12 Hi, Hank.
- Hank Smith: 00:12 If you've been following followHIM Favorites this year, you know that we are taking a single question from each week's lesson and studying it just for a few minutes. John, in the manual for this week's lesson of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, there's a lot of syllables there, it says right in the beginning, "Reading the Old Testament often means reading prophecies about destruction. The Lord frequently called prophets to warn the wicked." And then this question is posed in the very first paragraph, and this is our question today, "Why is it valuable to read these prophecies today?" So John, what would you say to someone who's reading these three books going, "Wow, this is a lot of destruction. Why do I have to read this?" What do you think?
- John Bytheway: 00:53 The first thing that comes to my mind is that they have been warned, they have been taught, and now they are getting consequences. And one of the things that I think Satan tries to do is say there's no consequences. Like, jumping over to the Book of Mormon and the Korihor story, when a man is dead, that's the end. Whatsoever a man did was no crime, no consequences. And here we're finding out, wow, they learned the hard way that choices have consequences. Every choice has a consequence, and that can be a good thing. I remember raising my kids. If they did something wrong, "Do I get a consequence?" And I didn't want them to think of consequence as a negative word because sometimes consequences are wonderful.
- Hank Smith: 01:34 Can be positive. Yeah.
- John Bytheway: 01:35 So Elder Neal A. Maxwell said once, "We had better want the consequences of what we want." So maybe that's a good lesson here. And my mission president used to say, "Wise people learn

from experience, but super wise people learn from others' experience." What are the scriptures but the experiences of others? And maybe we can learn from these destructive consequences. Okay, what choices did they make that brought this on? How can I avoid those choices?

- Hank Smith: 02:03 Excellent. I see the word woe coming up in Habakkuk a lot and in Zephaniah, and woe is warning. Watch out for this. So we can use these books and this destruction as a warning to not follow their same footsteps. So every time you see "woe," I would mark that and say, "Watch out. Be careful." Don't follow that same path or you're going to end up in the same place. Also, the joy of the Lord, John, and the blessings of the Lord, the hesed, as we've been talking about this year, which means mercy of the Lord, wouldn't mean anything if he wasn't saving us from something, if the mercy of God wasn't saving us from something. When we repent, we're saved from this destruction. Well, if the destruction was never going to happen in the first place, how valuable is that gift? To me, watching that this destruction does come says, "Yeah, the mercy of the Lord is that wonderful because it's stopping something that really is on its way, that really is coming. I want to take part of that."
- John Bytheway: 03:05 Yeah, it's really positive and see all the destruction, but notice that our merciful God is still there. Verse 17, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty. He will save. He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will rest in his love. He will joy over thee with singing." So make sure you notice the hope in the midst of all the destruction when you read it too.
- Hank Smith: 03:27 So when you see this destruction coming and you can learn to value repentance more, then you value the mercy of the Lord and the goodness of the Lord in saving you from all this destruction that can happen as a result of sin. Well, we hope you'll join us on our full podcast. It's called followHIM. You can get it wherever you get your podcasts. We're with Dr. Josh Matson this week. You're going to love his expertise when it comes to these smaller books of the Bible. And then join us next week as we come back for another followHIM Favorites.