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**C1138 – November 30, 2011 – Zephaniah 2.1-3**  
**The Gathering Of Israel Without Merit**

We are working with Zephaniah and the theme of Zephaniah which is the day of the Lord. The application of the day of the Lord is preparedness, being prepared all the time because the day of the Lord can come at any time, it's imminent and you don't want to be caught up in the opening phase of the day of the Lord because it's intense judgment.

In the Old and New Testament references to the day of the Lord occur more than 80 times. Starting with Obadiah and Joel, amplified by Amos, Isaiah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Zechariah and referred to by both Peter and Paul in the NT this doctrine permeates the pages of Scripture. Of the more than 80 references 24 are found in Zephaniah alone. So Zephaniah is a heavy hitter on the day of the Lord. Since the doctrine was already well established by Joel, Zephaniah mentions it under a number of various expressions such as "the day of the Lord" (1:7, 14), "a day" (1:15, 16), "the day," (2:2; 3:8), "that day" (1:9, 10, 15; 3:11, 16), "the time" (3:20), "that time" (1:12; 3:19, 20), "the day of the LORD's sacrifice (1:8), "the day of the LORD's wrath (1:18) and "the day of the LORD's anger (2:2, 3). Since this is a major Scriptural doctrine I want to clarify it's *not* what is commonly referred to among modern prophecy teachers as the Tribulation. You may find that I'm making an unnecessary distinction but I assure you its not. They are very different. And the truth of the matter is that if you go to heaven and start talking to the apostle Paul about "the tribulation" he's not going to know what you are talking about. But if you talk to him about "the day of the Lord" he's going to know exactly what you're talking about. The tribulation as it is talked about in modern times is biblically speaking, the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, a period of just 7 years beginning with the Antichrist signing a peace treaty with the leadership of the nation Israel and ending with the Antichrist being cast alive in the lake of fire on the day of Christ's Second Coming. The day of

the Lord, on the other hand, is a period of more than 1007 years beginning with the revealing of the Antichrist and ending with the Great White Throne Judgment. So the day of the Lord is much, much bigger than what people call the Tribulation, but what the Bible calls the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. And the day of the Lord includes both judgment and blessing while the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel just includes judgment. So they're not the same and you don't want to confuse them.

The day of the Lord seems to have arisen from the popular concept in the ancient Near East that a really great warrior king *could* consummate an entire military campaign in one single day. It came in Scripture to refer to YHWH as a great warrior King who *could* consummate an entire military campaign against His enemies in a single day *and* in some cases deliver His own. We have to emphasize that last part, don't forget that in some passages the expression includes the time period when God delivers His own and blesses them, is the millennial kingdom. So the day of the Lord includes judgment and blessing, darkness and light, which is why we note that it's called a "day" in the sense that a day includes a period of darkness and light. In Genesis the day starts with darkness and ends with light, evening and morning the xth day, over and over you see this pattern. And in the same way the day of the Lord starts with darkness or judgment and ends with light or blessing. So that's why the Scriptural authors called it the day of the Lord, not to signal it's a 24 hour period but to signify the dark, light cycle, darkness preceding the light.

We've been studying primarily the darkness aspect that precedes the light. Toward the end of Zephaniah we'll study more of the light. One of the things I want to point out before we move into chapter 2 is the shifting back and forth from local to global judgments. This is a common feature in prophetic writings. If you notice verse 2, "I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. 3I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky And the fish of the sea, And the ruins along with the wicked; And I will cut off man from the face of the earth," declares the LORD." And that sounds pretty universal if you ask me. It sounds like it's the end of the world. But then if you look at verse 10 it looks like a local judgment on Jerusalem, "On that day," declares the LORD, "There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate, A wail from the Second Quarter," these are references to Jerusalem. Then in verse 18b it seems to be universal again,

“And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.” It sounds strikingly like verse 2 doesn’t it. The point is there’s this strange flip flopping back and forth between what appears to be a universal judgment and a local judgment. And it’s really hard to separate them. I would imagine the original audience had a more difficult time than us. I think of it like trying to separate out two different grains of sand, white sand and masonry sand, they look similar, they’re about the same size, they’re just slightly different. And that’s the way it is with many prophecies. There are two sets of prophecies but jumbled all together and the author goes back and forth.

Now what we call these are near and far prophecies. Some of them are near but the near are tangled up with the far and as you read you think, now wait a minute, are we talking about one prophecy here or two? And it’s very hard to tell, particularly if the prophecy came in your generation. Now looking back it’s a little easier. Hindsight is always 20-20. But foresight, not 20-20.

Let’s look at it from hindsight. Looking back we can see that two prophecies are going on, a past, near prophecy that was fulfilled by the Babylonian invasion and Exile of Judah in three deportations, 605BC, 597BC and 588-586BC. Then you’ve got another prophecy that is still future, a far prophecy that has yet to be fulfilled but involves the entire world, even the entire universe. And I don’t know exactly what they thought about these prophecies but they sure look tangled up to me. And from their foresight they probably assumed that it all went together in one big prophecy at the end of the world. But from hindsight we know that there are two prophecies here, a near prophecy and a far prophecy. And the way the prophet’s present prophecies of the day of the Lord are in terms of a near day of the Lord and a far day of the Lord. I sort of hate to use the term near in this context because both of them are near in the biblical sense of imminency, but the common terminology of referring to this phenomena in prophetic writings is near and far.

Now why do you care about this phenomena of near and far prophecies? Because if a proclaimed prophet just starts predicting things that happen far beyond his lifetime then how do you know if he’s a true prophet or not? One of the tests for a prophet in Deut 18 is that his prophecies have to be verified in history 100% of the time. So if the generation that sees the prophet has to

test the prophet according to Deut 18 but all his prophecies are far off prophecies how do they test whether he's true or false? So God gave His prophets near prophecies and far prophecies. This is a pattern in Scripture, both OT and NT. You want to pick up these patterns because when some Mormon comes along and says we've got our prophet and our prophet re-opened the canon, we have the updated version here and you Christians are out of date, you need to get up to speed with the word of God in the Book of Mormon. Then you want to start subjecting these claims to the patterns of Scripture. And by doing that you can see they're erroneous. And one of the patterns you can test these claims against is whether the prophet gave both near and far prophecies. That way you could test whether a prophet was true or false in his own lifetime and then you would know whether to listen to him or not. But if he just prophesied about things in the distant future he couldn't be tested. And in fact this is one mark of all false prophets, not common to all but common to many. They make predictions so far off in the future that they can never be verified. But God would always give the true prophet near prophecies so he could be verified. To cite an example from the NT so you can see this is always God's pattern -. Jesus was a prophet; a prophet, priest and king. As a true prophet He made both near and far prophecies. For example, He prophesied that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crowed, that's a near prophecy that occurred within Jesus' own lifetime, and when it happened it verified Him as a prophet of God. So what this meant was that any far prophecies Jesus made you could count on being fulfilled. If the near are fulfilled it's just a matter of time before the far are fulfilled.

That one's easy to see but a lot of times the near and far prophecies are enmeshed with one another, and you need hindsight to filter out all the differences. We have that struggle in Zephaniah and I've shown you how it swings back and forth in chapter 1. But it's very unlikely they were able to sort all that out. Now we see a bit clearer but it's still difficult.

Now, knowing that we have near and far prophecies in chapter 1, a near day of the Lord that came upon Judah in three waves of attacks by the Babylonians, and a far day of the Lord that is much greater in scale and still yet to come to pass, when you come to chapter 2 you have to wonder, who or what generation of Israel is being addressed here? Is this referring to a past generation of Israel that was attacked by Babylon or is this a future generation of Israel being addressed? See the difficulty? **Gather yourselves**

**together, yes, gather, O nation without shame.** Just who are you talking to Zephaniah? Is this the near or the far prophecy? The near generation or a far generation? Or does it apply equally to both? Is that a possibility? If you were a Jew in Zephaniah's day and you heard this command you could deduce that hey, anytime here what we need to do to be spared the judgment is gather together as a nation. This is an absolute requirement. Josiah was the king at the time, he was trying to gather the nation together spiritually but their heart wasn't in it. Josiah would be spared, we know that, it was prophesied that because he humbled himself before the Lord he would be spared. But his four sons were pagan, remember how they wore pagan clothes around, a sign of support for pagan religion? Well, they would not be as fortunate as their father. Each of them is going to come and sit on the throne of David, one after another, but not one of them is going to follow this command to gather the nation together, not one; they were spiritual morons. So we'd say they had four opportunities, each of Josiah's sons had an opportunity gather the nation together and build on what their father Josiah had started but they didn't. The first son was Jehoahaz and he was taken to Egypt and died there. The second was Jehoiakim and rather than gathering the nation together he became a puppet of Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled so you had the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar in 605BC. And he was pretty nice, considering, he just took some of the royal family captive, deposed Jehoiakim and set up his brother Jehoiachin. These guys had interesting names. Now all Jehoiachin had to do was learn the lesson his brother didn't learn and pay attention to the word of God in verse 1, gather the nation. But he didn't so a second invasion of Nebuchadnezzar came in 597BC and he was pretty nice again, he took some more prisoners and booted Jehoiachin and set up his brother Zedekiah. And by this time you'd think this family would have learned the lesson but the problem is they're not able to trust the word of God, they're so far down the path of depravity they wouldn't know how to confess their sin if you read them a script. They are way out of it spiritually. They haven't been on a steady diet of the word of God and if you don't hear the word of God you can't believe the word of God. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. So these people are all gimmick kings, they don't have a clue and they can't trust the word of God, they can only trust in their little schemes. So Zedekiah comes to the throne, he rebels and Nebuchadnezzar comes down for the third and final invasion and wipes out Jerusalem, destroys the Temple. So as you can see they had multiple opportunities to follow verse 1 and gather the nation but they spurned grace

over and over and over and so God said that's it. So that's how verse 1 could have been taken by a contemporary of Zephaniah as a near prophecy.

However you can also see how this could very well be a far prophecy and be speaking to a future generation of Israel that should gather. Now that's the trouble I'm trying to present to you. And my point is that it really could refer to both.

I think the way to understand this is to grasp that while Zephaniah is talking to his own generation and describing the day of the Lord that was coming upon them it is also talking to a future generation and describing the day of the Lord that will ultimately come upon them and all the nations of the world. So that the near prophecy fulfilled in the Babylonian invasions is a small preview of the much greater future day of the Lord that will come upon the whole world.

Now it's this second, future call to **gather** that we want to focus on tonight since that's the purpose of these prophecies, to look to the greater day. Let's start in v 1 highlighting some grammar. You see **gather** used twice. Both are commands. The first command to **gather** is the intensive middle, it's very powerful, very strong command, **gather yourselves**, the second **gather** is the simple active and this strengthens it even further. So this is a very strong and important gathering. The nation has got to gather to be spared the coming judgment.

Now in the plan of God for the nation Israel, let's review the timetable so we can place this verse in the plan of God. In 1948 the UN voted to recognize Israel as a national entity, the first world leader to give approval and recognition of the modern State of Israel was President Harry Truman. He insisted Israel be recognized; the Arabs still don't recognize them. So some prophecy scholars looking at 1948 argue that verse 1 was fulfilled in 1948. Now it's true that the modern State of Israel is an important event and necessary for certain prophecy to be fulfilled but I don't think it is the fulfillment of this prophecy because the rest of the chapter is not talking about Jews from outside the land regathering but Jews from inside the land regathering.

There is an intense interest in the Promised Land of Israel in this text because of the Land Covenant of Deut 29-30. If you notice verse 4 starts to dish out judgment to everyone who encroached on Israel's Promised Land. Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron, those are all over in the modern day Gaza strip, they have encroached on the western side of the Promised Land, in verse 8-9 you have Moab and Moab is modern day Jordan, they have encroached on the eastern side of the Promised Land. In verse 12 the Ethiopians which here are Egypt and they encroached on the southern side of the Promised Land into the Sinai Peninsula. And then verse 13, Assyria encroached on the north. All four directions of the compass, foreigners to the covenant have encroached on Israel's Promised territory. And clearly at the end of verse 8 the land is in view, they have "become arrogant against their territory." So the land is in view and God is very concerned that this land, in its entirety, be given to Israel. So when he says in verse 1, **Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation**, he's not referring to all Jews on the planet, he's talking to Jews in the land, Jews who have already returned to the land of Israel. So this is not 1948, in my humble opinion, but sometime within the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. And the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel begins when the Antichrist signs a covenant with the leadership of Israel.

If we look at it from the Church's perspective, the Church came into existence after the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ; it was formed on the day of Pentecost. We are promised to be removed from earth before the day of the Lord by means of the rapture. Once the rapture occurs the Antichrist's identity will be revealed, he will rise in power sufficient to convince the leadership of the nation Israel that he can give them military protection, then they will enter into a peace treaty with the Antichrist, that initiates the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, it restarts their calendar from Dan 9. Then you have the nation Israel dwelling in peace and security for the first 3 ½ years under Antichrist's protection, they start to rebuild their temple, you have the two witnesses and the 144,000 witnesses. The 144,000 primarily minister outside the land, to Diaspora Jews. The two witnesses minister inside the land, to native Jews. So it's a time of peace for 3 ½ years in Israel and in v 1 it's the Jews in the land at that time he's specifically referring to. Obviously they're not believers yet but they need to become believers. So he says **gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame. Before the decree takes effect—the day passes like the chaff—Before the**

**burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you. 3Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth, Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger.** So he works his way from the entire nation in verse 1 to only the remnant, a subset in verse 3. We have a command for the whole nation to **gather** in verse 1. They'll be responding to this during the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. Down in verse 3 the commands to Seek the LORD and Seek righteousness and so forth are only for the actual remnant that do gather in verse 1. Verse 3 will refer to the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. So the salvation of the remnant occurs between the first and the second half. We'd locate it at the mid-point. Most people see it at the end but it's not, it's at the mid-point. You have the remnant already saved by the mid-point, they are going to have the challenge to persevere for the next 3 ½ years, some of them will survive, some of them will not, that's down in verse 3, perhaps you will be hidden (also cf Matt 24:13; Rev 13:10). As for the unbelieving Jews and the nations - they are going to come under intense judgment for this last 3 ½ years.

That's a sketch of what's happening. So what this looks like is that in the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel you have the two witnesses come, they're Jews, they could be Moses and Elijah or Moses and Enoch or they could just be two new Jews that do miracles like Moses and Elijah. But whoever they are they will minister to the nation the word of God for the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. They'll be calling out to the nation the words of Zephaniah and other prophets to **gather** and those who gather under their ministry will respond positively to the LORD, they'll believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, they're the remnant of Israel, saved Jews. Down in verse 3 he's telling the remnant of saved Jews to **Seek the LORD**, to pursue Him during the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel which is when Antichrist will break his peace treaty with them and go on a rampage to destroy them. So the command is to persevere during this time despite the situation they'll be facing.

Let's come back to verse 1 and see what he means by **Gather**. We said this is a very intense command for the nation to **gather**. But notice they are to gather a certain way. **yes, gather, O nation without shame**. The Hebrew word translated **shame** is actually the word for "silver" or "money" and is



very difficult to translate because obviously, to say **Gather, O nation without silver** doesn't make a lot of sense so people said it means without shame or longing. But that doesn't make any sense either. If we go back in the context to verse 18 we may get some help. Here's the word for silver again. **Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them.** What's the idea in this context? Money can't buy your escape from the day of the Lord. What's God going to do with your money? So it's the false idea that we can buy off God, that we can earn merit with God and God will give us a get out of jail free card. Now transfer that concept into verse 1 what do we have, **Gather, O nation without** merit. See, what's the nation Israel always trying to do before God? Century after century? Build merit. Look at all our righteousness God, look at all our mitzvah's, all our good works. Doing righteousness is at the heart of Judaism. We're going to do all these good works and say here God and God is going to look down and be so impressed with all our little goodies that he's going to accept us. It's a system of works, a system of building merit with God.

So it seems to me that in 2:1 the prophet Zephaniah is saying, **Gather yourselves together, yes, gather O nation without** "merit." Don't gather together with all your good deeds and try to present them to the Lord as you've always done, gather together, yes, but gather empty-handed, gather before the Lord with nothing. That's how we have to come before God because frankly, He's not interested in anything we have to offer Him. We don't have anything to offer Him. We're dead in transgressions and sins and the only thing that pleases Him is faith, which is acceptance of His word. But Judaism doesn't have faith, they have works, they say we don't need faith, we need good works, deeds of righteousness and that's the basis of God accepting us. Uh, uh. **Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without** merit, without any good works, without all your mitzvah's because you've been bringing those before Me for centuries, generation after generation of Jews have brought good deeds of kindness before Me but that's not what I'm looking for. I was never looking for self-righteousness, I was looking for you to recognize that you are without righteousness. I gave you the law as a tutor to lead you to Christ. So when he says **Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame**, those who respond and come empty handed before Him are those who are believing in Jesus Christ for His righteousness. So this is the nation Israel's salvation at the mid point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

Now turn to Hosea 6 for another passage dealing with the nation Israel's salvation. This is one reason I wanted to teach the Minor Prophets. There are bits and pieces of the prophetic puzzle in these books and so familiarizing ourselves with them is very helpful for putting together the pieces. Now notice verse 14 here's the Lord's judgment of the northern and southern kingdom, "For I will be like a lion to Ephraim And like a young lion to the house of Judah. I, even I, will tear to pieces and go away, I will carry away, and there will be none to deliver." Now when did this take place? In 721BC the northern kingdom went into Exile to Assyria, in 586BC the southern kingdom went into Exile to Babylon. Verse 15, "I will go away and return to My place." Well, if He goes away what does that presuppose? That He came. So He sent them into Exile, some of them partially returned, God sent forth His own son, he came to His own but His own received Him not, they crucified Him. And He says "I will go away and return to My place Until they acknowledge their guilt," that's the guilt for crucifying their own Messiah, so he left. He leaves until the acknowledge their guilt "and seek My face," that's a desire for Shekinah Glory to return and dwell among them in the Temple. "In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me." So when the nation is facing its most intense affliction then and only then will they turn to the Lord. They have to come to the end of their rope. They have to try every gimmick and when the last gimmick fails out, then and only then will they turn to the Lord. Chapter 6, verse 1 describes their acknowledgement of guilt which will happen about the mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. "Come, let us return to the LORD. For He has torn us," we have been under divine discipline, we recognize that now, "but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. He will revive us after two days;" that's two days of intense mourning, when they realize they committed the ultimate boo boo, crucifying their own Messiah, they're going to mourn for two days, "He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day;" that's the day of the nation Israel's salvation. "That we may live before Him. 3So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, Like the spring rain watering the earth." So the nation is currently under divine discipline, they've been under divine discipline for over 2500 years, but they will eventually respond when all their gimmicks run out and they will trust in Jesus as their Messiah and the nation will be born again at the middle of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel.

Let's go back to Zeph 2 and pick up another idea. There's a limited time for this, notice the **Before's** in verse 2, just count them, 1, 2, 3, three times he says **Before**. So there's a heavy emphasis on the limited time frame to gather. **Before the decree takes effect...Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you...Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you.** So first there's the decree. The decree refers to a "writing" or "engraving" and here it refers to the before time plan of God. God planned the day of the Lord. Second is **Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon them**, upon unbelieving Jews of course. And the word for burning anger is the word for anger being kindled like a fire being kindled and it grows and grows until it is a raging fire of destruction. Finally, the third **Before, Before the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you**, again, unbelieving Jews, and this word for anger is the word for nose or nostrils, when a person's angry their nose flares and the picture of God is that He took a deep breath and He's holding it but when He stops holding it His wrath is unleashed and who can survive.

Now I would argue that this aspect of the day of the LORD that they need to gather before refers to before the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. He's given them the first half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week as an opportunity to gather, He's given them the 2 witnesses inside the land, He's given them the 144,000 witnesses outside the land. But when the Antichrist enters into the temple at the mid point, commits the abomination of desolation and exalts himself as God then their opportunity to gather as a nation and believe in the Messiah will be over because the Antichrist will implement a systematic program to exterminate all Jewry from the planet. So this is the last 3 ½ years of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, described by Jesus as the great tribulation. The point is, vv 1-2, there's a limited time available for the nation to gather and be regenerated and that time is the mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. That is the point when the remnant of Israel will believe and then the majority of them will escape to a place of safety.

If you turn to Micah 2:12 I'll show you that place of safety. Again we've been here and I'm just putting together these references from the Minor Prophets. When the Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew that the Jews should flee Jerusalem. Of course, only Jews who believe in Jesus are going to follow His instruction. Where are they going to flee to? A place of safety. Verse 12, "I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob,

I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold;" the Hebrew word there is Bozrah, which you know as the region that contains the city of Petra. Petra is a walled city, enclosed by massive sandstone, there's only one entrance which is very easy to defend. So it looks like they are going to flee to Petra where the Lord is sovereignly assembling them to keep the remnant of Israel safe." The passage goes on to describe their final victory when the king returns 3 ½ years later to lead them in the final battle.

Alright, back to Zeph 2 and we come to verse 3. **Seek the LORD**, alright, now this is directed at the believing remnant of Israel. All of them will not escape to Petra, many of them will but some of them will stay in Jerusalem and of course, you'll have Jewish believers all over the world who responded to the ministry of the 144,000. So the first **command in v 1** is to the whole nation in the land, they are commanded to **gather** for the purpose of national regeneration, that occurs at the mid-point of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, only a subset respond positively, those that reject will face verse 2, the burning anger of the Lord. As for those that responded positively, they are now given instruction for the last half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. What are they going to do now that the Antichrist turns against them to exterminate them? Answer, turn to Rev 12. Now this passage discusses the Jewish believers who heed Jesus' teaching in Matt 24 that when the Antichrist commits the abomination of desolation they should flee from Jerusalem to the wilderness. We just saw this but this is another passage. Verse 13, "And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child." Now the male child is obviously Jesus, the dragon is Satan and the woman is Israel. Israel is the nation who brought Jesus into the world. And when Satan is thrown down out of heaven, so he no longer has access to Jesus then he attacks the next best thing, the people who gave birth to Jesus, Israel. But, verse 14, "But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent." So they go to the wilderness, we think this is the same place as Micah discussed which is Petra, they go, Satan goes after them, but he's one step behind and can't catch them. Verse 17, he gets enraged and goes off to make war with the rest of her children, that's Gentile believers.

Jewish believers who do not heed Jesus' teaching and they stay behind in Jerusalem will come under tremendous pressure; most of them will be killed. So, hold your place here and turn to a famous verse in church history, Matt 24:13. Often misinterpreted. This is the passage that Calvinists claim proves that only believers that persevere to the end of their life are the true believers. So they take it as referring to spiritual salvation. Arminian's take it that if you don't persevere to the end then you'll lose your salvation. So they also look at it as spiritual salvation. But it doesn't have anything to do with that at all. It's in an eschatological context referring to Israel in the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel. And the point here is, "the one who endures to the end, he will be saved." That is, the Jew who perseveres through the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel will be physically saved and brought into the kingdom as a mortal. That's why he follows up in vv 15, 16 on down to verse 20 by telling them to get out of Judea when you see the abomination of desolation because if you don't you're going to die! So some Jewish believers will die.

Lastly Rev 13:7. "It was also given to him to make war with the saints," now this is Antichrist, it was given to him to make war with the saints, I take that as Jewish and Gentile saints "and to overcome them," so that means physical death, he can't defeat them spiritually, but he can kill them. Verse 10, "If anyone is destined for captivity to Antichrist, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and faith of the saints." That is, those Jewish believers who are on earth during this time are going to have to persevere through extremely difficult times. But that's their calling, some of them will be killed, others will be protected in Petra, others will survive elsewhere in the Diaspora. But the point is they are called to persevere no matter what.

Back to Zephaniah 2:3 and we'll conclude. We have the same type of verse here addressed to the remnant of believing Jews. **Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth**, see, they've realized who their Messiah is, they're **humble**, they're stationed all over the earth, or perhaps land, **Who have carried out His justice; Seek righteousness, seek humility**. That in the Hebrew means to intensively pursue it, despite the persecution they will face in the second half of the 70<sup>th</sup> week of Daniel, continually seek it anyway, like Daniel did in Babylon when they said no prayer to anyone besides the statue of Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel just kept on. You can't tell me who to worship. Now I respect the office you hold but with all due respect I am still going to

worship my God. Do whatever you want to me, go ahead, throw me in the lion's den. You don't scare me. That's perseverance and that may be what is coming in our nation. But the text says at the close, **Perhaps you will be hidden**, that is, maybe you'll be kept from the terrors of the day of the Lord, maybe you won't, some will be killed, others will survive. They're all saved spiritually but the point is that they are to persevere and take whatever destiny God has for them, whether it's captivity in concentration camps, whether it's death or whether it's life. God has a plan for them all in that time period and they need to pursue Him, pursue righteousness, pursue humility and accept whatever fate God has for them. And friend, that's how every one of us should live the Christian life. "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

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