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C1203 – January 18, 2012 – Zephaniah 3.14-17
The Blessing Of Messiah's Presence

Last week we dealt with the judgments in the future day of the Lord that resulted in a subset of Jews and Gentiles entering the kingdom. One question was to clarify whether any unbelievers will enter the kingdom. The answer to that is no, Jesus said to enter the kingdom of God you must be born again. Therefore the future judgment in the dark phase of the day of the Lord is to remove unbelievers from the earth. This is what Zephaniah has said earlier in chapter 1:2, “I will completely remove all From the face of the earth,” declares the LORD. I will remove man and beast; I will remove 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.” That terminology is Flood terminology and at the Flood the same kind of judgment occurred in that every living thing that has the breath of life and was not in the Ark was destroyed. So there is a parallel between the Flood and the future day of the Lord. The difference is that at the Flood the destruction was by water and at the future day of the Lord the destruction will be by fire. But in both instances no unbelievers from the prior civilization survive and go into the new world. The new world starts off with believers only. And the kingdom will start with believers only; believers from among both Jews and Gentiles.

Another related question was the children of these people that enter the kingdom. They will be mortal people and they will be able to procreate and populate the kingdom with mortals. So what about their children? Well, they will be born with a sin nature and they will also have to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. And not all of them will believe. It seems to me that all the offspring of the Jews will believe but not the Gentiles and by the end of the kingdom you have Satan released and he goes out to deceive the Gentile nations and they all come up and rebel against the King at Jerusalem and that’s the final Battle of Gog and Magog. There are two Battles of Gog

and Magog in the Scripture: the one of Ezekiel 38-39 which is before the Kingdom and the one of Rev 20 which is after the Kingdom. So they are separated by more than 1,000 years. It's the Gog and Magog after the 1,000 years that shows you that there are a lot of unbelieving Gentiles in rebellion against the King but we have no evidence that Jews are a part of that rebellion. Therefore we suppose they are all believers.

Another issue that comes up in the discussion is the longevity of people in the kingdom. How long will people live? And will people die? Isaiah says people will die. Although infant mortality will be unknown he says rebels will die at 100 because they'll be terminated, they'll have had 100 years to respond to the King's gracious offer of salvation but if they haven't believed by the age of 100 then they will have reached the point of no return and Christ will slay them. However, those who die at the age of 100 will be considered youth. So the aging process is greatly retarded in the kingdom. And I guess that means you won't get your drivers license till you're about 150. So you'll have a long and memorable childhood. Isaiah also says that old men will live out their days and that the lifetime of believers will be as the lifetime of a tree, so people will be living in mortal bodies for hundreds and hundreds of years, lifespans will return to pre-Flood lengths. And I think it's highly possible that there will be those who live the entire 1,000 years. I think that covers the basic questions we had last week.

Alright, tonight we come to the conclusion of Zephaniah and we want to recall that Zephaniah is a pre-Exilic prophet. The northern kingdom of Israel had already gone into Exile to Assyria, that's 721BC, but the southern kingdom of Judah was on the brink of Exile, another 20-30 years and their captivity would begin. And therefore the Judeans to whom this scroll was written were living in a chaotic kingdom; the political establishment was corrupt, the religious establishment was deceitful and a military crisis was looming on the horizon. The average person on the streets was living in very tumultuous and uncertain times. In those kinds of times what do believers need? They need hope, they need encouragement, they need to know that when all the turmoil and all the judgment and all the suffering is said and done, ultimately God is faithful to His promises and there will be blessing. So what Zephaniah is now doing is giving them hope. Hope for the future.

The believer's hope lies not in this world but in a future world prepared specifically for him, when he will dwell with his Savior. It's this future hope that gives strength in the present; strength to endure the trials we face to the end. All prophecy has this application embedded in it, to inspire hope for the future so we can endure trials in the present.

So what Zephaniah lays out for Israel is a vision of future hope. His theme is the day of the Lord and the structure of his book is laid out in this pattern. The Hebrew day started with a period of darkness and ended with a period of light because the days of Creation week in Genesis began with evening and ended with morning. Each day closes with the words, evening and morning, day one, evening and morning the second day, evening and morning the third day. So the cycle was darkness/light. And it's this dark/light cycle that the prophets pick up and capitalize on to reveal that the fundamental prophetic truth, that of a future day of the Lord that has two phases; darkness, which signifies judgment, followed by light, which signifies blessing.

And Zephaniah's book is laid out structurally according to this cycle, beginning with darkness and judgment in 1:2-3:8 and ending with light in 3:9-20. Granted, some of the darkness section deals with past days of the Lord but the purpose of those past days of the Lord were to preview or foreshadow the greater future day of the Lord. But in any case the book follows this structure of putting the darkness before the light, of putting judgment before blessing.

We have covered extensively the judgment up to 3:8. 3:8 is the judgment at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. As far as the believing remnant of Jews are concerned the Lord says to them, "wait for Me, For the day when I rise up to the prey. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal." The Lord Jesus Christ is rising up to defeat the Gentile kingdoms of Daniel. In 586BC the Shekinah Glory departed the Temple, signifying that a kingdom change was being made. The Jews would no longer be free from Gentile dominion. Gentiles would now be given a period of dominion that would come under four kingdoms; Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. Rome having two phases, an original form that breaks into two spheres and a final form that tries to unite the two spheres and have world dominion. It's this final phase of Rome that is

presently forming and verse 8 is saying that God is going to gather them in one place, we know it as Armageddon, and the nations are gathering to annihilate Israel but God is gathering the nations to annihilate them.

Those Gentiles who remain on earth, verse 9, will be taken to a judgment Jesus called the Sheep-Goats judgment in Matt 25 and Joel reveals it will occur in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. In this judgment the believing Gentiles, the Sheep, will be put on His right and the unbelieving Gentiles, the Goats, will be put on His left and the Sheep will be brought into the Kingdom and the Goats will be slaughtered. It's the Sheep he's referring to in verse 9 where he says, "For then I will give to the nations purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder." These are the believing Gentiles who went through the Sheep judgment, they are from all nations on earth and their lips are circumcised for worship, they are given a new language, this time it's not a partition of languages as at the judgment of Babel, but a unification of language so as to worship YHWH in the millennial kingdom. So believing Gentiles will enter the kingdom in their mortal bodies and they will procreate to re-populate Gentile nations.

Verse 10 turns to the believing remnant of Jews that enter the kingdom and they are central. Notice the amount of material dedicated to the Gentiles is one verse versus the material dedicated to the Jews, verses 10-20, eleven verses. And what that disproportion teaches you is that the prevailing nation in the millennial kingdom is the Jews. The Gentiles have had their time of dominance; the four Gentile kingdoms have at this time all been destroyed and now the fifth Kingdom of Daniel has come, the stone cut out without hands, the kingdom of the Son of Man which stands in marked contrast to the four animal kingdoms of the Gentiles. Why the four Gentile kingdoms are pictured as animals in contrast to the final Jewish kingdom which is pictured as a man seems to be that the four Gentile kingdoms do not produce living conditions fit for man, they all ravage and oppress man and are somehow inhumane, but the final kingdom, the fifth kingdom pictured as a man is the only kingdom that produces human living conditions, it is truly a kingdom in which man can live as he was designed to live.

So in verse 10 the world moves into a period dominated by the Jews and dominated by the King of the Jews, the God-man Jesus Christ. "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My

offerings.” These are the believing Jews of the dispersion coming up to Jerusalem with offerings. Verse 11, “In that day,” the blessing phase of the day of the Lord, “you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds By which you have rebelled against Me;” their sins will be forgotten, put out of mind by the Lord. “Indeed then I will remove from your midst Your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain.” This is at the Second Coming, the unbelieving Jews that remain alive when Christ returns will be taken to judgment and slaughtered. But verse 12, “I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.” That’s the remnant. Verse 13, “The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble.” They will not sin and they will go into the blessings of the millennial kingdom and they will possess their Promised Real Estate and they will have Homeland Security.

Alright, that brings us to verse 14 and here we have Israel’s future hope realized. Finally, all the enemies have been removed, finally their captivity has come to an end, and finally they are set free. Freedom, that’s a topic we might comment on. What is freedom? People yak, yak, yak about freedom but nobody ever defines freedom. Sometimes you hear, well, it’s the government out of my life. Wrong. Jesus Christ is going to have big government in the millennial kingdom, lots of centralized power and it will be a period of tremendous freedom. So then freedom cannot be defined as absence of governmental intrusion into your life. What is freedom then? It is living in the presence of God and apart from sin, it is living as we were meant to live. The world wants freedom from God which is slavery. You hear it in the second Psalm, the kings of the earth say, “let us tear their cords from us.” We want to be free from God. But the Scriptures teach that true freedom is living with God, as you were designed to live, apart from sin.

Now when that condition comes for Israel, verse 14 comes to pass, **Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!** Now the **daughter of Jerusalem** is the true citizens of Jerusalem. And the true citizens of Jerusalem are Jews who have completed their Jewishness. What do you mean completed their Jewishness? I mean what Paul referred to in Romans 9 when he said, “They are not all Israel who are descended from Israel.” What

do you mean they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel? I thought a Jew was a Jew was a Jew. Well biblically speaking there are such people who are racial Jews, physical descendants of Jacob by their father, the mother doesn't matter, to be a racial Jew your father has to be a physical descendant of Jacob. But being a racial Jew doesn't make you a completed Jew. A completed Jew is one who has also believed in the Messiahship of Jesus or in whatever revelation was available prior to Jesus, a faith like unto Abraham's. That was required to complete one's Jewishness and enter into the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant. Blessing in the land, blessing of the Seed and blessing of the worldwide mission is exclusively for completed Jews. Here called the **daughter of Zion**, the true citizens, the true Israel, also called the **daughter of Jerusalem** at the end of the verse.

So **Zion**, that's the geographical location, it's a mountain, **Jerusalem** is the city built on the mountain. And the true Israel is given a heaping up of words for rejoicing because they are now enjoying the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. **Shout for joy...Shout in triumph...rejoice and exult.**

Verse 15 gives the reason, **The LORD has taken away His judgments against you**, His cursings would be better. The OT predicted these cursings; their exile, their captivity to Gentile powers, that is what has been taken away at this point. Over 2500 years of cursings have now come to an end. **He has cleared away your enemies.** That's everybody who hates Israel. Think of all the nations on earth that hate Israel. Apparently they will have to change their attitude or be completely destroyed. If we were to look at the Sheep-Goats judgment in Matt 25, and we don't have time to turn there, but if you remember some of the famous words used at that judgment where Jesus says, come, inherit my kingdom for I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was naked and you clothed me, and so forth and the Sheep answer and say, Lord, when did we see you hungry and give you something to eat, when were you thirsty and we gave you something to drink. And the King says, I say to you that to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine...you did it to Me. Those brothers of Mine he's referring to are the Jewish believers. So there is going to have to be a change of attitude among the Gentile nations toward Jews. And it will come for members of all nations, including all the Arab nations, but for those that don't change their attitudes, the Goats, because the passage shows they continued in their anti-Semitism, their lot is

to be cleared away. As our verse says, **he has cleared away your enemies**, they wanted to wipe Israel off the map, they got wiped off the map. You don't touch the apple of God's eye. You'd think people would learn this lesson of history. Whenever any nation has touched Israel in a wrong way, even slightly, they've been crushed. That goes for whether the Jews are inside the land or outside the land, it goes for whether the Jews are in belief or unbelief, that goes for whether you like their national policy or you don't like their national policy. The world has yet to learn the principle of Gen 12:3, He who curses you (even lightly) the Hebrew suggests will be cursed (heavily). We have seen this in Persia in the book of Esther, we have seen this with the Ottoman Empire, we have seen this with Germany in WWII. Over and over, you don't touch the Jews.

Now then, verse 15, they will be cleared out, for 1,000 years no enemies of Israel, in fact, Satan himself will be locked away, he who stirred up the nations against Israel. And notice the next part; this is central, **The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst**; Now this is the ruler of the kingdom. A kingdom has to have a King. And here we have the King, He's the **LORD** Himself and when you see LORD in all caps like that what's the Hebrew word behind it? YHWH. So the **King** is **YHWH**. But the King is also a legitimate **King of Israel**, He has rights to the Throne of David. And he has to be a legal heir of David to sit on that throne. But if he's the legal heir of David then He also has to be a genuine human. So the King here is God and He's man and so the incarnation is presupposed. God has to have taken to Himself flesh. And the legal genealogy that establishes the fact that this occurred in Jesus is established in Matt 1. That genealogy is proof; and by the way, it's written by a tax collector. Matthew was a very mathematical, calculating kind of man, he dealt with fine details of accounting, and so it's not by accident that he's the one who is so interested in the fine details of Jesus' genealogy. In that genealogy Matthew shows that Jesus has legal rights to the throne of David because while descended from David He is not descended from David through Jeconiah but rather born of a virgin. The branch of David's line that Joseph came through was via a king named Jeconiah, one of Josiah's sons if you're interested, and Jeconiah was cursed, never again would anyone that descends from Jeconiah sit on the throne of David. It's called the Coniah curse and Joseph is of that line. So if Joseph is the father of Jesus, the real, biological father of Jesus, then guess what? Jesus is cursed. Jesus has no right to the throne of David. And so Matthew's

point is to show how God pulled this off. Matthew was very impressed with how God did it and he was putting together the prophecies of Coniah and the prophecies of the virgin birth and he said, bam, look at this, I do my calculations and this is the guy, this is the only one who could ever qualify, this guy has the credentials, He is the legitimate heir of David's throne. And Zephaniah is speaking of the time when he actually sits on that throne and rules in the midst of Israel. A remarkable picture. God is going to once more dwell with man. That is God's desire, we're not told why. Why does He want to dwell with us stinkers? I don't know, but we do know that He wants to. He dwelt with man in the Garden of Eden, man rebelled, He dwelt with man again in the wilderness wanderings as a pillar of fire and a pillar of cloud, what we call the Shekinah Glory. The Shekinah dwelled locally in the Tabernacle, then in the Temple, He departed at the Exile in 586BC and He came in the incarnation, but His people didn't receive Him. Finally they will receive Him and He will dwell with them in the Kingdom as their King. A stunning moment of history. The earth is going to be ruled geopolitically, from sea to sea, in righteousness by the God of the universe incarnate in Jewish flesh on the throne of David in the exalted city of Jerusalem. He's going to reign in great power and glory.

He's coming back, not as a suffering servant but as a glorious King. Reading the end of verse 15, **You will fear disaster no more. 16In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. 17The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior.** When the Lord Jesus Christ returns He's not coming back as a meek and mild person, He's coming back in war garments drenched in blood. Isa 63, "Who is...This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength...Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? I have trodden the wine trough alone...I trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their blood is sprinkled on My garments...For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come I looked, and there was no one to help...So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. I trod down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their blood on the earth." That's the General of an Army fighting the entire battle Himself. He is drenched with blood. He has conquered.

And what did we say the day of the Lord was? How did we define the day of the Lord? As a really great warrior King conquering His enemies and rescuing His people. And this is it. There is no other verse in the Bible I know of that singlehandedly conveys that idea better than this one. Jesus Christ is a victorious warrior ruling in the midst of Israel and exulting over them, rejoicing, these are the shouts of joy of Israel's Messiah. He's exultant over saving His promised people. He has accomplished it. What does the NT say about Jesus and why He endured the cross? For the joy set before Him. What joy? This joy right here. The joy of ruling over His people and lavishing His love on them. It was this joy that Jesus Christ had in mind on the cross. It's what kept Him on the cross! And finally, after thousands of years He receives the Kingdom and the joy that *was* set before Him *is* now His in full.

Alright, let's stop there, every phrase of verse 18 is difficult and I want to end on this high note of the Messiah as a victorious warrior King dwelling in the midst of His people and exulting over them with shouts of joy!

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