

Zephaniah 2

Zephaniah 1—The God who Disciplines

Zephaniah 2—The God who Defends

Zephaniah 3—The God who Delights

Last week, as we considered The God who Disciplines, we saw that Zephaniah

1. Declared judgement upon the idolators, the backsliders, the rulers, the money lovers, and the stagnant of Judah.
2. He warns them of the coming Day of the Lord

Today, as we get into chapter 2 we will see how God, even in the midst of judgement, cared for and defends his people. There are 3 primary ways that we see God step into the breach for the well-being of His people.

I. He Pleads with them Passionately v1-3

Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame,

The word translated “gather” here is the word commonly used in reference to gathering sticks for a fire.

1. Judah was a nation without shame.
2. Jeremiah 6:15 *“Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,” says the LORD.*
3. God was saying, since you have no desire to amend your ways, since you have no shame, gather yourselves together for judgment.

This is not an outburst. This is God’s attempt at getting their attention before it is too late! Look at all the “before’s” in v2-3.

2 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. 3 Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD’S anger.

The Lord makes one last appeal to His people...before it is too late! Seek me!

1. Amos 5:6, 14-15 *“Seek the LORD that you may live, Or He will break forth like a fire, O house of Joseph, And it will consume with none to quench it for Bethel, ...Seek good and not evil, that you may live; And thus may the LORD God of hosts be with you, Just as you have said! 15 Hate evil, love good, And establish justice in the gate! Perhaps the LORD God of hosts May be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.*

2. Seek me. Literally...
 - a. Turn to him with sound and true repentance
 - b. pray for pardon
 - c. engage in renewed obedience
 - d. fear, worship, depend on the Lord alone.

God is pleading with them passionately to see their shame, recognize the coming judgement, and seek Him!

II. He Pressures them with Love v4-15

The judgment of God is coming. There shall be no refuge for you among your neighbors. God is closing in on them!

A. To the West v4-7

4 For Gaza will be abandoned And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon And Ekron will be uprooted. 5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will destroy you So that there will be no inhabitant.

Here the prophet addressed four of the five great Philistine cities.

1. Gaza...it would be abandoned
2. Ashkelon...it would be a desolation
3. Ashdod...it would fall and they would flee at midday
4. Ekron...it would be uprooted
5. Canaan, the land of the Philistines would be destroyed

6 So the seacoast will be pastures, With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks. 7 And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

B. To the East v8-11

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

Moab and Ammon are mentioned here.

1. They were descendants of Lot and the result of a drunken incestuous relationship.
2. Historically they were bitter enemies of the Jews.

They are beginning to taunt the people of God

1. because the northern kingdom of Israel has fallen and the 10 tribes have been taken into captivity.
2. Because they see the growing weakness of Judah's kings.

9 "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, "Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them And the remainder of My nation will inherit them." 10 This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11 The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.

C. To the South v12

12 *“You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword.”*

Ethiopia was allied to Egypt.

1. There may have been Ethiopian regiments in Pharaoh Necho’s army that killed King Josiah.
2. Not even they would escape the wrath of God.

D. To the North v13-15

13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north And destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness. 14 Flocks will lie down in her midst, All beasts which range in herds; Both the pelican (or the owl) and the hedgehog Will lodge in the tops of her pillars; Birds will sing in the window, Desolation will be on the threshold; For He has laid bare the cedar work.

1. The pelican was a symbol of uncleanness and its Hebrew name suggest vomiting.
2. She thought none was like her in glory, power, and wealth...now there is none like her in misery and desolations.

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

God is closing in on them! He is pressuring them in love!

1. He was patiently, graciously, and compassionately giving them time and encouragement to repent.
2. Time
 - a. One nation after another is falling...it is coming
 - b. Every time a surrounding country fell to Babylon, Zephaniah’s prophecy seemed a little more valid... and imminent.
 - c. It was as if God used every surrounding nation to back Judah one more step into a corner.
3. Encouragement
 - a. As each nation falls the escape routes were disappearing. I can’t run N, S, E, or W.
 - b. As each nation falls the refuges and hopes were disappearing. There is no help from the North, South, East or West.
 - c. There is no where to run but to God! So seek me!!!

III. He Promises them a Future

The judgment of God is coming

1. There shall be no refuge for you among your neighbors.
2. But God hasn’t abandoned you. He is still looking out for you and he will defend the remnant!
3. He will judge all of your enemies and take them out of your way.

A. The Philistines

6 So the seacoast will be pastures, With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks. 7 And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

1. There will be judgment on the Philistines for all that they have done to God's people over the years.
2. The remnant of God's people would eventually plunder them and dwell in their land.

B. Moab

9 "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, "Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them And the remainder of My nation will inherit them." 10 This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts. 11 The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.

There is not only a promise of God's defense from their enemies and vengeance on their enemies. There is also the promise of a future hope.

1. Exile in Babylon would not be their end! They had a future.
2. Jeremiah 29:11 *For I know the plans that I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.*

Conclusion:

1. God pleads with them passionately in hopes that they would repent and seek Him. Maybe He has been doing the same for you.
 - a. 2 Peter 3:9 *The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.*
 - b. He has waited week after week for you to come
2. God pressured them in love
 - a. You feel like you have been backed into a corner
 - b. He is not cornering you to devour you, but to deliver you.
 - c. Stop trying to get away and surrender.
3. God promised them a future hope and he has promised you one as well if you will repent, turn to Him, and be transformed today!

John 14:1-3 *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. 2 In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. 3 If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.*