

Take your Bibles and open with me to Zephaniah chapter 3. This morning we are looking at the rest of chapter 3, verses 8-20, and in fact will finish the Book of Zephaniah, although we will have one final message for this series next week. Remember this series has been titled “The Day of the Lord” and our message today to finish chapter 3 is titled, “The Restored Remnant.”

To review, Zephaniah, a prophet who is a member of the royal family, a descendant of King Hezekiah, and cousin of the current King in Judah, Josiah, is summarizing the messages of warning to Judah and surrounding nations about the wrath of God coming upon the nations then, and in the future, in the great and terrible coming Day of the Lord. Some of what the prophet has proclaimed will be coming to pass within less than a generation from when he preached it, fulfilled by the Babylonian exile of Judah. But he also, at the very start of his message, proclaimed judgment upon the whole earth wherein all of creation will be consumed by the wrath of God – remember that we fleshed out 2 verses from chapter 1 in the seals, trumpets, and bowls of John’s Revelation.

Those verses tell us, **“I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,” says the Lord; “I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,” says the Lord.**” He says He will make the wicked piles of rubble. God is going to trash His creation because of the stain of sin.

This is not a 70 year exile in Babylon – this is the judgment of the nations at the coming of Christ. But the prophet also has a specific warning for Judah that is indeed fulfilled in their captivity. This of course means that there is a need for repentance among the nations and the people of God. However, as we have progressed through the prophesy we have learned that at a certain point it was no longer a matter of repentance because a sure and certain judgment was coming and there was no stopping it. Then the people were admonished to gather together and seek to be near the Lord and maybe, perhaps they would be spared the fall out of this terrible judgment coming upon the world.

Finally now as we have come to the end of the summarization of the prophecies of the first half of the Minor Prophets, we kind of expect doom and gloom and a desperation because of the finality of judgment, however here at the end we find a drop of mercy – we find the promise of restoration! God closes a book of judgment with Good News!

Let’s examine these final verses starting with Zephaniah 3:8. **“Therefore wait for Me,” says the Lord, “Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.**”

So we start the good news with one last word of bad news – God is going to judge the nations. But He does have a message for His people in the midst of that. And He is speaking to the remnant of Jerusalem, the remnant who was faithful, who believed Him and His Word. This is the remnant who had repented and drawn near to Him in response to the Word being proclaimed. And He says to them, because of what is going to happen to the nations and to Jerusalem, to His people in Judah, because of that they need to wait on Him. “Therefore, wait for Me,” He says, “until the day.” Wait for the final day of judgment.

This is not a wait and see, or wait and do nothing until this comes to pass. This is an active waiting. It is an expectant waiting. It is waiting for a display of justice and holiness that will glorify God – we forget, usually on purpose, that God will be glorified in the judgment of sinners. And the remnant is encouraged to wait with expectation and with faith knowing that God will come and judge the wicked. **“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.** And while the world spurns God and His Word and His people, we wait for the certainty of accountability and judgment upon the wicked. Jesus is coming again and while we will rejoice, the world will mourn and be horrified.

In 2 Timothy 4:8 we find another expectation for His coming. **“Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”**

Often I think we want Jesus to come back specifically because we know He will judge the wicked. We want justice. But do we love His appearing for what it means to the lost more than what it means to the justified? And shouldn't we want the lost to be saved first and foremost and thereby be spared the judgment of God as Christ has paid the penalty for His people?

We want sinners to pay, but we do not want to pay as sinners, do we? We are glad Jesus paid the price for us, but would rather those vile sinners out there in the world pay their own way, right?

And in loving His return here is the question, do we truly expect that Jesus is coming back? Do we believe He is going to return? I know we profess that Jesus is coming again, but how often do we look at how long it has been since He made the promise and how confusing end times scenarios can be, with or without charts and graphs – and we believe He is coming back but deep down we don't think we will see it in our lifetime?

Do we expect His return? Not eventually...but as He Himself stated, **“Behold, I am coming quickly!”**

An atheist friend of mine summed it up quite blasphemously when he posted a picture of Jesus on the cross saying, "I'll be right back." And his comment was, "LOL. It's only been 2000 years."

This sentiment is not something new. We need to make sure we do not fall into thinking that because we perceive a delay that this means He might not be coming. We need to be alert and watch for it. When we finally get to 2 Peter later this year, we will see that Peter had to address his readers' questions about why Jesus had not come back as promised. It seems a human thing where we all know we need to wait but we hate waiting!

It started soon after the ascension it seems – He said He would be right back, so where is He? Well when you see how God does math....quick for Him means a wait time for us! These last 2000 years for us are the equivalent in heavenly time of about 2 days.

So as we face the future let us do so with this assurance – Jesus is coming back and we should be expectantly waiting for Him.

When He comes He says He is going to plunder the world. He says here in verse 8, **"My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy."**

Why do we have this promise of judgement and fierce anger and wrath? It is sin. Sin against God. Sin against each other. And sin has a penalty. Sin has a price – a wage. And that wage is death. It is judgment.

Jesus addresses the coming judgment and the reasons for wrath in a parable in Matthew 21:33-41. The Parable of the wicked vinedressers. There Jesus tells us, **33 "Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' 38 But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' 39 So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 "Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" 41 They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons."**

In Isaiah chapter 5 we find God referring to His people as a vineyard, planted with the choicest seed, but the vineyard is a disappointment as it grows wild grapes and not good grapes.

We, by our sin, have ruined God's creation. We should be good stewards of it but instead we think it is ours to do with as we please. And we use the world He has created to indulge our fleshly desires instead of to serve and glorify Him. This is how we have treated Him.

He has sent His prophets and His apostles and His Son to us. And we, humanity, in our lostness, in our hatred of God, we killed His prophets, His apostles, and His Son. This is our sin. And when the owner of the vineyard comes to collect what is His, He will destroy wicked men miserably.

Yet even now we find hope. Here is His Word to His remnant, in verses 9-13:

**9 “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. 11 In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. 12 I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord. 13 The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.”**

After the words about wrath and the certainty of judgment against sin, God reminds us that He is the God of salvation. There is a remnant that will be preserved and given the hope of restoration. And while it is true that God promised through Jeremiah and Zephaniah to restore His people in Judah after the time of judgment in exile through a return to the Land, there is more here than a fulfillment to just Judah. God says He will restore “to the peoples”, not people, singular, but peoples, plural.

In speaking to those who will return after the exile, after judgment, Jeremiah introduces the New Covenant. In Jeremiah 31:31 **“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah— 32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. 33 But this is the covenant that I will**

**make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."**

That means we need to ask a question? Who is the remnant? Who is the remnant of Israel? It is not just the Jews or those returned from exile. Remember, God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, for all who repent of their sin and trust Christ are the offspring of Abraham according to his faith! Paul says it in Galatians 3:29, **"And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."**

Remember the children's song, the Christian hokey pokey? "Father Abraham had many sons. Many sons had father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord! Right arm, left arm, right foot, left foot...."

God says He will restore the peoples, those who worship Him, those who are His. And He says He will restore to them a pure language. The phrase means literally God is going to purify their lips. Why would it be important to have purified lips?

Think about Isaiah's encounter with God in Isaiah 6. In seeing God's holiness Isaiah became aware of his own sinfulness and declared that he was a man of unclean lips. And an angel took a coal from off the altar and touched his lips with it.

In the Scripture unclean lips signify an impure heart. Jesus said that the words that come out of our mouth proceed from the heart. The lips diagnose the heart. This coal off the altar represented the sacrifice for sin, it signified the sacrifice of Christ and His work to give us not just forgiveness, but a new heart.

Here in Zephaniah God promises that after this great day of judgment upon the wicked that God will give His people clean lips. This is a New Covenant promise! By this new heart and these purified lips, we can call upon the name of the Lord. After the judgment we will have no hindrance in our worship of God.

Psalm 24:3-5 asks this question, **"Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who may stand in His holy place? 4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. 5 He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."**

Who can draw near to God? Those who have been cleansed by the grace of God through the sacrifice of Christ applied in giving them a new heart. As a result, there is no deceit.

We are a new creation. All things have been made new. We are a new man, Paul says, **“Created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”** (Eph. 4:24).

After judgment, for the remaining remnant, God will restore to us the ability to worship Him in holiness!

Look at our assurance again in verses 11-12. **“In that day you shall not be ashamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. 12 I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord.**

The first mark of membership in the remnant of the people of God is worship from a pure heart and clean lips. The second mark we see here is the destruction of pride and the presence of meek humility.

How devastating is pride? It is ultimately the root of every sin. It was the first sin – as Lucifer proclaimed, **“I will be like the Most High.”** (Isaiah 14:14). It is all about “I”. It is about my will, my way, my wants. Pride prevents fellowship with God. So God says He will take pride away, literally He will conquer pride. In James, He says He will abase the proud. Abase means to knock someone down. To take them down a notch, we would say in Texas. This fall, this abasement, it is a guarantee. **“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”** (Proverbs 16:18).

And God says when you belong to Him you will no longer be proud and haughty. God humbles us. How much of our trials and suffering I wonder are tools in God’s hands to humble us, to crush pride and remove haughtiness and self-dependence? God will conquer our pride and raise up among us meek and humble people who trust in the Lord, not in self, but in the Lord.

Jesus says of the meek, **“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”** (Matt. 5:5). Here it is, after the Day of Judgment. The meek and humble remain with Him and will reign with Him in this renewed creation.

And be sure, meekness is not weakness. It is not pacificity. Meekness is having a proper view of self in relation to God. It is reverence and trust. It is bowing before God in submission, abandoning ourselves to His will and His way.

Before we can make a claim to belonging to the remnant, we must ask if we are mostly

proud, or mostly meek and humble. Read your facebook comments to take your temperature. Amen. Or ouch!

We see the third mark of membership in the remnant in verse 13. **“The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.”**

Compare Psalm 24:4 to Zephaniah 3:13. Who can draw near to God? **4 He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.**

Ultimately it says here we will do no unrighteousness. If we follow Jesus we will live a holy life. This speaks to our sanctification and also to the hope of our glorification. We should be able to look at our lives and see growth in grace. We should be making progress, even if at times that means a step forward after a slide back. It is evidenced by falling 7 times and getting back up 8. It is Proverbs 24:16, **“For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.”** It is not about where we are, but about where we are headed. What is our trajectory?

Are we making progress? And as we look at the hope of glorification, the day that even the desire for sin will be removed. This is all because of God’s grace. And did you know that grace has requirements? Grace is free but grace has requirements.

1 John 2:3, **“Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.”** Humble obedience is the mark of having received grace. Grace empowers us, it enables us to walk in holiness. But it is not merely the ability. If grace is at work, we will want to walk in holiness and we will walk in holiness! We will hear and we will do.

To review from verses 9-13 we see God’s promises to the remnant of His people – a pure heart and clean lips, worthy worship, meekness, humility, and holiness. But we do not need to wait for the day of judgment for these things to be part of our life, do we? We need to exhibit these marks of membership in the remnant now. See, living a holy life does not save you, but if you are saved, you will live a holy life.

Now in verses 14-17 we see not only is God going to bring a restoration, but there will be a new song, there will be rejoicing! He says,

**14 Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no**

**more. 16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. 17 The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”**

Sing! Shout! Be glad and rejoice! After judgment comes salvation – after the day of judgment comes the gathering together of the people of God around the throne forever in the new heavens and the new earth and do you think we will be quiet? Reverent – yes. But quiet? The Lord, as our King, will be in our midst and there will be no more disaster, and the word is evil. Wickedness will be no more.

The word “Shout” here is a battle cry of victory. Jesus has won. Now...every head bowed, every eye closed, let’s silently meditate....NO – Shout to the Lord!

Imagine later today the noise when the Falcons beat the Patriots. Imagine the roar of the crowd when their team wins, or makes an amazing play. I’ve heard noise like this at a Chicago Cubs game. The bases were loaded and there was 1 out and the Cubs were about to lose it all, how could they get out of the inning. And they made an incredible double play and I have never heard a noise like that before in my life. Imagine then the victory shout of the people of God when the last enemy, death, is destroyed forever! Amen?

Imagine the noise of the people of God praising Him without hindrance. Without doubt. Without fear. Let us confess that all too often we are excited, passionate, or noisy, about things in life that we should not actually be all that excited about! But as a believer, because of the gospel and its power, we need to sing, and we need to shout, and we need to rejoice – evidence of emotion and passion. If we can coldly, calmly, and collectively sing praises to the God who saved us from death, and wrath, and hell then we just may not get what it means that God has given us the victory through Christ.

We are to love and worship Him with all we are, with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Decently and in order, to be sure, but don’t hold anything back! Please don’t let the abuses of some make us afraid to be passionate in our worship of God! There are times that we cheer more for kids on a field playing games than we cheer over the victory over sin, temptation, and death that we have been given by Jesus Christ. We are afraid to be noisy!

Remember, this worship, this noise of rejoicing, it has as its backdrop judgment. Look at the severity of judgment. Now look at the depths of His love and grace. That should generate a little excitement, shouldn’t it?

Here is our reason to rejoice, **“The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out**

**your enemy.”** Every penalty, every wage earned by our sin, Jesus paid it all. God has taken away our judgment and put it on another. Paul says it this way in Colossians 2:13-15, **“And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.”** The handwriting of requirements against us – the judgments, the debt we owed – it has been wiped out, nailed to the cross! It’s done!

And here we see not just the removal of wrath, but the defeat of our enemy. We see Satan disarmed. He has cast out our enemy. **“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.”** (Eph. 6:12).

Satan is a defeated, retreating foe. While any wounded animal may still be dangerous, we must remember that Satan has lost. And if that is not enough, God says the King of Israel is in our midst. He says, **“16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. 17 The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save;”**

And look – we see why we have reason to rejoice. We see, I hope we see and understand why it is we should sing and shout and rejoice and praise the Lord. But here in verse 17, look at Who else has a reason to rejoice. **“The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.”** Look at this – after judgment, when Creation is restored and renewed, God is the one rejoicing!

We have gone from the most terrifying description of judgment in chapter 1 to the most exhilarating descriptions of God’s love for us in chapter 3. Look here at the love of God for His people. Our God, the Mightiest Warrior, who has defeated our enemy and claimed us for Himself, He will save us. He has saved us!

These next three lines, one commentator says, “express the deepest inner joy and satisfaction of God Himself in His love for His people.” (*NICOT Commentary on Zephaniah*, O. Palmer Robertson, pg. 339).

God rejoicing over you with gladness.

God quietly contemplating you with love.

God rejoicing and singing over you.

Now we preach a God focused message here, but let’s understand, that does not mean that

there is nothing to say about what He thinks about us. It says here God will be rejoicing over us with gladness. He will be quietly contemplating us with His love. He will be rejoicing and singing over us. Can you imagine the glory of God rejoicing in His accomplished purposes as we stand around the Throne and praise Him and He joins in the singing and rejoicing because we are there with Him? Would you have imagined that God can praise Himself? And this is what He does. He praises Himself for us and what He has accomplished in saving us.

In Numbers 23:21 we find the basis for God's rejoicing in His work of salvation, **"He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel. The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a King is among them."** In Zechariah 9:9-10 we read, **"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; the battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth.'"**

In the coming of Christ we find reasons for rejoicing. Reasons on earth. Reasons in heaven! And because He has come and will come we need not be afraid. And we need not be weak. He says, **"Let not your hands be weak."** Don't grow weary in obedience. Hebrews 12:12-13 says, **"Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."** While we wait for this time of great rejoicing, shouting, and singing, we wait, and we guard against growing weak and tired.

This is our work here and now in the church. Paul describes the work this way, in the context of the second coming, **"Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all."** (1 Thess. 5:14).

Remember, as we have discussed before, to warn the unruly means to warn those who are "out of ranks." It is a term for someone who is marching out of step and referred to those who did not show up to work. Warn those!

Comfort the fainthearted. Give hope to the struggling. We would much rather just squash the struggling, wouldn't we? We see someone struggling and you know why they are struggling – well obviously it is because they don't have enough faith! NO! Comfort the fainthearted.

Uphold the weak – literally hold them up. Don't just help them bear their burdens, but carry them if needed.

And be patient with all. With ALL. Ugh. This is perhaps the most difficult. But this is how we guard against growing weary. We help each other in the body.

Finally then in verses 18-20 the prophet closes his message and the theme of his closing is the great redemptive purpose and power of God. He has talked about the grand finale, the judgment of nations, the reward of the remnant, but now at the end He comes back with a word to Judah. To those who are going to be taken into exile.

**18 “I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden. 19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. 20 At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes,” says the Lord.**

There is here again the promise of return for the people after judgment. And that return is but a foreshadowing of the great day of rejoicing that will follow the final judgment. But for now, Zephaniah returns to the promises for Judah. And we see here that even though Babylon captured Judah, we know that the Medes and Persians conquered Babylon, and then the Greeks were victorious, and then the Romans, and then, just as Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed it, then came Christ, and His kingdom will never end.

And in His Kingdom, with His people, look at how many things God says He will do here in these final verses. I will gather. I will deal with those who afflict you. I will save. I will appoint. I will bring you back. I will gather you. I will give you fame and praise. I will return your captives. Here are 8 things God says He will do for His people in accomplishing His purpose of redemption.

Think about this message preached to Judah and those who would have heard it. Think as it might have been repeated. As we will see next week about the reforms of Josiah and what he did in response to the preaching of Zephaniah, we have to wonder who all did hear the message that was being preached? Because we are only 15 or 20 years away from Babylon coming and capturing Judah and taking them into exile. When that happened, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, they were taken. Do you wonder if they heard the message of Zephaniah being preached?

Surely they heard what Jeremiah had said. Jeremiah was even taken to Babylon. Daniel read his writings. And in studying Jeremiah, Daniel came to determine how long the exile would last. He was able then to prepare the people for the return to the land. Daniel did not get to go back. He died in exile. He was taken as a young boy, as a teen perhaps, and 70 years is a long time. He died in his middle to late 80s still in captivity. But for those who

had heard this message, for those who saw the hope of restoration, for those who saw God judge nation after nation just like He said He would do – what was their hope? It was the hope that God would keep His Word.

What is our hope? We are in exile, aren't we? We are pilgrims, we are aliens, this is not our home, we don't belong here. We wait for a home, for a city **“whose builder and maker is God.”** (Hebrews 11:10). And we may die in exile like Daniel. Or we may see Jesus come with our own eyes physically, standing here on the earth. If we die before He comes we get to see Him, either way. Whether we live or die we are going to be with Him. And He is coming for us.

This is our hope. This is the promise that even in the outpouring of wrath God has preserved a remnant – He has had mercy on whom He will have mercy. He will not leave us orphans. He will come for us. What an amazing day if we live to see it. And when He comes you will get to see it either way, from the earthly side, or coming with Him down from heaven, either way we will be there. This is His promise.

God closes by telling us this: Judgment is coming but He will preserve a faithful remnant. And just as Judah will return and rejoice after exile, so too, we His people will rejoice and He will rejoice over us after the Final Judgment, as we are finally and forever in His presence.

He brought His people back, He gathered them together, so that the Messianic line would be preserved. He brought them back from exile so that Jesus would be born. He saved them from judgment to save us from judgment!

And the hope here is not just a hope of reconciliation, or restoration. It is the hope of resurrection. It is life everlasting in the presence of God in the new heaven and the new earth.

In Mark 12 when Jesus is questioned by the Sadducees about the resurrection – they did not believe in the resurrection – Jesus replied that the resurrection is indeed a reality. He said, **“But concerning the dead, that they rise, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the burning bush passage, how God spoke to him, saying, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living. You are therefore greatly mistaken.”** (Mark 12:26-27).

The God of the living tells us that we should sing and shout and rejoice because of His redeeming love and power. As we look at the message of judgment and the wrath of God there is a promise in the midst of this great and terrible day of the Lord that is coming. In that day, He will be in our midst, our enemy will be defeated, and we will know His love

for us beyond comprehension. This is our hope in the gospel.

To conclude then, what did King Josiah and the people of Judah do after Zephaniah brought them the Word of God? Did they listen? Did they repent? Did they obey? Next week we will look at Josiah's response to the Word of the Lord.

The first message in this series was titled, "The Days of Josiah." Next week we finish with a message titled, "The Ways of Josiah." And the good news is that, yes, Josiah heeded the Word of God. And we will see the reform, the revival that resulted.

It was because of the faithfulness of Josiah that young men like Daniel and his friends, were taken into captivity, trained in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, in all of the ways of living like a Babylonian, and in the midst of all of that indoctrination they remained faithful to God. Because men like Zephaniah and Jeremiah stood and at great cost preached the Word of God to the people who were in danger of judgment.

Do we tell people the truth about sin? The truth about judgment? Do we think that people will think we are crazy if we tell them about the dangers of hell? It doesn't matter what they think about us. And we probably all are a little crazy. But that doesn't change the Word of God. We are to preach it because there are still those out there who need to hear it, who need to repent, who need to be restored, who need to gather with us to worship God as His children.

There are still members out there of the remnant wandering. We have been tasked with going and finding them, preaching the gospel, so that through us Jesus might continue His work to seek and save that which was lost. This is our calling. Wrath is sure and it is certain. We need to tell people the truth about the consequences for sin. We also need to preach the gospel with emotion, and with passion, like we believe it!

We need to sing. We need to rejoice. We need to shout in victory to the Lord. When we look at His grace and His goodness and His love and His power and His plan and His promises – if we just sit there calmly and not get excited, we need to be born again!

God tells us to love Him with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength – with everything that we are. May we be passionate in our pursuit of the lost and even more passionate in the proclamation of the grace of God, wherein He came and bestowed His love and His grace upon sinners like us.

Let us pray.