

Message #8

Zephaniah 3:8-13

Back in the 60's, Hal David wrote some lyrics and Burt Bacharach wrote the music to a song first recorded by Jackie De Shannon in 1965 and Dionne Warwick in 1965—"What the World Needs Now is Love Sweet Love."

When you come to this text in Zephaniah, he says no that is not what the world needs. **What it needs now and what the world is going to get is the judgment of God and that judgment is on the way.**

While we were on vacation, I talked with someone who had been to the Ark which is located a few miles south of Cincinnati on I-75. People travel long distances to admire the ark. What most people don't think about is that the reason Noah built the ark was God was going to judge and destroy the world and destroy everything in it. In all reality, when you look at that Ark, you are looking at the judgment of God.

What God wants His people waiting for is not more love. His love was fully and completely given in the sending of His Son. There is no greater demonstration of love than that. But the next thing on God's agenda is not more love, but various judgments.

In fact, this is a courtroom scene in which God becomes His own legal witness to carry out the judgment.

In **verse 8**, God says, "Therefore wait for Me." Charles Feinberg said this is the only verse in the OT where every Hebrew letter is used. Every bit of judgment is coming. That is an interesting Hebrew verb "wait." It actually means to wait in the sense of being tired or bound to something (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 276). God's people need to bind themselves or tie themselves to God as they wait for His judgment.

Contextually and theologically there are two things for which His people may wait:

- 1) Wait until I pour out My declarative wrath on the God mocking world.
- 2) Wait until I pour out My wonderful blessings on My faithful remnant.

Zephaniah is a hard hitting book. If you are not right with God, the future is dark and hopeless. If you are right with God, the future is bright and hopeful.

GOD WANTS HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE WAITING FOR HIM TO POUR OUT HIS WRATH JUDGMENT ON HIS ENEMIES ON THIS EARTH AND THEN ESTABLISH AND BLESS HIS PEOPLE ON THIS EARTH.

There are two main parts to this:

PART #1 – God declares what He will do to the nations. 3:8

There are several prophetic passages in the Bible that predict there will be a major judgment of nations—Joel 3:1, 2, 12-17; Zechariah 12:2, 3; 14:2; Matthew 25:31ff.. This one in Zephaniah is in the same genre.

What is predicted here is a major judgment of God against the nations and kingdoms of the world.

It will never be the proud nations or proud people who will inherit this earth from God; it will be the humble and meek people of God who will inherit it.

This text makes that point very clear.

What God promises to do here is not pretty. There are six observations we want to make:

Observation #1 - God declares that people wait for Him to judge the nations. **3:8a**

Now when you first read this, you think that is so nice. God tells people to wait for Him. But in the immediate context, this is not a wonderful promise, this is a serious threat. The address is saying, “You just wait until I decide to judge you for the evil you have done.” Just wait. Judgment is coming and you won’t be able to stop it.

Observation #2 - God will rise up as a witness against the nations. **3:8b**

God says there is coming a day when I will rise up as a witness for Myself in judgment. When God takes the stand as a witness, there will be no cross examination or questions. What God will do is pronounce a judicial declarative judgment.

Here is something to think about. Many people who end up in high political positions have a legal background. Many were attorneys and prosecutors. In fact, in Congress now are 6 attorneys; 16 former judges and 264 state legislators. These people know the law. These people know about courts and these people will face a judgment in the court of God. They led the nation.

Observation #3 - God has decided He will gather the nations. **3:8c**

All nations will be gathered to appear before God. There will be no nation left out of this. Every Israel hating, God defying, Bible rejecting, Christ mocking nation and individual will be judged.

Observation #4 - God has decided that He will assemble kingdoms. **3:8d**

By basic definition, a kingdom is that which is ruled by a king or queen. By stating that God will gather nations and kingdoms for judgment, we learn that no Gentile place will be left out from the face of the earth.

There is a famous prayer in the Bible that says, “Thy Kingdom Come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

In order for that to happen, all nations of the world must be assembled by God for judgment. He will assemble them together and in the aftermath of that, His will shall be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

Observation #5 - God has decided to pour out His indignation and burning anger on nations and kingdoms. **3:8c**

Do you see this? This is what God is going to do to the nations. This is what God will do to the world that has turned against Him and His word.

Observation #6 - God will devour all the earth. **3:8d**

The Apostle Peter predicted what God will do in devouring the earth in II Peter 3:10-11.

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!”

PART #2 – God declares what He God will do for His people. 3:9-13

Stephen Miller said, “Thankfully, the Book of Zephaniah ends with a wonderful message of hope for the Gentile nations (3:9-10) and Judah (3:11-20)” (*Zephaniah*, p. 104).

There is a bright future coming for the people of God. This is true for the Nation Israel and this is true for the individual believer.

We may observe that **verse 9** opens with “for then.” This is important chronology because once God has poured out His wrath and judgment, He can then focus on pouring out His blessings. This will happen then and not before then.

We may observe that in this text there is an interjection of three “I will” statements of what God will do (**v. 9, 11, 12**). This is an amazing prediction of what God will do for His people.

Amazing Promise #1 - God will give to the peoples purified lips. **3:9a**

Never again will anything impure be heard on the face of the earth.

Amazing Promise #2 - God will cause all the people to call on Him. **3:9b**

Think about this. It will be a time when everyone in the world will call upon the God of the Bible. There will be no more false religion or false faith.

Amazing Promise #3 - God will cause all people to serve Him in unity. **3:9c**

Just imagine a time when all people of the world love God, love the word of God and love each other and work shoulder to shoulder.

Amazing Promise #4 - God will cause His scattered people to come back to worship. **3:10a**

People who have been scattered will come to Jerusalem to worship. Jerusalem will be the worship center of the world.

Amazing Promise #5 - God will cause His scattered people to bring their offerings. **3:10b**

People will travel from Ethiopia to worship God and bring their offerings. To travel from Ethiopia to Jerusalem is about 2,500 miles. This is about the same distance as traveling from Georgia on the Atlantic to San Diego on the Pacific.

Think about this; people will travel these lengthy distances because they want to worship God and take their offerings to Jerusalem. Of course one reason why they will want to do this is because Jesus Christ will be there in Person.

Amazing Promise #6 - God will remove all shame for the rebellious acts against God. **3:11a**

The prepositional phrase “in that day” refers to the day when Jesus Christ is on earth and is taking charge of the world.

All people have done rebellious things against God and have done things for which they are ashamed. People who are right with God are ashamed of things they have done and said. This of course causes them to focus on God’s grace.

When Jesus Christ returns that will no longer be the case. He will not only take away the rebellious acts, but the shame that goes with it.

Amazing Promise #7 - God will remove all arrogant, proud people forever. **3:11b**

Pride is a horrible sin. It will be removed from everyone and every place.

Amazing Promise #8 - God will be a refuge to those who are humble and lowly. **3:12**

God's great, glorious and powerful work is always done with the humble and lowly. It is the contrite of spirit, not the proud that are so important.

Amazing Promise #9 - God's people will do no wrong. **3:13a**

What an amazing statement. There will come a time when God's people will not do one thing wrong, ever.

Amazing Promise #10 - God's people will tell no lies. **3:13b**

What a world it will be. No more lies. No more embellishments. No more exaggerations. Just plain and simple truth.

Amazing Promise #11 - God's people will not be deceitful. **3:13c**

Nothing clandestine or deceitful will ever be done.

Amazing Promise #12 - God's people will feed on God's word. **3:13d**

All of God's people will be feeding on God's word.

Amazing Promise #13 - God's people will lie down securely. **3:13e**

When you travel today you must be aware of your surroundings at all times because there are evil people who can do evil things. It will be a new world and an amazing world for the people of God.

Amazing Promise #14 - God's people will never see any who will make them afraid. **3:13f**

This will be the ultimate fulfillment of eternal security.

We live in a scary world. We live in an evil world. God wants His people waiting, not panicking; trusting, not overreacting. For God's people the future is bright; for the rest of the world, it is dark and scary.

That is exactly the prediction made by Zephaniah.