

**Connecting Through the Word**  
**“On That Day” and “At That Time”**  
**Zephaniah 1-3**

**Zephaniah 1:7-16**

*7 Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.*

*8 And on the day of the LORD's sacrifice— “I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.*

*9 On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.*

*10 “On that day,” declares the LORD, “a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills.*

*11 Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off.*

*12 At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.’*

*13 Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.”*

*14 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.*

*15 A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

*16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.*

**Zephaniah 2:3** *Seek the LORD, all who are humble, and follow his commands. Seek to do what is right and to live humbly. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you— protect you from his anger on that day of destruction.*

**Day** – used 20 times in 14 verses

**Zephaniah** is no ordinary preacher. He is the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, one of Judah's most famous rulers. He has royal blood in his veins, but more important, he has the message of God on his lips. Strange to say, Zephaniah preached during the reign of godly King Josiah, and it was a time of religious "revival" (see 2 Kings 22-23). Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight, and at the age of sixteen he committed himself to the Lord. When he was twenty, he began a great reformation in the land, pulling down the idols and judging the false priests and prophets. He then began to rebuild the temple and led the nation in a celebration of the Passover. To all appearances, it was a time of religious concern and consecration.

But Zephaniah saw deeper; he saw the hearts of the people, and he knew that their religious zeal was not sincere. The reforms were shallow; the people got rid of the idols in their homes, but not the idols in their hearts. The rulers of the land were still greedy and disobedient, and the city of Jerusalem was the source of all kinds of wickedness in the land. Even today, many believers lack discernment and think that every "religious movement" is a genuine work of the Lord. Sometimes mere outward reformation only prepares the way for a work of the devil (Matt. 12:43-45).

We may divide Zephaniah's message into three parts, two dealing with judgment and one with mercy.

**God Will Judge Judah (1:1-2:3)**

What a statement: "I will utterly destroy everything from off the land." Judgment is coming and nothing will escape. It will include birds, beasts, and fish; it will especially affect the idols ("stumbling blocks") of the wicked; and it will wipe out the population of the land. In v. 4 God names the trouble spots: Judah and Jerusalem. What? The people of God going through judgment? Yes. The city of God, the place where the temple

stands? Yes! How can God destroy His holy people and His holy city? He does it because of their sins, and particularly the sin of idolatry (vv. 4-6).

The prophet describes three kinds of sinners in these verses:

1. Those who have forsaken Jehovah and who worship only idols, vv. 4-5a;
2. Those who worship *both* Jehovah and the idols, v. 5b;
3. Those who have forsaken the Lord openly and want nothing to do with Him, v. 6.

These same attitudes are with us today.

### **The coming judgment is described in vv. 7-18.**

He calls it "the Day of the Lord," a phrase used by several other OT writers, especially Joel.

"The Day of the Lord" has a two-fold meaning:

- (1) Locally, God's judgments on Israel and Judah in the past;
- (2) Prophetically, that future time of judgment when God will pour out His wrath (Rev. 6-19)

In this case, "the Day of the Lord" would be the Babylonian invasion in 606 B.C. and the destruction of the city and temple in 586 B.C. Zephaniah sees this invasion as a great "sacrifice"; see also Rev. 19:17-18. The noise of the invasion will start at the fish gate, the farthest gate in the city, and then travel right up to the top of Mt. Zion. But it will not be foreign soldiers doing the work; it will be God searching out the city, as with a lamp, exposing sin and punishing wickedness.

Verses 14-16 use eleven different words to describe the coming day of the Lord. Rich and poor alike will suffer; no one's silver or gold will be able to save him.

*14 The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.*

*15 A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

*16 a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.*

### **In 2:1-3 the prophet turns to Jerusalem and Judah and pleads with the people to turn to the Lord and repent of their sins.**

*"Before God's decree of judgment comes to pass, while there is still time, turn to the Lord and ask for mercy."*

Alas, the nation was content to be "religious"; they would not turn from their sins.

### **God Will Judge the Nations (2:4-3:7)**

The prophet names the various Gentile nations around Judah and announces that God will judge them for their sins as well. He begins with Philistia (vv. 4-7) and predicts that their populous coasts will become pastures for the flocks. Then he names Moab and Ammon (vv. 8-11), both of whom came from backslidden Lot (Gen. 19:33-38). They had mistreated God's people and proudly "magnified themselves"; therefore God would humble them. Their lands would be ruined. Their idols would prove powerless.

Egypt is next on the list (v. 12), and he promises them war that will slay their youths. Assyria and her capital city Nineveh will be so completely destroyed that their land will be a wilderness (vv. 13-15). The wild birds will dwell there with the animals. Their beautiful buildings will be buried under the sands. Nahum had also prophesied the fall of Nineveh and its complete destruction.

### **Again, Zephaniah closes this message with an appeal to his own people (3:1-7).**

If God judges the sins of the heathen, how much more will He judge the sins of Judah, the "holy nation of God"? He calls Jerusalem filthy and polluted—yet Josiah had removed all the

idols. God could see their hearts, and in their hearts He saw rebellion. They had no real faith in the Lord.

- The princes and judges were like prowling animals, seeking someone to devour.
- The prophets were "light"; they lacked seriousness of thought and concern. They were also "treacherous," because they led the people astray.
- The priests polluted whatever they touched, including the holy sanctuary. They could see God's judgment day after day, but they did not take it to heart. They saw Him punish other nations, but they said, "It will never happen here."

Well, it did happen there. In 606 B.C., the Babylonians came and destroyed the nation, the city, and the temple. "Sin is a reproach to any people"—especially the people of God.

### **God Will Restore His People (3:8-20)**

Zephaniah closes his message with a great promise: God will one day regather His people, punish the Gentile nations, and restore Israel and Judah to their land. Verse 8 is certainly a prediction of the Battle of Armageddon, when all nations shall gather against Jerusalem in the last days (Rev. 19:11-21). But Jesus Christ will return and judge these nations, and then establish His kingdom. He will regather the scattered Jews, cleanse them of their sins, and establish His righteous kingdom, sitting upon David's throne in Jerusalem. See Zech. 12-13.

**Have you noticed Zephaniah's emphasis on "the remnant"?** (2:7, 9; 3:13) In his day, there was a believing remnant, a small group of people faithful to the Lord, just as there is a believing remnant today. In the last days, not every Jew will follow the Lord, but the remnant will.

### **What were the believing Jews to do because of Zephaniah's message?**

- For one thing, they were to wait (3:8) and let God work out His purposes.
- Then, they were to sing (3:14ff) and rejoice at the goodness of the Lord.

The nation would have to go through a time of trial and testing, but God would be in the midst of her (3:17) and she would not have to fear even in the time of judgment. God would love them and care for them. Then, when His wrath had been ended, He would restore the nation and rejoice over them. He would afflict those who had afflicted the Jews (3:19) and would bring the Jews back to their land. This happened after the seventy years of captivity ended.

But there is a future regathering and restoration for Israel when, according to v. 20, they will be a praise to all the earth. That has not happened. Today they are a source of international contention. But when Jesus returns, they will be the source of joy and glory in the earth, and the world will be at peace.

### **Matthew 24:42-51**

*Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know **on what day** your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming **at an hour** you do not expect. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his master has set over his household, to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that wicked servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed,' and begins to beat his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards, the master of that servant will **come on a day** when he does not expect him and **at an hour** he does not know and will cut him in pieces and put him with the hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

### **Luke 17:24-31**

*For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his **day**. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the **days** of Noah, so will it be in the **days** of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the **day** when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the **days** of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the **day** when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— so will it be on the **day** when the Son of Man is revealed. **On that day**, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back.*

### **Acts 17:30-31**

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because **he has fixed a day** on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”*

### **Romans 2:3-11**

*Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on **the day of wrath** when God’s righteous judgment will be revealed. He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey*

*unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.*

### **Romans 13:12**

*The night is far gone; **the day is at hand**. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.*

### **1 Corinthians 3:12-13**

*Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one’s work will become manifest, **for the Day will disclose it**, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done.*

### **Philippians 2:14-16**

*Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that **in the day of Christ** I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.*

### **1 Thessalonians 5:2-4**

*For you yourselves are fully aware **that the day** of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, **for that day** to surprise you like a thief.*

### **2 Timothy 4:8**

*Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me **on that Day**, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.*

## Hebrews 10:24-25

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see **the Day** drawing near.*

## 2 Peter 3:10-12

*But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of **the day of God**, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*

## 1 John 4:17

*By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for **the day of judgment**, because as he is so also are we in this world.*

## Jude 1:6

*And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until **the judgment of the great day**—*

## Revelation 6:15-17

*Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for **the great day of their wrath** has come, and who can stand?"*

## Revelation 16:14

*For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on **the great day of God the Almighty**.*

## Verses with "That Day" "That Time" "Day"

### "That Day" (5 times)

#### Zephaniah 1:9

<sup>9</sup> On **that day** I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.

#### Zephaniah 1:10

<sup>10</sup> "And there shall be on **that day**," says the LORD, "The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, A wailing from the Second Quarter, And a loud crashing from the hills.

#### Zephaniah 1:15

<sup>15</sup> **That day** is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, **A day** of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

#### Zephaniah 3:11

<sup>11</sup> 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.

#### Zephaniah 3:16

<sup>16</sup> In **that day** it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak.

### "That Time" (4 times)

#### Zephaniah 1:12-13

At **that time** I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them."

#### Zephaniah 1:12

<sup>12</sup> "And it shall come to pass at **that time** That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, 'The LORD will not do good, Nor will He do evil.'

### **Zephaniah 3:19-20**

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> 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.

### **“Day” (20 times)**

### **Zephaniah 1:7-8**

<sup>7</sup> Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the **day** of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.

<sup>8</sup> And on the **day** of the LORD’s sacrifice— “I will punish the officials and the king’s sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.

### **Zephaniah 1:9**

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<sup>15</sup> A **day** of wrath is that **day**, a **day** of distress and anguish, a **day** of ruin and devastation, a **day** of darkness and gloom, a **day** of clouds and thick darkness,

<sup>16</sup> a **day** of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

**Zephaniah 1:18** Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the **day** of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

### **Zephaniah 2:2-3**

<sup>2</sup> before the decree takes effect —before the **day** passes away like chaff— before there comes upon you the burning anger of the LORD, before there comes upon you the **day** of the anger of the LORD.

<sup>3</sup> Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the **day** of the anger of the LORD.

### **Zephaniah 3:8**

<sup>8</sup> “Therefore wait for me,” declares the LORD, “for the **day** when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.

### **Zephaniah 3:11**

<sup>11</sup> 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.

### **Zephaniah 3:16**

<sup>16</sup> In that **day** it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak.