Zephaniah 2,3

“A Message of **Doom** to a Message of **Hope!**”

1. **Intro:**
   1.1. In this last section lies one of the most “piercing, incisive, & insightful” passages in all of Scripture! – It depicts God as a loving mother **singing** over her kids & **finding joy** in their presence!

2. **DOOM TO THE NATIONS!** *(Ch. 2)*
   2.1. **The Call!** *(1-3)*
   2.2. *(3)* All are called to **“seek the Lord”** for His shelter!
      2.2.1. This shelter is available to **all who would repent & come after him**…even today!
   2.3. **Hidden!**
      2.3.1. *Zephaniah* = Jehovah hides(i.e. our sins).
      2.3.2. **Our present day practical lesson is:** if you’ve strayed from his will & have experienced His chastening, come to Him w/a broken heart & confessing your sins. - He will receive you the same way a loving mother receives a disobedient child!
   2.4. The prophet, like a fighter pilot on a bombing campaign 1st drops a bomb to the **West** *(Philistia)*; then **East** *(Moab & Ammon)*; **South** *(Ethiopia)*; then **North** *(Assyria)*…then on his bull’s-eye, dead center…**Jerusalem**!
      2.4.1. Some see this representing **all the Gentile Nations**, i.e. N,S,E,W.
   2.5. **Philistia!** *(4-7)* - Note agricultural images: chaff(2); uprooted tree(here); overrun w/weeds(9); desert(13).
   2.6. *(5)* Here is where all judgment comes from! “the Word of the Lord is against you!”
      2.6.1. **Q:** Who will testify against the unbeliever on judgment day?
      2.6.2. 1st their **personal bible(s)** will rise up & testify against them, “he never read me, though I was close by”.
      2.6.3. **Every single scripture** one by one will sound off, “I was spoken to him…but he would not heed me!” – “his mother shared me” another will say. - “his sister quoted me” – “he heard me on the radio”.
      2.6.4. A **friend** sent him a letter full of scripture.
      2.6.5. The **Law** screams, “I was written on his conscience!”
      2.6.6. The **Gospel** will say, “I was preached to him…but he ridiculed me.”

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1 I adapted from, Spurgeon At His Best pg.259.
2.7. **Moab & Ammon!** (8-11) **Ethiopia!** (12) **Assyria!** (13-15)

2.8. Heb. 10:31 “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

2.8.1. It can never be said of God, “that is bark is worse then his bite!”

3. **DOOM FOR JERUSALEM, BUT ALSO HOPE!** *(Ch.3)*

3.1. **Jerusalem!** (1-8) - Would God judge His own people any less harshly for the same sins? - The answer was No!

3.1.1. Their sin was toxic! And like many toxins/poisons they eventually kill!

3.2. (2) See the 4 “not’s”

3.2.1. They didn’t obey him (obedience); didn’t receive correction from him (instruction); didn’t trust Him (faith); & didn’t draw near to Him! (intimacy)

3.2.2. Q: Which of those 4 would you like to polish this week?

3.3. The leaders wouldn’t listen to God’s servants or heed God’s warnings (3a); the judges wouldn’t listen (3b); the prophets wouldn’t listen (4a); & the priests wouldn’t listen (4b).

3.3.1. Jerusalem’s greatest enemy was herself!

3.3.2. God’s judgments on the surrounding nations hadn’t made a dent in their stubborn spirits!

3.3.3. Instead of being a good example to other nations, they became just like their pagan neighbors!

3.3.4. The Jerusalem/Zion/the Temple was designed to be “centripetal” (Moving or directed toward a center) [opposite of centrifugal]

3.3.4.1. Micah 4:2 "Many nations shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths."

3.3.5. But after all God did for them they “got up early to sin!” [sad verse]

3.4. Jerusalem had crumbled internally, long before Babylon came!

3.4.1. Her rebellion ate away her soul! – This destroyed their trust in God & undermined worship!

3.4.2. For this they would be judged. See Armageddon vs.8.

3.5. (8) **Armageddon!** - Trivial Trivia - This is the only vs. in the OT where every letter of the Hebrew alphabet is used! (Charles Feinberg)
3.6. **Restoration!** (9-13)

3.7. **A message of Doom turns into a message of Hope!**

3.7.1. Here is the light at the end of God’s tunnel of judgment\(^2\)

3.8. Listen to the list of blessings during the kingdom reign: purity of worship(9a); universal commitment to God(9b); worldwide unity(10); no more shame(11); gentle humility(12); no more sin(13); heartfelt joy(14); no more judgment(15a); the Lord’s personal presence(15b); no more fear(16); exaltation of those who sorrow, are lame, & outcast(18-19); regathering of Jews to their land(20a); & He’ll give them a name(20).

3.9. (9-13) Note, they will **call** on the name of the Lord; **serve** Him; & not fear!(13)

3.9.1. (9) Their lips will be purified! (because what we say w/our lips comes from our heart!)

3.9.2. Mt.12:34 “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

3.9.3. Is.6:6,7 “Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth with it, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged."

3.10. (11,12) **Q:** Are you among the humble or the haughty?

3.11. **Rejoicing!** (14-17)

3.12. (14,15) **Q:** So what did they have to sing about?

3.12.1. Vs.15 explains “Why” they could **now** sing, shout, be glad, & rejoice whole heartedly!

3.12.2. He doesn’t just command us out of the blue to yield this emotion, but instead sometimes has to remind us of our victories in Him!


3.13. (17) **Another example of the Motherhood of God!**

3.13.1. Another reason for no need of Mariology!

3.13.2. **OT:** “So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” Gen. 1:27

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\(^2\) Chuck Swindoll
3.13.3. "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings, so the Lord alone did lead [Jacob] and there was no strange god with him." Deut 32:11-12

3.13.4. "As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you." Isa. 66:13a

3.13.5. NT: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Matt 23:37

3.13.6. The Lord your God in your midst! –
3.13.6.1. A garden curse is finally removed!
3.13.6.2. Q: What happened when Adam & eve sinned besides being naked? (there was now a barrier between them & God)
3.13.6.3. Before they were willing to meet w/Him; now they hid!
3.13.6.4. What a joy to have this reversed!

3.13.7. Will save! – or “a warrior who gives victory;” (RSV)

3.13.8. Will rejoice over you w/gladness! – Not of obligation but true delight!
3.13.8.1. What an amazing fact that we can actually bring real joy & delight to God!!!

3.13.9. Will quiet you w/His love! –
3.13.9.1. Also translated “keep silent w/His love” (Keil & Delitzch) – A man doesn’t have to give evidence against his wife in a court of law. And so with God against his wife either!
3.13.9.2. It can also be seen as a love too deep for words!
3.13.9.3. When a baby is scared/frightened you pick them up & quiet them with touch. With holding them close. Maybe shhh them. Sometimes no words are necessary.
3.13.9.4. Read – Story from L.B. Cowman’s (missionary to Japan & China) “Streams in the Desert” pg.67,68.
3.13.9.5. Also note with HIS love – not w/man’s love, which is a flickering flame at best! - But a constant beacon-light …like the sun itself!

3.13.10. Will rejoice over you w/singing! – The silence is broken by singing!
3.13.10.1. Q: Didn’t you sing over your children when they were babies?
3.13.10.2. **Sidney Lanier** said that “music is love in search of a word”.
3.13.10.3. **Longfellow** said, "Music is the universal language of mankind."
3.13.10.4. **Charles Kingsley** noted that music had been called "the speech of angels" and added, "I will go further and call it the speech of God himself."

3.13.10.5. Here, the Father sings!
3.13.10.6. In Mt.26:30 Jesus sings “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (also Heb.2:12)
3.13.10.7. **God the Spirit** sings through the hearts & lips of Christians wh praise God in the spirit, “be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”.

3.13.11. **Q:** So what does God’s voice sound like? – See Ps.29:3-9

3.14. **Q:** So what did they have to sing, shout, be glad, & rejoice over?

3.14.1. His Presence, His Power, His Pampering, & His Praise! (17a,b,c,d)

3.15. **Regathering!** (18-20)

3.16. 10 times…“I will” promises that God gives in just 4 verses(17-20).