

Zephaniah 2,3

1-23-03

*“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.”¹

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 than 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!**”[7b](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!
- 3.12.3. [1] No more **judgments!** [2] No more **enemy** [3] No more **absent King** [4] No more **Fear**.
- 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

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
"I will fall upon them like a bear robbed of **her** cubs." Hos. 13:8a
- 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).