

Zephaniah – An Old Testament Minor Prophet – Part 2

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All references in red are from: Engelbrecht, E. A. (2009). *The Lutheran Study Bible*. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House.

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Judgment on Judah's Enemies (2:1-15):

A Summary from The Lutheran Study Bible (1516): “Zephaniah urges the people of Judah to seek the Lord, then describes the devastation that will fall on neighboring nations because of their sins. We, too, are guilty of arrogance, pride, and boasting. The Lord calls us to humble repentance and, through trust in Jesus as our Savior, He promises to shield us from His anger.”

1. The LORD's call to the faithful people of Judah: ¹ Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation, ² 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. ³ 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. Let's apply those words:
 - a. Is the USA a shameless nation? Y N Why or why not? _____
 - b. Does the Lord desire all to be saved? (1 Timothy 2:3-4) Y N
 - c. What is the Lord calling all people to do NOW? (Isaiah 55:6; 2 Corinthians 6:2)

 - d. What characterizes the humble ones? (v. 3) _____
 - e. What is the only righteousness that really matters? (Romans 10:2-4)

 - f. What is the problem with pride? (Proverbs 16:18) _____
2. The LORD's promised destruction against Philistia, the territory of the Philistines, which was to the **west** of Judah (**see the map**): ⁴ For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted. ⁵ Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left. ⁶ And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks. ⁷ The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.
 - a. Those who *persisted* as enemies of God's people were destroyed!
 - b. Those *few* who remained faithful had the LORD's continued blessings!
3. The LORD's promised destruction against Moab and Ammon, which were to the **east** of Judah (**see the maps**): ⁸ “I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory. ⁹ Therefore, as I live,” declares the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, “Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The

remnant of my people shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation shall possess them.”
¹⁰ This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.

- a. In this world God’s people are persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12), but He continues to greatly love them (Romans 8:35-39).
 - b. When people oppose us because we are Christians, what must we do toward them? (Matthew 6:9-15) _____
4. The LORD’s promised destruction against Cush, to the **south** of Judah, and Assyria, to the **north** of Judah (**see the map**): ¹¹ The LORD will be awesome against them; for he will famish [cause to suffer severely from hunger] all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations. ¹² You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword. ¹³ And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh [the capital city of Assyria] a desolation, a dry waste like the desert. ¹⁴ Herds shall lie down in her midst, all kinds of beasts; even the owl and the hedgehog shall lodge in her capitals; a voice shall hoot in the window; devastation will be on the threshold; for her cedar work will be laid bare. ¹⁵ This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart [with great pride], “I am, and there is no one else.” What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist.
- a. A day is coming when every knee shall bow (Philippians 2:9-11).
 - b. Earlier Nineveh was spared when _____ went there to call the people to repent. Repentance is important, but it also *must continue to the end*. What does it mean to repent? _____

A video reminder that God can do whatever He says: Awesome God – Rich Mullins

Judgment on Jerusalem and the Nations (3:1-8):

A Summary from The Lutheran Study Bible (1516): “The city of Jerusalem, including its leaders, refuses to return to the Lord. Such impenitence brings upon them God’s day of wrath. These things are meant as a warning for us (1Co 10:6)...”

5. The city of Jerusalem: ¹ Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city [of Jerusalem]! ² She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God.
 - a. The Lord’s offer to us: See James 4:7-10.
 - b. The sad consequence of those who keep refusing the LORD: See Proverbs 1:24-29.
6. The *political* and *spiritual* leaders of Jerusalem: ³ Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. ⁴ Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men; her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law.
 - a. We should be active in voting for godly men and women to lead us.
 - b. We should be faithfully *hearing, believing, and living* the truth of God’s Word. Furthermore, those who know the truth should tell the truth and expose those who are leading people astray!

7. Even though the city is so wicked, the LORD is not: ⁵ The LORD within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.
 - a. The LORD's faithfulness should encourage our faithfulness.
 - b. The LORD's righteousness should be reflected in our words and deeds.
8. The LORD took drastic action from which repentance was expected: ⁶ "I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant. ⁷ I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.' But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.
 - a. Isn't it shocking how people go from bad to worse? (2 Timothy 3:12-13) Y N
 - b. See Romans 1:28-32.
9. But there was no repentance: ⁸ "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."
 - a. *wait for Me.* Most often, God encourages believers to wait for His salvation (Lm 3:26). But here the wait is for that day when the Lord will consume the earth (1:18).
 - b. *the day.* The day of wrath (1:15), when God will assemble all people for judgment.

The Conversion of the Nations (3:9-13):

A Summary from The Lutheran Study Bible (1517): "Along with the remnant in Israel, nations from around the world will call on the name of the Lord and serve Him. Once proud and haughty, these people will now praise God because Jesus has paid the price for their rebellious deeds. You and I are part of this great communion of saints."

10. Notice the great changes that the LORD will bring about in the repentant ones (as He changes us on the inside, so that shows on the outside – in words and deeds):
 - a. Pure speech and service: ⁹ "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord.
 - i. What is the second commandment? _____
 - ii. According to Dr. Luther's explanation of the first article of the Apostles' Creed, how are we to respond to God for all that He has done and continues to do for us? _____
 - b. Bringing offering: ¹⁰ From beyond the rivers of Cush [far to the south, possibly Ethiopia] my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.
 - i. Why do you give an offering? _____
 - ii. Is *your importance of God* reflected in the percentage you give? Y N

- c. The unrepentant are removed; the repentant are no longer proud: ¹¹ “On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.
 - i. Those who remain proud, without repentance, will be humbled (Luke 14:11).
 - ii. But the repentant have God’s blessed forgiveness in Christ and desire to live for Him (1 Peter 2:24).
- d. Trusting the LORD, speaking rightly, and no longer being afraid: ¹² But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, ¹³ those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”
 - i. It reminds me of Psalm 23.
 - ii. Can we say it together? The LORD is my...

Israel’s Joy and Restoration (3:14-20):

A Summary from The Lutheran Study Bible (1517): “Zephaniah urges God’s people to fear no evil but instead to rejoice over their coming salvation. Fear may hinder us from witnessing of God’s love and mercy; how wrong and foolish that would be! God has redeemed us in Christ. He will always be with us, and someday He will take us to the heavenly Jerusalem.”

- 11. The blessings of trusting in Jesus to the end: ¹⁴ Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵ The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.
 - a. *O daughter of Zion. Citizens of God’s Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Church (Heb 12:22).*
 - b. **3:15** *judgments against you. The Lord has removed every legal accusation against His people (Rm 8:33)...*
- 12. Let us not despair when times are difficult, the LORD is with us and will bless us: ¹⁶ On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. ¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.
- 13. When Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed in 587 the festivals were no longer celebrated, but blessings were still promised: ¹⁸ I will gather those of you who mourn [Matt. 5:4] for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.
- 14. In the end the LORD will lift up those who trust in Him: ¹⁹ Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. ²⁰ At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.