

**Slide # 1**

**Zephaniah**

**Theme:** The Coming Day of the Lord

**Outline:**

**1:1-2:3 Warning to Judah of God's coming Judgment**

2:4-3:8 God's Judgment on specific nations

3:9-20 Future Restoration for Israel

The Day of the LORD is a broad theme in the Scriptures. It depicts a time of God's intervention in which His LORDSHIP power and judgment is demonstrated in devastating and undeniable fashion. It the day when God shows up and overtly puts His LORDSHIP on display for all to see.

The nature of it is seen at the end Zephaniah 1 as it is portrayed in ominous terms.

**Slide # 2**

**Zephaniah 1:15 (NKJV)**

**15** 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**,

The Day of the LORD is a day of severe judgment and reckoning. It is “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”.

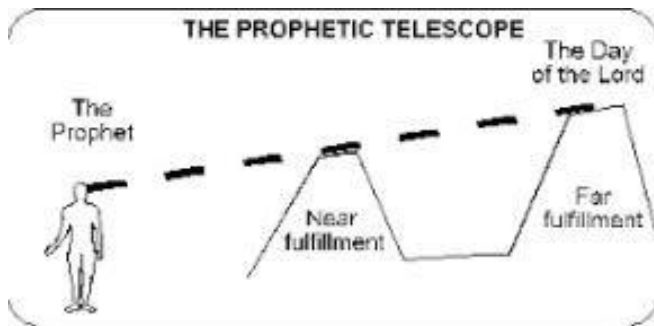
There are several facets to this day of the LORD theme. There was a day of the LORD intervention in relation to the Babylonian Captivity and there is a more extensive development of theme in relation to God's judgment of the world in relation to Christ's Second coming in what we commonly refer to as the Tribulation Period. The first in a sense is the forerunner to and portrays the latter.

**Slide # 3**

Near/Partial v. Distant/Complete

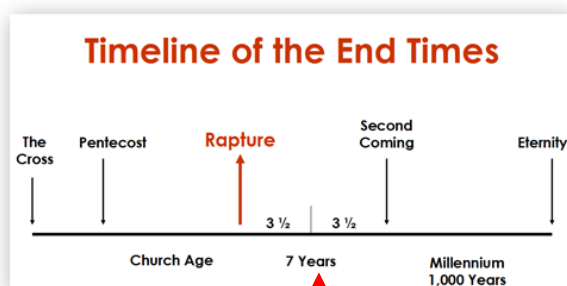
- “**t**”he day of the LORD (Babylonian Captivity) - **Near**
- “**T**”**HE** day of the LORD (Tribulation Period...) – **Distant**

#### Slide # 4



Interwoven throughout Zephaniah and virtually all the prophets are these two strands of near/partial and distant/complete fulfillment. And I say the historical Day of the LORD judgment that took place at the time of the Babylonian Captivity foreshadows the last days Day of the LORD judgment that will be fulfilled in relation to the coming Tribulation Period.

#### Slide # 5



Day of the Lord Judgment!

What is the point of Zephaniah drawing such a DARK and DREADFUL picture of the Day of the LORD as seen at the end of chapter 1. Well, he brings us to the purpose as we come to chapter 2. And there we find the goal is to bring people to repentance – not merely despair.

[Zephaniah intended] not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins”. – **Matthew Henry**

## **1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation,**

As I say in Zephaniah there is a two-pronged emphasis – one that relates essentially to Judah, but then also a broader emphasis that relates to the whole world of which Israel is the catalyst. In view here in verse one is the summons to God’s people Israel/Judah.

Note the context here. At the end of chapter 1 as seen in verse 18 the application of God’s judgment has a universal application of “the day of the LORD’S wrath”. It says there that “***all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end He will make of all the inhabitants of the earth***” as so translated in the ESV.

It’s in that context that we enter into Zephaniah chapter 2. Chapter and verse divisions were not in the original text. They were added later to help us find our way around in our Bibles, but it good to note that sometimes chapter and verse references get in the way of the flow of the text.

It’s with universal judgment just having been stated – which would relate to the climactic end times Day of the LORD judgment; its with that in view that we come to chapter 2. And its with this universal coming judgment in view that God’s people Israel are summoned with the words, “Gather yourselves together, yes gather together”. It is stated twice for emphasis.

Now many commentators think the idea her is that God’s people Israel are being summoned to gather for the purpose of collective repentance similar to the emphasis in Joel 2:16.

### **Slide # 6**

**Joel 2:16 (NKJV)**

**16** Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes; Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room.

So, this is a possibility, that the call to gather is for the purpose of repentance and getting right with God. And this may certainly be involved – especially as we get into verses 2 and 3. But initially the emphasis is simply on gathering and then the flow of thought moves toward the emphasis on repentance.

I prefer the view that sees verse 1 as God summoning His people to gather back to the land of promise prior to the end times Day of the LORD with the further call of summoning them to repentance from that state.

### **Slide # 7**

Although this could be a call to collective repentance, it could also be a call to return to the land of Israel prior to the eschatological “day of the LORD.” ... Thus, it refers to the Lord literally regathering Judah back to the land prior to the “day of the LORD,” the seven-year tribulation period (Dn. 9:27). – ***The Moody Bible Commentary***

I think this best fits the flow of the context. Also the word “gather” (Heb. *qashash*) while used only here has two other words used as synonyms for “gather” in the book (see *asaph* in 3:8, 18; and *qabats* in 3:19, 20). These words refer to a literal/physical gathering indicating the word “gather” in 2:1 should probably be understood in the same way.

This word “gather” is elsewhere tied to the idea of stubble or sticks that are used for burning (cf. 1 Kg. 17:10, 12). Thus, God’s people are pictured as dry and facing the burning wrath of God’s coming judgment that will serve as a great purging.

And note God’s people Israel are here referred to as an “undesirable nation”. This is more literally “shameless nation”.

### **Slide # 8**

The words **O shameful nation** are literally, “O nation not shamed.” (“Shamed” is *niḵsāp*, from *kāsap*, “to be pale or white with shame.” A related word *keseḗp* means “silver,” the pale-colored metal mentioned in 1:11, 18.) – ***The Bible Knowledge Commentary***

The idea is that God's people at this point although living in great sin have no shame. They don't even blush or turn white with embarrassment. They are hardened and insensitive in their sin. Hence, they are an undesirable or shameless nation.

When I read J. Vernon McGee's commentary it almost made me laugh – not in a funny sense but in an ironic sense.

He wrote: "I do believe that there was just as much sin when I was growing up as there is today, but the sin was carried on behind the curtain or in the backyard or someplace else where it could not be seen. It was not flaunted before the world. It was not boasted of. In other words, it was not shameless sin as it is at the present time. I heard a very beautiful young woman on a talk program on television boast of the fact that she is living with a man to whom she is not married. The others on the program congratulated her for her "courage" and "broad mindedness." Nobody called it shameless sin."

Wow! If he thought that was bad, look where we are at today. Even among professing Christians there is little shame. There is so little blushing or embarrassment over flagrant sin. Our whole society including many professing Christians have forgotten how to blush. We are very bold in our sinfulness – we are shamelessly sinful. That defines last days apostasy.

I think in view here in our study in Zephaniah is the return of Israel back to the land in a shameless condition. They gather in unbelief which is where they are today. Most Jews living in Israel today call themselves secular. Many don't even believe in God at all. Yes, they keep some of the "traditions" but they are only "cultural Jews" and not really religious or God-fearing. And many of them are shameless about it.

With the great Day of the LORD judgment coming this is their condition.

**2 Before the decree is issued, Or the day passes like chaff, Before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you!**

Note the word "Before" is found three times in this verse. The "gathering" in view in verse 1 takes place BEFORE the day of the LORD'S anger comes. It takes place BEFORE the decree is issued – in other words before the judgment falls which will quickly cause all to wither and blow away like chaff.

It takes place BEFORE the LORD's fierce anger comes upon them. And it takes place BEFORE the day of the LORD'S comes upon them. This gathering takes place BEFORE the coming Day of the LORD judgment.

I believe this is where we are right now in history. Israel is gathering back to the land and they are in a shameless state. It is the time when they are regathered BEFORE the coming Day of the LORD.

### **Slide # 9**

In verse two the word *before* is used three times in relationship to the preceding passage regarding the tribulation. One of these “befores” includes the “before the day of the LORD” itself. ...this passage clearly states that this regathering in unbelief will occur before the tribulation actually begins. – **Arnold Fruchtenbaum**

### **Slide # 10**

These descriptions are all references to Israel's regathering into the land of Israel before the seven-year Tribulation period is to begin (cf. Isa. 11:11-12; Ezek. 20:33-38; 22:17-22; 38-39). It is especially significant that Israel was reestablished as a political entity in A.D. 1948. The current nation of Israel is now back in the land, in unbelief, yet positioned to fulfill what the prophets have predicted will happen during the Tribulation. – **Tim LaHaye**

And what are they to do in that state. Well, verse 3 tells us...

**3 Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the LORD's anger.**

In verse 2 there is a three-fold emphasis on BEFORE and here in verse 3 there is a three-fold emphasis on SEEK. The people back in the land in an undesirable/shameless condition are called upon to seek the LORD BEFORE the Day of the LORD judgment hits.

And really the emphasis here on “seek” is directed to that remnant that truly know the LORD. It is the meek (sometimes translated as humble) who are to seek. Meekness is indicative of a submissive spirit. This directive to seek is directed to those who have upheld God's justice.

Why is this?

We might expect the emphasis to be on the shameless who are told to seek, and other Scriptures do bring out that emphasis.

### **Slide # 11**

#### **Isaiah 55:6–7 (NKJV)**

**6** Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near.

**7** Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

So why is “seek” directed to the humble and those who uphold what is right?

This would seem to be the point. God always has a remnant. He has a remnant of Jews today who are back in the land. And He works through and in conjunction with that remnant. And the closer they are to God the more effective their witness will be.

Yes, these are already humble, but they need to seek the Lord all the more. Yes, they have already been standing for what is right (God’s justice) but they need to seek God all the more. They are called upon to seek righteousness and humility even more intensely in view of the coming Day of the LORD judgment.

Some have seen this seeking as a call to prayer directed to the faithful remnant who will be living in the land in the end-times. In view is the call to an earnest seeking after God.

### **Slide # 12**

#### **Matthew 6:33 (NKJV)**

**33** But **seek first** the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

And then at the end of verse 3 we have this intriguing statement: “It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.”

The description of the humble who truly seek the LORD and stand for His righteousness throughout the Scriptures is indicative of those who are true worshipers of YHWH.

It is to these true worshipers that we have this statement: “***It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.***”

What might this mean? Well, if they are true believers, gathered back into the land BEFORE the last days Day of the LORD judgment then my theology says they are going to escape this coming time of wrath via the rapture of the Church.

Now we know the Church and all that goes with it – including the rapture were a mystery not revealed in the OT. But my question is this: Could this be a veiled (emphasis on veiled) reference to the rapture hidden back here in the OT? Possibly!

It was Augustine who first said: “The **new is in the old concealed**; the **old is in the new revealed**.” There are limits to how far you can go with this but in general I agree.

For example: The feast of Pentecost (commonly called the Day of Pentecost) is the only major feast not associated with some prior occasion in Israel’s history which is commemorated. Why is that? Well, Pentecost relates to Church truth as we discover as we come into the NT. So I think the truth of it was there in veiled form, but it was not known until we get to the NT.

The two loaves baked with leaven in relation to the Day of Pentecost as found in Lev. 23:17 were very unique. Why two loaves – why the leaven? Many believe these two loaves foreshadowed the Church which is made up of both Jew and Gentile. The leaven represents the reality of sin which remains in the church until glorification.

How about marriage. All along marriage as ordained by God was to be a picture of Christ and His relationship to the Church. That picture is nothing new, but the deeper meaning of it was not made known until it was revealed in the NT.

**Slide # 13**



Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures God establishes many principles by which He functions. Could this be the establishment of His principle of operation which is the foundation of the rapture of the church? There is no mention of the church in the Hebrew Scriptures. So this is not directly speaking of the rapture of church. But it does clearly establish the principle for it. This verse could hint that there will be Jewish people who will be “hid in that day of the LORD’s anger,” because they will have already been removed in the New Testament “catching away” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-19).

– **Ken Symes**, Jewish Awareness Ministries

I am not dogmatic here, but if indeed we are talking about BEFORE the coming Day of the LORD related to the Tribulation period and in that context being hidden from this coming day of the LORD’s anger – then in my theology the Rapture is a great possibility of what this hidden will entail.

If you don’t take that view then you have the meek going into the Tribulation and that has all sorts of theological problems – at least in my view.

By way of application what should those of us who are believers be doing in the shadow of the coming Day of the LORD judgment.

### **Slide # 14**

#### **2 Peter 3:10–11 (NKJV)**

**10** But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.

**11** Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,

#### **2 Peter 3:14 (NKJV)**

**14** Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;

Peter instructs us in view of the coming Day of the LORD which will come as a thief in the night to maintain an eternal perspective and live in light of eternity. This is always relevant! God expects us as His people to constantly live as those on the cusp of eternity.

In view of God's coming judgment, we should be living holy and godly lives; we should be endeavoring to live lives that are "without spot and blameless". Or by way of application, in the language of Zephaniah, we should be seeking after righteousness and humility, and as we do so we have the further revelation of a blessed hope that indeed God has not appointed us to wrath but rather to obtain deliverance through our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9).

Israel is back in the land BEFORE the Day of the LORD.  
Israel is back in the land in unbelief as an undesirable nation.

The call for the godly right now is to earnestly seek the Lord in our witness for Him as we await the great escape. And the call to the ungodly is to come to repentance so they also might escape this coming Day of the Lord judgment.

We know what is coming: Namely the Day of the LORD judgment. We just don't know when. We know Israel is gathered back into the land in shamelessness. And we know BEFORE judgment falls the call is to SEEK the Lord.

The flow of Zephaniah is this:

GATHER – stated twice in Zeph. 2:1.  
BEFORE - stated three times in Zeph. 2:2.  
SEEK – stated three times in Zeph. 2:3.

Live Ready!

Maranatha! (Our Lord comes!)

Perhaps tonight!

Indeed! Live Ready!

