

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

In Zephaniah 1 God warns of coming devastating judgment especially in reference to Judah; In Zephaniah 2 God warns of coming devastating judgment on the nations surrounding Judah – in other words on Israel’s enemies.

The Day of the Lord theme in Scripture is a BIG THEME!

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Day of the LORD

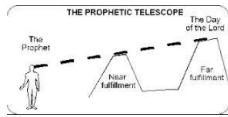
Definition: The **Day of the LORD** is the time when God overtly intervenes in human affairs (especially in relation to Israel) with catastrophic judgment in fulfillment of prophecy which overwhelmingly demonstrates His **LORDSHIP!**

There are layers of emphasis related to the prophet Zephaniah’s Day of the Lord judgment. Some aspects involve God’s people Judah (the Jews), others involve the enemy nations around them; some aspects relate to judgment that is near as in the Babylonian Captivity; and others involve aspects that relate to the end times related to the Messiah.

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• ***LAYERS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD JUDGMENT***

- 1) Judgment in reference to Babylonian Captivity.
- 2) Judgment in reference to the Second Coming.
- 3) Judgment in reference to dissolving of the present heavens and earth at the close of the Millennial Reign of Christ.

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The near aspect of the coming Day of the Lord Judgment related to God's judgment not only on Judah, but also to the enemy nations of God's people Israel. Representative nations from the four corners, from the west, east, south, and north are addressed with application that stretches way into the future culminating in the Messianic kingdom.

We saw last time in Zeph. 2:4-10 God addressing the Philistines to the west and Ammon and Moab to the east. Philistia would be wiped out which they were by the Babylonians (cf. Zeph. 2:4-7). Also, the historic relatives who were arch enemies of Israel by the name of Moab and Ammon would also be wiped out because of their haughty mistreatment of Israel – and they were (cf. Zeph. 2:8-10).

In both the case of the Philistines and also the case of Moab and Ammon they would be wiped out and then God's people (the Jews) would have possession of their land (cf. Zeph. 2:7, 9).

The text repeatedly shows just how serious it is to arrogantly threaten or abuse God's people Israel – because to do so is really to defy the God of Israel Who is in covenant relationship with them. To show no regard for Israel is to show no regard for the God of Israel – even when Israel is under discipline – even when Israel is not where she should be with the LORD.

Slide # 5**Zephaniah 2:10 (NKJV)**

10 This they [Moab & Ammon] shall have for their pride, Because they have reproached and made arrogant threats Against the people of the LORD of hosts.

The God of Israel ever remains the covenant God of Israel and He expects the nations of the world to regard Him as such – even when Israel is under discipline. And those that abuse His people Israel will suffer the consequences – just as did the Philistines and Moab and Ammon.

Zephaniah at this point makes application that extends way into the future – to the time of the Messianic kingdom as seen in 2:11.

Zephaniah 2:11–15 (NKJV)

11 The LORD will be awesome to them, For He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; People shall worship Him, Each one from his place, Indeed all the shores of the nations.

The nations of the world in their haughtiness will be taken down and God will be exalted in the Day of the Lord! That's what this day is ultimately all about – it's about LORDSHIP and God establishing His LORDSHIP for all to know and see. Without trying to sound redundant: The Day of the LORD is the Day of the LORD! This is all about LORDSHIP!

The nations of the earth defy God's LORDSHIP in how they treat His people; but in the end the God of Israel has His way with them, puts them down, and exalts His LORDSHIP in the restoration of His covenant people who also are humbled in the process.

Both the NASB and the ESV translate "will be awesome to them" as "will be terrifying to them". The old KJV said, "will be terrible unto them". The idea is terribly awesome!

None of us can even imagine how GREAT and AWESOME God is! And when He brings down these egomaniac nations who dared to defy God as seen in the mistreatment of Israel – when God rises up in the Day of the LORD and in His LORDSHIP smashes them it will be shock and awe! It will be terribly awesome!

And note the language of ***"He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth"***. Again, this is about LORDSHIP. This is the LORDSHIP of the God of Israel versus all the false gods of the world – and they are all going down! They are going to be reduced in the minds of all to what they really are which is NOTHING!

What God did in the Exodus was really all about LORDSHIP. Each of the plagues God sent was a direct challenge to one or more of the gods of Egypt starting with Pharaoh himself. One commentator says...

"The Egyptians believed that their pharaohs were half-man and half-god. A ritual was held when a pharaoh had been on the throne for thirty years. The pharaoh was then supposedly transformed into a full god. The pharaoh was the most powerful person in Egypt."

Exodus 12:12 (NKJV)

12 'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD.

Exodus 7:5 (NKJV)

5 And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I stretch out My hand on Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."

The Exodus was all about God establishing the truth of His LORDSHIP as the God of Israel over all the false gods of Egypt. And what God did on a smaller scale in relation to Egypt in the coming Day of the LORD He will do so in relation to the entire world. All the idolatry – all the false gods of the world – they are all going DOWN and will be reduced to NOTHING!

The Lord destroys the gods by destroying the nations that depend on these gods; these deities have no real existence apart from the people who serve them (1 Cor. 8:4-6). – **Expositors**

Ultimately in the climactic phase of the Day of the LORD that ushers in the Messianic kingdom all the nations will be humbled before the God of Israel and all the peoples of the world will worship the ONE TRUE God as found in the God of Israel as ultimately revealed in the Messiah! Zephaniah in 2:11 looks way down the way to this day.

The Day of the LORD is about the God of Israel putting every proudful thing DOWN and exalting Himself undeniably as LORD over all! Isaiah 2 drives this point home as God in the Day of the LORD is shown to drive PRIDE literally DOWN INTO THE GROUND!

Slide # 7**Isaiah 2:11–12 (NKJV)**

11 The lofty looks of man shall be humbled, The haughtiness of men shall be bowed down, And the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.

12 For the day of the LORD of hosts Shall come upon everything proud and lofty, Upon everything lifted up— And it shall be brought low—

Slide # 8**Isaiah 2:17–18 (NKJV)**

17 The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, And the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; The LORD alone will be exalted in that day,

18 But the idols He shall utterly abolish.

Slide # 9**Isaiah 2:19 (NKJV)**

19 They shall go into the holes of the rocks, And into the caves of the earth, From the terror of the LORD And the glory of His majesty, When He arises to shake the earth mightily.

This is what the climax of the book of Revelation is about when we come to the apex of the Tribulation Period when the idolatrous world as represented in Babylon the great comes crashing down which is immediately followed by a great multitude in heaven saying, “Alleluia! ...power belongs to the Lord our God!” (Rev. 18; 19:1).

Slide # 10**Revelation 19:6 (NKJV)**

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

This is what it’s all about! It’s all about God’s LORDSHIP! All of heaven gets it and in the end the whole of earth will get it!

Worship for the true God Who is LORD over all – the God Who has revealed Himself through and is forever in covenant relationship with Israel will ALONE be worshiped in that day.

As Zeph. 2:11b says, ***“People shall worship Him, each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations.”*** In other words, in that day the whole world will be worshipping the God of Israel.

Malachi 1:11 (NKJV)

11 For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, And a pure offering; For My name shall be great among the nations,” Says the LORD of hosts.

Zeph. 2:4-15 addresses all the enemies of Israel from every direction – in perhaps a representative way. First addressed is Philistia to the west (2:4-7); then Moab and Ammon to the east (2:8-10); then Ethiopia to the south (2:12) and finally Assyria to the north (2:13-15).

Verse 12 addresses the Ethiopians to the south.

12 “You Ethiopians also, You shall be slain by My sword.”

Ethiopia was south of Egypt and was inhabited by Cushites. In fact, various translations have “Cushites” here in Zeph. 2:12 instead of Ethiopians. They were the descendants of Ham (Gen. 10:6; 1 Chron. 1:8) and even ruled over Egypt for over 100 years from 720-654 BC.

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The “sword” of God referred to in this verse is Babylon which was the instrument God used in this initial phase of the Day of the LORD. In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Ethiopia.

Slide # 12

Ezekiel 30:4 (NKJV)

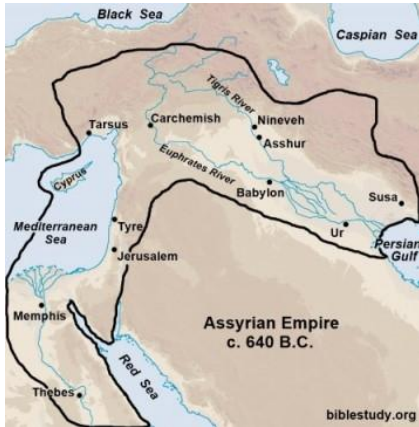
4 The sword shall come upon Egypt, And **great anguish shall be in Ethiopia**, When the slain fall in Egypt, And they take away her wealth, And her foundations are broken down.

13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north, Destroy Assyria, And make Nineveh a desolation, As dry as the wilderness.

The prophetic story builds to this climactic point because at the time Zephaniah was writing Assyria was still the greatest power in the world – although Babylon was rising. Assyria was actually located northeast of Judah.

However, when they invaded the holy land they came from the north. Instead of marching through the desert they followed the Euphrates River up to the north and then came down from there.

Slide # 13



Again, we believe what is being described is the overthrow of Assyria by Babylon. Assyria was the empire that conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. Assyria was a much-feared nation infamous because of their cruelty. We talk about people like Putin who is crazy cruel but he has nothing on the Assyrians.

The Assyrian empire reigned supreme for about 3 generations (883 – 612 BC) They mastered the art of war and torture techniques. And they loved to brag about it.

The Assyrians would cut off legs, arms, noses, tongues, ears, and other body parts. They would gouge the eyes out of their prisoners and they would burn children alive. It was brutal.

One commentator said this:

The Assyrians depicted the torture in great detail on the walls of the imperial palaces. They created tablets containing every single punishment the Assyrian army carried out. They cut off the limbs, gouged out the eyes, and then left those poor victims to roam around.

The Assyrians were proud of the mass executions. They loved to impale their victims on large stakes. Such sights instilled terror and fear into the rest of the population. For the Assyrian kings, it was a showcase of their power.

The Assyrian kings were fond of flaying the rebel leaders. They would cut the skin in strips and pulled it off the living victim. The victim's skin was hung in a visible place as a reminder for the rest of the citizens.

The Assyrians were brutal almost beyond belief. If you understand it, you can then understand Jonah's reluctance to go to Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, which he did about 150 years prior to Zephaniah's ministry.

But as imposing and powerful as Assyria was, God says that His sword (Babylon) is going to bring them down – and they did. God calls for Nineveh to be brought to desolation. The Babylonians in combination with the Medes destroyed Nineveh in 612 BC and the entire empire collapsed shortly thereafter in 609 BC.

The Day of the LORD brought down Assyria too!

Note the specific description here: Nineveh will be a desolation ***“as dry as the wilderness.”*** That is amazing because Nineveh in her day prided itself on the fame of its extensive irrigation system with water being supplied through conduits from as far as 25 miles away.

14 The herds shall lie down in her midst, Every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern Shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars; Their voice shall sing in the windows; Desolation shall be at the threshold; For He will lay bare the cedar work.

Nineveh in its days was the thriving capital of Assyria. The king's palace had at least 80 rooms, “with 9,880 feet of sculptured walls detailing his victories in battle.” (David Levy) The city boasted a library of more than 20,000 clay tablets. Within the city were elaborate parks, botanical gardens, and a zoo.

But this prophecy points to a time of decimation, depopulation, and destruction which was fulfilled after defeat at the hands of Babylon.

The pelican and the bittern are reflective of remote areas and various creatures in view are indicative of doleful sounds.

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Nineveh's destruction was so complete that Alexander the Great marched his army over the buried city and never knew it.

– **David Levy**

Talk about being fulfilled to the letter -this prophecy was. So entirely was the city wiped out that its very existence was questioned until evidence of it was unearthed by archaeologists in the 19th century.

15 This is the rejoicing city That dwelt securely, That said in her heart, “I am it, and there is none besides me.” How has she become a desolation, A place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her Shall hiss and shake his fist.

Previously Nineveh had been a carefree city that had no care in the world. Some translate this as “the exultant city”. They lived the “high life” of prosperity and self-indulgence giving in the image of “the rejoicing city”. But God said they were going down and they did.

And one reason this was “the exultant city” is because it was considered to be impregnable. They thought it was so secure as to be invincible. The city had a 60-mile circumference with an outer wall. Inside this was an inner wall with an 8-mile circumference.

This inner wall was 50 feet wide and 10 feet high. It had 1,200 guard towers. The city had a population in Jonah’s day with at least 120,000 children which may mean the actual population was more like 600,000 or more. This was a large well-fortified city.

But right here was the problem: Nineveh came to think she was self-sufficient and so great that she made God-like claims saying in her heart, “I am it, and there is none besides me.” (cf. Isa. 45:18, 21; Rev. 3:17)

Now indeed for over 200 years Nineveh had strutted its stuff on the world’s stage and it did seem like Nineveh was self-made great and invincible.

But when you start thinking about your greatness in “God-like” terms – then you are in real trouble because God always sees that those who think like this are brought down with a thud. Indeed, pride goes before a fall (Prov. 16:18).

In the Scriptures this language of “***there is none besides me***” is reserved for God alone! The sense of “***there is none besides me***” is that I am the greatest and there is no other like me. The sense is that I am dependent on no one and that is true of God and God ALONE! To have a totally self-sufficient attitude is high arrogance that is just asking to be brought down.

Slide # 15**Isaiah 45:5–6 (NKJV)**

5 I am the LORD, and **there is no other**; There is no God besides Me.
I will gird you, though you have not known Me,

6 That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting That
there is **none besides Me**. I am the LORD, and **there is no other**;

This is a God-like claim that is to be made by God alone – for indeed it is true only of God alone! God ALONE can legitimately make this claim.

However, people in their depravity often start to have a God-like complex in which they are completely deceived!

It was this level of arrogance that caused the devil to fall from heaven like lightning (Isa. 14:13-14; Lk. 10:18). This was the same sin of the boastful pride expressed by the king of Babylon as seen in Isa. 47:8 (cf. Ezek. 28:2).

Those that make claims of “deification” are sure to meet ruin. It has happened every time it has been tried with the result being in the end they are scorned and treated with contempt. Their great braggadocio is brought to ruin because God sees to it!

Slide # 16**Isaiah 10:12 (NKJV)**

12 Therefore it shall come to pass, when the LORD has performed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, that He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the **arrogant heart** of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his **haughty looks**.”

You see Assyria thought they were a self-made nation – self-made and self-sufficient GREAT! They did not realize it was the God of Israel Who allowed them to overtake the northern kingdom and so forth.

So note the pattern here. When Israel is doing poorly the tendency of the Gentile nations is to get haughty about it. They tend to forget Israel is still something special to God and they completely forget about the reality of God being behind all that is happening with Israel whether it be discipline or blessing. They forget BUT God still holds them accountable.

Moab and Ammon had no hesitation in reproaching God's people Israel and making arrogant threats (2:8, 10). Therefore God brought them down.

The Assyrians in their conquests developed a God-like complex and because it God brought them to utter desolation. There is a whole book of the Bible given over to the fall of Nineveh – the capital of Assyria – do you know which book it is? It is the OT book of Nahum. The book ends on this note concerning Nineveh.

Slide # 17

Nahum 3:19 (NKJV)

19 Your injury has no healing, Your wound is severe. All who hear news of you Will clap their hands over you, For upon whom has not your wickedness passed continually?

God demands that He be recognized for Who He is as God ALONE! And historically He has consistently done this in relation to His people Israel. God has historically revealed Himself to the world through Israel and to this day this is God's great apologetic. And thus He demands that the world recognize His sovereign LORDSHIP in relation to Israel.

And as noted in verse 11 when the Day of the LORD settles out all the peoples of the world will worship the one true God of Israel. He ALONE is the great I AM and there is NONE besides Him.

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has become a hero to many in recent days for his exemplary courage. Who can ever forget memorable lines like: "The fight is here; I need ammunition, not a ride."

Yet, one of my pastor friends noted that many seem to want to exalt Zelenskyy to almost God-like status (no fault of his necessarily). A popular song has come out as a tribute to him titled: "**Can One Man Save The World?**"

The answer is Yes – but it is not Zelenskyy! Jesus said in Matthew 24:22 that in the Tribulation Period things will become so bad that "**unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved**". Well, who is going to step in and save the day? It is going to be none other than the God-Man – the Lord Jesus Christ Who will come riding on a valiant white horse with many crowns and this ONE man – (the God-Man) will save the world.

Thus, His LORDSHIP will clearly be established for all to see and all will worship Him as KING of kings and LORD of lords! This is where the Day of the LORD leads – ultimately to the LORDSHIP of Jesus Christ triumphing over all!

Even so come Lord Jesus!