

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

There are two books in the OT that have as their overall theme the Day of the LORD. They are the book of Joel and the book of Zephaniah. However, a Day of the LORD theme is interwoven throughout the prophets of the OT.

The Day of the LORD refers to a prophetic time when the God of Israel radically intervenes in human affairs in dramatic fashion that undeniably demonstrates His LORDSHIP as the God of Israel. One of these times was in relation to the Babylonian Captivity which in reality foreshadows another Day of the LORD event that will one day usher in the Messiah.

Thus the Day of the LORD theme has a near/partial aspect and a distant/complete aspect of fulfillment. And these aspects are often tightly interwoven in the prophetic Scriptures.

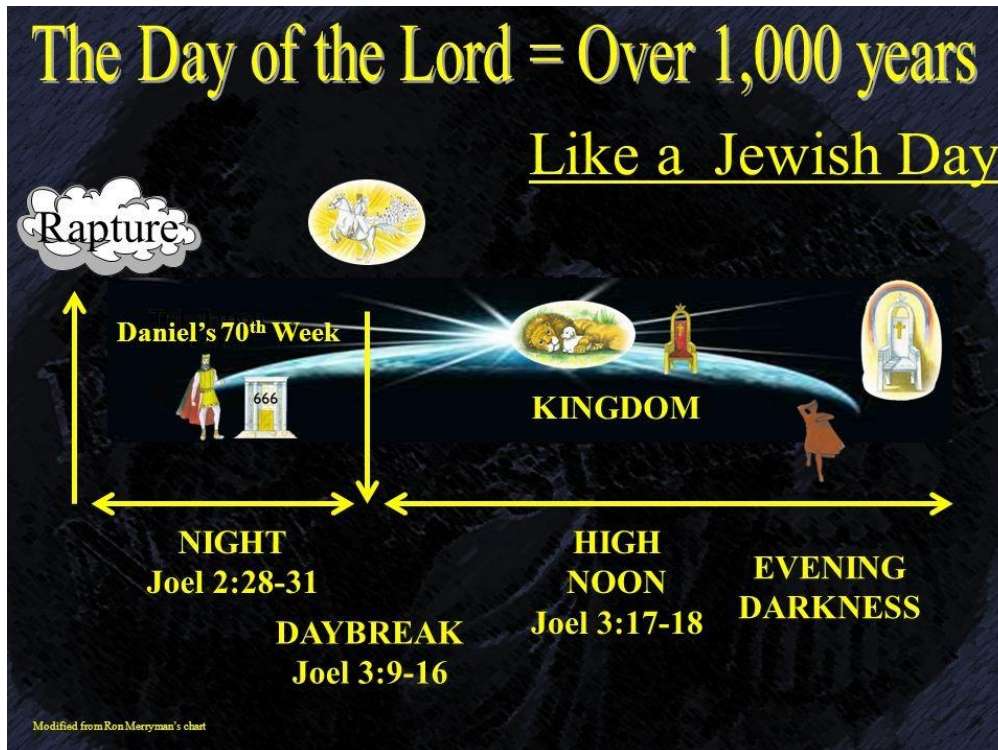
Critics have said that Zephaniah actually wrote two books with two very different messages. One was a book with a message of judgement while the other was a book with a message of blessing.

However, both of these themes, one of judgment and one of blessing properly fit together under the Day of the LORD theme. This is consistent not only in Zephaniah but also in the book of Joel and in the other Day of the LORD passages in the OT.

In truth, it is the coming Day of the LORD judgment that is the very means by which God will bring about the ultimate restoration of His people and the whole world. The day of the LORD is a time of purging and purification that ushers in the Messiah and His kingdom. This time of kingdom restoration is what is in view in Zephaniah 3:9-20.

The Day of the LORD has two main aspects. It has a judgment aspect or what we might call a DARK aspect. But it also has a blessing aspect or what we might call a LIGHT aspect. Thus, the Day of the LORD demonstrates the LORDSHIP of God from both aspects corresponding to the Jewish day which begins with the DARKNESS phase which is then followed by the LIGHT phase and finally concluding in DARKNESS.

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Zephaniah 3:9–13 (NKJV)

9 “For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord.

Verse 9 marks a major transition from the Day of the LORD judgment to the Millennial kingdom. We saw in verse 8 that God has determined that He will gather all the nations together in judgment in which He will pour out on them His fierce anger. This will culminate in what we commonly refer to as the battle of Armageddon that will climax in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He comes to set up His kingdom on earth.

So we have Day of the Lord judgments presented in Zeph. 1 through 3:8, which is then followed by a climactic time of blessing as seen in Zeph. 3:9-20.

Once the kingdom is ushered in, God says He will restore to the peoples a pure language. Scholars have wrestled over exactly what the concept of a “pure language” entails.

Clearly the context argues that all peoples of the world will no longer have defiled language that is tainted with idolatry or blasphemy. Now their speech will be God-oriented in true worship.

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Exodus 23:13 (NKJV)

13 “And in all that I have said to you, be circumspect and make no mention of the name of other gods, nor let it be heard from your mouth.

This is how it will be in the kingdom (cf. Josh. 23:7; Ps. 16:4; Hos. 2:17). Words are a reflection of the heart. As Jesus said, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” (Mt. 12:34). In this kingdom context pure God-glorifying speech will define the world (cf. Isa. 6:5-7; Lk. 6:45).

Some have thought that the idea of a restored pure language may also mean that the entire world will speak one single language such as Hebrew, thus reversing the effects of Babel in Genesis 11. Recall at that time because of the spirit of idolatry God confused the language resulting in the people being scattered and speaking many different languages. Some believe this pure language may be a restoration back to the pre-Babel days. They would point to texts like this one...

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Isaiah 19:18 (NKJV)

18 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of Destruction [or the sun].

Evidently these cities will be five key “worship centers” in the land of Egypt that will particularly function for the propagation of God’s truth in the kingdom. They will speak Hebrew and swear allegiance to the LORD of hosts showing their solidarity with Israel (cf. Zeph. 3:9; Zech. 14:16-19). Will this be indicative of what takes place throughout the whole world? That is not clearly spelled out.

It is clear that the “pure language” connects to all calling on the name of the LORD and all serving Him with one accord.

Calling on the Name of the LORD is associated with believing on the Lord and worship throughout the Scriptures starting in Gen. 4:26 (cf. 1 Kg. 18:24; Jer. 10:25). Calling on the name of the LORD recognizes His LORDSHIP authority and depends upon Him as Savior.

Those going into the kingdom will be those who called on the name of the Lord in the day of the LORD. This is a KEY emphasis within the context of the Day of the LORD theme in Joel.

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Joel 2:32 (NKJV)

32 And it shall come to pass That **whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.** For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be **deliverance**, As the LORD has said, Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

These here in Zephaniah will be those who called on the name of the LORD in the Day of the LORD judgment and thus were saved out of it and thereby have come into the kingdom in their mortal bodies.

Footnote: In the NT in Acts 2:21 Peter quotes from Joel 2:32 on the Day of Pentecost explaining to the people how to be saved. And again, Paul in Rom. 10:13 quotes from Joel 2:32 emphasizing that “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”

This shows us that this is KEY in the nature of saving faith. Saving faith recognizes Christ as Lord and expresses that by calling on Him for salvation. This truth applies not only to the day of the LORD, which is the context of Joel and Zephaniah, but also to those of us in the Church Age as seen in Romans 10:13. The nature of saving faith ever remains the same as seen in the Hall of Faith Chapter in Hebrews 11.

Furthermore, God says these will all serve the LORD with one accord. The phrase “with one accord” is more literally “with one shoulder”. It is a metaphor taken from a yoke of oxen. Under the yoke they would be shoulder to shoulder or as it were working in unison “with one shoulder”. That is the sense here. The whole world will be united in serving the LORD together. That is the golden age of the kingdom.

So note what will define those who go into the kingdom after the terrible time of judgment has purged the world.

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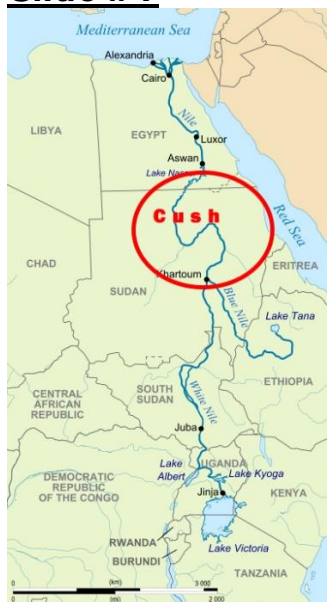
A restored pure language
 All call on the name of the LORD
 All serve the LORD with one accord

Then the prayer will largely be answered, “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Mt. 6:10).

10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, The daughter of My dispersed ones, Shall bring My offering.

Some translate Ethiopia as “Cush” which seems to be representative of the places most remote.

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The sense is that the remnant of God’s people, the Jews who have become true worshipers, shall make their way home to the Promised Land to the KEY place of worship. And as they come they will come to bring an offering of worship. The qualifier, “The daughter of My dispersed ones” refers to Jews who had been scattered. This is homecoming time for them!

And as they return home to the land of Promise they will be coming home restored.

11 In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds In which you transgress against Me; For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain.

What we have pictured here is God's blessings on His restored people Israel in the kingdom. Initially in repentance they shall be broken.

Slide # 8

Zechariah 12:10 (NKJV)

10 “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.

Zechariah 13:1 (NKJV)

1 “In that day a fountain [of cleansing] shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

But in the restoration of the kingdom Israel shall be so fully cleansed and restored that their shame shall be completely removed. The “deeds” they had done is more literally the “**terrible deeds**”. The humbled have repented and been thoroughly cleansed to where it is no longer an issue. But those who refuse to repent will be purged from Jewish society (cf. Ezek. 20:34-38; Mt. 25:1-13).

God says, “***For then I will take away from your midst Those who rejoice in your pride, And you shall no longer be haughty In My holy mountain.***” The besetting sin of mankind is PRIDE. And those who refuse to humble themselves before the LORD and refuse to call on the name of the LORD will be removed from the midst of Israel. He specifically says this applies to those who are proud and haughty.

Only the HUMBLED will go into the kingdom and experience God's kingdom restoration. That is true of the Jews and that is true for all people. In saving faith, in calling on the name of the LORD, a deep humility is involved in which a person humbles themselves before the truth of Christ's LORDSHIP. A saving faith is a position of humility. The saved are those who have been humbled before God.

God resists the proud but He gives grace to the humble (cf. Lk. 18:9-14; 1 Pet. 5:5-6).

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Isaiah 57:15 (NKJV)

15 For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, With him who has a contrite and **humble spirit**, To revive the spirit of the **humble**, And to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

This is what Jesus was talking about when He said...

Matthew 5:3 (NKJV)

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

At the end of the day only the converted humbled will have access to God's holy mountain. The terminology "holy mountain" is often used to describe Jerusalem in the kingdom which at that point will be the city of the great King (Ps. 48:2). In Isaiah this is a common designation of the worship center of the entire world in the kingdom (cf. Isa. 11:9; 56:7; 57:13; 65:11, 25; 66:20; also Ezek. 20:40; 28:14; Dan. 11:45; Joel 3:7; Obad. 16; Zech. 8:3).

Slide # 10

Joel 3:17 (NKJV)

17 "So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, **Dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.** Then Jerusalem shall be holy, And **no aliens shall ever pass through her again.**"

Zechariah 8:3 (NKJV)

3 "Thus says the LORD: '**I will return to Zion, And dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.** Jerusalem shall be called the **City of Truth, The Mountain of the LORD of hosts, The Holy Mountain.**'

Jerusalem in the kingdom will be the desire of the nations. It will be the most glorious place of all. But the PROUD will not have a place there. They will be purged out and only humble people of faith will be in the position of no shame because they will have been completely cleansed and restored.

And that is exactly what God goes on to say in the next verse.

12 I will leave in your midst A meek and humble people, And they shall trust in the name of the LORD.

Note the issue is “in your midst”.

Slide # 11

PROUD taken away from your midst – v. 11
 HUMBLE/TRUSTING in your midst – v. 12
 KING of Israel/the LORD in your midst – v. 15

The LORD is going to rid the world of the PROUD and those left standing will be those who have been humbled. Isaiah 2 is so emphatic saying repeatedly that “the haughtiness of men shall be brought low; the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day” (Isa. 2:11, 17).

Slide 12

Proverbs 6:16–19 (NKJV)

16 These six things the LORD **hates**, Yes, seven are an **abomination** to Him:

17 **A proud look**, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood,

18 A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil,

19 A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren.

Pride is the number one thing on the list that God hates which is an abomination to Him. Saving faith involves humbling oneself before the LORD. You put yourself down in recognition of His sovereign LORDSHIP and trust in Him to be your SAVIOR.

Slide # 13

Habakkuk 2:4 (NKJV)

4 “Behold **the proud**, His **soul is not upright** in him; But the **just shall live by his faith.**”

God is going to remove the PROUD from Israel but He is going to leave in their midst a meek and humble people who trust in the name of the LORD. God, in the great coming Day of the LORD is going to break Israel – He is going to humble them, and those who are humbled will go into the kingdom.

The NASB and the ESV translate this, “I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly”. And they both translate “trust in the name of the LORD” as those who “take refuge in the name of the LORD”.

In the OT the sense of trusting in the LORD is taking refuge in Him. It is to depend upon Him or as we would commonly say, to TRUST in Him.

Note again, the “name of the LORD” is emphasized. Those that come to the LORD in saving faith are those who “call on the name of the LORD” (v. 9) and humbled they “trust in the name of the LORD” (v. 12).

The name of the LORD is WHO He is. It is His PERSON! LORD, here is YHWH – the unchanging, eternal, covenant faithful God of Israel.

13 The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness And speak no lies, Nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; For they shall feed their flocks and lie down, And no one shall make them afraid.”

Note this applies to the “remnant of Israel”. We know from Zechariah that 2/3 of the Jews will be purged from the land and God will bring a 1/3 remnant into the kingdom.

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Zechariah 13:8–9 (NKJV)

8 And it shall come to pass in all the land,” Says the LORD, “That **two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die**, But **one-third shall be left in it:**
9 I will bring the one-third **through** the fire, Will **refine** them as silver is refined, And **test** them as gold is tested. **They will call on My name**, And I will answer them. I will say, **‘This is My people’; And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’**”

The truly saved people are those who know the LORD (YHWH) as their God. In faith they call upon Him. They trust in His name!

And note what will define them. They will be a changed people. They shall do no unrighteousness, speak no lies, nor use a deceitful tongue.

The phrase “shall do no unrighteousness” is better translated as “shall do no injustice”. The kingdom people will practice “kingdom justice”. They will live right according to kingdom ethics.

This phrase “shall do no injustice” is the identical phrase used in verse 5 to describe the LORD Himself. In the kingdom the people of God will be God-like in their character.

True repentance is a life changing reality because it is a heart changing reality. You won't find a better description of true repentance than that which David describes in Psalm 32 and Psalm 51.

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Psalm 32:2 (NKJV)

2 Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in **whose spirit there is no deceit.**

Psalm 51:6 (NKJV)

6 Behold, **You desire truth in the inward parts,** And in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

God wants honest to God confession – honest to God truth acknowledged in the heart in which the person “comes clean” (so to speak) and is brutally honest and broken over their sin. David goes on to say...

Slide # 16

Psalm 32:3–5 (NKJV)

3 When **I kept silent,** my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.

4 For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah

5 **I acknowledged my sin to You,** And **my iniquity I have not hidden.** I said, “**I will confess my transgressions** to the LORD,” And You **forgave** the iniquity of my sin. Selah

What is being described here in Zephaniah is the effects of a repentant Israel entering into a New Covenant with God in which He changes them from the inside out.

Slide # 17

Jeremiah 31:33–34 (NKJV)

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

And note the emphasis here on how these people will be changed in terms of lying and deceit. The name **Jacob** means "heel-grabber" or "supplanter", with supplant meaning to take the place of, through force or plotting. In Jacob's experience, it relates to being a **usurper, a trickster**, or one who takes advantage of another through conniving (cf. Hos. 12:3, Genesis 27:36).

Isn't this what the Jews have been accused of generally through the years. "To Jew" someone is a slur meaning to take advantage of someone. Now it would be wrong to stereotype all Jews in this way. But through the years they as a people (in general – rightfully or wrongfully) have carried on the reputation of their forefather Jacob who was a conniving usurper or trickster.

But NOTE that now in the kingdom as stated specifically about the remnant of Israel, Zeph. 3:13 very definitely says they shall do no injustice, they shall speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. They shall now be honest truth tellers and Jerusalem, their great capital, shall be called, "the City of Truth" (Zech. 8:3).

God is going to turn Jacob (the deceitful usurper) into Israel the truth teller and He will do it on a national basis in the kingdom!

Note what defines these kingdom people.

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A pure language – v. 9
 Call on the name of the LORD – v. 9
 Serve Him – v. 9
 A meek and humble people – v. 12
 Trust in the name of the LORD – v. 12
 Do no injustice – v. 13
 Speak no lies – v. 13
 No deceitful tongue – v. 13

This is truly being born-again – a radically changed people.

And then in the kingdom Israel will finally know true lasting peace and security. As Zeph. 3:13 says, “**they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.**” (cf. Isa. 49:9; Jer. 50:19; Ezek. 34:14; Mic. 7:14).

Slide # 19

Micah 4:4 (NKJV)

4 But everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, **And no one shall make them afraid;** For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken.

No more will shame, pride, deceit, or fear be in their midst! This will truly be the golden age. This will be kingdom living and it will be glorious. No wonder God’s people long for the kingdom to come.

Have you heard the saying, “***It was the worst of times – it was the best of times***”. That defines the coming Day of the LORD. First comes the worst of times (cf. Mt. 24:21). But in that crucible God will save a remnant of Israel that will go into the kingdom which will be the best of times.

Slide # 20

Jeremiah 30:7 (NKJV)

7 Alas! For that day is great, So that none is like it; And it is the time of Jacob’s trouble, [Day of the LORD DARK phase] But he shall be saved out of it [Day of the LORD LIGHT phase].

Right now Israel longs for peace and safety. Just this week we heard a report that certain Muslim leaders are circulating a report that a certain Muslim cleric in Iran has supposedly calculated from the Koran that Israel will cease to exist by July 8. This has both many Muslims in the area as well as Jews all astir.

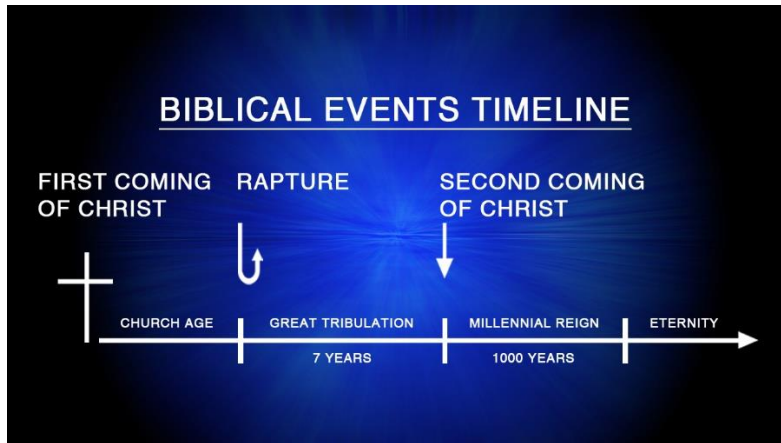
From time to time we have the talk of “***Peace in our time***” but that time never comes. And Biblically, lasting peace will not come until the Prince of Peace comes and sets up His kingdom. For the world the worst of times is yet to come which will involve a great purge of the wicked from the world. This will then be followed by the best of times in the kingdom age.

Truly Israel will then know the full experience of “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Ps. 23:1).

But right now we live in the Church age. Right now Christ is building a forever family of believers in Christ consisting of both Jew and Gentile called the Church.

Here is where we are....

Slide # 21



We are not looking for the undertaker – but for the upper taker.
 We are not looking for the Antichrist – but for the Christ.
 We are not looking for the Tribulation Period – but for the Rapture.

But indeed, ultimately, we are looking for the kingdom to come and we pray, “**Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.**” (Mt. 6:10).

This has always been the ultimate hope of God’s people down through the ages.

And so we say, “Even so, come Lord Jesus!”