

## Prophecy Fulfilled

A. As I read Zephaniah 3:20 I'm reminded that we are seeing the fulfillment of this prophecy in our day (read). In the early 1900's the people who are to be the ultimate caretakers of the Land of Israel began making their way home. *Zion* is an ancient name for Israel, and while the term given to this movement, *Zionism*, came to have some negative overtones, it is part of God's plan.

Once again the world is pointing its wrath at Israel over the flotilla event that took place a few days ago. While I don't condone all of Israel's policies, the reality is that it is folly for any nation to choose to be against Israel for God is going to do something great in that land. We may see another Mid-East war this summer over the events of the past weeks. If that happens pay attention to who stands with Israel. God will give honor to his people one day and when he does, I want to be on His side.

B. When the Day of the Lord breaks out, will you be on the Lord's side? Jesus pointed to a time when there will be a dividing of people just as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. It will be very clear who is with the Lord. Today it is a bit fuzzy to see who really is on the Lord's side. People say they belong to God but don't live the way God asks them to live. What about you? Are you making godly choices each day?

Zephaniah calls us to get rid of the fuzziness and any phoniness about our walk with God. I think of Moses where it says of him, "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called a son of Pharaoh's daughter." Hebrews 11:24. That took courage. He had been raised in the finest setting as a prince of Egypt, but the truth he learned at his mother's knee stayed with him and Moses chose to stand on that truth.

C. It takes boldness today to truly live for God. Will you be one of the bold ones? You don't have to be rude, offensive, or mean-spirited – just boldly in love with Jesus, ready to give yourself for him – after all, he gave his life for you.

## Prayer

Songs: Remember Zephaniah's prophesy beginning with Judah and then going to the north, south, east and west. Let's sing about God's call to the nations today:

Shout to the North and the South  
In Christ There is No East or West

"When Sorrow Turns to Song"  
Zephaniah

6/13/10

RMBC  
Pastor Dennis

## Introduction

A. The other day I came across this metaphor: God's hand is hidden in the glove of history. We see the glove (history/current events) and often forget that God's hand is within those events. I think the prophet Zephaniah would agree as he called people to take note of God's judgment. He saw God in world events.

B. Take the April Icelandic volcano eruption for example. Chuck Colson points out that it caused the largest air traffic shutdown since WWII. Between April 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> around 95,000 flights were canceled due to volcanic ash in the upper atmosphere. Millions of passengers were stranded as vital air corridors were declared off-limits to jet aircraft, costing airlines an estimated \$200 million a day.

And to think this was caused by tiny bits of pulverized rock less than one-half the diameter of a human hair. Volcanic ash and jet engines don't mix. Once inside the engine, the ash melts, turns into liquid glass, and coats the engine's vital parts.

C. But the planes started flying, the volcano dropped off our TV screens, and we began to forget the lessons learned: Lessons such as this --

1. That understanding how nature works doesn't mean we can master it. (Secular world view suggests we can)
2. That what we know is infinitesimal compared to what we don't. Think of it: A minor volcano coughs and the modern world almost comes to a halt.
3. That we are not in charge; not even close.

D. That's what Zephaniah wants us to know. The question is: Will we take the lesson to heart? Acknowledging that we are not in charge requires us to submit to God. And since the Garden, the refusal to submit has been the root problem of mankind. Man without God doesn't want to see God's hand in the glove of history. As Colson concludes, "So, instead, we act as if nothing important happened, and we wait to catch the next flight."

## The Point of Zephaniah's Message

A. The idea of judgment is not popular today. It would be easy to skip Zephaniah, a judgmental prophet who declares God's coming judgment. That's not easy stuff to receive in an age when we tend to sugar-coat God's wrath. But the truth is that both Old and New Testaments portray God as one who judges, just as both Old and New Testaments portray God as one who shows love and mercy. The testimony of the two testaments is one of harmony and unity.

B. In Zephaniah 1:14 we are introduced to a concept that is used widely in the prophets, especially the Minor Prophets. It is the Day of the Lord. “The great day of the Lord is near – near and coming quickly.” Joel, another prophet of judgment, used this term as well to point to a special time, a great day, when God will take over. It is a day when his hand will no longer be “hidden in the glove of history” but will “intervene directly in human affairs.”

C. If you want to get a NT picture of the Day of the Lord read Matthew 24:9-14; 21-22; 29-31. There Jesus describes a time of great tribulation when there will be many signs in nature and cataclysmic events in the universe. Much of what is described will likely happen after Jesus has come for the church, but the warnings remain appropriate for us. Persecution has come to the church before.

D. One thing to remember about the Day of the Lord: For those who have opposed the Lord; those who have not been his followers, it is a terrible day of judgment. But for the faithful remnant the Day of the Lord is a day of salvation and great blessing. If you are walking with Jesus you need not fear the Day of the Lord.

### **The Scope of Zephaniah’s Message**

A. One difficulty in interpreting Zephaniah is to determine when he is referring to the judgment God was bringing to Judah through the Babylonian invasion (This happened around 587 BC when Jerusalem was destroyed), and when is Zephaniah pointing to the time of Christ’s Second Coming and the events that will occur then. There clearly seem to be references to both of these.

B. Notice how, beginning with 1:4, Zephaniah’s prophecy systematically covers the whole region in which God was so clearly at work during those days.

1. He begins with a word about Judah. Think of Judah and Jerusalem being in the center of a map for a moment.

2. Then in vs. 2:4 he looks west to the area of the Philistines who had been such a thorn in the side of Judah and Israel for many years.

3. In vs. 2:8 he looks to the east where the Moabites and Ammonites had lived ever since the people of Israel came out of Egypt and crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

4. In vs. 2:12 he briefly nods southward toward Ethiopia. Cush is the biblical word/name for Ethiopia.

5. And finally, in 2:13, he looks north at the Assyrians whose capital at that time was Nineveh.

C. Notice several things about this judgment that could be important for us to remember:

- God’s judgment began with his own people. It is true that one day God will judge all the evil doers, but the message of the prophets is for the house of God to wake up. This is a word for us first. God does not overlook corruption within the ranks of his people.
- God’s judgment is thorough. We always see with such limited vision. God sees all and therefore can judge justly, rightly, but also completely. That’s why his justice does not negate his love – his judgment is perfect. Trust him!
- God’s judgment is not what he delights in. God delights in showing mercy. In Isaiah 28:21 he calls this work his “strange work” and an “alien task.”

D. So why does God bring this thorough judgment on the world and on his people? Is there a cause we can identify? It is in Zephaniah 1:17 where we read:

“... because they have sinned against the Lord.”

Before we move to the hopeful, happy side of this book, I plead with you to take a good look at the seriousness of God’s judgment. God is holy, righteous and pure and because he is absolute in those qualities (that means he is totally holy, completely righteous, 100% pure) he cannot tolerate sin – it must be dealt with.

The role of the prophet in Israel was to call God’s people to repentance. And nestled in vs. 2:1-3 is the first call to repentance. (Read). God is calling us to repentance today too. Will we hear?

### **The Hope of Zephaniah’s Message**

A. There was a young man on trial in Chicago who tried to escape as he was being escorted out of the courtroom. He had seen this work on television, so he made a dash for it. After he ran across a walkway he tried to jump through a window. But the bullet-proof glass didn’t break and just bounced him off onto the floor where he was arrested, now in worse trouble than before.

B. I remind you that you can only run about so far to avoid God’s judgment. On your own there is no hiding. But the good news is that God has provided a way. In Jesus Christ we have an advocate, a lawyer, who defends us; speaks up for us – as long as we stand with him and not on our own self-defense.

C. Zephaniah looked ahead to the day Judah’s sorrow would turn to song. Let’s read vs. 3:14-17. Now there’s a verse you’ll want to note. What a picture of God’s love!

So already in Zephaniah’s day there was the hope of deliverance, the offer of salvation for those who turn to God. You see, God’s purpose in judgment is never destruction. God only destroys for the sake of creating – something new; something that honors him and brings him glory.

## June 13 -- Zephaniah

Pastor Dennis

Central Message: Even in desolation God can bring about deliverance. God's judgment leaves hope for believers.

Verse to Highlight: "The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." Zephaniah 3:17

Sermon Title: "When Sorrow Turns to Song"

Outline of Zephaniah:

- Wrath Coming on Judah – 1:1-2:3
- Wrath on Nations – 2:4-3:8
- Wrath to Healing – 3:9-20

Sermon Notes:

Introduction

God's \_\_\_\_\_ is hidden in the \_\_\_\_\_ of history

Lessons from Historical Events:

Understanding nature does not mean we can master it

What we know is infinitesimal compared to what we don't

We are not in charge; not even close

The Point of Zephaniah's Message

The Scope of Zephaniah's Message

The Hope of Zephaniah's Message

Prophecy Fulfilled

Rely On God's Resources  
Faith building verses shared by Pastor Dennis  
On June 6, 2010

### **His Spirit**

I Corinthians 3:16

I Corinthians 2:12

### **His Strength**

Isaiah 41:10

Philippians 4:13

### **His Peace**

Isaiah 26:3

I Peter 5:7

### **His Faithfulness**

Lamentations 3:22-23

Numbers 23:19

### **His Provision**

Romans 8:32

Philippians 4:19

### **His Help in Temptation**

Hebrews 2:18

Psalms 119:9, 11