

Seek Yahveh, the God of Judgment & Discipline, Salvation & Blessing Fearing Him Exclusively!

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[0:00] please take your Bibles and go to the book of Zephaniah if you're visiting with us on that black Bible in the chair in front of you no pun intended it is on page 666 sorry it's like Zephaniah Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk Zephaniah if you hit Haggai Zechariah or Malachi the Italian prophet you've probably gone too far just do a few pages back to Zephaniah page 666 in that black Bible in the chair in front of you Zephaniah chapter 1 I'll read starting in verse 1 of chapter 1 but this morning we're going to do study verses 4 through 13 so we started the book of Zephaniah last Sunday excuse me but wanting to do that for a while we finished the gospel of John

I think it was in April or May it was May and we went through the Psalms and then I wanted to do an Old Testament book so Zephaniah which is a short book three chapters we'll be in that until almost the end of September Zephaniah chapter 1 and again today we'll study verses 4 through 13 but I'm going to read all of that from starting in chapter 1 verse 1 the word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi son of Gedaliah son of Amariah son of Hezekiah in the days of Josiah son of Ammon king of Judah I will completely remove all from the face of the earth declares the Lord I will remove man and beast I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked I will cut off man from the face of the earth declares Yahweh so I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests and those who bow down on the housetops to the hosts of heaven those who bow down swearing to Yahweh and swearing to Milcom those who have turned back from following Yahweh and those who have not sought the Lord or inquired of Him be silent before sovereign Yahweh for the day of Yahweh is near for Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice he has consecrated his guests that will come about on the day of Yahweh's sacrifice that I will punish the princes the kings sons and all who clothe themselves with foreign garments

I will punish on that day all who leap on the threshold who fill the house of their masters with violence and deceit on that day declares Yahweh there will be the sound of a cry from the fish gate a whale from the second quarter and a loud crash from the hills whale oh inhabitants of the mortar for all the people of Canaan will be silenced all who weigh out silver will be cut off and will come about at that time that is on that day I will search Jerusalem with lamps and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit who say in their hearts the Lord will not do good or evil moreover their wealth will become plunder and their houses desolate yes they will build houses but not inhabit and plant vineyards but not drink their wine there's a 1936 American film drama film called

Exclusive Story and the story becomes exclusive because it tracks how the mob was heavily involved in crime in the 1930s and the movie ends with the murder of a key person confessing and then identifying top people in the mob had to do with this murder the word exclusive can have two meanings that which is select or private special or restricted or it could also mean solely undivided absolute so we can see how these two definitions are intertwined in the plot of the movie Exclusive Story it was exclusive in the sense that restricted private selects only certain people had this but also it was an absolute statement that actually these people were involved in this major crime but this word exclusive has become a four letter word in our culture not that people have a problem saying these four letter words but be that as I may it's a four letter word in our culture because people instead of being exclusive they want to be inclusive right you're supposed to be inclusive include everybody you're not supposed to be exclusive and yet again as we see constantly when you compare the culture with the Bible you see how the

Bible constantly goes against our culture biblical Christianity moves against our culture because Jesus wants us exclusively Jesus wants you to want him exclusively solely as we come to this part in Zephaniah chapter 1 verses 4 through 14 you know it's the theme of Zephaniah seek Yahweh the God of judgment and discipline salvation and blessing and today we'll see seek Yahweh fear him exclusively or fearing him exclusively fear him exclusively love him singularly another way to put it and we get it from verse 7 of chapter 1 be silent before Yahweh God we'll talk about this more later be silent is the idea of have all respect fear him it's a command be quiet fear him love him be committed to him alone fear him exclusively here's ways to put this these verses 4 through 14 [6:52] Yahweh commands us to love or fear him exclusively and he will do whatever it takes for us to seek love and fear him singularly even if it means disciplining us as his people that's why we read from Revelation chapter 3 which gives that to us very well those those whom I love I reprove and discipline excuse me therefore be zealous and repent and interesting it goes on into verse 20 behold I stand at the door and knock if anyone hears my voice and opens the door I will come in to him and will dine with him and he with me that has nothing to do with salvation people use this as a verse for salvation no no it's talking about communing in a very intimate way with God exclusively wants me totally solely dine with me

God wants us to want him and he'll do what it takes to get you there even if it means he'll discipline you here's another way to put this passage verses 4 through 14 of Zephaniah God wants our worship our attention our adoration and our devotion exclusively he is jealous of our love for him alone he's a jealous God he doesn't want to share his glory with another and he doesn't want you to share your love with someone else or something else no no no that's not how he works God demands exclusive worship from us he's a jealous God and wants us to want him solely only totally exclusively look you cannot worship the Lord Jesus and yourself at the same time Jesus wants his body the church to solely love him or as he said to the

Ephesian church you've lost your first love I should be your first love says Jesus Judah worshiped Baal the sun the moon the stars they followed the customs and practices of the nations surrounding them that were surrounding them all while they tried to worship Yahweh it's called syncretism they're trying to merge worshipping God with other worships of other gods it cannot be that way you know what's interesting is that this passage looms over us because God's discipline begins with his own household Peter says this in 1 Peter chapter 4 I'll make reference to this later on in the service in the message as well 1 Peter chapter 4 verse 17 for a time for judgment to begin with the household of God and if it begins with us first what is the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of

God God begins disciplining his people because he wants his people to be zealous for him be committed to him and you see this constantly with the nation of Israel with Judah always going after something else always going after something else always wanting something else and God says you need to want me alone exclusively solely even for those who identify as God's people that's not proof against his disciplining judgment if there's no application of his will in a person's life or their relationships so let's dive into the passage verses 4 through 14 first we'll begin with the command the only command you see here be silent or fear me verse 7 be silent or to use slang shut your trap and to be silent in his presence means it's a sign of awe and respect and fear before sovereign Lord sovereign Yahweh Yahweh the omnipotent ruler the supreme God who rules over all he's the creator the sustainer the judge of the universe and his people be silent he says before Yahweh God before the sovereign Yahweh be silent be quiet fear him now we're going to look at two different questions that come up from the passage how do you fear him and why should you fear him first how how do we fear or love Yahweh how do we do this and the Lord listed off five objects upon which his wrath will fall upon his people and you see actually three ways Judah mixed their devotion with Yahweh God and we have the tendency to do the same thing three ways that Judah mixed their devotion to Yahweh with other gods notice number one how you fear Yahweh first stop your syncretism stop it they mixed their worship with Baal look at verse four

[12:40] I will stretch out my hand against Judah against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem we'll get to that in a moment a little bit later on in the message notice he says I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place the remnant of Baal the god of fertility there was still a remnant of Baal worshippers priests who served were still present they had fertility festivals sacred prostitution orgies Yahweh said that's enough stop this Judah thought they could have their cake and eat it too they tried to mix together idolatry with worshipping the only true god and that's something that we

new covenant Christians we're guilty of doing that too James says that in James chapter four you adulteresses don't you know that friendship with the world is hostility with god you can't mix worshipping yourself and worshipping god it doesn't go together notice what

Yahweh God says here end of verse four the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests it's quite possible these priests wore long black robes in the pagan worship these would be destroyed and notice to the point of having no descendants no way to perpetuate their line it would become a memory of the distant past as a way to judge them stop your syncretism notice they mixed their worship with Baal and second they mixed they worship the host of heaven look at verse five those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven this is the practice of both the Canaanites and the Mesopotamians they go up their rooftops those who are flat bowing down to the sun the moon the stars a trademark of Manasseh's reign and Ammon's reign Yahweh commanded them not to do this in

Deuteronomy chapter four verse 19 they disobeyed how do you fear Yahweh you stop the syncretism they mix worshipping with Baal they worship the host and they swore to another notice verse five again and those who bowed down swearing to Yahweh and swearing to Milcom Milcom is actually Molech the Ammonite god which called for child sacrifice oh that's nice and then they also swear to Yahweh so we swear to you Yahweh and we offer our child to Molech what are you doing once again they thought they could worship Yahweh along with the other foreign gods who are false gods there are no gods they had no heart loyalty to God but only love themselves they thought they could love

Yahweh God and love other gods but God doesn't work that way he's just saying that all my boasts is in Jesus he must be solely devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ so be silent fear him how first stop your syncretism two God says only follow me look at verse six and those who have turned back from following Yahweh they did not trust Yahweh alone showing itself by not following Yahweh alone they had no interest in following him they completely abandoned Yahweh they completely abandoned his will they abandoned his word remember after Josiah came to power what was he he was eight when he came to power and I think it was in the 16th year he started the reform so he and yes now in the eighth year he started the reform so he was 16 and then the 12th year so by then he's like 21 20 21 that's when they found the book of the law remember that king look we found that book what is it so you open it up oh my this is the book of the law they abandoned God's word to follow God is to fear God so fear him how stop syncretism merge your idols with the Lord only follow the Lord and then third only seek me and my guidance says the Lord verse 6 and those who have not sought Yahweh or inquired of him not only was there syncretism not only were they not following the Lord what made it worse they had not sought or inquired of him they were not seeking him remember that's the theme of Zephaniah seek God Yahweh God seek him go after him they had not sought or inquired of Yahweh which means they did not solely worship him wanting to be guided by him alone and that's what triggered

[18:17] Zephaniah's appeal seek him we'll look at that in a couple weeks so in short they had no relationship with Yahweh true relationship with Yahweh though they thought they did one is committed to Yahweh and him alone devoting oneself to him in prayer awaiting his guidance from his word to seek and inquire means there's devotion to Yahweh alone this is what one writer says he says it well God demands exclusive worship from his people God demands exclusive worship from his people Christian what are the idols of your life what is it that you want in place of Yahweh or along with Jesus but not solely Jesus see this is the heart of the gospel the heart of the gospel is I know I can't save myself

I know I can't do nothing of me I should be condemned I turn from my sin I repent and I trust in Jesus alone that he died for my sin in my place that's the heart of the gospel you repent and trust Christ you trust in Jesus the God man that he died in your place as your substitute that's the heart of the gospel it's Christ in Christ alone if you're here you don't know the Lord Jesus you should trust in Christ put your hope in the Lord Jesus Christ alone repent trust him he'll save you this is what God demands so requires so be silent fear Yahweh how stop the synchronicism follow him only seek him inquire of him now the next question which is going to be why be silent fear Yahweh why because he will stretch out his hand and cut off look at verse 4 back to verse 4 I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem

I will cut off here's God's judging discipline it will come against his people Israel Judah specifically and her capital Jerusalem notice stretch out his hand you know what's interesting about this word

this phrase Yahweh had delivered Israel with that outstretched arm it's the same word that's used here and metaphorically denotes his liberation and his protection of his people but now it will be used in judging discipline against them because now he would discipline them with that outstretched arm and notice the next verb he says I will stretch out and I will cut off same word used in verse 3 with the nations complete total utter removal of the wicked these who said they were God's people but wanted nothing to do with him in their lives they will face his judgment so be silent fear Yahweh because one he will stretch out his hand and cut off but also two because the day of Yahweh is near again verse 7 we looked at verse 7 the first part the only command here be silent look at the next part of verse 7 he says be silent fear the sovereign God for the day of the Lord or Yahweh is near for Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice he set apart his guests the day of Yahweh is near which it would be a theophany what's called in the Old Testament where God manifests himself like the pillar of fire that he did with the nation of Israel the day of Yahweh is the time that he visits his people he brings his judgment and this phrase the day of

Yahweh it begins here in the Old Testament a reference to judgment that would come upon the whole world and the Old Testament reveals to us this day and then when you go into the New full effects of that in the book of Revelation so it's not actually referring to like a 24 hour day per se but a specific period of time and for Zephaniah listen to what one writer says he saw quote both the events pending in the immediate future as they were linked with God's action in the final day as being of one piece and I say what did you just say I'll put it to you this way I'll put it easier in other words Zephaniah when he saw the prophecy of the day of the Lord the day of Yahweh it's like coming to Mingus Mountain you see there's just one mountain range right but until you get there you actually see there's like three or four mountains let's just say for example so when you look from far away it just looks the prophets they see the day of the

[23 : 38] Lord they see the day of Yahweh see it coming and there's immediate things that are taking place but then they see oh there's also future events are going to happen too so in other words there would be oh yeah on the day of Yahweh there would be looming historical events that Judah would face but also huge events that would take place in the Judah Israel and this is true you would see this in the prophets Judah viewed that day the day of Yahweh all in the positive for them

Yahweh would destroy the enemies and his people save them bless them restore them that's how they viewed it only positive which that's true but Zephaniah and the other prophets too they turned around this view of the populace because as you see here the day of Yahweh would be a day where Yahweh would visit or punish his people with his disciplining should be disciplining not disciplining disciplining purifying hand he would discipline his people he would purify his people because notice it says the next part of verse 7 for Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice be silent because the day of Yahweh is near because

Yahweh is prepared a sacrifice he set apart his guests now either he's the one who's going to be the guest or the nations are going to be the guest either way here's the point his people would be the sacrifice for their vast evil ways that's what he's saying as a sacrifice was a slaughtering his people would be slaughtered because they've offended the only true living God disobeying him because of their syncretism because they were not following him because they were not seeking him or inquiring of him and then you'll see notice from verse 11 to 13 the Lord starts to speak again here this is what's going to happen on that day on that day it says it will come about on that day of the

Lord sacrifice I will punish or the word can actually mean visit appoint inspect appropriately recompense his disobedient people he'll discipline his people and notice he brings up three specific sins here in verse eight and verse nine on that day I will visit my people for the lifestyles their customs and their behaviors verse eight I will punish the princes the king's sons and all who clothe themselves with foreign garments notice it's starting with those in royalty and he says all who clothe themselves in religious attire well wait is it because they're wearing certain clothes no the idea is they adopted new lifestyles customs and moral behavior again you see the syncretistic practices were being rebuked by

Yahweh they allow for other lifestyles for other customs and behaviors to rule their lives not the word of God so on that day I will visit them for the lifestyles customs and behaviors another second I will visit them for the pagan practices and superstitions verse nine I will punish on that day all who leap on the threshold it's hard to know what this means leaping on the threshold but it seems that this also had to do with syncretistic practices Judah had acquired as part of their culture instead of

following the word of God something that goes back to Dagon the Philistine gods and what they would do so they continued to adopt and have respect for pagan religious practices and superstitions and then trying to put it together with the worship of Yahweh but again Yahweh wanted them exclusively so there was customs and behaviors they were adopting pagan practices superstitions and also a third for benefiting through violence and deceit notice the next part of verse nine who fill the house of their masters or of their lord with violence and deceit the house of their rulers was filled with goods they obtained by violence by means of deceit

[29 : 10] God hates ill gotten gain benefiting oneself at the expense of others they abandoned the covenant they made with Yahweh so he would come and visit them on that day and remember we talked about this before God's judgment began with the leaders of the nation just as his disciplining hand must begin with the household of faith 1 Peter 4 17 that's why God sometimes he uses suffering trials and doesn't mean all suffering doesn't mean all trials doesn't mean all heartache is his disciplining hand but sometimes it is suffering trials heartache difficulties sometimes God uses that as a way to purify his people of their sin on that day he's bringing this upon his people because of what they've done and notice he says also from starting verse 10 on that day there will be despair verse 10 and also verse 11 on that day declares

Yahweh notice there will be a sound of a cry from the fish gate a whale from the second quarter a loud crash from the hills notice cry whale crash the cry was a cry for help hopeless despair wailing was screaming in intense distress experiencing extraordinary catastrophe God's hand would come against those who think they were secure the fish gate was the north of the city used for fishermen who would enter the city with their catch the second quarter was a later addition to the city where fashionable mansions were built and a loud crash from the hills refers to those hills surrounding Jerusalem there be an echo of the crash and notice it says in verse 11 whale oh inhabitants of the Mortar this was like the present day wall street this is where all the commerce was happening much of the trade and economic activity took place at the

Mortar and it says here for all the people of Canaan will be silenced all who weigh out silver will be cut off these were the merchants the merchant people who traded with silver all of this awaited total devastation utter destruction complete cleansing there would be a complete economic collapse upon Judah on that day there would be a cry wail a crash the Lord saying take me seriously take me seriously worship me alone on that day there will be despair notice on that day he says I will search look at verse 12 it will come about at that time or on that day I will search Jerusalem with lamps nobody would be hidden from God's search light none could hide in the dark away from Yahweh the dark corners will not be dark because Yahweh's lamp will find you it's like those lights that they have now those blue lights oh my goodness it's like they light up the whole street and they're coming at you this way and you can't see right because they blind you blue lights if you have a it shines it's everything you can't see Yahweh's light his lamp is going to shine bright he combed every nook and cranny because God would expose all the sin of his people on that day on that day I will search and then on that day notice he says I will visit the stagnant verse 12 I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit who say in their hearts Yahweh will not do good or evil interesting those who were complacent stagnant literally the word is thickening on their leaves or thickening on their dregs that's weird what's that mean this refers to wine when it's fermenting wine is left unattended what happens it would become thick unpalatable disgusting to drink like a thick blah so what he's saying

Judah had been left alone so her behavior went from bad to worse to the point where their boredom and their apathy led them to cynically doubt that Yahweh would do anything so their attitude it was it was exposed which said well there's not you do good or evil their attitude would be exposed which believed that God simply didn't matter anymore Yahweh is inactive he's not doing good or evil who cares they become complacent like that thickening disgusting wine that's unattended that swap at thinking their security and their prosperity was their right no matter what they thought about Yahweh has the church become like this too has the church become so apathetic and so cynical and so bored and apathetic that were like slop on that day

[35 : 06] I search I visit the stagnant and notice he says finally on that day they'll be plundered verse 13 more moreover their wealth will become plunder and their houses desolate yes they'll build houses but not inhabit and plant vineyards but not drink their wine they'll be looted and plundered all their hard work of building houses and vineyards will be destroyed and you know the wealth the houses the vineyards blah blah blah these were signs of God's blessings upon his

people because of his gracious generosity but when the people turned away from Yahweh all those blessings associated with the covenant would be forfeited the God who they thought was inactive yeah he's very much active Yahweh would show them he truly was in control by taking away all from them all these goods all their property given it to other nations interesting these are the very covenant curses from

Deuteronomy chapter 28 verse 30 Moses warned them you become so so at ease and then you become complacent and you're not going to go against the gods nations you're going to adopt their practices the Lord is going to bring these things upon you they did exactly what Moses had warned them not to do and God's disciplining hand would come against his people he would look this is a call to repentance really to repent of our lack of worshiping Yahweh exclusively he does not tolerate syncretistic practices this is so good for us as Christians new covenant believers because it it pricks us where am I trying to worship this and

God worship me and God worship this relationship and God worship this thing and God what am I doing am I doing this Lord what are the idols of my heart and Yahweh calls us away from indifference towards him look he is actively and presently involved in our lives and in our life history he's orchestrating everything for the glory of his name in your life everything God demands exclusive worship from us he's a jealous God and wants us to want him solely only totally exclusively you cannot worship the Lord Jesus and yourself at the same time you just can't God wants our worship our attention our adoration and our devotion exclusively he's jealous of our love for him and friends he'll come and if he needs to he'll discipline you to get your attention he squeezes so you will be driven to want him driven to prayer driven to love driven to devotion because he deserves all praise and thanks right of course he does he deserves our praise he deserves our thanks he deserves all our praise all our thanks once again

Yahweh commands us to love or fear him exclusively and he'll do whatever it takes for us to seek love and fear him singularly which is good because at this time we celebrate the Lord's Supper or it's also known as communion it reminds us of our singular exclusive devotion to Christ it reminds us of our relationship with the Lord Jesus it brings to our mind you know what I've sinned Lord I need to confess to you I have not done that so it causes us to search our heart examine our lives and it causes to take us back to the gospel to grace and God's forgiveness and we took that judgment that we should face the eternal condemnation that we should face he put it upon Jesus instead of us as our substitute this

Lord's supper reminds us of that which is why it's for believers if you're here you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ it's not for you it's for Christians who know the Lord Jesus if you're not a member here you're welcome to join if you're from a church of like faith and practice you join them with us in this and for Christians who have something against another Christian you've tried to go it's one thing where you've tried to go you can't reconcile but you haven't gone to reconcile you should probably wait to take the Lord's supper first try to reconcile with that person then come take the Lord's supper because God's reconciled with us right praise his name so let this be a time for you as a call to repentance in your own life and to make known what are the idols we're not trying to mix you with other things in my worship and my love for you this be a time for you to search your own heart and to be thankful for God's grace let's take a moment and pray and Father we admit and confess the idols of our hearts and we thank you

[41 : 20] Jesus that you had to die for that too so we come to you with humility thank you for your grace we don't deserve anything from you especially your love we pray that this will be a reminder of our exclusive devotion to you our allegiance to you how Jesus you died for us in our place there's forgiveness forgiveness we're justified we're made right with you or your children you've bought us back we're in union with you Jesus you've called us to yourself remind us of these great truths all because of Christ

Jesus and him crucified so I encourage you just a few moments to take this time and pray and have this wonderful time between you and the Lord examining your heart proclaiming the gospel to yourself remind yourself of the gospel of grace and how there's forgiveness of all your sins remind yourself of this gospel truth and may it take you back to your commitment to Jesus Christ and Christ alone please do that now and to to to