

Zephaniah 2:4-End "A Judgemental Reality"

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- [0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- You'll open your Bibles to Zephaniah. We're going to be looking at Zephaniah 2, verse 4, to the end of the chapter, but we're going to read together from chapter 3, verse 1, to the end.
- So in whatever form you have a Bible, if you'd open it and follow along as I read, Zephaniah 3, verses 1 through 20.
- Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city. She listens to no voice. She accepts no correction.
- She does not trust in the Lord. She does not draw near to her God. Her officials within her are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning.
- [1 : 14] Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men. Her priests profane what is holy. They do violence to the law. The Lord within her is righteous.
- He does no injustice. Every morning he shows forth his justice. Each dawn he does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.
- I have cut off nations. Their battlements are in ruins. I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them. Their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.
- I said, surely you will fear me. You will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.
- But all the more, they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt. Therefore, wait for me, declares the Lord.
- [2 : 21] For the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger.
- For in the fire of my jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed. For at that time, I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech.
- That all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.
- On that day, you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me. For then I will remove from your midst your proudly exalted ones.
- And you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord.
- [3 : 27] Those who are left in Israel, they shall do no injustice and speak no lies. Nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue.
- For they shall graze and lie down. And none shall make them afraid. Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion.

Shout, O Israel. Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away the judgments against you.

He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst. You shall never again fear evil.

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not, O Zion. Let not your hands grow weak. The Lord your God is in your midst. A mighty one who will save.

[4 : 28] He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will quiet you by his love. And he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival so that you will no longer suffer reproach.

Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast. And I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.

At that time I will bring you in. At the time when I gather you together. For I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth.

When I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the Lord. Let's pray together as we study this portion of his word.

Oh Father, would you give us your spirit. That we may understand and see the glory that are in these words.

[5 : 40] Would you pour out your spirit upon us. Convict us. But also encourage us. And give us hope.

Give us a glorious hope. Of all that your redemption accomplishes. In and for us. Come and work in our midst.

And use me to that end. And we pray. In the great name of our Redeemer. Our Lord Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Before we start, I need to call your attention to the outline on the back of your bulletin. There's two things you need to notice. First, I am not Peter Render.

As much as I would love to be. Reverend Render had appendicitis. Friday. And he's now taking a Sabbath rest.

[6 : 44] Second thing is, because I'm not Peter Render, this outline will do you no good. So, you don't get an outline today.

You're just going to have to wing it. You know, as we continue through this section of scriptures from the minor prophets.

And again, we refer to them as minor, not because they're any less important. It's just because they're small. But it's interesting. These words are just as significant as the major prophets.

In fact, Zephaniah, as he writes this small prophecy to Israel, to Jerusalem in the time of Isaiah. He begins it by saying the word of the Lord.

And then he ends it. His very last words are, says the Lord. And he's trying to make us notice that what they're about to hear is not words of some little preacher.

[7 : 58] These are words from God himself. So, these are not words that we can just write off. We can just, well, if they're interesting, I'll listen and pay attention.

He says, no. These are words from the author of all scripture. These are the words from the creator, the redeemer, the holy one.

And so, for all of us, for them and for us, we need to pay great attention.

And I appreciated how Derek began this study of Zephaniah last week as he brought out the very two aspects, very contrasting, but yet very complementary aspects of the God that we see in here.

And on one hand, we see, as in so many of the prophecies, a very hard side of God, a harsh side, the just side, where he calls out sin, he calls out people to repentance, he calls out their idolatry.

[9 : 08] And he brings his judgment upon it. But then there's, at the same time, we don't see this judgment outside of hope for redemption.

And Zephaniah is such a good example of that. We see some very, very harsh words spoken to all of the Jews still in Jerusalem.

But at the same time, when we get to the end, we see some of the most hopeful, some of the most glorious words that we'll find anywhere in the scriptures.

And all of these are wedded together. Because this is the God that we worship. He is both. And we need to see him as both.

So as we approach this, we're going to see three things. We're going to see, really, we're going to look at the day of the Lord.

[10 : 13] The day of the Lord is primarily the theme of Zephaniah. But we're going to see it in three ways. The day of the Lord among the nations, for the nations.

We're going to see the day of the Lord for God's people. And then finally, we're going to see the day of the Lord for God's son. Let's look at the first point.

The day of the Lord for the nations. The day of the Lord being that central theme. What is the day of the Lord? The day of the Lord is this day that Israel was promised and they looked forward to when God would come and make everything right.

That he would return to his people. He would come to them in their midst and he would bring his justice. All of their enemies who were oppressing them would be done away with.

They would be set free from all of those nations around them. And they would know shalom. That shalom that God had promised them.

[11 : 21] That he would bring. And this is the sense of where we begin in chapter 2 verse 4. In chapter 2 verse 4 to the end of the chapter.

We see Zephaniah laying out what God is going to do among the nations. And he uses an interesting technique. He really only singles out four nations.

But he does so in all directions of the compass. Moab and Ammon to the east. You've got Philistia to the west.

You have Cush to the south. And then Assyria to the north. And the message is this. When God comes.

When he comes to make things right. All of these nations. And he only picks out four. But he picks them out with those points of the compass to say. It doesn't matter where they are.

[12 : 22] All of the nations. All of those who oppress you. Will come to their end. And they will receive the justice.

That they deserve. They will receive justice from the hand of God. For all they have done. To his people. And he will make things right.

Particularly in verse. Chapter 2 verse 11. He says. This. He says. The Lord will be awesome against them. For he will famish all the gods of the earth.

And to him shall bow down. Each in his place. All the lands. Of the nations. That. Is what the Jews look forward to.

In the day of the Lord. So far so good. That's all good news. But he doesn't stop there. Now we get to chapter 3.

- [13 : 26] And now. It's a different story. Because once we get to chapter 3. Verses 1 through 5. The tables are turned. And the same God.
- Is going to execute. His justice. On all of the nations. Surrounding Israel. For the rebellion. And so. Is he going to do.
- In the midst. Of his own. People. They are not. Going to escape. In fact. Their actions. In their actions. And in their affections. In their worship. They have proven to them. Over and over. They have proven. That they are really.
- No. Different. Than all of these. Gentile nations. Around them. They have. Note verse 5.
- [14 : 23] Here. Where he says. The Lord within her. Is righteous. He does. No. In justice. And so. We're going to refer. To this phrase again.
- This is not all. That is meant. By this. But his justice. Is not just for the heathen. His justice. Is for. His covenant. People. Now he's. It should be expected. These. The. Jews.
- His people. Should not be surprised. By this. Yes. But they're going to be. They shouldn't be surprised. Because he's trying to warn them. He is shown.
- By all the devastation. That he has now. Brought about. In all these nations. What his justice. Will do. And he's brought. Time and time again. Prophets. He's brought all these events.
- [15 : 21] But yet. As they have seen them. The words. From these passages. Is just. Sad. And heart-wrenching. Because it says. They.
- Would receive. No. Correction. They paid. No.
- Attention. And this. Brings their downfall. And then when you get to verse 8. There's this very chilling.
- Statement. He says. Therefore. Wait for me. I mean. I mean. This is like. You know.
- When you're a little kid. And you haven't been at your best. And mom says. Wait till your father gets home.
- [16 : 18] And that phrase. And that phrase. Strikes terror. Because now. You know it's coming.
- He will come home. And he is going to. Bring justice. And back in my day. That justice. Usually would come. In the form.
- Of a belt. But. You kids got it so good. These days. Justice was on the way.
- I think. We as a church. Long for God.
- To make his presence known. We. Long for the day of the Lord. We long. For Jesus to return. And to make things right. We want his presence here.
- [17 : 15] In fact. As we prayed this morning. For our worship service. That was what we prayed for. That God's presence. Would come here. In our midst. And we long for him. To bring about.
- His justice. In the world. To put an end. To oppression. To put an end. To all the millions. Of.
- Innocent. Deaths. The hands of abortionists. To put an end. To the wars. And the divisions. And all of that.
- We long for that day. But when he comes. Sometimes what we fail to remember. He's also going to come.
- And deal with his people. And that includes us. We might not fear his condemnation. As the world should.

- [18 : 17] But we've got to expect. That he will come. And purify his bride. Because he loves his bride.
- Far too much. To leave her. To wallow. In her corruption. And idolatry. First Peter.
- First Peter 4. 17. And this is in the New Testament. This is in the time of grace. Peter says. For it is time for judgment to begin.
- At the household of God. And if it begins with us. What will be the outcome. For those who do not obey the gospel. So do not think.
- We. Southwood. We must not think. That God casts a blind eye. To.
- [19 : 13] Our cold. Corrupt. Hearts. We must not think. That he ignores. The idolatry. That still is so pervasive.
- In our midst. Christ. We must not think. That simply because. Now we are under grace. We have nothing more to worry about.
- He's coming. And he loves us far too much. To leave us in our corruption. He loves us far too much.
- And longs for us to display the beauty. That his bride should display. And that he will do. But now.
- With that said. That's half the equation. Then we get to verse 9. And verse 9 begins.
- [20 : 24] One of the most. Hopeful. And glorious. Texts.
- In all of scripture. And it is given. To those very. Ones. Who are still dealing with the corruption.
- The very ones he's going to visit. In verse 3. In chapter. I mean verse 9 here. Chapter 3. Something happens.
- A change takes place. In the disposition. Of the one speaking. And we see there. In the beginning. That he is going to do something. He is going to come.
- And make their speech different. He is going to come and work. And now. What we see. Is instead of his wrath. Instead of this.
- [21 : 22] Anger. He's calling. For rejoicing. What happened?
- Look at these words. Verses 14 through 15. Shout aloud. O daughter of Zion. Shout.
- O Israel. Rejoice. And exalt. With all your heart. O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away. The judgments. Against you.
- He has cleared. Away. Your enemies. The Lord. Your God. Is in your midst. And now. That's not a terrible thing.
- It's a glorious thing. It's a glorious thing. That thought. Used to present. Terror.
- [22 : 24] To those. Who would think. That the Holy One. Would come. And be there. In their midst. To have the very judge. Be right there. Among them.
- Would. Not. Be. Pleasant. But now. He's saying.
- It should be reason. To have a party. To rejoice. To exalt. Then he goes further.
- Look at verse 17. This is one of our favorite verses. In all of scripture. He said. The Lord your God. Is in your midst. Again. Notice that repetition.
- That is the key phrase. He's in their midst. A mighty one to save. He will rejoice over you. With singing. He will quiet you.
- [23 : 22] By his love. He will exalt over you. With loud singing. And I want you to notice. Three things. From this text. That to me. Are just. Beyond encouraging.

First thing is. The phrase. The Lord your God. Is in your midst. And it's repeated. He says it twice. What does it mean.

When. You want to be with someone. What does it mean. When somebody wants to be with you. What does it mean when. What does.

What happens here. When someone's presence. Creates. Rejoicing. I remember when I was little.

We had a. One of those. Shower. Tub combos. And you know. With the. Bath water coming out. The faucet. You pull up the little knob. Shower.

[24 : 25] And so forth. But I learned something. If you turn off the water. And hold the knob up. It stays. Which meant.

The next person that came in. Would turn on the water. Thinking it was going to come out down here. But instead. It was going to come out up here. And they were going to be.

Refreshed. With nice cold water. Very unexpectedly. And I thought. That would be perfect. For my little brother.

Alas. The best laid plans. My brother wasn't next. My mom.

Just got home. From the hairdresser. She didn't want to shower. Obviously. She wanted to take a bath.

[25 : 34] And I remember. I was out. It was a warm day. I was riding my bike. In front of the house. And I heard. This. Awful. Scream.

And I very quickly. Realized. What happened. Now. What did I do? Did I run in the house. And enjoy. The warm affection. Of my mother. Are you kidding? Not on your life.

Man. I rode. I rode. That bike. Down to the other end. Of the community. And I don't know how long. I stayed away from home. Because. I knew. At that point.

Because. Of her. Anger. Her presence. And her affection. Is not what I would receive. This is what we think of God sometimes.

[26 : 35] We think he's angry. We've been done. We've. We wrong. We've been wrong. We've done wrong. He knows it. And to be in his presence.

This. Is not a fun thing. But here. It's. It's a reason for rejoicing.

The Lord is in your midst. Let's have a party. There is affection. There is joy. There's celebration. Something happened. That his anger is no longer there.

He's inviting us now. Into. Not discipline.

Or judgment. But. Celebration. Notice the second thing. In this text. He says. He will quiet us.

[27 : 33] By his love. I love that. And especially as a parent. When our little ones. Would be afraid. Or. And just. Of something.

And they would come running to us. And kind of just. Bury their face. Right in between your legs. Or even when they were disciplined. When they would.

Be disciplined. And afterward. They would be crying. And I would remember. Grabbing them. And sometimes. Against what they really wanted. They wanted to run from me.

But I remember holding them. And pulling them into my lap. And just whispering. And says. Shh. It's okay. It's okay.

God himself. Draws us into his presence.

[28 : 35] And reminds us. That now. Because I'm here. It's all okay. It's all good.

Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. Shh. And then finally. The third thing he says. He says.

- He will exalt over you. With loud singing. Who's the singing coming from? It's not us. God is being very. Un-Presbyterian like. He is singing.
- Loudly. Some translations that he's shouting. Imagine. What campus would be like.
- [29 : 33] When Marshall wins the national championship. I know it's hard to imagine. I think it's harder for us to imagine this.
- That God himself would be singing loudly. And why? Why is he singing? He's singing. He's singing.
- He's singing. Over. Us. Over. Us. Can you imagine that? You.
- The rebellious covenant breaker. You. The disobedient. Child. Daughter. Son.
- You. He would be singing over. I mean.
- [30 : 38] Can you really imagine this? Think about. Who we are. When you look in the mirror. What do you see? Do you see reason to celebrate?
- Or do you look in the mirror. And your sense of shame and guilt. Begin. To overwhelm you. And not just looking in the mirror.
- Ready to go out. But we're looking in the mirror. Deeper than just that outward reflection. To see. Who is that in that mirror? And when we look.
- There's not. A lot of. Singing. And rejoicing. If we're honest. Because we see.
- The coldness of heart. We see. The lustful thoughts. We see. How much we value things.
- [31 : 44] We see. How little attention. We pay. To the kingdom. To God. It's all about us.
- Life is all about me. And there's not a lot of rejoicing. But when God looks.
- At us. It's party time. How can. How can you do that?
- What happened? So if someone were to ask you. If I were to ask you. What does God think of you? Some people say. Well.
- He loves me. Okay. That's the good Sunday school answer. Does he like you? And then at that point. Most people. If I ever ask them that question.
- [32 : 48] They kind of stop. And think. I don't know. Now you do.
- Now you know. Now you know. Because when he utters these words. These are not just words for them. Back then.
- They're words for us now. Instead of great wrath and anger. What we get. Is his celebration.
- His pleasure. His exuberant joy. Over us. Is that hopeful or what?
- But the question now is. What happened? How this major shift. Well now we go back to chapter 3 verse 5.
- [33 : 53] Where he said he's going to come and bring his justice. We also see in verse 17 there. That phrase. He is mighty to save. Because now we see.
- We have the entrance. Of a savior. The judge is going to come. And he's going to bring about justice. But the part that Zephaniah did not see.
- We can look back on. And that justice. That the judge was going to bring about. Ultimately was not poured out.
- On the inhabitants of Jerusalem. His people. They were not destroyed. Someone else was. And it was the judge himself.
- Isaiah 53. Verse 11. Out of the anguish of his soul. He shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one.

[35 : 02] My servant. Make many to be accounted righteous. And he shall bear their iniquities. You see what he's doing here?

He's going to be satisfied. The judge is going to find satisfaction. Because the righteous one. Will bear the iniquities.

And the guilty ones. Will be declared. Righteous. Justice. Justice.

Justice. Will be fulfilled. God. When he forgives our sins. He never just overlooks them. He never just pretends they're not there.

He deals with them. Directly. Face to face. And his justice was satisfied. Because the Savior. Came.

[36 : 04] Took those judgments. He became. Like. Us. So that we could become like.

Him. He. Was treated. As if he were us. With all of God's anger. All of his wrath. All of his hatred for sin.

He was treated. As if it was his. So that now we. Can be treated. As if we.

Were. Him. See these verses. Describe. God's pleasure. In. His. Beloved.

Son. But because of the justice. He fulfills. That. Pleasure. Is now. Ours. There's nothing left.

[37 : 07] Of anger. There's nothing left. Of wrath. For those who trust Jesus. Who are in him. There's nothing left. For us to bear. Except.

The exuberant. Joy. Of the judge. Who is satisfied. And now.

Pours out upon his people. In lavish abundance. Rejoicing. Because of what he did.

There's no greater hope than that. Right. And so here's the invitation. And with the invitation.

Also comes a warning. Let's deal with the warning first. You may think life is just going to keep going on.

[38 : 12] Nothing's going to change. Everything's going to be. Just continuing. It has. For thousands of years. But God says.

Wait for me. He said. I'm coming. And there is going to be. A day of the Lord. Where his judgment will be satisfied.

There will come a day. Where there will be no more. Arrogance. No more boasting. No more self gratification.

And glorification. There will come a day. When God will make the books balanced. And right. And those of us.

Who have not paid attention. Have not given him any attention. Will meet him face to face.

[39 : 15] And that is a very sobering warning. Can you stand in that day? But that's not the end of the story.

Here's the invitation. That very same judge. Offers. For all who come to Jesus. That he.

Will satisfy. Justice. In him. And not you. He will pour out his justice.

But it will be on a substitute. Who stands in for you. And when he comes. Then what we can expect. Is not his.

The anger on his face. We will get his smile. His laughter. His singing. And his welcome.

[40 : 17] Into his presence. Into the joy. That's the invitation for all of us. So if you don't know Christ.

This is the day. When you are invited now to come. Come to the judge. Who offers to pay your penalty.

And make you. Instead of an enemy. His son. Or daughter. And for those of us who are in Christ. Be encouraged.

The one. That we worship. Because of our great savior. Father. Is satisfied. Is satisfied. And rejoices.

Over us. Let's pray together. Father. Would you help us to believe. Help us.

[41 : 26] To understand. And if there's some of us here. Who don't know Christ. Would you speak. To them. That they may come.

And accept your invitation. Father. Let us. By your spirit. Hear the rejoicing.

The music of heaven. Over us. And we pray. In Jesus name. For more information. Visit us online.

At southwood.org. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye. Bye.

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