

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 10-21-12 PM NOTES
ZEPHANIAH
#38 in Series, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament"

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2 Kings 21:19-23 (NKJV) "Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰ And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ So he walked in all the ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshiped them. ²² He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord. ²³ Then the servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in his own house."

2 Kings 22:1-2 (NKJV) "Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² And he did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left."

2 Kings 23:4-8 (NKJV) "And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. ⁶ And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground *it* to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. ⁷ Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted persons that *were* in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. ⁸ And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which *were* at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* to the left of the city gate."

Matthew 12:43-45 (NKJV) "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

"As we come to the book of Zephaniah, we encounter a very judgmental prophet who speaks for a very judgmental God. You'll find no shades of gray in the book of Zephaniah, no compromise between good and evil, no moral relativism. Although many books of the Bible deal with God as a judge, the book of Zephaniah presents the Bible's most intense and concentrated treatment of this theme. Many people would like to rewrite the Bible and leave out all the distasteful references to God's judgment. If such a project were ever undertaken, the book of Zephaniah would practically cease to exist!"

—Ray Steadman

I. The Reason Revival Is Needed (Chapter 1)

A. Accepted Idolatry (1:2-6)

1. Idolaters (1:4)

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us...man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the church is God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time might say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like.”

— A. W. Tozer

2. Spiritual Adulterers (1:5)

Luke 16:13 (NASB) “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

3. Apostates (1:6)

B. Affluent Materialists (1:9-11)

Zephaniah 1:9-11 (HCSB) “On that day I will punish all who skip over the threshold, who fill their master’s house with violence and deceit. ¹⁰ On that day—the Lord’s declaration—there will be an outcry from the Fish Gate, a wailing from the Second District, and a loud crashing from the hills. ¹¹ Wail, you residents of the Hollow, for all the merchants will be silenced; all those loaded with silver will be cut off.”

C. Apathetic Indifference (1:12)

Revelation 3:15-16 (HCSB) “I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth.”

D. Approaching Judgment (1:14-18)

II. The Requirement for Revival (Chapter 2)

A. Seek the Lord (2:3a)

Isaiah 64:1 (NKJV) “Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence.”

B. Seek Righteousness (2:3b)

C. Seek Humility (2:3c)

2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV) “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

III. The Results of Revival (Chapter 3)

A. Scriptural Unity (3:9)

Zephaniah 3:9 (NASB) “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.”

B. Surrendered Dependence (3:12)

C. Secure Morality (3:13)

D. Singing and Rejoicing (3:14-17)

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ZEPHANIAH
#38 in Series, “The Glory of God in the Old Testament”

If your great, great, grandfather was Thomas Jefferson, do you think that you would be fairly quick to tell about it? Zephaniah’s great, great grandfather was King Hezekiah, the second most loved King in Judah’s history. That’s what we are told in **Zephaniah 1:1 (NKJV)** “The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.” This means that Zephaniah was also a cousin to the current king of Judah, Josiah. We know that King Josiah reigned from 640-609 BC, so somewhere in those years (probably about 620 BC) Zephaniah prophesied God’s Words to the people of Judah. Someone described Zephaniah as having royal blood in his veins and God’s message on his lips. To help you put Zephaniah in context, he would have been prophesying during the lifetime of Jeremiah and Habakkuk.

Allow me to set the background of this book by giving you a short history lesson. When King Josiah came into power, Judah was really in a mess. Josiah’s grandfather was probably the most wicked of all of Judah’s kings. His name was Manasseh. **2 Kings 21:2-6 (NKJV)** “And he [Manasseh] did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. ⁴ He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put My name.’ ⁵ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. ⁶ Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke *Him* to anger.” Manasseh’s son Amon (Josiah’s father) was almost as evil as his father. **2 Kings 21:19-23 (NKJV)** “Amon *was* twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name *was* Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. ²⁰ And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. ²¹ So he walked in all the ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshiped them. ²² He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord. ²³ Then the servants of Amon conspired against him, and killed the king in his own house.” Josiah was crowned as king when he was only 8 years old but he had godly advisors. **2 Kings 22:1-2 (NKJV)** “Josiah *was* eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name *was* Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. ² And he did *what was* right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” When Josiah was 18, he initiated reforms that were designed to bring about a revival in Judah. Josiah called on the High Priest Hilkiah and a scribe to read the law to the people and then he called on the people to obey the law of God. The temple was cleansed and true worship was restored. **2 Kings 23:4-8 (NKJV)** “And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, the priests of the second order, and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the articles that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. ⁵ Then he removed the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the places all around Jerusalem, and those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, to the moon, to the constellations, and to all the host of heaven. ⁶ And he brought out the wooden image from the house of the Lord, to the Brook Kidron outside Jerusalem, burned it at the Brook Kidron and ground *it* to ashes, and threw its ashes on the graves of the common people. ⁷ Then he tore down the *ritual* booths of the perverted persons that *were* in the house of the Lord, where the women wove hangings for the wooden image. ⁸ And he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; also he broke down the high places at the gates which *were* at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* to the left of the city gate.” At first this seemed like a wonderful revival, a revival like we have been asking God for in our church and our nation. However,

Zephaniah saw into the hearts of the people and he saw that their zeal was not sincere or of the lasting type. There was little if any heart change among the people of Judah. The reforms were only on the surface and never got to the hearts of the people. While the idols in public were dealt with, the idols of the heart were not dealt with. They experienced what Spurgeon called a “spiritual spasm” that brought only a temporal surface change but no lasting heart change. Sometimes a flesh empowered outward only temporary change only prepares the way for an even greater work of the devil. In **Matthew 12:43-45 (NKJV)** Jesus said "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. ⁴⁴ Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds *it* empty, swept, and put in order. ⁴⁵ Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." The rulers of the land of Judah were still greedy and disobedient and Jerusalem was a source of all kinds of wickedness.

The primary message of the book of Zephaniah is judgment. Ray Steadman summarizes it: “As we come to the book of Zephaniah, we encounter a very judgmental prophet who speaks for a very judgmental God. You’ll find no shades of gray in the book of Zephaniah, no compromise between good and evil, no moral relativism. Although many books of the Bible deal with God as a judge, the book of Zephaniah presents the Bible’s most intense and concentrated treatment of this theme. Many people would like to rewrite the Bible and leave out all the distasteful references to God’s judgment. If such a project were ever undertaken, the book of Zephaniah would practically cease to exist!” [Ray Steadman, *Adventuring Through the Bible*, Page 433].

I am going to approach this book a little different than most Bible teachers do. The primary message of Zephaniah is that judgment is coming to Israel but God will restore them in the earthly reign of Christ when He comes the second time to set up His earthly kingdom for 1,000 years (the Millennium). I am going to make a secondary application to us today. When Christ rules in the heart of His people and we experience genuine revival, much of what happens during the coming earthly kingdom happens in the church today. In this message, we will be moving back and forth from the historical situation of Zephaniah’s day and the church today, and then we will be moving from the coming millennial reign of Christ to what happens in a genuine life changing, church changing, culture impacting revival.

I. The Reason Revival Is Needed (Chapter 1)

As we see what brought God’s judgment on Judah, we will see that the same problems are plaguing God’s church today.

A. Accepted Idolatry (1:2-6)

Even though Josiah had removed the idols from the temple and the public places, there was still much idolatry among the people. Do you get the idea that the Lord dislikes idolatry? In this book of Zephaniah we see three categories of people and they are still around in our day.

1. Idolaters (1:4)

These people worship false god’s even though they may use the same name for them. In Judah in Zephaniah’s day and in America today, there are people who worship false god’s but the most subtle idols are those we call the God of the Bible, but they are not. A. W Tozer speaks of the danger of worshipping a god who is different from the God revealed in Scripture: “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us ... man’s spiritual history will positively demonstrate that no religion has ever been greater than its idea of God. Worship is pure or base as the worshipper entertains high or low thoughts of God. For this reason the gravest question before the church is God Himself, and the most portentous fact about any man is not what he at any given time might say or do, but what he in his deep heart conceives God to be like” [A. W. Tozer, Quoted in *Southern Seminary Magazine Fall 2012*, Page 34]. When the land of Israel was filled with idolaters, God’s judgment was sure to follow. Today, the organized church is so full of idolaters who worship the one they call “god” but he is not the God of the Bible.

2. Spiritual Adulterers (1:5)

The adulterers went through the motions of worshipping the true God but also worshipped false gods. Verse 5 speaks of astrology. There were many who participated in temple worship, swore oaths by the Lord, but then went up on their rooftops and worshipped the stars and trusted in the alignment of the stars and planets. Today, the most common spiritual adulterers are those who seek to worship God and Mammon (the god of money and stuff). In reality, it is impossible to truly worship God and anything or anyone else. Jesus said in **Luke 16:13 (NASB)** "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

3. Apostates (1:6)

Apostates are those who professed to worship the true God and then turned away from Him completely to other god's.

All three of these manifestations of idolatry are hated by God and will be judged by God. We have all three of these in our country today, but perhaps the most prevalent are the spiritual adulterers who profess to worship God and yet still worship their false gods such as money and stuff. Our situation is similar to an old Irish folk song. One line in the song said:

*There was an old woman in Wexford,
In Wexford town did dwell;
She loved her husband dearly,
But another man twice as well.*

There are so many attached to the church that profess a love for the Lord and go through the motions for worship and yet love their idols "twice as well". Idols are so sneaky! They can often creep into our life and we don't even know that they are there. An idol can be a false god like the Allah of Islam, any of the millions of Hindu gods, the New Age god that is the sum total of the deity in all of us. For Judah, Zephaniah mentions Baal, Astrology, and Milcom. Idolatry is really much broader than that. In reality, an idol is anything we turn to for what told us to turn to Him for; an idol is anything that we trust in for what God told us to trust Him for. An idol is anything or anyone that we love and treasure more than we love and treasure God. When idolatry creeps into our life there is a deadness that pervades and we desperately need revival.

B. Affluent Materialists (1:9-11)

Zephaniah 1:9-11 (HCSB) "On that day I will punish all who skip over the threshold, who fill their master's house with violence and deceit. ¹⁰ On that day—the Lord's declaration— there will be an outcry from the Fish Gate, a wailing from the Second District, and a loud crashing from the hills. ¹¹ Wail, you residents of the Hollow, for all the merchants will be silenced; all those loaded with silver will be cut off." The picture in verse 9 is the eagerness with which people were hurrying from their homes to gain more wealth by whatever means were necessary. God declares that the affluent business leaders will be judged for their greed and dishonesty.

The parallel to today is obvious as we see people addicted to stuff and going into unwise debt and thereby putting themselves in bondage and squelching their spiritual life.

C. Apathetic Indifference (1:12)

In other words, God was irrelevant to them. This is a perfect picture of our culture. We are not so much "anti-god"; God is just irrelevant. Even those who are called by His name make their decisions, live their lives, carry out their vocations, raise their families, and just leave God out. Yet if you ask them if they know the Lord the overwhelming majority of them would say "Yes, we do". This apathetic indifference is called being lukewarm in **Revelation 3:15-16 (HCSB)** and Jesus said this about it: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of My mouth." When indifference prevails, revival is our greatest need.

D. Approaching Judgment (1:14-18)

What can avert that kind of judgment? Revival! We looked at that concept of "the day of the Lord" in Joel. It has a prophetic fulfillment in the great tribulation that precedes the return of Christ, but it can also

refer to a more local judgment. Less than 40 years after the surface revival under king Josiah, Judah fell to Babylon and Jerusalem was destroyed and most of the people were taken captive.

Just as Judah in the 7th Century BC stood in desperate need of revival, so do we in the 21st century AD.

II. The Requirement for Revival (Chapter 2)

What did Zephaniah urge the people to do to deal with the idolatry, the materialism, and the indifference in light of coming judgment? **Zephaniah 2:1-2 (NKJV)** “Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable nation, ² Before the decree is issued, *or* the day passes like chaff, before the Lord's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you!” There is a sense of desperation that action needs to be taken. Oh that God would make us desperate for revival! What is the action that needs to be taken?

A. Seek the Lord (2:3a)

The word “seek” in Hebrew means to search out, to strive after, or to urgently request or plead. Out of our desperation and purposed hearts to not continue as we are, comes a turning to the Lord and a desperate seeking of His person and presence. When we get desperate for revival, God is not our last resort; He is our only hope! We seek not His action as much as we seek His person, His manifest presence with us. Isaiah prayed in **Isaiah 64:1 (NKJV)** Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence”.

B. Seek Righteousness (2:3b)

As it is used here, righteousness means correct living in relation to God and men. It is written to those who have believed God and their faith is counted for righteousness. The result of righteousness with God is to live out that righteousness in a life characterized by obedience to God and love to others. It speaks of a holy life. To seek righteousness assumes repentance and brokenness from unrighteous acts and attitudes. Every questionable activity must be set aside; every relationship that does not honor God must be abandoned. We seek righteousness.

C. Seek Humility (2:3c)

The word translated “humility” speaks of absolute dependence. Humility is to come before God with the realization that without Him, I can do nothing, To seek humility is to seek to be delivered from all human pride. Pride is living independently of God and humility is to live in complete dependence on God. We are to seek, strive after, urgently plead for the Lord's presence, righteousness, and humility. It is interesting that we see all three of those requests in the best known “revival verse” in the Bible. **2 Chronicles 7:14 (NKJV)** “if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves [humility], and pray and seek My face [seek the Lord], and turn from their wicked ways [seek righteousness], then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

To seek the Lord, seek righteousness, and seek humility is the only way that God's people are hidden from His chastisement and discipline.

III. The Results of Revival (Chapter 3)

Beginning in verse 8, the primary time this passage is referring to is the time when Christ returns and defeats His enemies in a battle often called “the Battle of Armageddon”. **Zephaniah 3:8 (NKJV)** “‘Therefore wait for Me,’ says the Lord, ‘Until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination *is* to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all my fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy.’” You can read the details of this battle in Revelation 19:11-21. As Zephaniah begins to describe this time when Christ rules and reigns on earth, a great secondary application is to what happens when Christ rules in this age in the hearts of His people – what happens when a penetrating, mighty revival comes to His people.

A. Scriptural Unity (3:9)

The phrase “pure language” is better translated “purified lips” as it is in the NASB. It is speaking of pure worship. Here is a great picture of biblical unity. I love the NASB translation of **Zephaniah 3:9 (NASB)** “For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the

Lord, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder.” Here are God’s people practicing pure worship together and serving the Lord “shoulder to shoulder”. What a beautiful picture! Revival rights broken relationships and we serve Him in one accord, with one mind. May it come Lord!

B. Surrendered Dependence (3:12)

“Meekness” and “humility” are closely related words. Meekness speaks of total surrender and humility speaks of total dependence. When genuine revival comes, a revival that goes deep beyond just the surface of a life, God’s people will live totally surrendered totally dependent on Him. That becomes a unified people that God can use and glorify Himself through.

C. Secure Morality (3:13)

In an atmosphere of security [“and no one shall make them afraid”], surrender and trustful dependence on God, practical morality rules in the daily lives of a revived people. It is very interesting to read quotes regarding practical morality as a result of a great revival. Jonathan Edwards wrote a letter to a minister in Boston on December 12, 1743 describing some of the effects of the First Great Awakening. He spoke of what he called, “A great alteration, amongst old and young with regard to tavern-haunting” He went on to say, “I suppose the town has been in no measure so free of vice in these respects ... for sixty years as it has been in nine years past”. In the great Welch Revival of 1904 it was said that work in the mines across Wales came to a standstill because the pit ponies that pulled the coal out of the mines couldn’t understand the commands of the miners who used to curse and beat them but now as saved men had changed their whole way of talking and treating even their animals [From Brian Edwards, *Revival*, Page 186 and following]. There are reports of policemen forming singing groups to sing in the meetings because there was no crime to deal with.

D. Singing and Rejoicing (3:14-17)

First there is our singing (V14). In revival, there is joy unspeakable that finds its outlet in singing like no singing on this side of Heaven. Second, there is God singing over His revived people (V17). Can you even begin to comprehend that? God is singing over His people with joy! That alone ought to motivate us to seek revival.

CONCLUSION

There is so much more we pull from this passage but I have prayed that God would use it to whet your appetite for genuine revival in our church and in our land.