

Message #3

Zephaniah 1:7-13

In this book of Zephaniah, what no one can deny is that he predicts in multiple passages that there is coming a specific “Day of Judgment” that will hit the whole world. In fact, as near as we may determine, Zephaniah specifically refers to this day and time some 20 times:

- 1) He calls it “the Day of the LORD.” 1:7, 1:14
- 2) He calls it “the Day of the LORD’S sacrifice.” 1:8
- 3) He calls it “that time.” 1:12; 3:19; 3:20
- 4) He calls it “that Day.” 1:15; 3:11; 3:16
- 5) He calls it “A Day.” 1:15, 15, 15, 15, 15, 16
- 6) He calls it “the Day of the LORD’S wrath.” 1:18
- 7) He calls it “the Day.” 2:2a
- 8) He calls it “the day of the LORD’S anger.” 2:2b, 2:3
- 9) He calls it “the time.” 3:20

When we consider that there are only 53 verses in the book of Zephaniah, and in 20 of those verses there is a specific reference to the coming Day of Judgment, it is clear that this is a serious warning that he is giving not only to Israel, but to the whole world.

Now what Zephaniah specifically reveals is that God is going to intervene in the world of politics and religion and sin and pour out His wrath on a God mocking, Bible rejecting, Christ demeaning world. The promise is that God is going to actually intervene in the national world and individual world and will track down and destroy everything except the remnant of people who love Him and His word and seek to apply it.

This will be a devastating judgment and what Zephaniah says here is this:

THE PREDICTION OF THE COMING FEROCIOUS JUDGMENT OF GOD SHOULD CAUSE PEOPLE TO BE SILENT BEFORE GOD AND SEEK TO BE RIGHT WITH GOD.

In Habakkuk 2:20 we read, “Let all the earth be silent before Him.”

When it comes to the subject of prophecy and God’s judgment, the command of God is not to debate eschatology; the command of God is to “Be Silent.” The thought of God’s Sovereign judgment upon anything or anyone should prompt this. **The counsel from Zephaniah is stop talking and start thinking about judgment.**

Do you grasp this point? The coming judgment of God should silence every one of us. We are going to give an account of ourselves to God. When this judgment comes, which is a wrath judgment, paganism will be rampant. False worship will be rampant. From the highest levels of government and religious leadership to the lowest levels of people living in the cities. Evil will be rampant and very few will have hearts right with God or hearts and minds that are even concerned with being right with God.

There will be no fear of the Lord. There will be no reverence for God or His word. Religious people will have stagnant spirits and corrupt hearts.

The command is to “Be Silent before the “Lord GOD,” Adonai-Jehovah.

This silence is to be “before” the Adonai who is Lord and master over all in heaven and on earth and before Jehovah who is the sovereign, Self-Existing God who is in a covenant relationship with His people.

This silence is a reverential awe for what God is about to do in judgment. What God is about to do demands silence. It does not demand debate or discussion or criticism, but silence.

When it comes to the subject of God pouring out His judgment, people like to run their mouths. They love to postulate their ignorance and arrogance. They pop off their religious theoretical pomp as if they really have something to say that is worth our listening. God must get a good laugh at listening to these people mock Him and ridicule the idea that He will judge.

Let’s be real honest here. When it comes to the judgment of God, who are we to discuss anything? For example, death is a penalty for sin and we all have the death penalty. Can any of us explain why people die when they die or how they die? Can any of us explain the circumstances of every person who dies? What is better for us to do is to keep our mouth shut and let God be God.

When it comes to any judgment of God, don’t criticize God, don’t question God, don’t demean God, but just shut up. Be Silent. Truth is nothing anyone can say or will say will change anything.

There is a scene in Revelation 8:1 when God is about to pour out His final judgments on the earth, just before the Trumpet judgments and we read “there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.”

Now we may notice after Zephaniah says to “be silent before the Lord GOD” he uses a conjunction “for” which gives us the reason for the silence:

REASON #1 – Be silent because judgment is near. **1:7b**

For Judah and Jerusalem, the judgment of God was very near. If we date Zephaniah at 625 BC, the judgment that would completely wipe out the people and the city was about 38 years away. The first wave of judgment came 20 years after in 605 BC and the last wave that totally destroyed the city came in 586 BC.

When Jesus was here on earth and He predicted that judgment would come against Jerusalem and level the city, He made that prediction about AD 32-33. Judgment that leveled the city hit in AD 70, which ironically is also 37-38 years later.

So what we may conclude from this is that when predictions of God's judgment are made, partial fulfillment may be very near. It is very rare when God warns and then instantly carries it out. Unusually there is some gap of time between the warning and the execution of the judgment.

So here is our advice - when you see a political or religious leader who is mocking God and His word, just keep silent and watch and see what eventually happens. Give it time and watch what God will do.

REASON #2 – Be silent because judgment is a prepared sacrifice by God. **1:7c**

Judgment is serious and sacred business. This is what most people do not realize.

Now when some read this they think that is so nice that God has prepared a sacrifice. What they don't realize is that this means God has prepared them for slaughter. So the sacrifice that God has prepared is a sacrifice in which He is going to destroy God mockers. He is going to destroy those who were against Him, His Son and His people.

The text says, "He has consecrated His guests." This may mean a couple of things:

- 1) It may mean that He has set apart those He will slaughter as a conscripted sacrifice.
- 2) It may mean that He has set apart those agents He will use to carry out the slaughter.

So what we learn here is that God carries out His plan in executing judgment and He marks off those who will be judged and those He will use for the judgment.

God says to His people - "Be Silent" and leave this all to Me, for I will handle it. So when we have an enemy, we can leave vengeance to God, knowing He will take care of us as His sacred property and He will destroy them.

Now in **verses 8-13**, Zephaniah gives a judgment description of what the judgment would entail:

Judgment Description #1 - God will punish the princes. **1:8a**

The princes are official political officers of the King's court. These were high-ranking political leaders of the nation who had led the nation away from what was right before God. Israel was God's nation and the political leaders led them away from a commitment to God and His word.

Many of our leaders are guilty of the same thing. They have no fear of God and they are leading the country into deeper levels of depravity by promoting and sanctioning things that are an abomination to God. God's people just need to keep silent and watch what God will do.

Judgment Description #2 - God will punish the King's sons. **1:8b**

The King's sons were the upper class children of royalty, who would have been specifically Josiah's sons. God wants His people to know that His judgment is not partial.

The fact is, Josiah's sons were literally individually punished. This did happen literally. Jehoahaz was taken as a captive to Egypt (II Kings 23:34); Jehoiakim was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar and died in Jerusalem (II Kings 24:1-6); Jehoiachin, Josiah's grandson, was taken captive to Babylon (II Kings 24:8-16); Zedekiah was blinded and taken captive to Babylon (II Kings 24:18-25:7).

Judgment Description #3 - God will punish all those who are clothed with foreign garments.
1:8c

The idea of being clad in foreign clothes is the idea of having lifestyles of pagans. These people so identified themselves with the world that they dressed like them and acted like them. The leadership of Israel was looking like the leadership of the rest of the world. These people who were running things had the values and lifestyle of pagans.

Judgment Description #4 - God will punish those who demean the Temple. **1:9a**

There are a couple of possibilities for this, but certainly a prevailing theme here is that God would specifically target those who are disrespectful and do disrespectful things. The idea of a threshold is the idea of the place where something begins, such as the entrance of some place, like the Temple.

This may be a reference to the fact that God would punish religious people who followed religious superstitions such as not stepping on a threshold and jumping on it. This concept comes from I Samuel 5:5 and the idolatrous religion of the Philistines. When God destroyed the idols they would not go near the threshold again and step foot on it because of their superstitions.

Or it may be a reference to treat this place irreverently. God says I see who reverences Me at My place of worship and those who do not will pay a price.

Judgment Description #5 - God will punish those who are violent. **1:9b**

Carefully observe the fact that they have something they are following that is "their lord." They have some master they are serving. It may be a human or it may be Satan or a combination of both. What they are not serving and worshipping is the true God.

These are leaders who have sanctioned violence. You know, when I read this I could not help but think of the violence we saw a few years ago in an election when people were burning down things and looting stores and making mockery of the police.

There were some in high positions of power who seemed to sanction it. They seemed to actually promote the idea that burning down things and looting were just part of life. God has kept the record of those who support that. God says I will punish those leaders who supported violence.

Judgment Description #6 - God will punish those who are given to deceit. **1:9c**

There have always been those who made their fortunes by deceitful means. It still goes on today. God says I see that. I have the record of that and those who have used deceitful tactics to gain more will pay a high price. It will happen “on that day,” the day of judgment.

Judgment Description #7 - God will punish and when He does there will be loud crying.
1:10-11a

What is clear from **verse 10** is that when this ultimate Day of the LORD judgment occurs, the Temple will be standing in Jerusalem, which is not standing right now. We learn from **verse 10** that when this judgment occurs there will be different noises at different locations:

(Noise #1) - There will be the sound of crying at the Fish Gate.

Now the Fish Gate was located near the NW corner of the Temple Mount. This was the actual gate through which Nebuchadnezzar entered when he came to Jerusalem. It was named “fish gate” because it was located next to the market place for fish. This was the gate where fishermen brought their fish to market.

(Noise #2) - There will be the sound of wailing from the Second Quarter. **1:10b**

The Second quarter was the new quarter, located in the NW part of the Temple area. So in the market areas and in the housing areas there will be crying and wailing.

(Noise #3) - There will be the sound of a loud crash in the hills. **1:10c**

The reference to the hills probably means all over the surrounding area because there are hills all over the area. Hills not only exist near the Temple and in the city, but also outside the city. Crying and wailing would go forth from every area of the city.

When God pours out His judgment there will be wailing and crying and destructive crashes all over.

(Noise #4) - There will be wailing for inhabitants of the Mortar. **1:11a**

The Mortar was the market area or business area in Jerusalem. Those who live in those areas would also wail. So when God would send His judgment against His city, individuals, no matter where they are or where they live, they will be wailing. These are individuals living in a city who are now wailing because of judgment.

(Noise #5) - There will be no noise from the people of Canaan. **1:11b**

All the people of the surrounding area who did business in Jerusalem would be silenced because of what they will see God do in judgment against Jerusalem.

It is a very foolish thing to make money and business the focus of life apart from God. Many people made their living by weighing out silver and cheating people out of their money.

That is not going unnoticed by God and God says I will avenge it. It will shut their mouths.

Judgment Description #8 - God will search out everyone in Jerusalem. **1:12-13**

When God decides to judge, there is no place to hide and there is none who will escape.

(Fact #1) - God will search the city with lamps. **1:12a**

What this means is that God will track down every person in Jerusalem. Every person who is guilty will be discovered and will pay. God will track them all down. There will be no place to hide for God will search them out with His light.

Josephus claims that when God permitted this to happen, they actually found dead people hiding in the sewer areas.

(Fact #2) - God will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit. **1:12b**

Those people who think complacently about God and His word will pay a high price. There are people who say they love God and His word, but their spirits are “stagnant.” They are not committed to truth. They love religion, but not God and His word.

(Fact #3) - God will punish the men who say in their hearts God does not do good or evil. **1:12c**

It is a very serious thing to think that God will do nothing about sin or evil. It is a very serious thing to suggest God will never move or act. God sees what people think in their hearts about that and He hears what they say with their lips about Him and judgment.

(Fact #4) - God will plunder their wealth. **1:13a**

People thought their security was in their financial stability. God says your security is with Me, not in some financial nest egg.

(Fact #5) - God will destroy their houses. **1:13b**

When you see people come into your neighborhood and take over houses they did not build or do not own, you are seeing a judgment of God. This literally did happen in Israel. Others took their homes. God says as a judgment, I will not permit you to live in your own house.

(Fact #6) - God will not permit them to drink wine from their own vineyards. **1:13c**

As a judgment, God would permit others to take away all wealth and all property. In view of the prediction of the judgment of God, how should this affect you? Be Silent and Be Reverent. Close your mouth and open your heart.