

Zephaniah 2 - The Regathering of Israel; The Judgment of the Nations; The Return

I. The coming day of divine wrath for Judah and Jerusalem (Zeph 1:1—2:3)

(3) Judgment upon Judah (Zeph 1:4—2:3)

(C) Invitation for Judah to repent so judgment can be averted (2:1-3)

II. Coming day of divine wrath upon Judah's surrounding neighbors (Zeph 2:4-15)

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(C) Invitation for Judah to repent so judgment can be averted (2:1-3)

Regathering of Israel

1 Gather yourselves together, yes, join together, You nation without shame,

1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame,

1 "Gather together! Yes, indeed, gather together, you shameless nation!

1 Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired;

- It is not that He does not love them; it is because of their *shameless* sin.

- Following up on the previous chapter (v14-18), which described events during the Day of the Lord (the Tribulation), v1-2 speak of an event that occurs before the "Day of the Lord," mainly the regathering of Israel in unbelief (the first regathering).

2 **Before** the decree takes effect— The day passes like chaff— **Before** the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, **Before** the day of the LORD'S anger comes upon you.

2 Before the decree takes effect— The day passes like the chaff— Before the burning anger of the LORD comes upon you, Before the day of the LORD's anger comes upon you.

2 Before the decree is carried out, before the day flies away like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD visits you, before the Day of the LORD's wrath surprises you,

2 Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD'S anger come upon you.

- "Before" [3x] - used in reference to the Tribulation, described in v1
- The restoration of the Jewish State of Israel fulfills prophecies speaking of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment (Cf. Ezek 20:33-38; 22:17-22)
- Note the tone of urgency here: repent before the judgment comes, before it's too late

See note: **(2) The Regathering of Israel** in [Pre-Tribulational Events](#) for more information.

A Snapshot of Heaven

*I was shocked, confused, bewildered As I entered Heaven's door,
Not by the beauty of it all, Nor the lights or its decor.
But it was the folks in Heaven Who made me sputter and gasp—
The thieves, the liars, the sinners, The alcoholics and the trash.
There stood the kid from seventh grade Who swiped my lunch money twice.
Next to him was my old neighbor Who never said anything nice.
Herb, who I always thought Was rotting away in hell,
Was sitting pretty on cloud nine, Looking incredibly well.
I nudged Jesus, "What's the deal? I would love to hear Your take.
How'd all these sinners get up here? God must've made a mistake.
"And why is everyone so quiet, So somber — give me a clue."
"Hush, child," He said, "they're all in shock. No one thought they'd be seeing you."*

Judge not. Remember: Just going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than standing in your garage makes you a car. Every saint has a PAST... Every sinner has a FUTURE!

3 Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have practiced His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will remain hidden On the day of the LORD'S anger.

3 Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD's anger.

3 seek the LORD, all you humble people of the land, who do what he commands. Seek righteousness! Seek humility! Maybe you will be protected in the Day of the LORD's anger."
3 Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

II. Coming day of divine wrath upon Judah's surrounding neighbors (Zeph 2:4-15)

(1) Philistia to the West (2:4-7)

(A) Objects of judgment (2:4-5a)

4 For Gaza will be abandoned, And Ashkelon *will become* a desolation; *The inhabitants of* Ashdod will be driven out at noon, And Ekron will be uprooted.

4 For Gaza will be abandoned And Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon And Ekron will be uprooted.

4 "For Gaza will be forsaken, and Ashkelon deserted— Ashdod will be emptied at high noon; even Ekron will be uprooted.

4 For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

- Four of the cities of the Philistines (Gath, the 5th, had already been destroyed by the Assyrian king Sargon II in 711 BC)

— Gaza is certainly problematic today and Ashkelon is a desolation (the present Ashkelon is not over the ruins of the old city)

(B) Finality of the judgment (2:5b)

5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will eliminate you So that there will be no inhabitant.

5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, The nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; And I will destroy you So that there will be no inhabitant.

5 Woe to those who live along the coast, the people of Philistia! This message from the LORD is being spoken against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines: 'I'll destroy you until no one lives there!'

5 Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea coast, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

- The Cherethites were a people (of Hamitic descent) who came from the island of Crete (Deut 2:23; Jer 47:4; Amos 9:7), migrants who came to be known as Philistines (which means "emigration"; Cf. Ps 83)

(C) Restorative effects of the judgment (2:6-7)

6 So the seacoast will become grazing places, *With***pastures** for shepherds and folds for flocks.

6 So the seacoast will be pastures, *With* caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.

6 The Philistine coast will become meadows for shepherds and sheep pens.

6 And the sea coast shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

- "...pastures" - rather, "dwellings with cisterns" (that is, water-tanks *dug* in the earth) *for shepherds*

— The *Hebrew* for "dug cisterns," *Ceroth*, seems a play on sounds, alluding to their name Cherethites (Zeph 2:5)

— Their land shall become what their national name implies, a land of *cisterns*. Instead of a thick population and tillage, the region shall become a pasturage for nomad shepherds' flocks.

7 And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will drive *sheep* to pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortunes.

7 And the coast will be For the remnant of the house of Judah, They will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

7 The survivors of Judah will find pasture on it; at twilight they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon, for the LORD their God will visit them, restoring their prosperity."

7 And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

- You can visit the beaches and apartments at Ashkelon and see this. (However, they may yet be driven from this area before the final fulfillment.)

- Now Zephaniah turns to the east:

(2) Moab and Ammon to the East (2:8-11)

(A) Cause of judgment: arrogant taunting (2:8,10)

8 "I have heard the taunting of Moab And the abusive speech of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And boasted against their territory.

8 "I have heard the taunting of Moab And the revilings of the sons of Ammon, With which they have taunted My people And become arrogant against their territory.

8 "I've heard Moab's insults and the curses from those Ammonites by which they defame my people and boast about their territory.

8 I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people, and magnified themselves against their border.

- Moabites and Ammonites descended from the incest of Lot (Gen 19:36-38)

(B) Finality of the judgment (2:9a)

(C) Results of the judgment (2:9b,11)

(a) Territory to be possessed by Israel (2:9b)

9 "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of armies, The God of Israel, "Moab will assuredly be like Sodom, And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah— Ground overgrown with weeds and *full of saltmines*, And a permanent desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them, And the remainder of My nation will inherit them."

9 "Therefore, as I live," declares the LORD of hosts, The God of Israel, "Surely Moab will be like Sodom And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah— A place possessed by nettles and salt pits, And a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My people will plunder them And the remainder of My nation will inherit them."

9 Therefore as I'm alive and living," declares the LORD of the Heavenly Armies, the God of Israel, "Moab will surely become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, a place overrun by weeds and salty marshes, unpopulated forever. The survivors of my people will confiscate their property, and those who remain of my nation will inherit what was theirs.

9 Therefore as I live, saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Surely Moab shall be as Sodom, and the children of Ammon as Gomorrah, even the breeding of nettles, and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation: the residue of my people shall spoil them, and the remnant of my people shall possess them.

- Here the implication seems to be that hard words spoken against Israel as the Lord's people are in effect spoken against the Lord himself

- "...salt mines" - found at the south of the Dead Sea. The water overflows in the spring, and salt is left by the evaporation (Judges 9:45; Ps 107:34).

These nations consistently opposed Gods people:

- Moab: Num 22:1-6; 25:1-8; Judges 3:12ff; 2 Kings 3:4ff; 2 Chr 20:1ff; Ezek 25:8
- Ammon: Judges 11:4-33; 1 Sam 11:1-11; 2 Sam 10:1-14; 2 Chr 20:1ff; Neh 2:10,19; 4:3-23; Jer 40:14

Their land, which for centuries had been noted for its fertility, would become a desolate waste. The Hashimite Kingdom of Jordan, was one of the poorest countries in existence.

(A) Cause of judgment: arrogant taunting (2:8,10)

10 This they will have in return for their arrogance, because they have taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of armies.

10 This they will have in return for their pride, because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the LORD of hosts.

10 This they will have in lieu of their pride, because they have insulted and mocked the people of the LORD of the Heavenly Armies.

10 This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts.

- Pride, against the Jew. Cf. The plight of the Edomites...

(b) Moabites and Ammonites to worship God (2:11)

11 The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his *own* place.

11 The LORD will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his *own* place.

11 The LORD will incite them to terror, because he will cause all the gods of the earth to waste away. They will worship him, every person in his own home, including even the coastlands of the nations."

11 The LORD will be terrible unto them: for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

- They will be judged for their:

- Pride and arrogance (Is 16:6)
- Gross immorality, idolatry (1 Kings 11:7)
- Psychopathic inhumanity (2 Kings 3:26-27)

- The danger among believers today: a pride of race; a pride of face; a pride of grace

- Paul said he had nothing to glory in. If he had none, then certainly we have none! Seek: righteousness. Meekness. [Do *you*?]

(3) Cush or Ethiopia to the South (2:12)

12 "You also, Ethiopians, will be slain by My **sword**."

12 "You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword."

12 "Now as for you, Cush, you will surely be slain by my sword!

12 Ye Ethiopians also, ye shall be slain by my sword.

- These are the descendants of Cush (Gen 10:6), including eastern Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea, etc.

— Ethiopia had been a great nation—even ruling Egypt from 720-654 BC

— yet at times threatened the well-being of Judah (2 Kings 19:9; 2 Chr 14:9-13; Cf. Is 37:9)

- "...sword" - she is to be ravaged by war (Cf. Zeph 3:10)

(4) Assyria to the North (2:13-15)

(A) Reality of the judgment (2:13)

13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north And eliminate Assyria, And He will make **Nineveh** a desolation, Parched like the wilderness.

13 And He will stretch out His hand against the north And destroy Assyria, And He will make Nineveh a desolation, Parched like the wilderness.

13 "And the LORD will attack the north, destroying Assyria. He will turn Nineveh into a desolate ruin, as dry as a desert wilderness.

13 And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness.

- The judgment is worldwide

- Now, to the north: Assyria had been dominant for centuries. Zephaniah's prophecies were in advance of the Medo-Babylonian attacks.

- "...Nineveh" - one of the oldest cities in the world (Gen 10:11)

- In Zephaniah's day it was deemed impregnable. Xenophon, the ancient Greek historian, reported that its walls stood 100ft high, and 50ft thick. They were surrounded by a moat 150ft wide, and protected by 1200 towers.

Nineveh

Diodorus Siculus refers to a legend that stated that the city would not be taken until the river became its enemy (Cf. Nahum 1:8; 2:6; 3:13,15).

History records that when the Medes and Babylonians attacked Nineveh, there was a sudden rise in the level of the Tigris River. Water began to soften the sun-dried bricks, a section of the wall collapsed, causing a breach in the defenses and the once-proud city was soon overrun and destroyed.

Nineveh was destroyed by Cyaxares and Nabopolassar, 625 BC. The Scythian hordes, by an inroad into Media and then in the southwest of Asia (thought by many to be the forces described by Zephaniah, as the invaders of Judea, rather than the Chaldeans), for awhile interrupted Cyaxares' operations; but he finally succeeded.

Arbaces and Belesis previously subverted the Assyrian empire under Sardanapalus (that is, Pul?) in 877 BC.

(B) Finality of the judgment (2:14,15b)

14 Flocks will lie down in her midst, All animals that range in herds; Both the pelican and the hedgehog Will spend their nights in the tops of her pillars; Birds will sing in the window, Devastation *will be* on the threshold; For He has uncovered the cedar work.

14 Flocks will lie down in her midst, All beasts which range in herds; Both the pelican and the hedgehog Will lodge in the tops of her pillars; Birds will sing in the window, Desolation *will be* on the threshold; For He has laid bare the cedar work.

14 Flocks will lie down in her midst, along with animals of every kind. Desert owls and screeching owls will nest at the top of the pillars, hooting through the vacant windows, 'Ruin sits at these doorsills,' for he will expose even the cedar framework.

14 And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations: both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds: for he shall uncover the cedar work.

- Their buildings are to be torn down

(C) Cause of the judgment: pride (2:15a)

(B) Finality of the judgment (2:14,15b)

15 This is the presumptuous city That dwells securely, Who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." How she has become a desolation, A resting place for animals! Everyone who passes by her will hiss *And* wave his hand *in contempt*.

15 This is the exultant city Which dwells securely, Who says in her heart, "I am, and there is no one besides me." How she has become a desolation, A resting place for beasts!

Everyone who passes by her will hiss *And* wave his hand *in contempt*.

15 This is that carefree city that lived irresponsibly, that told herself, 'Me first!' and, 'There will be no one else!' How ruined she has become— a habitat for wild animals! Everyone who passes by her will sneer at her and make obscene gestures!"

15 This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.

- When Alexander the Great marched his armies up the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, Nineveh had been so completely covered that they were unaware that beneath their feet lay the once mighty city of Nimrod (Gen 10:8-11)

Nothing then seemed more improbable than that the capital of so vast an empire, a city sixty miles in compass, with walls one hundred feet high, and so thick that three chariots could go abreast on them, and with twelve hundred towers, should be so totally destroyed that its site is with difficulty discovered. Yet so it is, as the prophet foretold.

The picture of Nineveh's destruction is completed as the prophet reiterated that the city, though apparently quite secure, would be shamed. Its king was arrogant because of its supposed impregnability (Is 10:12). It was known as the carefree city, as its populace felt it lived in complete safety.

The city was quite large, having with its suburban areas a circumference of 60 miles and a population of at least 120,000. In addition to an extensive outer wall there was an inner wall with an 8-mile circumference, 50 feet thick and 100 feet high. Between the two walls was enough farmland to support the huge population.

Nineveh's claim ("there is none besides me") was no idle boast! For approximately 200 years she was superior in strength to any other city of her time. An attack on the outer wall, begun in 614 BC by the Medes and Babylonians, and a combination of trickery by the attackers, carelessness by the attacked, and a natural disaster, finally brought victory to the attackers (Nahum 1:10; 2:3-5; 3:11).

The great inner wall collapsed because of an unexpected deluge that swelled the Tigris River in a normally dry season of the year and inundated the wall. Thus the city was unexpectedly defeated (Nahum 1:8; 2:6-8; 3:12). The carefree boasting of the city was hushed by her enemies, and all who later saw its ruins scoffed at her former haughtiness (Nahum 3:19). To scoff and to shake their fists were signs of contempt. God reduced the city miraculously and gave it to the wild beasts!

Implications

The precision of these prophecies are a startling preview of the overthrow of the world's nations in the end times. God has judged the nations in the past, and He will judge them in the future.