


## From Judgment to Joy: The Message of Zephaniah

### Part 2

# TALKINGPOINTS WALKINGPOINTS

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A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a “transforming church”. We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs you to “discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” Since “Talking Points, Walking Points” is intended both for individual reflection and for group discussion, questions vary in degree of vulnerability required. Generally it is best to begin group discussions with questions which involve less personal disclosure—but don't linger there. Be sure to “dive deep” too! The questions which require the greatest openness and honesty, as well as those in the section entitled “Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time”, are perfect for private reflection.

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

### Observation—*What do I see?*

- What offenses does Zephaniah 1:4–6 identify as deserving judgment?
- How does Zephaniah describe the scope of God's coming judgment in 1:2–3?
- The phrase, “The Day of Yahweh”, dominates Zephaniah 1:7–18. What descriptions are piled up in v. 14–18 to portray that day?
- According to Zephaniah 2:3, what is our appropriate response in light of that terrifying day?

### Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- Zephaniah speaks in such sweeping language about destroying everything from the earth—so how is it that there is hope for a remnant?
- Why is spiritual indifference treated as seriously as outright idolatry?
- What is the significance of the image of God “searching Jerusalem with lamps”?

### Application—*What do I do with this?*

- What are the areas of my life that I do not want God to search with his lamp?
- What signs of spiritual complacency are present in me?
- What am I tempted to trust in place of God?
- In what ways am I tempted to presume on God's patience, continuing in sin? When I find myself presuming on God's patience, what must I do?

# Sermon Summary Zephaniah 1:1–2:3

God's coming judgment exposes sin, humbles human pride, and calls His people to urgently seek Him while mercy is still available. Like the boy who cried wolf, the city of Jerusalem was guilty of treating the prophet Zephaniah with the same disregard - though Zephaniah's warnings were never misleading or deceptive. As Zephaniah thundered his own warnings, the people showed little interest in turning from their sins (Ecclesiastes 8:11; 2 Peter 3:3–9).

**I. The Certainty of God's Judgment** (1:1–6) Josiah was one of the few kings of Judah who obeyed God and worshiped Him alone. Together, he and Zephaniah spearheaded religious reform in Judah. The nation of Judah was guilty of gross negligence in its relationship with God, and Zephaniah warned them that judgment was coming. This may well be the most intense and extensive warning found anywhere in Scripture. Zephaniah's goal was to awaken the people to their disobedience, to convey the seriousness of their sin. God threatens not only to judge them, but to wipe them off the face of the earth (v. 2-3). God's judgment reminds us that sin is not the trivial thing that we sometimes think it to be. No, it destabilizes the moral order of the entire world. In the book of Zephaniah, the confusion is that on the one hand, Zephaniah talks about God destroying everything on the face of the earth, but he also describes what is not destroyed. My conclusion is that the purpose of God's judgment isn't total annihilation, but rather a sweeping purification. In His judgment, God will destroy societal structures of corruption, rebellion, and false worship (3:8–10). The purpose of this judgment is to preserve a people who are faithful and godly worshippers of the one true God.

Through His prophet Zephaniah, God begins by announcing a broad and general judgment. But then He zeros in on His own people—the nation of Judah and He reveals the cause of this judgment (Zephaniah 1:4-6). Note that five offenses will be “cut off” by Yahweh: [1] Baal Worship: Canaanite god of prosperity and fertility, [2] Milcom Worship: chief god of the Ammonites, [3] Astrolatry: worship of the stars; astrology and horoscopes, [4] Syncretism: worshipping both Yahweh and Milcom; the blending of multiple religious belief systems into a new, hybrid system, and [5] Indifference: those who stopped seeking the Lord; those who live as “practical atheists.” The sins of Judah are also the sins of the modern world. They are also the sins of the church (1:6). The God of the Bible is loving and kind, and long-suffering - but He is also holy and just. The truth is that evil, risky, irresponsible behavior is unbecoming of God's image bearers. It demands a loving response. Our actions today impact generations tomorrow! That is why God intervenes in the world He created. He lovingly disciplines those whom He loves.

**II. The Terror of the Day of the Lord** (1:7-18) In light of God's announced judgment, God calls upon His people to be silent. Zephaniah 1:7 is saying, “It is too late to offer a defense. God has already rendered His verdict!” The phrase, “the Day of the Lord” is a very important theological concept. It is a reference to the end time judgment of God toward which other judgments point. God was clarifying through Zephaniah that a day of reckoning is coming. Not just one in Zephaniah's day, but one at the culmination of human history. No one is immune to God's judgment. But it is important to note that God does not punish for punishment's sake, but rather to provoke His people to return to Him in faithful obedience.

Zephaniah 1:8 is saying that these invited guests are the sacrificial offering. He is speaking specifically of the people of Jerusalem, especially its wealthy, duplicitous leaders! Verse 9 is referring to those who steal from their neighbors and then fill their pagan temple with what they stole. The idea being conveyed in verse 10 seems to be that God's judgment will fall on every segment of Jewish society. Every quarter of the city of Jerusalem would be impacted by God's judgment. No one escapes accountability! He is looking for the indifferent, the spiritually complacent. The truth is everyone worships something. Zephaniah declares that God will destroy their idols (1:13). Verses 14-18 pile up descriptions of the day of judgment.

**III. The Urgent Call to Repent** (2:1-3) Judgment is coming, but there is still a glint of hope. After the terrifying warnings comes an invitation (2:1-3). While God will bring judgment—He does not delight in it. Any movement towards Him will result in Him moving towards us in love and compassion. Three commands are given: Seek the Lord; Seek righteousness; Seek humility. Mercy depends upon humble repentance. The humble, who repent and seek the Lord, will find refuge from God's anger.

## Application Challenge:

- Examine your heart — God sees the sin that we try to hide.
- Reject spiritual complacency — indifference toward God can be as dangerous as open rebellion.
- Do not trust in worldly security.
- Seek the Lord now — humility leads to refuge.

God warns before He judges. Prophetic warnings are grace-filled alarms, not merely threats. They are invitations to repent. Every time we hear Scripture confront our sin, it is God giving us time to respond. Ignoring God's warnings hardens the heart.



Make plans as a group to use this summer's conference as an outreach to neighbors and co-workers.

Jim Dieffenderfer will speak the first three Sundays:

- Sunday morning, July 5                      Entering into the Debate
- Sunday morning, July 12                    Evaluating Evolutionary Icons
- Sunday morning, July 19                    Evolution's Fatal Flaw

Then, Dr. Terry Mortenson of Answers in Genesis will speak the final Sunday morning, followed by evening sessions Sunday, Monday and Tuesday:

- Sunday morning, July 26                    Evolution v. Creation: Why Does it Matter?
- Sunday evening, July 26                    Ape-men, Adam and the Gospel
- Monday evening, July 27                    Millions of Years: Unscientific Origin, Catastrophic Consequences
- Tuesday evening, July 28                    Noah's Flood: Washing Away Millions of Years

Learn more about Dr. Mortenson's here:



## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

*Many people wrongly assume that "the God of the Old Testament" was petty and wrathful, but that Jesus, "the God of the New Testament", is kind and forgiving. But Hebrews 1:3 assures us that "Jesus is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature". Or, as Jesus himself expressed it, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father" (John 14:9). So, Jesus and the Father are equally loving, gracious and merciful—and equally wrathful at sin and ultimately also willing to punish. The Book of Hebrews shares five warnings\* for us today. Let's look at each...*

### **Monday**— The Danger of **Drifting**

What do you learn from **Hebrews 2:1-4**?

### **Tuesday**— The Danger of **Disbelief**

What do you learn from **Hebrews 3:7—4:13**?

### **Wednesday**— The Danger of **Defection**

What do you learn from **Hebrews 5:11—6:20**?

### **Thursday**— The Danger of **Despising**

What do you learn from **Hebrews 10:26-31**?

### **Friday**— The Danger of **Denying**

What do you learn from **Hebrews 12:25-29**?

\* Note: If you're disturbed by these warning passages, join Pastor Dan's study of Hebrews in September!