

From Judgment to Joy: The Message of Zephaniah


Part 4

TALKING POINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

2026-6-28



A publication of  DISCIPLE, 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

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Many people think that God is only wrathful, but how is he described in Zephaniah 3:17?
- 2 God's message to Judah through Zephaniah is to [1] look within at her own sin (1:1–2:3), [2] look around at the nations under judgment (2:4–3:8), and finally [3] look beyond judgment to future restoration and peace (3:9–20). What does each of those "looks" accomplish?
- 3 In Zephaniah 3:15 Pastor Doug identified three reasons for Israel's future joy. What are they?
- 4 What repeated phrase in Zephaniah 3:18–20 emphasizes God's commitment to restoration?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 5 What is the connection between transformed speech and transformed hearts?
- 6 Why does God remove pride before establishing His kingdom of peace?
- 7 What does God's rejoicing and singing over His people communicate about His relationship with them?
- 8 How do we reconcile God's judgment with His love?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 9 Pastor Doug noted that when God saved him, He cleansed his coarse speech. What does your speech reveal about the condition of your heart?
- 10 How should the promise of Christ's future kingdom influence your view of current world problems?
- 11 How should the truth that God delights in His redeemed people change your daily walk with Him?
- 12 How consistently do you rejoice in God's covenant loyalty to you today?

- ① He is a mighty Savior who rejoices over His people with gladness, quiets them with His love, and sings over them.
- ② Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.
- ③ God will take away their judgments, clear away their enemies, and dwell in their midst as King.
- ④ The phrase “I will” is repeated multiple times, highlighting God’s unbreakable promises.
- ⑤ Because outward speech reflects inward spiritual change; pure speech is evidence of genuine conversion.
- ⑥ Pride opposes dependence on God, while humility leads people to seek refuge and trust in Him.
- ⑦ God does not merely tolerate His redeemed people; He delights in them and loves them deeply.
- ⑧ God’s holiness requires judgment of sin, while His love and faithfulness lead Him to restore and bless His people. Both attributes work together.
- ⑨ Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.
- ⑩ It encourages hope, patience, and confidence that God will ultimately establish justice and peace.
- ⑪ It can deepen assurance, encourage worship, and motivate a loving response to God’s grace.
- ⑫ Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.



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:



Sermon Summary Zephaniah 3:9-20

God's judgment is not inconsistent with His love. One demands the other. Love and justice must never be isolated from each other. In our study today, Zephaniah 3:9-20, Judah was invited to look beyond this time of judgment, to a time of spiritual healing and prosperity and peace—not just for Israel and Judah, but also for the nations of the world. Zephaniah is looking into the future at the coming millennial kingdom, when Jesus will reign as King over the earth and both Israel and the nations of the world will experience peace.

I. God Promises Transformation (v. 9–10) God does not merely restrain evil—He transforms hearts. And when hearts change, speech changes. Zephaniah looks ahead to a time when nations that once blasphemed God will now call upon His name and serve Him together. In verse 10, Zephaniah tells us that during the Millennial kingdom these converted Gentile nations will bring offerings to the Lord. God communicates this same truth through the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:18, 20). Zephaniah says that as He restores the nations to Himself, He will also greatly bless His chosen people Israel (Deuteronomy 30:1-10). This closing section of Zephaniah's prophecy is comforting precisely because it assures God's people that He keeps His promises. He will ultimately bless the Jewish people, and the world, through them.

II. God Removes Shame and Pride (v. 11–13) God addresses the deepest wound of sin—shame (v.11). Apart from God's grace, all of us have reason to be ashamed. That is why God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus into the world. Pride has no place among God's people—ancient or modern. Here God declares that He will remove the proud from our midst (v.12). The Bible makes clear that God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:6; Psalm 91:1–2). When God becomes our refuge, fear begins to lose its grip (Psalm 46:1–3). In verse 13 we see that not only will God give His people refuge, but He will also create an environment where there is true spiritual rest.

III. God Calls His People to Rejoice (v. 14–17) One day, believing Jews will rejoice in their salvation. In their God they will find a safe refuge. No more threats, no more enemies (v.14). In v. 15, Zephaniah goes on to cite three reasons this future faithful remnant of Jews will be able to rejoice: The Lord has taken away your judgments; The Lord has cleared away your enemies; The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst. Because of the Lord's presence, Israel will lift her hands in triumph, for as Zephaniah goes on to declare, "The Lord is mighty to save!" (v.16). Verse 17 is a powerful description of God's love for His people! This is not a God who merely tolerates His redeemed people. This is a God who rejoices over them.

IV. God Guarantees Restoration and Renown (v. 18–20) In the final verses, God makes a series of unbreakable promises—six times He says, "I will." As a consequence of God's judgment, many Jews had been exiled to foreign lands and had been unable to participate in their nation's religious feasts. But the Lord will remove those sorrows when He regathers His people to Jerusalem where they will exultantly worship Him (v.18). We see God's other promises in verses 19 and 20. God will remove all of Israel's foreign oppressors. Those who cursed Israel, God will curse. He will tenderly gather His people who have been scattered among the nations and will bestow upon them a favorable reputation among the nations of the world. Where they once were scorned, now they will be praised and honored (Deuteronomy 26:18–19).

In the coming Millennium, God will restore Israel's fortunes and she will possess all the land God promised her (Genesis 12:1–7; 13:14–17; 15:7–21; 17:7–8). Jesus, her Messiah King, will establish His kingdom and will reign from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 7:16; Psalm 89:3–4; Isaiah 9:6–7; Daniel 7:27; Zephaniah. 3:15). From our study of Zephaniah, we have learned that God transforms His people from shame to joy through His redeeming grace and promises a future of restoration, worship, and rejoicing. We have seen that God permits human evil, punishes the wicked and promises a final restitution. Through His prophets, He points us to a time when this present darkness will give way to His tender triumph of love and virtue.

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

The New Covenant is one of the central themes of Scripture. God promised through the prophets that He would establish a new covenant with His people, and Jesus declared that this covenant was inaugurated through His death. The New Covenant unpacks the restoration of which Zephaniah spoke.

Monday— The Promise of a New Covenant God promised a covenant that would surpass the Mosaic Covenant. Unlike the old covenant, which Israel repeatedly broke, this new covenant would bring an internal transformation. The emphasis shifts from external law to inward renewal.

Read Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezekiel 36:25–27.

- What problems under the Old Covenant made a New Covenant necessary?
- How does God's promise reveal His grace toward His people?
- What aspects of the New Covenant are highlighted in Jeremiah and Ezekiel?
- Thank God that salvation rests on His faithfulness rather than ours.

Tuesday— The New Covenant Is Established Through Christ's Blood Jesus' sacrificial death inaugurated the New Covenant. The covenant was not established by human obedience but by Christ's atoning work on the cross.

Read Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25 and Hebrews 9:15.

- Why was Christ's blood necessary for the New Covenant?
- How does the Lord's Supper remind believers of covenant blessings?
- What does Christ's role as mediator teach us about salvation?
- Regularly remember and celebrate Christ's sacrifice through worship and communion.

Wednesday— The New Covenant Provides Complete Forgiveness One of the greatest promises of the New Covenant is full forgiveness of sins. God promises not merely to overlook sin but to remove its guilt permanently through Christ.

Read Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17–18.

- What does it mean that God will "remember their sin no more"?
- How does New Covenant forgiveness differ from the repeated sacrifices of the Old Testament?
- Why is assurance of forgiveness important for Christian living?
- Live with confidence that Christ's sacrifice is sufficient for all your sins.

Thursday— The New Covenant Includes a New Heart, Which Results in New Obedience God changes His people from the inside out. The Holy Spirit enables us to obey God and impels us toward holiness. We obey because we have new, God-given affections.

Read Ezekiel 36:26–27, Romans 8:3–4, 2 Corinthians 3:3, 1 John 3:10 and Philippians 2:12–13.

- What is the difference between outward religion and inward transformation?
- How does the Holy Spirit help believers obey God?
- What evidence of a new heart should be seen in a Christian's life?
- Depend on the Spirit rather than self-effort for spiritual growth.

Friday— The New Covenant Creates a People Who Know God Every member of the New Covenant community possesses a personal knowledge of God. Knowing God is not merely intellectual; it is relational and saving.

Read Jeremiah 31:34, John 17:3 and Hebrews 8:11.

- What does it mean to know God personally?
- How is New Covenant knowledge of God different from merely knowing facts about Him?
- How does knowing God affect daily life?
- Pursue a deeper relationship with God through His Word, prayer, and obedience.

Saturday—The New Covenant Secures an Eternal Inheritance The New Covenant points beyond present blessings to eternal fellowship with God. Believers enjoy covenant blessings now, but their full realization awaits Christ's return and the new creation.

Read Hebrews 9:15 and 10:19–22 and Revelation 21:3–4.

- What future blessings are guaranteed by the New Covenant?
- How does the promise of eternal life strengthen believers during trials?
- What confidence should Christians have when approaching God?
- Live with hope and perseverance, knowing that God will complete all His covenant promises.