

# Zephaniah 1-3 – Prophecies of the Great Tribulation & Millennial Kingdom

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Open your Bible to the Book of Zephaniah. I'm going to use a handheld microphone here tonight, hope that doesn't distract too much from what we're doing tonight. I can only use one hand to gesture, and that'll probably affect me somehow. But, if you happen to be looking at this in our, one of our Calvary Chapel little blue paperback Bibles, this is on page 459.

For those of you that might not be terribly familiar with the geography of your Bible, Zephaniah is a small, minor prophet, and, as with the other minor prophets, it's short in size only about, well, it's just three chapters long. And as with many of the other minor prophets, we know very little about the man Zephaniah, except that he was the great, great grandson of King Hezekiah.

And he was ministering during the time of Josiah, King Josiah, who, as we know was the last good king of Judah. And Josiah brought a lot of wonderful reforms to the land, but they were all pretty short-lived because Josiah's life was pretty short-lived. He died, I think at the age of 40 or 41 something like that.

Zephaniah's name means Jehovah Protects or Jehovah Treasures. And that's an interesting definition when we, you'll see as we get into what this book is kind of about because the primary message that Zephaniah came to bring is about the day of the Lord. And, he's going to cover in this short book and really talk a lot about the great tribulation period.

And yet he's going to end this by talking about the future blessings that will come to a small remnant of Israel after the time of the great tribulation. As you know, when, let me just give you a little quick timeline. This might help. The next thing on the prophetic calendar is the catching away of the church.

And we know that's going to happen, not in the time of the great tribulation, but before the great tribulation because the Bible says that people will be saying peace and safety, and then destruction will come on them like labor pains on a woman. So, the church is going to be caught away first in what we call the

rapture, and then the world will be thrust into that seven year period that we call the great tribulation.

At the very close of the great tribulation, the nations of this world are going to amass and come against Israel to wipe her off the globe. And they will be doing a pretty good job of it. And they will eventually come to Jerusalem and they will threaten to invade Jerusalem as well and it will look very, very dire for the people of Jerusalem at that time.

And then, the Bible tells us there's going to be another trumpet sound and Jesus is going to come and he is going to fight on behalf of Israel at that time. And he is going to, and this is the battle that we refer to as Armageddon, all right. So, this is the battle of Armageddon, that takes place at the end of the great tribulation. And the Lord will destroy the enemies of the nations who have come against Israel at that time.

And it sounds like it's going to be a huge army of people around the world, and who are all going to come against and largely this is going to be the work of the anti-Christ who will poison the hearts of the people of the world against Israel. And yet Jesus is going to put down the enemies of Israel. He's going to destroy them.

The people of Israel themselves are going to rise up under his leadership and the nation of Israel at that time will turn to the Lord as a single nation. Now, it won't be a huge number of people. In fact, the Bible refers to it even here in the Book of Zephaniah as a remnant. And a remnant always means a small portion.

So, it will be a small portion of the overall people that would otherwise be known as Israelis or Israelites. And yet this small remnant of people when of course, the Messiah returns and fights on their behalf, they will turn to him as a single nation and they will recognize that this is the Messiah who came previously.

And the Bible says they will mourn for him as for an only son (Zechariah 12:10). And yet they will turn to him at that time. And after the destruction of the enemies in the army in the battle of Armageddon, the people who are left on the earth, and believe it or not, there will be people who will survive the great tribulation.

Those people from those nations will begin to stream to Israel because there Jesus will establish his throne in Jerusalem where he will rule and reign for a period of 1000 years, and we call that period of time the millennial kingdom.

It's also referred to as the Messianic kingdom, and that will be a 1000 year period of unprecedented peace. We'll look at some scriptures tonight that will make reference to it. Zephaniah will make reference to it, but we'll look at some others as well.

So that's a bit of the timeline so that you can understand a little bit of what Zephaniah is going to cover because he's going to talk about the great tribulation and then he's going to, he's going to move us right into that period of the millennial kingdom.

Chapter 1, verse 1 begins by saying:

<sup>1</sup> *“The word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.”* (ESV)

So, the book begins like many other prophetic books with the author making you instantly aware of the fact that this is a message from God.

Notice he says the word of the Lord. He's telling you in no uncertain terms that what you're about to read is the word of the Lord. And he says in verse 2, and it comes out very strongly from the very beginning, he says:

<sup>2</sup> *“I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.”* (ESV)

So right away we see that Zephaniah, the Lord, I should say, through Zephaniah makes a very powerful statement about the coming wrath of God, and I want you to notice the scope of this. This is not directed just to Israel. You'll notice that he says I'm going to sweep away everything from the face of the earth. (Zephaniah 1:2).

All right, so we're obviously talking about the great tribulation period that will take place after the bride of Christ is caught away. Verse 3 says:

<sup>3</sup> *“I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.”* (ESV).

Now you need to understand a couple of things. First of all, the words **sweep away** mean to gather and take away, to remove, and to destroy. All of those meanings are encompassed in that single Hebrew word.

But when God says here, that He's going to cut off mankind, He's obviously referring to the wicked from the earth since we know, and we've already talked about the fact that a remnant from Israel will survive, and we know that there will even be survivors of the other nations during the great tribulation.

So, he's clarifying here that the wicked, well, actually it's Jeremiah who clarifies, let me put this on the screen for you. Here's a passage from Jeremiah chapter 25, which says:

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**Jeremiah 25:31 (ESV)**

*“The clamor will resound to the ends of the earth, for the Lord has an indictment against” (who?) the nations; (notice the nations) he is entering into judgment with all flesh, (and notice what it says) “and the wicked he will put to the sword, declares the Lord.”*

So, Jeremiah gives us some greater clarity as for who's going to be swept away during that period of the great tribulation, it's going to be the wicked. And so that's what is referred to there in verse 3.

And now the prophecy is in verse 4, pointed now directly at Judah, and particularly those who had come under the judgment of the Lord. But when He says:

<sup>4</sup> *“I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests,*

*<sup>5</sup>those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom (and that was a God of the Ammonites),” (ESV)*

He says:

<sup>6</sup> *“those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.”” (ESV)*

So, you have a fairly lengthy definition there of the wicked who are going to be swept away from Judah. And he's talking there specifically about those who are worshiping pagan idols and who have abandoned any worship of the Lord God, even though they say in word that they're continuing to call upon him.

Verse 7 says:

<sup>7</sup> *“Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near; the Lord has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests.*

<sup>8</sup> *And on the day of the Lord's sacrifice— (the Lord says) “I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire.*

<sup>9</sup> *On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold,” (ESV)*

And we're not really sure what that refers to. Probably some pagan custom, some superstition and superstition is always thick in paganism. Something that the people were observing. And He says,

<sup>9</sup> *“...,and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.*

<sup>10</sup> *“On that day,” declares the Lord, “a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills.*

<sup>11</sup> *Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off.*

<sup>12</sup> *At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, ‘The Lord will not do good, nor will he do ill.’” (ESV)*

So apparently some of the people were under the belief that God would neither support Israel nor judge them and, so God says He's going to judge specifically those.

Verse 13:

<sup>13</sup> *“Their goods (He says) shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them.” (ESV)*

Those are very common prophecies concerning the judgment of Israel.

And he says in verse 14:

<sup>14</sup> *“The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.”* (ESV)

Notice that he says it's the day of the Lord is going to be bitter and the reason the Lord is reminding Israel about the bitterness of the day of the Lord, is because Israel is going to go through the great tribulation period.

But there were Jews who believed that the day of the Lord was simply going to be a time when God conquered their enemies. And, in the day of the Lord, or at the very conclusion of what we call the day of the Lord, that is true. God is going to conquer the enemies of Israel, but there's so much more that's going to be happening in the day of the Lord and for Israel it's going to be a time of great difficulty and he says bitterness.

Notice how God goes on to describe the day of the Lord in verse 15 and following. Look in your Bible.

<sup>15</sup> *“A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish (Notice those words), a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness,*

<sup>16</sup> *a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.”* (ESV)

Notice all the words the Lord uses to describe the day of the Lord. He says:

<sup>17</sup> *“I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.*

<sup>18</sup> *Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord.”* (ESV)

In other words, God is saying all their riches and all their wealth will be useless on that day to purchase any kind of protection or deliverance from the wrath of the Lord.

And he says:

<sup>18</sup> “...*In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.*” (ESV)

And again, that refers to the wicked of the Earth.

Chapter 2 goes on and says:

<sup>1</sup> “*Gather together, yes, gather, O shameless nation,*” (ESV)

And this appears very much to be a call now for the people of Judah to be gathered for a time of repentance, although they are not going to do that.

He says:

<sup>2</sup> “*before the decree takes effect—before the day passes away like chaff—before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord, before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord.*”

<sup>3</sup> “*Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.*” (ESV)

I want you to notice that, there's an interesting statement here, that is made to the people of Judah saying, that for those of you who are humble, for those of you who are walking in right relationship, seek the Lord and perhaps you may be hidden. And we happen to know that some of the Jews will be hidden during that time of the great tribulation.

He says in verse 4:

<sup>4</sup> “*For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted.*”

<sup>5</sup> “*Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.*”

<sup>6</sup> “*And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks.*” (ESV)

In other words, what the Lord is saying here is that, those once inhabited areas on the sea coast are going to become fields and pastures because they're going to be uninhabited after the Lord brings judgment.

He says in verse 7:

<sup>7</sup> *“The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant (There it is again) of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the Lord their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.”* (ESV)

Now this is interesting because Ashkelon, is this area which is well, was back then part of the Philistine territory. In fact, Ashkelon was one of the major cities of Philistine territory.

And this is an area that is very much under dispute today and is constantly under dispute between Israel and their closest neighbors. And yet it says here that after this time, that the people, the remnant of Judah, is actually going to occupy that area.

And then God, and God gives the reason for that occupation. He says, the Lord God will restore their fortunes. God is going to restore their fortunes. And this is again, all going to happen at the end of the great tribulation, all right? Going into the millennial kingdom.

Verse 8:

<sup>8</sup> *“I have heard the taunts of Moab and the revilings of the Ammonites, (The Lord says) how they have taunted my people and made boasts against their territory.*

<sup>9</sup> *Therefore, as I live,” declares the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, “Moab shall become like Sodom, and the Ammonites like Gomorrah, (and you know what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah. He says) a land possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a waste forever. The remnant (Here it is again) of my people (That's the people remaining after the great tribulation. After the battle of Armageddon) shall plunder them, and the survivors of my nation (He says) shall possess them.”* (ESV)

So that remnant of Jews is going to possess the land of their enemies at that time. And it says:

<sup>10</sup> *“This shall be their lot in return for their pride, because they taunted and boasted against the people of the LORD of hosts.*

<sup>11</sup> *“The Lord will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth, and to him shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.”* (ESV)

Now, this is, verse 11, is wonderful. Because once again we're talking about the end of the tribulation period, we're talking about the, even after the battle of Armageddon, when the Lord establishes his throne in Jerusalem to rule and reign there, it says that to Him shall the nation's bow down, right? To Him, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.

So, it's saying that everybody is going to bow down. Well, the fact of the matter is, we're told this elsewhere through the scriptures, that at some point or another, everybody's going to bow down, to the Lord our God, particularly to Jesus Christ, that he might give glory to the Father.

The Apostle Paul wrote about this in the book of Philippians. Let me put this on the screen for you. From Philippians chapter 2.

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**Philippians 2:10-11 (ESV)**

*“... at the name of Jesus (Paul writes) every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (speaking of the dead) and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

So, this is going to happen. I've said many times that as Christians, we have the wonderful opportunity in the precious privilege of bowing the need to him today by our own volition. But for those who refuse and say, I will not bow down, there will come a day when they will. They will bow down before the Lord God.

They will confess. They will say, Jesus is Lord. I wasn't willing to say at all the days of my life on earth, but He is. He is the Lord. And I bow down to Him now.

I had somebody write me a letter and say, does that mean everybody's going to be saved because they're going to bow down? And the answer to that is, no, they're not.

Jesus even told us, many are called but fewer chosen. We know that the way to destruction is wide and easy, an easy path. The way to life is narrow and hard. And so, no, not everybody is going to be safe simply because they bow down. I believe even the demons are going to bow down and declare and give glory to God the Father.

And, that doesn't mean the demons are going to be saved. Doesn't mean those people are going to be saved. It simply means they are at some point they are going to confess. They will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Verse 12:

<sup>12</sup> *"You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword."*

<sup>13</sup> *"And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert."*

<sup>14</sup> *"Herds shall lie down in her midst, all kinds of beasts; even the owl and the hedgehog shall lodge in her capitals;"* (ESV)

Once areas of huge commerce and great populations will now be a place for the hedgehog and the owl.

<sup>14</sup> *"... a voice shall hoot in the window; devastation will be on the threshold; for her cedar work will be laid bare."*

<sup>15</sup> *"This is the exultant city that lived securely, that said in her heart, 'I am, and there is no one else.'" (Notice that prideful attitude) What a desolation she has become, a lair for wild beasts! Everyone who passes by her hisses and shakes his fist."* (ESV)

So, you can see the description that the Lord is giving of the judgment that comes upon the nations is quite graphic and difficult.

Chapter 3, now chapter 3 begins with the Lord confronting the city of Jerusalem specifically, not just Judah in general, but now the city of Jerusalem.

And He says:

<sup>1</sup> *“Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city!*

<sup>2</sup> *She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God.*

<sup>3</sup> *Her officials within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning.*

<sup>4</sup> *Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men; her priests profane what is holy; they do violence to the law.” (ESV)*

Obviously, these are serious indictments against the city of Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup> *“The Lord within her is righteous; he does no injustice; every morning he shows forth his justice; each dawn he does not fail; but the unjust knows no shame.*

<sup>6</sup> *“I have cut off nations; their battlements are in ruins; I have laid waste their streets so that no one walks in them; their cities have been made desolate, without a man, without an inhabitant.*

<sup>7</sup> *I said, ‘Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you.’ But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.” (ESV)*

Now, starting in verse 8, this is very important for you to hear. I want you to pay attention here.

<sup>8</sup> *““Therefore wait for me,” declares the Lord, “for the day when I rise up to seize the prey. For my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.” (ESV)*

Now He's gone back and he's talking about the battle of Armageddon. And God is telling his own people and telling us ahead of time that He has made a decision about how He's going to bring judgment upon the nations during the period of the great tribulation. And the decision that the Lord made was to gather them. To gather them and to assemble them.

And this is frankly quite brilliant, but the anti-Christ is going to be involved here in bringing a deception upon the nations of the world at that time to bring them to a gathering army and to come against all of Israel at that time. And they're going to fall for that deception. But this is the Lord's doing because God says right here in Zephaniah for my decision is to gather the nations and to assemble the kingdoms that I might pour out upon them my indignation.

He says in verse 9:

<sup>9</sup> *“For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call upon the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.”* (ESV)

Now this is speaking of that time during the millennial kingdom, and this is an interesting verse. We don't know exactly what the Lord is saying here, but it sounds very much like the Lord is going to reverse the language curse that was given to the people of the world at the Tower of Babel, so that they would be separated and go and obey the Lord, even though they didn't see it as obedience. But you'll remember the whole reason for the Tower of Babel and what God did there was because God told them to go and populate the earth.

He said, go into all the earth and be fruitful and multiply. And what did the people say? They said, no!, we're not going to do that. We're staying right here and we're going to live right in the same place. In fact, we're going to build a monument to ourselves and we're going to build it to the sky and it's going to be all about us.

And so, God came down, we're told in the book of Genesis, he confused their languages so that the people whose languages were similar departed and went to other areas. And so, God eventually, caused the people to be obedient, to spread out and multiply on the earth, but He did it through the confusing of their languages.

What's interesting about this verse in verse 9 is that it sounds very much like the Lord is going to reverse that at that time and He says, I'm going to give the people a pure speech so that they might come together and call upon the name of the Lord in unity, which is pretty fascinating when you stop and think about it isn't it.

That you know that suddenly everybody's going to speak with the same language at that time and it's certainly within the providence and the ability of the Lord to do that. Just as he confused the languages at one time, he can certainly unconfuse them at some particular time in history if that is in fact his wish. And I seriously doubt it'll be English, but that's all right.

Back when Ian Fisher was an elder here, before he retired and moved away, he said it was going to be Scottish. He said that was the original language and that we were going back to Scottish. I seriously doubt that, but we used to just nod our heads when he was around here just to humor him.

So anyway, verse 10, it says:

<sup>10</sup> *“From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, (look at this) the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.”* (ESV)

So, the Lord says, I'm going to call these people from, people who've not been part of Israel, and they're going to come and they're going to bring an offering.

And He says:

<sup>11</sup> *““On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, (In other words, they're the ones who are going to receive judgment) and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.”* (ESV)

So, the time of the millennial kingdom is going to be a time of great humility, and the people are going to humbly come to the Lord and He says, and you're no longer going to live in shame.

You have to think about this from the standpoint of how a Jew is going to be, someone in Israel. You guys know that right now that the vast majority of Jews in Israel are atheist. At this time, there is a small portion of Israelis who are Orthodox Jews and there's a basic belief in God, although they haven't moved beyond much of what the Old Testament had, but the vast majority of people don't believe in God at all.

And so, the Lord speaks of this, as the people being in rebellion. And so, when the Lord returns and they realize that everything that God had prophesied in the Old Testament scriptures was true, and everything that there was spoken of in the New Testament passages was in fact true.

There's going to be great shame that is going to come upon the people of Israel at that time, and that's why we're told elsewhere in the scriptures from Zechariah that the people will mourn at first when they realize who Jesus is. They will mourn for him as for an only son, (Zechariah 12:10) and they'll be mourning because they spent all this time rejecting their Messiah.

But the Lord now speaks here in verse 11 to say that they will, that shame will be taken away due to their past rebellion.

And He says, and God is saying here, He's going to give them a heart of humility by which they will no longer have that prideful, arrogant attitude toward the Lord. And He says, that won't exist anymore on my Holy Mountain.

Verse 12.

<sup>12</sup>“*But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly.*” (ESV)

And this is that remnant. The remnant of Israel that remains is that humble and lowly remnant and He says:

<sup>12</sup>“*... They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord,*

<sup>13</sup>*those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, (and look at this) and none shall make them afraid.*” (ESV)

And that speaks of the peace that's going to come upon the earth at that time during the millennial kingdom. Now, Zephaniah is one of the few, many old Testament prophets that speak of this unprecedented time of peace during the millennial kingdom. In fact, it's not only going to affect nations, it's going to affect the animal kingdom as well.

It's going to be incredible. Let me show you some passages here from Isaiah. In fact, this is fairly one fairly long passage. Isaiah chapter 11, look at this.

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**Isaiah 11:4-9 (ESV)**

*...with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. (Notice there it is again from Isaiah, who's going to be judged and taken out? The wicked.) Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. (Isn't that great?) The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. (Going on it says) The cow (This is great) and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. (Now that's going to be a sight. And it goes on to say) The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child (so the little bit older child) shall put his hand on the adder's den. (And an adder is a snake, a poisonous snake.) They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*

This is just a small picture of the peace that's going to prevail during the time of the messianic or millennial kingdom. Children are going to play around poisonous animals. Those animals that were predators and, I mean, a lion, would chase down a goat and have it for lunch, but it says they're going to lie down together. And this is just, it's going to be incredible.

But you see, this is the peace that Jesus is going to bring. It's not just peace between nations, peace between warring factions, it's beginning to return the earth to the way God intended it to be.

See, I don't believe that God created the earth to be a place of death. I don't believe that predators were part of God's original creation. And the reason I don't believe that is because we can see He's going to go back. He's going back to that sort of a reality.

I don't believe that death was a part of God's original creation. I simply don't believe it. You can't convince me of it. I don't believe God created A world where death was a part of that creation and He would've said, it's all good.

Because we see over and over again in the Book of Genesis, after each day of creation, God pronounced what He made good. (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 25)

And I don't believe He created animals to hunt down other animals and rip them to shreds and He said, yeah, that's a good thing. I simply don't, I don't believe it.

So, and I know that there are Christians, there are sincere Christians who disagree with me on this particular subject, but my personal belief is that when God pronounced death in Genesis chapter 3, due to sin, that, that was the beginning of death, not just for mankind, but it was the beginning of death for creation. That all of creation was thrown into that cycle of death because of the curse of sin.

The Bible tells us that, Paul tells us the whole creation is groaning as in the pains of childbirth. (Romans 8:22) It doesn't just say, man is, it says the whole creation is groaning. All of creation is groaning, wanting to be released from bondage to decay and it's going to be released.

The millennial kingdom is a foreshadowing of that release, and then after the millennial kingdom, things will be made new, brand new with a new earth and a new heaven.

Will there be animals in the new earth and in the new? Yeah, I think so. But it'll be what it, like it was supposed to be, the way God intended it to be.

So, as we finish out the chapter, verse 14, it says:

<sup>14</sup>“Sing aloud, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

<sup>15</sup>*The Lord has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil.” (ESV)*

Now again, this is a statement that is made prophetically about that time of the millennial kingdom and onward. But, because it, you can tell this prophecy has not yet come to pass.

The Jews do still fear evil. I don't know if you heard, but there's been bombings just recently this last week in Jerusalem. Even some American tourists I heard had gotten injured because somebody got, came into a bus, I think it was, and started just firing a weapon. So, people, the people are still fearing.

What is given here in verse 15 is a statement in the future where the Lord says, I've taken away the judgments against you, cleared away your enemies, and now you shall no longer fear evil.

And He says in verse 16:

<sup>16</sup> *“On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak.*

<sup>17</sup> *The Lord your God is in your midst, (and that’s because Jesus will be ruling and reigning on Mount Zion) a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” (ESV)*

Isn't that going to be cool? The Lord God is going to sing over his people. Isn't that amazing?

<sup>18</sup> *“I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach.*

<sup>19</sup> *Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.*

<sup>20</sup> *At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; (And look at this) for I will make you (this is the people of Israel) renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the Lord.” (ESV)*

This is a wonderful prophecy. It is particularly wonderful for the people of Israel, which is why the Lord begins in verse 14 by saying:

<sup>14</sup> *“Sing aloud, Oh, daughter of Zion;...” (ESV)*

The Lord is telling them what is to come. Now you might say, okay, you've been talking a lot here, pastor Paul about the nation of Israel and all the things that are going to be happening to the nation of Israel. But, where are we? Who are we? Well, we are not the nation of Israel. I'm sorry.

There are people who like to think that the church has taken over for Israel, but that is patently false. We are not Israel. We are not the New Israel. We are the bride of Christ. We are the body of Christ. The New Testament church is made up of Jew and Gentile, where there now is no longer any Jew or Gentile.

That's what we're told in the New Testament. In Christ, there's neither male nor female, Jew nor Gentile.

So, in the Bible tells us that God has made the two, one. He's taken away that dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile and the church is this amalgamation of Jew and Gentile, and we are simply the people of God known as the body of Christ.

We, as the church, will be caught up to be with the Lord at the very beginning of the great tribulation. When just before the anti-Christ reveals himself, and there we will have the wedding supper with our groom. And when he returns at the end of the great tribulation, to fight on behalf of Israel, we will return with him. That's what the Bible says.

We will come back, the Lord will come back with his saints and we will return with the Lord. We will already have had our new, resurrection bodies, which we will be, will receive at the time of the rapture. Paul says very clearly in, in Thessalonians that we will be changed in the twinkling of an eye and we will receive our incorruptible bodies at that time. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

So, when we return with the Lord, assuming we're going to fight at his side along with the people of Israel at that time and what all we're going to be doing during the millennial kingdom, we're not really told. It doesn't really matter because, we'll be busy, there'll be things going on, but we will be immortal at that time.

There will still be people who are mortal on the face of the earth during the millennial kingdom. People will be born, they will live out their life, and they will die.

Now, there will be very long lives during the millennial kingdom. We're told that somebody who dies at 100 will be considered young. So, ages will be, will go much longer during the millennial kingdom, but people will die.

And then there will be another resurrection of those at the very end of the millennial kingdom right before what the Bible refers to as the great white throne judgment, which will take place at the end of the millennial kingdom. And just before that time that we enter into called eternity.

There you go. So, there's Zephaniah. I guess it was a good thing we did that anyway, wasn't it? Yeah, that was good.

So, let's pray.

Father, we thank you so much for your word and the power of your word, the beauty of your word. Lord, we're thankful that you have revealed these things to us and told us how these things are going to play out. Both for the church, the body of Christ and also for the nation of Israel, and for that remnant of people.

Lord, it's a glorious, it's a glorious plan that you have, for you are a God of justice and righteousness, and the purpose of your will cannot be thwarted by any man or nation. And you, the sovereign, eternal God will have your way. And these things will come to pass, of that we are sure. Until the day, Lord, when you call us home, we ask that you would keep our hearts where they need to be.

We ask you, father God, to keep us from turning to the right or to the left, but to continue on the path that you have chosen for us. You have called us to this day and to the things that are happening in this day.

And you've called us to shine our light and to bring glory to your name. And Father, we pray in Jesus' name that you would strengthen us to live for you with the totality of our being, to glorify your name, to accomplish your purpose, and to fulfill the plan that you have for each and every one of us. We ask all of these things in the mighty name of our coming redeemer, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. Amen.