

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
11-28-18

Zephaniah 2

Judah and Jerusalem Judged Along With the Nations - Verses 1-3

¹Gather together, gather yourselves together, you shameful nation,
²before the decree takes effect and that day passes like windblown chaff,
before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's
wrath comes upon you. ³Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do
what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be
sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

2:1-3 There was still time for the people to avert God's judgment. They simply had to turn from their sins, humble themselves, and obey God. The Old Testament prophets announced news of destruction, but they also offered the only means of escape and protection—turning from sin and walking with God (see also Micah 6:8).

2:1-3 God's judgment against Judah came with ample warning, so the people had no excuse. God told them to (1) pray together ("gather yourselves together"), (2) beg to be saved ("seek the LORD"), and (3) humbly do what is right ("seek righteousness, seek humility"). As God warned Judah, so he also warns us concerning the final day of judgment. We must (1) pray for forgiveness of sin, (2) ask God to bring us into his heavenly kingdom, and (3) humbly obey him. At the end of time, when God comes to judge, you cannot say, "But no one told me." Turn to God today for salvation.

Philistia - Verses 4-7

⁴Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. ⁵Woe to you who live by the sea, you Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, Canaan, land of the Philistines. He says, "I will destroy you, and none will be left." ⁶The land by the sea will become pastures having wells for shepherds and pens for flocks. ⁷That land will belong to the remnant of the people of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.

2:4 The four cities mentioned here are in Philistia, the nation southwest of Judah on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Age-old enemies of Israel from the days of Joshua, the Philistines were known for their cruelty. God judged these cities for their idolatry and their constant taunting of Israel. These four cities were four of the five capitals. The fifth (Gath) had probably already been destroyed.

2:5 The Kerethites were a clan of the Philistines, the nation located just southwest of Judah. The Kerethites migrated to Palestine along with other Philistine peoples. Their name may have been derived from "Crete," the island where they lived before migrating to Palestine.

2:7 All the prophets, even while prophesying doom and destruction, speak of "the remnant"—a small group of God's people who remain faithful to him and whom God will restore to the land. Although God said he would destroy Judah, he also promised to save some, thus keeping his original covenant to preserve Abraham's descendants (Genesis 17:4-8). Because God is holy, he cannot allow sin to continue. But God is also faithful to his promises. He cannot stay angry with Israel forever—or with you, if you are his child—because he loves his children and always seeks their good.

Moab and Ammon - Verses 8 -11

8 "I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land. **9** Therefore, as surely as I live," declares the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, "surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah—a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land." **10** This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the LORD Almighty. **11** The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the earth. Distant nations will bow down to him, all of them in their own lands.

2:8 The Moabites and Ammonites lived to the east of Judah, and they often ridiculed and attacked Judah. These nations worshiped Chemosh and Molek (1 Kings 11:7). Moab's king once sacrificed his son on the city wall to stop an invasion (2 Kings 3:26-27). God would judge these nations for their wickedness and for their treatment of his people.

2:8 Judah had been taunted and mocked by the neighboring nations, Moab and Ammon, but God reminded them that he had "heard the insults" (2:8), and that the taunters would be punished for their pride (2:10). At times the whole world seems to mock God and those who have faith in him. When you are ridiculed, remember that God hears and will answer. Eventually, in God's timing, justice will be carried out.

2:9 The nations of Moab and Ammon trace their roots to Lot's incest with his daughters after they escaped the destruction of evil Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19). Ironically, Moab and Ammon would suffer the same kind of perpetual desolation that God brought down on those evil cities. Sodom and Gomorrah were so completely destroyed that their exact location is still unknown.

Cush

¹² "You Cushites, -too, will be slain by my sword."

2:12 Cush, at the southern end of the Red Sea, controlled Egypt at this time. No one can escape deserved judgment. The Cushites were also "slain by my [God's] sword" when the Babylonians invaded Egypt in 605 B.C. (See Isaiah 18 and Ezekiel 30:9 for other prophecies concerning Cush.)

Assyria - Verses 13-15

¹³ He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert. ¹⁴ Flocks and herds will lie down there, creatures of every kind. The desert owl and the screech owl will roost on her columns. Their hooting will echo through the windows, rubble will fill the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed. ¹⁵ This is the city of revelry that lived in safety. She said to herself, "I am the one! And there is none besides me." What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.

2:13 Zephaniah mentioned the large nation to the south and then moved to the nation that invaded from the north, Assyria. Though declining, Assyria was still the strongest military power of the day, dominating the world for three centuries and destroying anyone in its path. Nineveh, the large capital city, was considered impregnable. However, just as Zephaniah predicted, Nineveh was wiped out in 612 B.C. by the Babylonians, who would become the next world power.

2:13-15 To predict the destruction of Nineveh 10 years before it happened would be equivalent to predicting the destruction of London, Tokyo, Paris, or New York. Nineveh was the ancient Near Eastern center for culture, technology, and beauty. It had great libraries, buildings, and a vast irrigation system that created lush gardens in the city. The city wall was 60 miles long, 100 feet high, and over 30 feet wide and was fortified with 1,500 towers. Yet the entire city was destroyed so completely that its very existence was questioned until it was discovered, with great difficulty, by 19th-century archaeologists. Nineveh had indeed become as desolate and dry as the desert.