

*The Promise of*

*Resurrection<sup>in</sup> Christ*

*in Zephaniah*



CHRIST COMMUNITY  
CHURCH  
*Changed Hearts. Changed Lives. Changed Community.*



*The Promise of  
Resurrection<sup>in</sup> Christ  
<sup>in</sup> Zephaniah*

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# Introduction

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Each Easter season gives us the opportunity to consider again why Jesus laid down His life for us and granted us newness of life through His resurrection. Did Jesus die so that we could get a second chance to prove our worth? Was His sacrifice so that we could be set free to sin without fear of the consequences? Or, did He suffer the cross and rise victorious from the grave so that we could be restored to God as resurrected sons and daughters to enjoy His presence for eternity? The Prophet Zephaniah helps us to see that Christ came to restore us to God and our calling as His ambassadors of reconciliation. This should cause us to humbly rejoice with greater joy each Easter Season as we draw closer to being gloriously resurrected to enjoy God's presence for eternity at the return of Christ.

So, why focus on the Prophecy of Zephaniah for this Easter Season? Shouldn't we focus only on the joys of the resurrection given that judgment for those in Christ has already been rendered on the cross? What does Zephaniah's warnings and promises to God's people of old have to do with us today? How can focusing on the long shadows of an Old Testament prophet help us further appreciate the colorful brilliance of our present union with Christ? These are great questions for us to wrestle through in order to better hear and live out what God has for us through His Word from Zephaniah.

Knowing the historical context of Zephaniah's prophecy can help us to better understand what God said to the original audience and what He's saying to us today. Though the exact date or timeframe isn't known, we do know that Zephaniah prophesied during Josiah's reign from 640 B.C. to 609 B.C based on **Zephaniah 1:1**. Josiah inherited a nation in severe moral and spiritual decline. The cultural circumstances under Manasseh included rampant idolatry, prostitution as part of cultic worship, and child sacrifices on Baal's altar (cf. **2 Kings 21:1-9**). With the discovery of the Book of the Law in 622 B.C., Israel underwent a moral and spiritual reformation. They resumed the Passover, enjoyed widespread repentance, and morale was high among some of God's people (cf. **2 Kings 22-23**). However, there was considerable opposition to Josiah's reforms from those who had reveled in Manasseh's sins (cf. **Jeremiah 3:6-10**). God called Zephaniah to warn these opposition groups and those who might follow them in His mercy and grace as well as to comfort the faithful remnant seeking to honor the Lord.<sup>1</sup> According to Duguid, "Zephaniah was an acute observer of the problems of his society. Under the inspiration of God, the prophet foresaw and proclaimed the inevitable consequences of the societal and religious abuses that he saw all around him. He recognized that evil cries out for justice, and that the time was drawing near when the sovereign Lord, the

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Webber, *The Coming of the Warrior-King: Zephaniah Simply Explained* (Leyland: EP Books, 2004), 23.

God of Israel, would mete out a just punishment on Judah for the people's long history of sin."<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, many of God's people didn't heed the prophet's warning. The nation descended rapidly into wickedness following Josiah's untimely death resulting in exile in Babylon in 586 B.C (cf. **2 Kings 24-25**).<sup>3</sup> This serves as a cautionary tale for God's people to not grow weary in doing good in glorifying the Lord.

As we've witnessed in other prophetic books, God's judgment ultimately serves His redemptive purposes. Zephaniah proves this truth yet again by warning of God's pending judgment in order to call the people to gather in repentance and bear the fruits of humility, justice, and righteousness. This prophecy serves as a means of grace to reveal their need for repentance and transformation in resurrected newness of life. Calvin depicts this glorious truth when he writes,

The more severe, then, God is, when he chastises us and makes known our sins, and sets before us his wrath, the more clearly he testifies how precious and dear to him is our salvation; for when he sees us rushing headlong, as it were, into ruin, he calls us back by threatening and chastisements. Whenever, then, God condemns us by his word, let us know that he will be propitious to us, if, touched with true repentance, we flee to his mercy; for to effect this is the design of all his reproofs and threatenings.<sup>4</sup>

This continues to be true today. God continues to lovingly call us to repentance and reconciliation. Do we have the ears to hear this Easter Season where God might be warning us to call us to bear fruits in repentance as evidenced by a growing humility, concern for justice, and desire for righteousness?

In addition to the prophecy's context, the structure of Zephaniah helps us to experience God's loving and just heart for His people. The movement of God's judgment contrasts the original flow of Creation-Formation of the Nation of Israel-Call to Serve the Nations in the Torah. Zephaniah warns that God's judgment will first undo Creation (**1:2-3**), then denationalize God's people (**1:4-18**), and conclude by sweeping through the nations like a refiner's fire (**2:4-15**). Robertson observes that, "The entire imagery (of Zephaniah) depicts a reversal of creation's order. Humanity originally had been given responsibility for exercising dominion over the whole creation. But now the creation seizes power from the greatest human empires and transforms it into a bestial wilderness. Organized chaos has supplanted

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<sup>2</sup> Iain M. Duguid, "Zephaniah: Hope Through Darkness" in *Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi* by Iain M. Duguid & Matthew P. Harmon (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2018), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Webber, 14-17; Duguid, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> John Calvin, *Bible Commentaries on the Books of Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Haggai* (North Charleston: Createspace, 2021), 178.

civilization.”<sup>5</sup> Fortunately for them and for us, judgment isn’t God’s main goal; His main goal is restoration in resurrected newness of life which His judgment serves to facilitate.

God’s redemptive goal first appears in the midst of the valleys of judgment at the pinnacle of Zephaniah in **2:1-3**.<sup>6</sup> In these verses, God calls His people to return to Him in repentance so that He might hide them from the judgment to come.<sup>7</sup> As Webber observes, “Time after time (God) makes known that he is willing to delay and withhold punishment in order that the people might learn and turn from their sinful ways.”<sup>8</sup> Zephaniah goes on to repeat the warning of God’s judgment on Jerusalem and the nations in **3:1-8** before declaring one of the more glorious descriptions of reconciliation in all of the Bible in **3:9-20**. This reconciliation is described as re-creation through resurrection in which God’s people shed the grave clothes of the curses of sin and death for the glorious worship garments of Abba’s beloved in Christ! Calvin writes, “...(Zephaniah) means that the restoration of the Church would be a kind of resurrection, for the Lord would humble his people until they became almost lifeless, so as not to be able to breathe: but he would at length gather them, and so gather them that they would not only breathe but be replenished with such new vigor as they had received no loss.”<sup>9</sup> This refreshment in resurrection is what we hope and long for in Christ.

As we await the glorified resurrection in Christ in which God will sing praise songs over us, we must confess that we’re too often self-serving and forsake the redemptive mission for which we exist just like those in Zephaniah’s day. We must recognize that judgment fell on both Israel and the nations, because God’s people had forsaken their missional reason for being. We need to soberly recognize that there are many this Easter season that have yet to experience the companion blessings of forgiveness and resurrection in Christ. In our culture, Easter serves as a unique opportunity to invite people to experience God’s love for them through the story of the death and resurrection of Christ. This story begins long before the final weeks of Jesus’ life. Zephaniah’s declaration of God’s justice and love is ultimately fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ. Helping those who don’t currently believe to see this as the consistent redemptive story through both Old and New Testaments can help clear away one of the main barriers to believing that God loves them. We know that God will

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<sup>5</sup> O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habbakuk, and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 312.

<sup>6</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Preacher’s Commentary, Vol. 23: Micah, Nahum, Habbakuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992), 229.

<sup>7</sup> Zephaniah’s name which means “Hidden of the Lord (Yahweh),” seems to foreshadow **2:3**, however, Robertson, 252, writes that there is no scholarly agreement on a connection between the meaning of Zephaniah’s name and the content of the book.

<sup>8</sup> Webber, 130.

<sup>9</sup> Calvin, 238.

be faithful to keep His redemptive promises. As Duguid writes, "...in the end, the Lord would do what humanity on its own never could: he would unite the nations once again in his worship under his blessing, just as he promised Abraham (see Ps. 47:9)."<sup>10</sup> Our desire should be to join in God's redemptive mission to which He has invited and equipped us to bear eternal fruit.

This Easter Season offers us the opportunity to behold again God's mercy and grace to us through the death and resurrection of Christ. May it move us to grieve our sin and bear fruits in keeping with repentance from the eternal storehouse of our forgiveness. May it stir our hearts to joy in our resurrected newness of life that grants us the ability to please God and bear eternal fruits through our words and deeds. Matthew Henry succinctly captures God's heart in Zephaniah's prophecy: "From first to last (God's) design was not to drive the people to despair, but to drive them to God and to their duty – not to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins."<sup>11</sup> Join in praying that God's Word in Zephaniah would drive us to God and the wonderful things that we get to do in Christ as we remember the costly death of Jesus and celebrate His glorious resurrection!

We will continue to seek nourishment from the Old and New Testaments for our weekly devotion and worship. Various **Psalms** will serve to call us to worship each week as they have God's people throughout history. We will respond together to God's call from **Zephaniah 2:1-3** asking for the ears to hear and the heart to act on His Word in righteous obedience and humility in the Holy Spirit through union with Christ. Our assurances of pardon will come from **the Gospel stories of Jesus' death and resurrection** to anchor our faiths in Christ's redemptive purpose for serving as a sacrifice on our behalf. We will receive a benedictory blessing each week based on **Zephaniah 3:14-15** to remind us of God's pardoning mercy and redeeming grace. The goal of these various elements is to help us to walk in newness of life in the power of Christ's resurrection for God's glory, our joy, and for the life of the world.

This devotional is designed to encourage daily meditation and prayer in personal devotions and/or family worship. You are encouraged to use it the week prior to the associated sermon so that you and your family are better prepared for worship. In addition to the Scriptures and associated questions, there are opportunities to pray for the various aspects of the Church. On Wednesdays, we will pray for different areas within our local church. We also have the opportunity on Saturday to further prepare for worship on Sunday, particularly if we will be celebrating the Lord's Table or a baptism. On Sunday, the Lord's Day Sabbath, we will pray for the means of grace to bear specific fruits in our lives. May God bless our time in personal devotion, family worship, and corporate worship as we seek for the Church to

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<sup>10</sup> Duguid, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. 4* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 1991), 1,083.

grow in knowing God's unchanging love and living in a way that reflects our gratitude and His glory!

*Soli Deo Gloria!*



# The Structure

## of Zephaniah

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### Opening:

- 1:1: *The Word of the Lord to Zephaniah*
- 1:2-3: *Creation Undone in the Day of the Lord*
- 1:4-18: *God's People Undone in the Day of the Lord*
- 2:1-3: *The Offer of the Power of Sin Undone Before the Day of the Lord*
- 2:4-15: *The Nations Undone in the Day of the Lord*
- 3:1-8: *Jerusalem and the Nations Undone in the Day of the Lord Revisited*
- 3:9-13: *The Curse of Babel Undone in the Day of the Lord*
- 3:14-20: *The Power of Death Undone in the Day of the Lord*

# Sermon Schedule

Date	Call to Worship	Assurance of Pardon	Benediction	Sacrament
<i>Sunday, 3/16:</i> Zephaniah 1:1-3	Psalm 8	Matthew 21:1-11	Zephaniah 3:14-15	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 3/13:</i> Zephaniah 1:4-18	Psalm 135:13-21	Matthew 21:12-17	Zephaniah 3:14-15	<i>Baptism</i>
<i>Sunday, 3/20:</i> Zephaniah 2:1-3	Psalm 27	Matthew 26:26-29	Zephaniah 3:14-15	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 3/27:</i> Zephaniah 2:4-15	Psalm 17:6-15	Matthew 27:27-31	Zephaniah 3:14-15	
<i>Sunday, 4/3:</i> Zephaniah 3:1-8	Psalm 122	Matthew 27:32-44	Zephaniah 3:14-15	<i>The Lord's Table</i>
<i>Sunday, 4/10:</i> Zephaniah 3:9-13	Psalm 47	Matthew 27:45-54	Zephaniah 3:14-15	
<i>Sunday, 4/17:</i> Zephaniah 3:14-20	Psalm 40:1-10	Matthew 28:1-10	Zephaniah 3:14-15	<i>The Lord's Table</i>

# Weekly Congregational

## *Response* <sup>to the</sup> *Call* <sup>to</sup> *Worship*

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**Gather us together, Abba Father,  
to hear Your Word of warning and comfort  
before Your discipline comes upon us.  
Let us find You in humble obedience  
as we seek righteousness and humility.**

**Amen.**

*Adapted from* **Zephaniah 2:1-3**

# Weekly Benedictory Blessing

*to* *Send Us Out Refreshed*

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We have sung aloud, rejoiced, and exulted with all our hearts because You, Lord, have taken away the judgments against us and cleared away our enemies of sin and death in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The King of Glory is present with us as we boldly go out allowing us to fear no evil.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Amen.

*Adapted from* **Zephaniah 3:14-15**

# Zephaniah 1:1-3

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## *The Week of March 6<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 2/28:* **Psalm 8:** Give thanks to the Lord for being mindful of you and crowning you with honor and glory in Christ.

*Tuesday, 3/1:* **Matthew 21:1-11:** Who does your life declare Jesus to be? What are those in your spheres of influence learning about Jesus from your life?

*Wednesday, 3/2:* Pray for the host of children that God has entrusted to our church to behold our love for Him and our neighbors as ourselves in a way that will help draw them to Jesus.

*Thursday, 3/3:* **Zephaniah 1:1-3:** Pray for our congregation to mature in our understanding of who God is and who we are as His beloved children through our time in the Prophecy of Zephaniah.

*Friday, 3/4:* **Zephaniah 3:14-15:** How does weekly worship help you to know that God loves you and has delivered you from His judgments against you?

*Saturday, 3/5:* Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table on Sunday. Come in awe of the Lord's love for you as displayed in the death and resurrection of Christ.

*Sunday, 3/6:* *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the Holy Spirit to facilitate a healthy fear of and respect for the Lord through the means of grace.

# Zephaniah 1:4-18

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## *The Week of March 13<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 3/7:* **Psalm 135:13-21:** What ways can you bless the Lord and glorify His name this week in your spheres of influence?

*Tuesday, 3/8:* **Matthew 21:12-17:** Meditate on Jesus' fierce zeal for God's glory. Who suffers most when the things of God get twisted to serve our base desires?

*Wednesday, 3/9:* Pray for the students in youth group to experience our church as a house of prayer and generosity.

*Thursday, 3/10:* **Zephaniah 1:4-18:** Where does God's judgment begin? How should this affect how you live as a Christian?

*Friday, 3/11:* **Zephaniah 3:14-15:** Give thanks to the Lord for how you have been specifically blessed by having His just judgments against your sin taken away in Jesus.

*Saturday, 3/12:* Read the preparatory letter for Shepherd Blackman's baptism on Sunday. Come seeking to improve on your baptism as you are reminded of Christ's death and resurrection on your behalf to set you free from the shackles of sin and death.

*Sunday, 3/13:* *The Lord's Day Sabbath* <sup>with</sup> *Baptism:* Pray for the means of grace to humble and prepare us for the opportunities we have to glorify God in the power of the Holy Spirit.

# Zephaniah 2:1-3

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## *The Week of March 20<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 3/14:* **Psalm 27:** What are you fearful of outside of the Lord? Pray this Psalm asking the Holy Spirit to help deliver from your fears and take greater joy in the Lord.

*Tuesday, 3/15:* **Matthew 26:26-29:** What are some ways in which you have been assured of who and Whose you are through the Lord's Table?

*Wednesday, 3/16:* Pray for the college students to seek the Lord humbly and righteously while He may be found and not presume upon His grace.

*Thursday, 3/17:* **Zephaniah 2:1-3:** How has God's patience and longsuffering been displayed to you throughout your life? Share this with someone this week.

*Friday, 3/18:* **Zephaniah 3:14-15:** How have you been blessed by seeing God's just judgment of others taken away in Christ?

*Saturday, 3/19:* Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table on Sunday. Come seeking the Lord humbly and righteously in Christ.

*Sunday, 3/20:* *The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to help us bear fruits in keeping with repentance as a result of our being forgiven in Jesus.

# Zephaniah 2:4-15

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## *The Week of March 27<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 3/21:* **Psalm 17:6-15:** What most affects your hope in the power of prayer and whether God will faithfully respond?

*Tuesday, 3/22:* **Matthew 27:27-31:** Consider the brutality that Jesus suffered in preparation for His crucifixion. Give thanks for the depths of His love for you that He would endure such for the joy of your salvation.

*Wednesday, 3/23:* Pray for those who are single to be faithful to the redemptive mission of God as ambassadors of reconciliation.

*Thursday, 3/24:* **Zephaniah 2:4-15:** How should we react to the judgment of the nations? What role does our lack of missional love play in the nations suffering judgment?

*Friday, 3/25:* **Zephaniah 3:14-15:** Who could you be praying for in your spheres of influence that you would love to see God's just judgment taken away in Christ? What role might you play in this coming to eternal fruition?

*Saturday, 3/26:* Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw those to worship tomorrow who need to be redeemed by God's grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

*Sunday, 3/27:* *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the means of grace to tender our hearts toward those who are currently enemies of God.



# Zephaniah 3:1-8

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*The Week of April 3<sup>rd</sup>*

*Monday, 3/28: Psalm 122:* What helps you come into the house of the Lord for worship on the Lord's Day Sabbath with gladness?

*Tuesday, 3/29: Matthew 27:32-44:* Imagine being mocked as Jesus was mocked. What could keep you from using the divine power He had to exact revenge on those mocking?

*Wednesday, 3/30:* Pray for those newly married and first time parents to have ears to hear God's Word so as to trust in and draw near to Him in Christ.

*Thursday, 3/31: Zephaniah 3:1-8:* What have you recently heard from God's Word that has helped you to trust in and draw near to Him in Christ?

*Friday, 4/1: Zephaniah 3:14-15:* Give thanks to God for clearing away our enemies of sin and death in the death and resurrection of Christ.

*Saturday, 4/2:* Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table on Sunday. Come expecting the Holy Spirit to help you hear of God's love for you from His Word.

*Sunday, 4/3: <sup>The</sup> Lord's Day Sabbath <sup>with The</sup> Lord's Table:* Pray for the means of grace to help us accept the loving correction from the Lord so as to be restored to Him and others.

# Zephaniah 3:9-13

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*The Week of April 10<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 4/4:* **Psalm 47:** What ought to motivate you to sing out in praise and joy? Is it what the Lord has done for you, or is it the style of or familiarity with the music?

*Tuesday, 4/5:* **Matthew 27:45-54:** What does the tearing of the curtain and the opening of the tombs tell us about what Christ accomplished through His death on the cross?

*Wednesday, 4/6:* Pray for the parents in our church to call upon the Lord and to serve Him with one accord.

*Thursday, 4/7:* **Zephaniah 3:9-13:** Could you be described as humble and lowly? Do you seek refuge in the Lord?

*Friday, 4/8:* **Zephaniah 3:14-15:** How have you been blessed by knowing that the Lord is present with us His people every week in worship?

*Saturday, 4/9:* Pray for the Holy Spirit to draw people to worship those who are seeking refuge in the Lord.

*Sunday, 4/10:* *The Lord's Day Sabbath:* Pray for the Holy Spirit to use the means of grace to make us a more humble and lowly people in Christ's image.

# Zephaniah 3:14-20

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*The Week of April 17<sup>th</sup>*

*Monday, 4/11: Psalm 40:1-10:* How have you benefitted from waiting patiently for the Lord? How have you been blessed by trusting in the Lord?

*Tuesday, 4/12: Matthew 28:1-10:* How do you react to the resurrection of Jesus? Does it cause you to humble yourself and worship as it did those who first saw Him?

*Wednesday, 4/13:* Pray for the Empty Nesters and Solos groups to continue to walk faithfully in resurrected newness of life in Christ.

*Thursday, 4/14: Zephaniah 3:14-20:* How will God react to being in our presence after the Last Judgment? Pray through this passage giving thanks for the Lord's grace!

*Friday, 4/15: Zephaniah 3:14-15:* Meditate on the blessing of being sent out of worship to boldly go and fear no evil in Christ.

*Saturday, 4/16:* Read the preparatory letter for the Lord's Table on Sunday. Come expecting to be refreshed by God's grace.

*Sunday, 4/17: The Lord's Day Sabbath with The Lord's Table:* Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us to walk in resurrected newness of life.

# Suggested Resources

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*for further Study*

## Basic:

Daniel Webber, *The Coming of the Warrior-King: Zephaniah Simply Explained* (Leyland: EP Books, 2004)

Iain M. Duguid & Matthew P. Harmon, "Zephaniah: Hope Through the Darkness" in *Zephaniah, Haggai, Malachi: Reformed Expository Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2018)

## Intermediate:

John Calvin, *Commentary on Zephaniah*, available at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/cal/zephaniah-1.html>

John L. McKay, *Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah: God's Just Demands* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 1988; Reprint 2019)

## Advanced:

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990)

J. Alec Motyer, "Zephaniah" in *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical & Expository Commentary, Vol. 3: Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi*, ed. by Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998)