

ZEPHANIAH: GOD'S JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION

V: God's Vengeance On Judah's Neighbors

(Zephaniah 2:4-15)

I. Introduction

- A. Unlike the other Old Testament prophets, Zephaniah had a genealogy of four generations, so he was a man "of prominence and even of royalty." (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1523) He offered the prophetic view of the upper class.
- B. However, upper and lower class prophets **both** wrote of judgment and blessing for God's people in "the day of the Lord," a phrase Zephaniah used more often than any other prophet. (Ibid., p. 1524)
- C. In Zephaniah 2:4-15, God's prophet shifted from warning Judah to predict "wrath on her equally idolatrous neighbors" who had "led Judah to stumble" or mistreated them. We view the passage for our application:

II. God's Vengeance On Judah's Neighbors, Zephaniah 2:4-15.

- A. When God directed the people of Israel to possess the Promised Land, a land situated at the crossroads of the continents of the ancient world, His intent was for Israel to be a testimony to God in order to disciple the pagan Gentile world around her for the Lord following the apostasy at Babel, cf. Genesis 11:1-12:3.
- B. However, Israel failed in her testimony, and the pagan Gentiles around her either influenced Israel to become idolatrous like them or they mistreated Israel.
- C. Thus, after the call in Zephaniah 2:1-3 that Judah repent and return to the Lord, Zephaniah 2:4-15 addressed the Gentile nations surrounding Judah to the four points of the compass, predicting God's judgment on them for being idolatrous stumbling blocks to Judah or for mistreating her (Ibid., p. 1529):
 1. God pronounced judgment on Judah's Gentile neighbor of Philistia to the **west**, Zephaniah 2:4-7:
 - a. Four of Philistia's five city states, mentioned in order from south to north (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron) would be conquered in divine judgment, Zephaniah 2:4. [The fifth city state of Gath is not named, for it may still have lain in ruins following Uzziah's destruction of it (2 Chronicles 26:6), Ibid.]
 - b. The Cherethites along the southern coast of Philistia "had roots in Crete," and they would face judgment since God was against the people of Canaan, a reference to the coastal plains, Zeph. 2:5a; Ibid. They as a people along the coast would be annihilated, their land being left as mere pasture lands, Zephaniah 2:5b-6.
 - c. In time, the remnant of Judah who survived God's wrath on Judah would occupy this land of their former enemies when God restored the fortunes of His people, Zephaniah 2:7.
 2. God pronounced judgment on Judah's Gentile neighbors of Moab and Edom to the **east**, Zeph. 2:8-11:
 - a. Moab and Edom were east of Judah, and these nations had expressed hostility toward God's people in the form of insults, taunts, and threats, so God made an oath that He would surely make Moab as Sodom and Ammon as Gomorrah, reducing them to utter ruin making them a wasteland, Zeph. 2:8-9a; Ibid., p. 1530.
 - b. A remnant of Judah would possess those lands and enslave their survivors, Zeph. 2:9b; Ibid.
 - c. This judgment would be administered for the Moabites' and Ammonites' insults and mocks of God's people (Zeph. 2:10), and the Lord would judge them in His power and destroy all their idols, Zeph. 2:11a.
 - d. In Zephaniah 2:11b, God looked far forward to the Millennial Kingdom to predict that all nations will worship the true God, everyone in his own land. (Ibid.)
 3. God pronounced judgment on Judah's Gentile neighbor of the Ethiopians to the **south**, Zephaniah 2:12:
 - a. The Ethiopians are briefly mentioned in this passage as objects of God's judgment, possibly mainly "to stretch the points of the compass to the known extremes," Ibid.
 - b. However, they also were guilty of idolatry, and they had threatened Judah when Judah's King Asa had destroyed a large army of Ethiopians according to 2 Chronicles 14:9-13; Ibid., p. 1531.
 4. God pronounced judgment on Judah's Gentile neighbor of Assyria to the **north**, Zephaniah 2:13-15:
 - a. Assyria lay to the northeast of Judah, but invaders from that area of the Middle East avoided the desert by following the Fertile Crescent westward before turning south to invade Judah from the north, Ibid.
 - b. Though Assyria's capitol city of Nineveh contained greatly feared, ruthless people, God would cause it to be completely destroyed in judgment, leaving it a deserted haunt of wild animals, Zephaniah 2:13-14.
 - c. Nineveh's pride would lead to her utter devastation and to her resulting great humiliation, Zephaniah 2:15.

Lesson: *For either mistreating God's people or for acting as idolatrous stumbling blocks for them, God would severely punish Judah's neighbors to the four points of the compass all around her.*

Application: *May we not mistreat or be a spiritual stumbling block to others around us lest God punish us for it.*