

# Judgment is Coming!

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*Zephaniah 1:2-6*

## INTRODUCTION

- A. Archimedes, the well-known Greek mathematician, was so fond of mathematical problems that, when the city in which he was residing was stormed, he did not know it.
1. He heard not the whizz of the arrows that were shot into the market place; he heard not the tramp of the armed men that marched to the forum of the conquered city.
  2. He was busy in his study with his triangles and squares and obtuse calculations.
    - a. He heard not, when the very street in which he was, was stormed; he heard not when the soldiers entered his house; and it was not till a soldier came and plucked him by the sleeve that the calculating philosopher lifted his head and realized that the soldier had business with him.
    - b. Archimedes was so concerned about his own interests that he completely ignored the warning signs of impending doom.
- B. In that way, he was like the little boy who was lost at Disney World.
1. Once they realized that he was missing, his family frantically called security & began a search for him.
  2. At last, they found him eating an ice cream cone at the end of one of the many parades.
    - a. He was enjoying himself—having the time of his life, all the while totally oblivious to the fact that he was lost.
    - b. Many will be just like Archimedes & that boy at Disney World:
      - 1) “As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man” (Mt 24:37-39).
      - 2) “While people are saying, ‘There is peace and security,’ then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape” (1 Thess 5:3).
- C. But, “Judgment is Coming” whether or not individuals realize it.
1. The rich farmer had no idea that judgment was coming.
    - a. He had just decided to build bigger barns & live a good life.
    - b. God immediately says to him: “Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Lk 12:20).
      - 1) This man defines “fool.”
      - 2) He had everything he wanted in this life, but he forgot there is another life & that “Judgment is Coming”!
  2. “It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27).
    - a. The author of Hebrews doesn’t say, “There might be judgment after death.” Rather, there is judgment after death.
    - b. How many people start out on a trip & end up in Torment before they reach their destination? How many people wake up to begin the day but end up in Torment before they reach the shower?
      - 1) They may have been totally oblivious to their impending doom, but it still came.
      - 2) This morning’s text keeps us from being oblivious to the coming judgment.
- D. READ TEXT.
1. The people of Judah seem to have had no idea that judgment was coming upon them.
    - a. “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.’ Their goods 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” (1:12-13).
    - b. These people believed that God would do nothing—either good or ill.
  2. God says, “You just wait. I’ll show you what I’ll do. Even though you are oblivious to judgment,

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‘Judgment is Coming!’ ”

3. Granted, this passage deals with the coming Babylonian Captivity; however, there are some very important lessons we wish to learn this morning.

### **JUDGMENT IS COMING UPON THE WHOLE WORLD, vv. 2-3**

- A. “‘I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth,’ declares the LORD. ‘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.”
  1. Zephaniah pairs man and beast (created on the sixth day) and birds and fish (created on the fifth day).
    - a. This pairing demonstrates that every living thing will be destroyed.
    - b. The prophet is demonstrating the totality and severity of the divine judgment.
  2. This judgment is so total that no one or no thing shall escape.
  3. This passage uses the same imagery as the flood narrative.
    - a. The phrase “face of the earth” occurs throughout the flood narrative.
    - b. This likely serves to illustrate the totality of this destruction - just as everything outside the ark was destroyed in the flood, everything would be destroyed in this judgment.
- B. Zephaniah is depicting a total & complete judgment.
  1. The judgment at the end of the age is so total that no one shall escape.
    - a. “Before [Christ] will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats” (Mt 25:32).
    - b. “He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury” (Rom 2:6-8).
    - c. “I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened” (Rev 20:12)—John didn’t see anyone escaping that judgment.
    - d. You are going to be judged by God—just as every Israelite was going to be judged when the Babylonians came against them.
  2. An anxious client asked his lawyer, “Will my case be called today? Are you sure that nothing is left undone? If judgment is pronounced against me, I am a ruined man.”
    - a. What if your case is called before the Lord today? Is there anything left undone? Will you be ruined if God judges you this day?
    - b. Are you ready for that day when God will sweep away everything from the face of the earth?

### **JUDGMENT IS COMING UPON THE HOUSE OF GOD, vv. 4-6**

- A. “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, 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, those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.”
- B. Zephaniah begins with the general judgment about to come, and then he narrows his focus on the people of God.
  1. Judah had been privileged to have God’s revelation of his will; they would, thus, face a more severe judgment.
  2. This principle occurs in the New Testament as well: although judgment will come upon the whole world, judgment upon the church will be more severe.
    - a. “It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Pt 4:17).
    - b. “That servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating” (Lk. 12:47).
  3. It is only right that judgment begins “at the household of God”!
    - a. It is we who have come to understand the high price God paid for our salvation.

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- b. It is we who have heard the Gospel time & time again.
  - c. It is we who are the salt of the earth.
- C. God would cut off from Jerusalem the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests, v. 4b.
- 1. The remnant of Baal may signify that Josiah had begun his reforms.
    - a. Manasseh instituted the worship of Baal in Judah: “He rebuilt the high places that Hezekiah his father had destroyed, and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them” (2 Ki. 21:3).
    - b. Josiah destroyed much of the worship of Baal: “They chopped down the altars of the Baals in his presence, and he cut down the incense altars that stood above them. And he broke in pieces the Asherim and the carved and the metal images, and he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them” (2 Chr. 34:4).
  - 2. The fact that God only mentions a “remnant of Baal” likely indicates that Josiah had begun his reforms, but his reforms had not fully taken root.
    - a. This remnant of Baal had to be eradicated—no person loyal to YHWH could be allowed to continue worshiping idols.
    - b. This illustrates the importance of not allowing evil to go unchecked.
      - 1) Those in Judah needed to be on constant guard against those loyal to Baal.
      - 2) Those of us in the church today need to be on constant guard against those who would propagate error.
        - a) Even though Josiah had probably started his reforms, there were still some loyal to paganism rather than God.
        - b) Even when congregations attempt to do right, there may be some loyal to error.
          - i. The elect lady was warned about those loyal to error: “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 Jn 7).
          - ii. The churches of Galatia were dealing with error: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” (Gal. 1:6).
          - iii. We need to be careful that there is no “remnant of Baal” in our midst.
- D. God would cut off those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, v. 5a.
- 1. Roofs provided a clear view of the sky and a good place for altars.
  - 2. In Deut 4:19, Moses had instructed the children of Israel not to participate in the worship of the stars.
  - 3. Manasseh introduced the worship of the host of heaven to Israel (2 Ki. 21:3, 5).
  - 4. Those who continued the practice of Manasseh would face judgment from God.
- E. God would cut off those who bow down and swear to him and yet swear by Milcom, v. 5b.
- 1. Milcom was an Ammorite god who was also called Molech: “You shall not give any of your children to offer them to Molech, and so profane the name of your God: I am the LORD” (Lev. 18:21).
  - 2. The sin here was syncretism; these Jews were taking part of the religion of their neighbors and part of the religion of YHWH and mixing the two together.
    - a. God here makes it very clear that his truth does not mix with error.
    - b. Likewise, today, God’s religion does not mix with error.
      - 1) There have always been those who have wanted to take worldly ideas & mix them with truth.
      - 2) Attempting to do such is like mixing oil & water; God has no use for such!
  - 3. There is another lesson for us, perhaps one that is even more relevant for us.
    - a. These Jews had divided hearts—they wanted to serve God, but they wanted to hold onto the things of the world.
    - b. If we are to be pleasing to God, we cannot pledge allegiance to him and yet hold onto part of the world; we cannot have divided loyalty.
      - 1) There has always been a tendency for people to serve God with divided loyalty.
        - a) The people of Samaria “feared the LORD but also served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away” (2 Ki. 17:33).
        - b) In discussing paganism with the Corinthians, Paul said, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of

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- demons” (1 Cor. 10:21).
- 2) We must rid ourselves of double-mindedness and serve God with undivided service.
  - a) In reply to Satan’s attempt to get Jesus to worship him, Jesus responded, “You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve” (Mt. 4:10).
  - b) “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded” (Js. 4:8).
- c. John Adams, when casting a vote in the Continental Congress for the Declaration of Independence said, “Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish, I give my heart and my hand to this vote.”
  - 1) The future President knew there was no turning back; once he cast that vote everything would be different.
  - 2) When we become a Christian there is to be no burning back, no divided loyalty; we are to serve God with our entire being!
- F. God would cut off those who had turned back from following him and who did not seek him or inquire of him, v. 6.
  - 1. Unlike the others God intends to destroy, this class of individuals does not deal with idolatry, it simply deals with not following the Lord.
  - 2. These Jews had turned back from following the Lord.
    - a. They had begun to follow him, but things did not work out the way they had desired, so they left him.
    - b. There is clearly a tendency for Christians to do the same thing - to pledge allegiance to the Lord, but then to turn back from following him. Some research indicates that about half of those who come to Christ eventually leave.
    - c. God does not desire that we should turn back from following him.
      - 1) Those who draw back are not fit for the kingdom of heaven: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Lk. 9:62).
      - 2) God is not happy if we turn back from following him: “My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him” (Heb. 10:38).
    - d. Have you turned back?

## CONCLUSION

- A. “Judgment is Coming!”
  - 1. “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 1:14-15).
  - 2. Charles Spurgeon once said, “Is it not foolish to be living in this world without a thought of what you will do at last? A man goes into an inn, and as soon as he sits down, he begins to order his wine, his dinner, his bed; there is no delicacy in season which he forgets to bespeak. He stops at the inn for some time. By and by, the bill is forthcoming, and it takes him by surprise. ‘I never thought of that! I never thought of that!’ ‘Why,’ says the landlord, ‘here is a man who is either a born fool, or else a knave. What! Never thought of the reckoning, never thought of settling with me!’ After this fashion, too many lie. They eat and drink and sin, but they forget the inevitable hereafter, when, for all deeds done in the body, the Lord will bring us into judgment.”
- B. Are you thought of the reckoning? Are you prepared for that reckoning?