

**“...I Will Curse Him That Curseth Thee...”**

**Zephaniah 2:4-15; Genesis 12:3**

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Introduction: This morning we began our study of the Book of Zephaniah by looking at the reckoning of judgment & the repentance to avert judgment. That reckoning began with Judah for we noted that judgment begins with the people of God (cf. I Peter 4:18). Tonight we come to chapter 2, verses 4-15, where we find judgment upon the nations surrounding Judah (Israel). They correspond to the 4 points of the compass & therefore seem to represent all Gentiles. It was a reminder to Judah & to us today that the future Day of the Lord will include judgment upon all the nations of the world. There is also the indication of God’s promise to Abraham being fulfilled, *“And I will make of thee a great nation, & I will bless thee, & make thy name great; & thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, & curse him that curseth thee: & in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed”* (Genesis 12:2-3). Consider with me this evening how the absolute sovereignty of God over the nations of the world is demonstrated by the judgment of these enemies of Israel.

I. God’s judgment upon **Philistia** (to the West) (2:4-7)

A. Identities of the cities:

1. *“Gaza shall be forsaken.”*
2. *“Ashkelon a desolation.”*
3. *“They shall drive out Ashdod.”*
4. *“Ekron shall be rooted up.”*

Summary: Four of the five Philistine cities are mentioned; Gath is left out because both Uzziah & Hezekiah had kept Gath in subjection.

B. Indictment of the peoples:

1. The people are called *“Cherethites”* or people of the Cretans (having come from Crete).
2. The prophecy indicates that the Philistines would be permanently removed & the Jews would possess their land.

Summary: Today modern Israel controls the ancient territory of the Philistines. Phillips points out: *“One area of the coastline, the Gaza Strip, was held by the Arabs until 1967, but it was seized by the Jews during the Six-Day War.”*

II. God’s judgment upon **Moab & Ammon** (to the East) (:8-11)

A. The description (& history) of these nations:

1. They were descendants of Lot’s incestuous relationship with his 2 daughters (Gen. 19:30-38).
2. They were bitter enemies of the Jews down through the years – here accused of blasphemy against Israel (*“reproached”* & *“magnified”* – *“revilings”*).

B. The destiny of these nations:

1. Their destruction likened unto that of Sodom & Gomorrah – land of nettles & salt pits.
2. Their future destiny is to be occupied by the Jewish people.

Summary: *“Today the territory of Ammon & Moab lies within the boundaries of Jordan...When the end-times arrive, Jordan will again become an active foe of Israel - & all Zephaniah’s predictions will have their final fulfillment”* (Phillips).

Note the universal language of verse 11. This speaks not only of God's punishment & destruction of the Gentile nations, but "to overrule evil for good & to bring peace out of hopeless chaos. In His wrath He will be terrible to the sinning nations, thus dealing summarily with the gods they worshipped" (Feinberg). This will result in the universal worship of the one true God.

### III. Judgment upon *Ethiopia* (to the South) (:12)

- A. Its identity: Ethiopia is sometimes referred to as "*Cush*" (& possibly included Egypt).
- B. Its destiny: "*Slain by My sword*" – God used the swords of Nebuchadnezzar & his soldiers to conquer this ancient nation.

### IV. Judgment upon *Assyria* (to the North) (:13-15)

- A. The nation described:
  1. At the time of this prophecy, Assyria was the strongest nation in the known world.
  2. Compare the prophecies of Jonah & Nahum concerning Nineveh.
- B. The nation destroyed:
  1. The city will become as a dry, desolate wilderness.
  2. The city will be deserted, fit only for wild animals.

Summary: In her "glory" days, Nineveh boasted as being "one of a kind" –self-sufficient. "For this arrogance she is brought down to the basest desolation... The magnitude & suddenness of her destruction will make her the object of scorn & contempt of all that pass by. They will wag their hand, implying that she has brought her judgment on herself" (Feinberg). (cf. Nahum 3:19.)

Conclusion: Since the judgment prophesied by Zephaniah against these cities came to pass, shall not all of the other prophecies be fulfilled as well? Wiersbe points out: "Each of these local invasions & conquests was a precursor of the end times Day of the Lord, which will come upon the whole world. But when the Day of the Lord has run its course, Israel will be delivered, & the Lord will establish His glorious kingdom on the earth (see 3:9-20)." What other lessons can we learn from this Book of Zephaniah? As noted in the introduction, God judges His people for their disobedience. God's people then, & today, are to be different from the world around them. Consider the N.T. admonitions of Romans 12:1-2 as well as II Corinthians 6:14 – 7:1. Again as was stated in the introduction, God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3 still stands. Those nations which mistreat God's people, the Jews, can expect to be judged. The writer to the Hebrews declared, "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*" (10:31). It should be noted that although these nations were not identified with the worship of the one true God, they were still responsible & accountable to God & stand without excuse because of the revelation of God in His creation & man's conscience (see Romans 1:18ff.).

The lesson for the individual is summarized in Hebrews 9:27, "*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" Will you stand at the Great White Throne to be judged by your works & ultimately cast into hell because your name is not found written in the Book of Life? Or as a believer, will you stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ to receive reward (or the loss of reward) because of your faith in & service for the Lord Jesus Christ? How about you this evening?