

# **“King of Israel” and “Do Not Fear, Daughter of Zion”**

*The Use of Zephaniah 3 in John 12*

**Christopher S. Tachick**

  
P U B L I S H I N G  
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## Foreword

Preaching around A.D. 33 and having recently witnessed Jesus Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his week of passion, his resurrection, his ascension, and then the birth of his church at Pentecost, the Apostle Peter daringly proclaimed from Jerusalem's Temple Mount that "God foretold by the mouth of *all* the prophets that his Christ would suffer" and that "*all* the prophets . . . proclaimed these days" of the church's rise (Acts 3:18, 24). Indeed, Peter would later declare that "to [Christ] *all* the prophets bear witness" (10:43). In Wittenberg, Germany, a millennium and a half later, in lectures dated to 13 August 1525, Martin Luther asserted of the prophet Zephaniah, "Among the minor prophets, he makes the clearest prophecies about the kingdom of Christ" (*Minor Prophets I: Hosea–Malachi*, Luther's Works 18, 319). What is so striking about these statements from both the apostle and Luther is that God's prophetic mouthpiece Zephaniah never explicitly mentioned the promised Messiah, whether with reference to his tribulation or triumph. Nevertheless, those reading his book through the light and lens of Christ, assert that they find within it God predicting both Christ's suffering and sovereignty.

The study before you by Christopher Tachick helps clarify how the assertions by both the apostle and Luther are true. It does so by adding to the significant wrestling done over the last five decades on how the New Testament authors cite, allude to, or echo the Old Testament. Tachick's formal training as a linguist, exegete, and theologian, his grasp of the biblical languages, along with English, French, and German, and his years of service with Wycliffe Bible Translators have supplied him with key skills for this task. But even more,

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he knows the God of Scripture, and he is convinced of the Bible's overarching unity and of the way the whole progresses, integrates, and climaxes in Christ. This study is both careful and thoughtful, and engages the best scholarship on both Zephaniah and the Fourth Gospel. Tachick persuasively argues that John's narrative of Jesus' triumphal entry alludes at two different points (John 12:13, 15) to Zephaniah 3:14–15, and the study helpfully unpacks the significance of this fact for the message of John's Gospel.

Interpreters commonly recognize the citations of Psalm 118:25–26 and Zechariah 9:9 in John 12:13–15, where we read:

So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the *King of Israel!*" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written, "*Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt.*"

However, as Tachick rightly observes, the psalmist did not include the phrase "King of Israel," and Zechariah's opening charge is actually "rejoice" rather than "fear not." What, therefore, is John doing in these citations? Tachick suggests that he is intentionally alluding to Zephaniah 3:14–15, which is the only place in the Old Testament where we find the grouping of "King of Israel," "Fear not," and "daughter of Zion":

Sing aloud, O *daughter of Zion*; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The LORD has taken away the judgments against you; he has cleared away your enemies. The *King of Israel*, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall *never* again *fear* evil.

To guide his study, Tachick employs the rigorous methodology set forth in works like G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, eds.,

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*Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Baker, 2007) and G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Baker, 2012). In chapter 1, he surveys the various proposals to the sources of “King of Israel,” “fear not,” and “daughter of Zion,” and lays out his methodology. Chapter 2 carefully assesses the literary context of John 12:9–19, examines the chief arguments for what he tags “the Zephaniah Proposal,” and compares the texts Psalm 118, Zechariah 9, Zephaniah 3, and John 12. Chapter 3 supplies the heart of the study, engaging in a rigorous textual assessment of Zephaniah 3:8–20. Here Tachick is at his best, carefully tracing Zephaniah’s flow of thought and faithfully articulating the prophet’s vision of global renewal growing out of the arrival of the day of the Lord. Chapter 4 surveys the reception of Zephaniah 3 in Jewish literature, and then Chapter 5 assesses both the hermeneutical and theological use of Zephaniah 3 in John 12. Tachick argues that John’s primary hermeneutical use of Zephaniah was to highlight the initial direct fulfillment of the prophet’s predictions, but that John also drew on Zephaniah to support his application of narrative irony and to serve as a structural blueprint for his narrative. Tachick also identifies that John’s theological use highlights the very close association between Yahweh and King Jesus, incorporates Zephaniah’s teaching on both the Gentile ingathering and warrior-king motifs, and stresses that Zephaniah’s eschatological “day” of the Lord has dawned. Chapter 6 summarizes the whole.

The prophet Zephaniah envisioned a global renewal arising from the arrival of the day of the Lord. At that time, the warrior-king Yahweh would deliver his city Jerusalem and all the humble gathered there, including some transformed worshippers from the nations. By his allusions to Zephaniah 3, John portrays Jesus’ triumphal entry unto death and victorious resurrection as inaugurating Zephaniah’s day of the Lord and the eschatological reign of Yahweh associated with it. In Christ, the end of the ages has dawned, and through him we gain both a light for seeing what the Old Testament anticipated

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and a lens for guiding us to a proper assessment that magnifies him as the one to whom all the Old Testament points and as the one from whom all fulfillment comes. I celebrate the publication of this work, which faithfully engages in the discipline of biblical theology for the glory of Christ and the good of his church.

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