

OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2022

Insight

CONNECTING
BAPTISTS
ACROSS
IRELAND

ZEPHANIAH

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Wait and Hope

CHRIS BANKS

PAGE 14

Entreat and Trust

JASON DEROUCHIE

PAGE 16

Believe and Sing

SARAH DALRYMPLE

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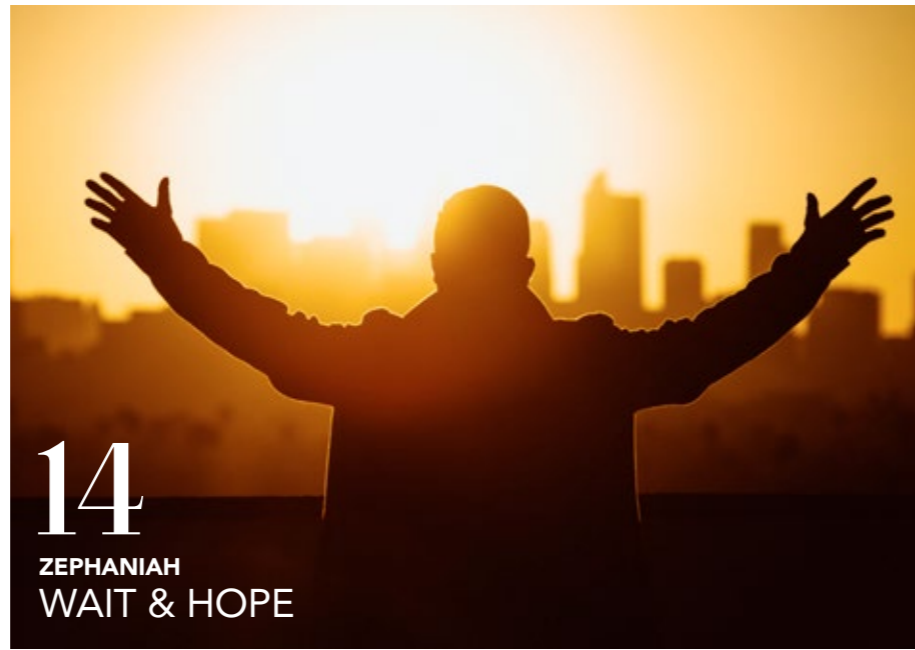
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Entreat & Trust

Q & A

WITH JASON
S. DEROUCHIE

Q: Zephaniah is an obscure Old Testament book, why should we read it?

A: In these darkening days, God's people need to hear his cry to seek him together to avoid punishment and to wait on him to enjoy satisfying salvation. There is only one way to find shelter from the coming day of fury: find refuge in the King who has come in Christ and who will completely save those who have humbled themselves in hope.

Q: In Zephaniah God threatens people with destruction - how does this fit with the love of God?

A: God's love is not uniform (see D. A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God*, Crossway, 1999). God 'loves' the world, but only those who believe in Jesus 'will not perish' under his wrath (John 3:16). Thus, God shows his love for all nations by Zephaniah's declaring their sinfulness and warning of



Yahweh will shelter those who seek him by seeking righteousness and humility.

punishment, even though only those who seek Yahweh together by seeking righteousness and humility will experience deliverance at the day of the Lord (Zeph 2:3).

From another perspective, God's elective, regenerating love is unconditional, 'poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit' (Rom 5:5) and shown in that 'while we were still sinners, Christ died for us' (5:8). Nevertheless, only those justified by faith are protected from God's future wrath (5:9) because that justification always leads to sanctification, whose end is eternal life (6:22–23; cf. Heb 12:14).

Zephaniah believed that all 'mankind' had 'sinned against the LORD' and that all would, therefore, justly face his fury (Zeph 1:17–18). Yet Yahweh will shelter those who seek him by seeking righteousness and humility (2:3). Thus, those who walk in God's way by valuing him and his image in others and who depend on him as saviour and satisfier can rest secure.

Paul said, 'For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose' (Rom 8:28). This conditional reality is not in any way in tension with the truths: 'If God

is for us, who can be against us? ... Who can separate us from the love of Christ?' (8:31, 35). God's loving, general call to salvation goes out to all (Matt 22:14), but his elective love, grounded in Christ's work alone, always awakens faith in its object and leads to fruits of holiness that provide necessary evidence of God's active love, which lets every believer rest without fear (Zeph 3:13, 15).

Q: Zephaniah also offers future hope for the nations of the world. What encouragement and motivation does this give missionary endeavour?

A: Yahweh will starve all so-called gods, creating a world-wide recognition from both war prisoners and saved believers that he is God alone (Zeph 2:11). Yahweh's supremacy over all things should motivate mission.

Furthermore, God promises to transform a multi-ethnic remnant from all the 'peoples' of the nations, uniting their profession and reversing the negative effects of Tower of Babel punishment (3:9–10). Yahweh promises:

- 'I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD ... from beyond the rivers of Cush' (3:9–10).
- 'I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and
- 'I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth' (3:19).

When the one with all authority in heaven and on earth, now realized in the person of Christ, declares that he will act, we can be certain of the results. We have the highest power working for the greatest task.

God promised that the Spirit's power would enable Christ's church to be his witnesses 'in Jerusalem ... to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8). With the salvation of the Ethiopian (= Cushite) eunuch in Acts 8, God began to fulfil Zephaniah's vision of global deliverance - one that God will finally realize when he has ransomed for himself some 'from every tribe, language, people, and nation' (Rev 5:9). Zephaniah's hope for a global remnant making up the transformed 'Israel' and 'Zion' (Zeph 3:14, 16) is now being realized in the church, and his portrait of Yahweh's reign should significantly motivate missions today.

Q: Seeking and waiting on God appear to be key themes in the book, in what way might these themes aid and challenge our prayer lives?

A: If depending on God is important, prayer must be important to us. Zephaniah indicated that one mark of idolatry in Jerusalem was that the people were wordless and prayerless, failing to 'seek the LORD or inquire of him' (Zeph 1:6). As Yahweh later notes, '[Jerusalem] listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God' (3:2). Zephaniah's sermon is like a basic training manual for Christian soldiers. It reminds us that the universe's King is working and will win (3:8, 15) and that we gain assurance of lasting life only when we seek him together (2:1, 3) and wait for him (3:8). We must depend on him by looking to him for help, hope, healing, wisdom, provision, and protection. Fearing God

(3:7) should lead us to prayer and surrender to God's word.

Q: What would you say is the big take away from the book of Zephaniah?

Look and long, hunger and hope, entreat and trust ... for the joy that is set before you. This is Zephaniah's lasting call.

A: Yahweh calls us to seek him together to avoid punishment and to wait for him to enjoy a satisfying salvation (Zeph 2:1, 3; 3:8). Look and long, hunger and hope, entreat and trust ... for the joy that is set before you. This is Zephaniah's lasting call, and it is my prayer for those reading this.

Q: Can you recommend a few resources to help us further understand Zephaniah?

A: Here are three to consider:

- DeRouchie, Jason S. "Zephaniah." Pages 561–604 in *Daniel–Malachi*. Vol. 7 of *ESV Expository Commentary*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018.
- Zephaniah - *The Gospel Coalition Bible Commentary*, 2021. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/zephaniah/>
- Motyer, J. Alec. Zephaniah - Pages 897–962 in *The Minor Prophets*. Edited by Thomas Edward McComiskey. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998.

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