

REJOICING IN HOPE: UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING ZEPHANIAH

Jason S. DeRouchie, PhD

Lecture 2: Wait for the Lord in order to Enjoy Satisfying Salvation (Zeph 3:8–20)

The prophet Zephaniah was convinced that what we hope for or fear tomorrow can change who we are today. God intends that his promises of curse and blessing motivate radical Godward surrender. In Peter's words, "He has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire" (2 Pet 1:4).

Zephaniah employed dread and hope to awaken his audience to return to the basics of Yahwistic-messianic faith. In our first lecture we focused on how Zephaniah uses the day of the Lord as punishment to motivate us to seek the Lord together. In this lecture we focus on how he uses the day of the Lord as renewal and new creation to motivate us to wait for the Lord to consummate a satisfying salvation. "Seeking" God together and "waiting" for him today (2:1, 3; 3:8) will result in lasting joy tomorrow, both for those the Savior saves (3:14–15) and for the Warrior-King himself (3:17). Let's pray again, asking God for help: Sovereign Yahweh, you are the God of armies, and in the end you will decimate every spiritual and physical power that stands against you. Thank you that in Christ Jesus we have "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven" for us (1 Pet 1:4). Magnify your Son in this message. Amen.

My goal in this lecture is twofold: (1) Overview the charge to wait for the Lord (3:8–10) and the promises Zephaniah uses to motivate waiting (3:11–20b). (2) Consider how Christ fulfills Zephaniah's vision of the Lord's day and what that means regarding the timing and nature of the realization of Zephaniah's hopes.

The Substance of the Savior's Invitation, Stage 2: Wait for the Lord (3:8–10)

In Zeph 2:5–3:7 the prophet bemoans the state and fate of the rebels from the foreign nations (2:5–15) and from Jerusalem (3:1–7). In 3:1–7 he concluded the unit speaking about Jerusalem in feminine singular language: "Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the LORD; she does not draw near to her God"

(3:1–2). And again in 3:7 the speech is feminine singular: “I said, ‘Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off.’”

3:8, however, marks a major transition, as Yahweh returns to addressing his faithful remnant. “‘Therefore,’” in view of the state and fate of world’s rebels, “‘wait for me,’ declares the LORD, ‘for the day when I rise up as witness.’” Everywhere else in the OT the term for “waiting” is never used negatively (Ps 33:20; Isa 64:4; Dan 12:12; Hab 2:3). Thus, we read in Ps 33:20, “Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and our shield.” With this, while the “you” in 3:1–7 addressed the feminine singular “city” of Jerusalem, the masculine plural “you” in 3:8 recalls the addressees of the earlier commands in 2:1 and 3 and signals that we are now hearing Stage 2 of the Savior’s invitation to satisfaction. As such, I believe Zephaniah’s logic is this:

- *Initial Commands*: Seek the Lord together (2:1–4)
- *Ground/Reason*: Because of the negative state and fate of the rebels (2:5–3:7)
- *Inferential Command*: Therefore, wait for the Lord (3:8–10)

In the midst of trouble, in the midst of darkness, when sin runs rampant, remnant of God, hear me: Wait for the day of the Lord’s rising.

We now get two reasons to wait for the LORD both introduced by the subordinate conjunction “for.” Look first at verse 8: “Wait for the LORD ... *for* my decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out upon them my indignation, all my burning anger; for in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed.” The first reason that the remnant of faithful followers must persist in their hope of salvation is because God still intends to punish the wicked of the earth (cf. Hab 1:2; 3:17–19). Although at present, injustice still reigns, like those who prepare metal for melting (Ezek 22:19–22) or sheaves for threshing (Mic 4:12–13), the Lord has determined to “gather” (Ezek 16:37; Joel 3:2; Zeph 3:18; Zech 14:2–3) all people groups (“nations”) and political powers (“kingdoms”) for judicial assessment (cf. Isa 24:22). And at that time, his molten jealousy for the honor of his name will finally “pour out” upon “all the earth,” destroying all those who are hostile to him (cf. Zeph 1:17–18). Here Zephaniah uses the same sacrificial imagery that we saw in 1:7 and 18. The fires of God’s just wrath will consume his enemies. And because the coming punishment is certain, the remnant of Judah and beyond must continue to wait in hope, confident that God will act (Isa 64:4).

Look now at Zeph 3:9 for the second reason Zephaniah gives for Judah's remnant to persist in Godward trust. "Wait for me, declares the LORD, for the day when I rise up ... *for* at that time [i.e., the time of the great judicial ingathering] I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech that all of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord." The prophet here envisions that some of the peoples [note the plural] will not be destroyed in Yahweh's fires of wrath but will instead be transformed into a community of worshipers. Specifically, God will purify their speech—or, as the Septuagint renders it, he will change their tongue—so that they will with one voice call upon Yahweh's name and together serve him shoulder to shoulder (Zeph 3:9; cf. Rev 7:9–10). To call on Yahweh's name (cf. Zeph 3:12) is to outwardly express worshipful dependence on him as one's Savior, King, and Treasure. As the psalmist declared, "Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, I pray, deliver my soul!' ... I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.... I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD" (Ps 116:4, 13, 17).

The prophets often linked calling on Yahweh's name with the day of the Lord and future work of God in the messianic era (Isa 12:4; Joel 2:28–32; Zech 13:9). For example, in the days when the child king rises in power and initiates the great end-times second exodus, Isaiah asserts, "And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the peoples, proclaim that his name is exalted" (Isa 12:4).

Similarly, in the very text that Peter cites at Pentecost in Acts 2 to support the outbreak of good-news declaring prophecy in various tongues (Acts 2:19–21), Joel declares (Joel 2:30–32):

And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

The day of the Lord includes not only punishment but also new creation, the transforming of once-hostile peoples from the nations and kingdoms of mankind into servants of a new king who call out to him for help and in thanksgiving and praise. They smell like smoke, but their lives have been preserved because they looked to the only Sovereign, Savior, and Satisfier.

Now, what we read next identifies that Zephaniah is actually here envisioning the reversal of past judgment. Verse 10 says, “From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, the daughter of my dispersed ones, shall bring my offering.” “Cush” was the center of black Africa and located in modern Sudan, and the rivers were likely the White and Blue Nile (see Isa 18:1–2). The region of Cush and the people associated with it were named after Cush, Noah’s grandson through Ham. Cush’s son Nimrod is the one who built ancient Babel. We first learn of Cush in Genesis 2, where it is identified as a terminus of one of the four rivers flowing from Eden. So, because Zephaniah envisions the worshipers gathering to Yahweh at his sanctuary to give him offerings, it’s as if the descendants of those once exiled from Eden are now following the rivers of life back to their source in order to enjoy fellowship with the great King (Gen 2:13; cf. Rev 22:1–2).

And these worshipers are made up of a multi-ethnic group from the “peoples” of the world, all of whom have transformed tongue—new speech patterns that call on the name Yahweh. In this light, because these worshipers are tagged “the daughter of my dispersed ones,” we likely have here an intentional vision of the reversal of the tower of Babel judgment. You will recall that in Gen 11:9 we read that “[the place] was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the *language* of all the earth. And from there the LORD *dispersed* them over the face of the earth.” When it says God confused “the language,” the Hebrew word is the same as that translated “speech” or “tongue” in Zeph 3:9, and when it says that God “dispersed” the peoples, it uses the same word for “my dispersed ones” in Zeph 3:10. Back in Zeph 2:11–12 Yahweh declares punishment on Cush, but here he predicts that even the most distant lands upon which he has poured his wrath will have a remnant of “worshipers” whom God’s presence will compel to the transformed Jerusalem, thus reversing the curse of Babel.

Promises to Motivate Waiting for the Lord (3:11–20b)

The Lord now motivates his charge to wait by promising to save in a way that satisfies. There are two main promise units that stand in parallel, each of which begins with the phrase “On that day”: (1) 3:11–13 promises that, “on that day” that he rises as judge, Yahweh will not shame the new Jerusalem. (2) 3:16–20 then promises that “on that day” of the Lord, Yahweh will save completely the new Jerusalem. These two promises frame 3:14–15, which are parenthetical and provide the motivational high-point of the book. Let’s consider each of these units.

To stimulate patient trust (3:8a), Yahweh announces that, despite Jerusalem’s previous rebellion and corruption (cf. 3:7), the transformed city will not remain before him in a shameful state (3:11a; cf. Isa 29:22–23; 45:17; Rom

10:11). This is because he will remove Jerusalem's proud (Zeph 3:11bc) and preserve her humble (3:12–13).

On that day you shall not be put to shame because of the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel; they shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue. For they shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

The “you” in 3:11 is feminine singular and addresses the city Jerusalem. This is where the multi-ethnic worshipers gathered in 3:10. God promises to forever erase pride by expelling the haughty and self-reliant (cf. Isa 3:16–17; Jer 3:15–16; Ezek 16:50) from his presence (cf. 3:5) and “holy mountain” (Zeph 3:11bc). Additionally, he will leave an afflicted and needy people (“humble and lowly”; cf. Isa 14:32; Matt 5:3), who will find “refuge in the name of the LORD” (3:12; cf. Pss 118:9; Prov 30:5; Nah 1:7). Because a multi-ethnic community of worshipers gathered to God's presence in Zeph 3:9–10, this global, transformed remnant makes up “those who are left in Israel” (3:13a; cf. 2:7, 9; Ps 87; Rom 11:17–24; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:11–16). That is, the remnant of this new Israel is made up of the multi-ethnic peoples from 3:9–10. With God having purified them, they shall walk in justice and truth (“no injustice ... no lies, nor ... a deceitful tongue”), turning from sin because (“for”) they experience rest with none to “make them afraid” (3:13; cf. Jer 30:10; Ezek 34:28; Mic 4:4).

Zephaniah's excitement over the hope of 3:11–13 now erupts in an intrusive call to celebrate as if the promised deliverance had already occurred. “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.” Four imperatives urge the remnant to praise: “Sing aloud ... shout! Rejoice and exult!” (3:14). Those who in 3:10 are called “the daughter of my dispersed onese” are now referred to as the “daughter of Zion,” “Israel,” and the “daughter of Jerusalem.” There is both continuity and discontinuity between the old Jerusalem and the new Jerusalem. The new Israel descends from the earlier Zion but is now transformed and includes some from the peoples of the world.

Why should this changed remnant rejoice? Two unmarked reasons ground the call to sing: (1) The Lord has removed the curse of enemy oppression (3:15ab;

cf. 3:11), and (2) the Lord is near (3:15cd). What is striking in 3:15 is this: Rather than treating the coming wrath and salvation as *future* (e.g., 1:7; 2:2; 3:8–10, 11, 19), Zephaniah acts as though the time of judgment has *already passed*: “the LORD *has taken away* the judgments against you” (3:15a). This shift is unexpected and identifies that, for Zephaniah, the future salvation is so certain that it should create present joy amidst pain. Zephaniah’s audience is still awaiting the day of the Lord. The remnant is still living in the midst of injustice and corruption. But they can delight today because their desire for complete freedom from oppression and darkness is coming. They must rejoice in hope, waiting for the Lord to act. Notice who is with them. “The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall never again fear evil” (3:15). By calling Yahweh “the King of Israel,” Zephaniah emphasizes that he is the true Sovereign (cf. 1:5; 2:11; 3:8). Because he will be in Jerusalem’s midst, she ought to “never again fear evil” (3:15).

We now come to last unit, 3:16–20b. Repeating the phrase “on that day” (3:16; cf. 3:11), Yahweh now adds his second promise to motivate faithful waiting (3:8). Here we have a future speech that prohibits fear on the day of the Lord (3:16–18) and then the implications of the speech itself (3:19–20).

On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: “Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. I will gather those of you who mourn for the festival, so that you will no longer suffer reproach. Behold, at that time I will deal with all your oppressors. And I will save the lame and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth. At that time I will bring you in, at the time when I gather you together; for I will make you renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.

“On that day” when the Lord reestablishes order in his world, an unnamed messenger will charge the transformed Jerusalem/Zion to neither feel afraid (“fear not”) nor act fearfully (“let not your hands grow weak”; cf. Isa 13:7). They need not fear because the saving Warrior will be with them and will be readying to deliver (“a mighty one who will save”) and to celebrate over his redeemed (Zeph 3:17; cf. Isa 65:19; Jer 32:41). “He will rejoice ... he will quiet ... he will exult,” matching the remnant’s three-fold chorus of joy line by line (cf. Zeph 3:14). The day of the Lord includes not only the remnant’s joy but also Yahweh’s joy in those he’s redeemed.

It is important to notice that prophet envisions that the day of the Lord working its way out in stages. The day of the Lord includes an overlap such that God will be with his remnant but that they will still need to be comforted and called to not fear. The Hebrew in 3:18 is difficult, but what is most significant is that the Hebrew reads, “I have gathered,” and not “I will gather.” This suggests to me that 3:18 supplies the end of the future speech, where God declares that he on his day he will have already gathered his remnant but not saved them completely. 3:19, then, returns to Zephaniah’s day and furthers Yahweh’s future prediction.

“Behold, at that time,” Yahweh pledges to save Jerusalem, remove her “oppressors,” and receive her even though she is “lame” and “outcast” (3:19; cf. Mic 4:6–7). He will then establish the remnant for “praise” and “renown in all the earth” (Zeph 3:19), which identifies not only that others will honor God’s redeemed (cf. Isa 56:5) but also that the redeemed themselves will display Yahweh’s fame in the earth (Jer 33:9; Ezek 36:23). Zephaniah 3:20 reaffirms this great ingathering in personal terms, identifying that those seeking and waiting for God are the ones whom he will exalt “among all the peoples of the earth.” He will “restore [their] fortunes” (cf. 2:7), thus fulfilling his ancient promise (Deut 30:3), and he will do so in such a way that the very remnant of Zephaniah’s day will experience it for themselves (“before your eyes”; cf. Job 19:25–26; Ps 73:24–26; Isa 26:19).

This is a truly grand vision of the Lord’s day. Where do we place the fulfillment that is predicted within salvation history? Does it only relate to Christ’s second appearing or is there any sense in which it relates to Christ’s first coming and the church age?

Christ’s Saving Work and the Church Age as Initial Fulfillment of Zephaniah’s Day of Yahweh

Let’s begin looking at 3:8–10. What we read in verses 9–10 is that God will develop his new creational, multi-ethnic community “at that time”—namely, at the day of the Lord, when the fires of God’s judgment pour out against the nations and kingdoms of the earth. As we saw in lecture 1, Paul envisions this day as still future, when he asserts that the Lord Jesus will be “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus” (2 Thess 1:8–9). Peter, too, highlights the future, unexpected nature of this day: “The heavens and the earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.... But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and

then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed” (2 Pet 3:7, 10).

Nevertheless, while in one sense Yahweh’s day that Zephaniah envisions is still future for us, there is another very real sense in which the day of punishment for the elect is now past and we are even now enjoying the transformed speech, unity, and worship envisioned in Zeph 3:9–10. Peter declared that “all the prophets” foretold Christ’s sufferings and subsequent glories, including the glories seen in and through the church (Acts 3:18, 24; 1 Pet 1:10–11). Zephaniah never explicitly predicts Jesus’s coming, yet we see the prophet foreseeing the Messiah and his mission in at least two ways: (1) Zephaniah portrays the day of the Lord as God’s sacrifice by which he satisfies his wrath and gains victory over all evil. In Christ’s first coming he serves as the *object* of God’s wrath on behalf of the elect, but in his second coming he serves as the *agent* of God’s wrath on behalf of the elect. (2) Zephaniah envisions the church age, wherein Christ’s death initially fulfils Zephaniah’s vision of the day of wrath against sinners and inaugurates the multi-ethnic gathering of worshipers in the presence of the King.

Recognize that Christ’s sacrificial death initiates the day of the Lord for the elect.

In the first lecture we saw that, for Zephaniah, the day of the Lord is a time of war when Yahweh will pour out his wrath on the rebellious of the earth (Zeph 1:15–17), whom the prophet portrays as a “sacrifice” ready to be consumed (1:7–8; cf. Jer 46:10; Rev 19:17–21). Right order exists only where God is exalted over all, and his just jealousy moves him to re-establish order by overcoming evil. He accomplishes this only by killing either the sinner or a substitute (Lev 17:11; Heb 9:22). By failing to “draw near” to the Lord (Zeph 3:2), especially through his provision of a substitute sacrifice (cf. Lev 9:1–10:3), those in Jerusalem and beyond were readying themselves to *become* the sacrifice.

Yet God’s law sets forth a clear pattern of substitution (e.g., Exod 12:12–14; Lev 16:15–22, 33–34), and prophets like Isaiah show that this pattern was pointing to the sufferings of the royal servant (Isa 52:13–53:12). Each of the Gospel writers highlights the darkness that accompanied Jesus’s crucifixion (e.g., Luke 23:44), and Peter’s citation of Joel 2:30–31 in Acts 2:19–20 suggests that Peter identified this darkness with what the prophets said would precede the day of the Lord. Jesus is “the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29), and thus we should understand that when Jesus bore God’s wrath as the sacrificial substitute

on behalf of the elect, he was partially fulfilling what Zephaniah said would happen at the day of the Lord.

Recognize that the Church fulfils Zephaniah's hopes for a single reconciled community from every tribe and tongue.

If the fires of judgment foreseen in Zeph 3:8 were bore for the elect by Christ at the cross, then his resurrection and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost mark the initiation of Zephaniah's vision of new creation begun in 3:9–10. John said, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me ... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matt 3:11). In Jerusalem, Jesus initiated a great second exodus or ingathering in which many peoples would be saved (Luke 9:31; cf. Zeph 3:10, 19–20). In Caiaphas's words: "[He died] for the nation [of Israel], and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:51–52; cf. Isa 49:5–6). The church today, made up of believing Jews and Gentiles in Christ, is fulfilling this vision.

One way this is seen is in Luke's depiction of the early church's growth in the beginning of Acts. I think Luke actually has Zeph 3:8–10 in mind when he crafts his narrative. In the context of explaining a mission of making worshipers "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8), Peter's Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:17–21 cites Joel 2:28–32, which depicts the day of the Lord and mentions calling on God's name in ways very similar to Zephaniah (Zeph 1:15; 3:8–9). What is not found in Joel, however, but is present in Zeph 3:9–10 is the vision of transformed "speech" (LXX = "tongue") and united devotion, both of which Luke highlights in detailing the outpouring of "tongues" (Acts 2:4, 11) and the amazing kinship enjoyed by the early believers (vv. 42–47). Also significant is that the only region that Zephaniah focuses on as example of God's end-times global restoration is Cush, ancient black Africa. The Greeks called ancient Cush "Ethiopia," a name that is strikingly absent from the list of nations in Acts 2 that Luke tells us were gathered "from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5; cf. 9–11). I suggest that the reason he never mentions "Ethiopia" there was because he sought to highlight the fulfilment of Zephaniah's vision by highlighting the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–40. The first Gentile convert to Christianity was an Ethiopian, a Cushite, and this highlights that God was beginning to fulfil the shaping of his multi-ethnic community of worshipers, just as Zephaniah proclaimed.

With this, in broader fulfilment of Zephaniah's restoration hope in 3:9–10, the NT is clear that Jesus's first coming marks the beginning of the end of the first creation and initiates the new creation, which corresponds to the new covenant (2

Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Heb 8:13). In this age Jews and Gentiles in Christ together make up one people of God, the church (Gal 3:8, 14, 29; Eph 2:14–16), which Rev 5:9–10 says Jesus is shaping into “a kingdom and priests” “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (cf. Rev 7:9–10). Already, as priests, we are offering sacrifices of praise (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15–16; 1 Pet 2:5) at “Mount Zion and ... the heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22; cf. Isa 2:2–3; Zech 8:20–23; Gal 4:26). Nevertheless, we await the day on which the “new Jerusalem” will descend from heaven as (or to) the new earth (Rev 21:2, 10; cf. Isa 65:17–18), when our daily journey to find rest in Christ’s supremacy and sufficiency (Matt 11:28–29; John 6:35) will come to completion in a place where the curse is no more (Rev 21:22–22:5).

Next, let’s consider how the Apostle John alludes to Zeph 3:14–15. Keeping your finger in Zeph 3, turn with me to John 12:13–15. Interpreters commonly recognize that John cites Ps 118:25–26 [LXX 117:25–26] and Zech 9:9 in his account of Jesus’s triumphal entry: “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!’” (John 12:13–15). What many miss, however, is that the psalm does not include the phrase “Israel’s King” and that Zechariah’s opening charge is actually “rejoice” rather than “do not be afraid.” Christopher Tachick argues convincingly that these differences identify that John is also alluding to Zeph 3:14–15, which is the only place in the OT where we find the grouping “Israel’s King,” “Fear not,” and “daughter of Zion.”⁵ Within Zephaniah, this exhortation intrudes into his depiction of Yahweh’s cleansing and renewal of his creation that he will accomplish “on that day” of his judgment (3:11, 16). John sees Jesus initiating the end-times reign of God and salvation for which Zephaniah longed. In Christ, Zephaniah’s eschatological day of the Lord has dawned. Jesus is the warrior-king who judges the enemy: “Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out” (John 12:31; cf. v. 13). With this, Jesus is working a great ingathering of the nations. “So the Pharisees said to one another, ‘You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him.’ Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks” (John 12:19–20). Then Jesus declares in John 12:32: “and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

⁵ Christopher S. Tachick, “*King of Israel*” and “*Do Not Fear, Daughter of Zion*”: *The Use of Zephaniah 3 in John 12*, Reformed Academic Dissertations 11 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2018).

A Proper Response

a. Rejoice that the church fulfills OT hopes for a single reconciled community from every tribe and tongue.

As part of the day of the Lord, Zephaniah envisions God's blessing of reconciliation reaching the nations (Zeph 3:9–10), thus fulfilling the hopes of the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:3; 22:18). This new multi-ethnic people is identified with the new Jerusalem, which God cleanses from pride and fills with “a people humble and lowly” who “seek refuge in the name of the LORD” (Zeph 3:11–12). This group of faithful from all nations makes up “those who are left in Israel” (3:13). When God raises up a messenger to proclaim to Zion, “Fear not” (3:16), it is this multi-ethnic church that fills the city. Christ's ministry of healing (Matt 8:16–17; 11:5; cf. Isa 42:3; 53:4; 61:1–3) and recovery (John 10:16; 11:50–52) inaugurated the great ingathering of the lame and outcast that Zephaniah envisions (Zeph 3:19). Now Jesus's followers honor him so that others see their good works and “give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt 5:16; cf. 1 Pet 2:12). Rejoice today that the church fulfills Zephaniah's hopes for a single reconciled community from every tribe and tongue.

b. Wait for the Lord.

We live in a beautiful but broken world; beautiful because the creation displays the grand design of its Creator and broken because the Adamic curse affects and infects all things (Rom 8:20–21). Family celebrations are tempered by car accidents and cancer, and marvelous vistas become contexts for mass executions of Christians. City parks designed for child play become the place of riots or kidnappings. Disease runs rampant; people lose jobs; the global economy plummets. The global pandemic of alien guilt continues to produce sinners who sin, leading them to perform injustice against the living God and his image in others. Believers today live in the overlap of the ages—*after* Yahweh has atoned for the sin of his elect through the death of his Son yet *before* he has eradicated all evil and carried out the final judgment (Heb 9:28). The *already* aspects require that we call on his name and serve him together (Zeph 3:9–10). The *not yet* aspects necessitate that we heed Zephaniah's charge to patiently trust in the Lord (“wait,” 3:8), holding unswervingly to the only God who “acts for those who wait for him” (Isa 64:4).

Waiting is not easy, for great are the temptations to doubt, compromise, fear, or become anxious. Yet we must remember, “If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he also will

deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful” (2 Tim 2:11–13). In the midst of trouble, the call is, “Humble yourselves ... under the mighty hand of God ... casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you” (1 Pet 5:6–7; cf. Phil 4:6–7). “Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted” (Heb 12:3).

Before us is “the crown of life,” and everyone “who remains steadfast under trial” will receive it (Jas 1:12). “The Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment” (2 Pet 2:9). So “let us hold fast the confession of hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb 10:23). “And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you” (1 Pet 5:10).

c. Delight in the Lord who saves his people from his wrath and from all evil.

We have a God who promises to sing over those he saves (Zeph 3:17; cf. Ps 147:11), and his mirth-filled melody is to be matched, line for line, by the rejoicing of his bride in his goodness (Zeph 3:14–15; cf. Isa 65:18; Jer 31:10–14). Our joy today is not based on present appearances but on what God has already done and promises to do (Hab 3:18–19; Rom 5:2–5, 9–11; 8:31–32; 1 Pet 5:10). *Already* the Lord “has put all things under his feet” (Eph 1:22; cf. Heb 2:8). Having “disarmed the rulers and authorities,” God has *already* “put them to open shame, by triumphing over them” at the cross (Col 2:15; cf. Zeph 3:11, 19). *Already* “God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Rom 5:5), such that God is truly in our midst (cf. Zeph 3:15, 17). God has *already* begun to gather his remnant (John 10:16; 11:51–52; cf. Zeph 3:18–20), has *already* inaugurated the new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15), and has *already* secured the complete and future victory for which Zephaniah rejoiced (Zeph 3:14–15). Heeding his own prayer (Matt 6:13; John 17:15), the faithful Lord Jesus “will establish you and guard you against the evil one” (2 Thess 3:3). “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom” (2 Tim 4:18).

“For the joy that was set before him [he] endured” (Heb 12:2; cf. Isa 53:11). As was true for Jesus, the future joy for which we aim becomes our present joy that sustains (cf. Heb 10:34; 11:6, 26; 12:3). “The King of Israel” and the “mighty one,” who will completely save and sing over his redeemed, desires to satisfy us with his goodness (Zeph 3:14–15, 17). Our gladness redounds to his glory (3:19–20), so may we today patiently pursue the Lord together, rejoicing in hope and embracing the Savior’s invitation to satisfaction.