



Zephaniah Wk. 1
The Day of Judgment
By Pastor Jody May 05/03/2026

[CALL TO HEAR]

1 The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

The Coming Judgment on Judah

- 2** "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.
- 3** "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.
- 4** "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,
- 5** 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,
- 6** those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him."
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**Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."
People – "Thanks be to God."**

Pray

Illustration. (Pay back brothers!)

Introduction

The book of Zephaniah has a great promise for the people of God. It is a promise that has never grown cold even with the 2,700 years that separate us



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from its' writing. It is a promise meant to uplift and encourage even in the face of cultural moral decay, political upheaval, and even personal sin. And that great promise is that the Son of God **will** come. In Zephaniah's day they looked for the coming of the Lord to be the answer to their dilemmas. And for us in the NT times, He has come and has given that which they were so desperately waiting for! He came and He removed the personal sins for many, He preserved a people for Himself even in the midst of continuous political upheaval, and He brought His Father a great glory by making a people who resembled the Son.

Zephaniah also though has this unique quality that some of the other prophetic books have. There is the idea that Zephaniah speaks to a prophecy that would not just be filled in their immediate future but in ours as well.

Paul spoke about it Himself:

1 Thes 5:1-2 ESV

5 Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. **2** For you yourselves are fully aware that the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief in the night.

Where did he ever get tis idea from? Because the Lord Himself spoke about it, you just read that for yourself on Friday in your reading plan in Matthew 25!

Matthew 25:31-32 ESV

31 "When the **Son of Man comes in his glory**, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. **32** Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

Jesus gave that word to Zephaniah, Jesus referenced that word about Himself, and Paul confirmed it for the NT church!

That means we believe Zephaniah is also looking past us into a future where the Lord will return, the 2nd coming. Upon that final advent He will accomplish all that Bible says He will do concerning Judgement AND Salvation. We call that a **Dual/Double Fulfillment** of prophecy and what some theologians allude



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to as the time of the **Already/Not Yet**. It speaks to the need of the prophecy in the past but that is also a shadow of what is still is to come.

What makes this book of Zephaniah so special is that it is all about our blessed Lord, Jesus Christ. And the way that it is about our blessed Lord is that this book focuses on the day of His coming, the **Day of the Lord**. And in fact, the day of the Lord is used in the book of Zephaniah more than any other book in the entire Bible.

What will you hear today? There is a Day coming/Day of Judgment! What is that? First, it looks serious, it sounds ominous, and you don't want to be on the wrong side of it. Second, there is another side to that. It is the day of your Salvation! It is a day of healing, restoration, preservation and glorification.

Illustration - Reminds me of the feeling that kids get when they are told wait until your father gets home. It was all about the Fear of the return of the father and consequences that would follow him.

MP

The LORD Cleans out False Worship and Redeems True Worshipers for Himself.

We're going to see this in three parts this morning. First, we'll see it in how the **Lord comes and sweeps away all of creation** in verses 2 and 3. Then we will see how the **Lord comes and cuts off all idolaters** in verses 4 to 6. And then finally, we will consider how the **Lord comes to redeem His people** and bring them to Himself, because ultimately that is the plan. But before getting into the major content of the book, beginning in verse 2, verse 1 introduces to us this prophet by the name of Zephaniah.

1 The word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah (tsef-an-yaw') the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah (ghed-al-yaw'), son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah (khiz-kee-yaw'), in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.

Who is Zeph and why should we listen to him?



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Well Zephaniah provides his lineage, and it is one of the lengthier lineages we have for a prophet. In short, he's the great, great grandson of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was King in Judah from 715/716 - 686/687 BC, a 29-year reign and was known as the great reformer of the ancient kings; initiated major religious reforms, destroying idol worship, reopening the Temple, and turned away the Assyrians, in 701 BC under Sennacherib, and was supported by none other than Isaiah the prophet.

It is important for us to know that was who Zephaniah related himself to. He was of the royal line, and the mentioning of his ancestor was to tell you it was Hezekiah that he resembled more than his great uncle. You see Zephaniah, being in the royal line, lived in Jerusalem, was most likely a property owner and frequenter of the palace grounds, but that did not mean he was like the other side of the family.

Zephaniah was raised in the time of Manasseh (686-642 BC), who reigned 55 years and undid all his father's reforms (2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25). But he endured, stayed in contact with the royal line, kept his cool, and when Manasseh passed it seems he began his preaching ministry. You may ask why he waited, other prophets had preached during an evil kings' reign, why didn't he? Well because the text says "the word of the LORD", that came to Zeph, came during the time of Josiah, Manasseh's son. It wasn't time yet, it wasn't part of God's plan to speak it earlier, there was something that needed to happen first, part of redemption history had to be played out. Not to mention the fact it is noted that Manasseh had Isaiah sawed in half, it was the Lord's Providence to preserve Zeph so we would have his message of hope and judgment.

Josiah (640-609 BC), you see would be the last god king, yes, it is sad but also necessary. He would be the one that would begin to repair the temple once again, and in that process Hilkiah the High Priest found the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy) hidden and sent it to Josiah. Josiah had it read, responded as the king should, called the people to repentance, but it was too little too late. That set into action the final days of the kingdom, and the hope that God would preserve for Himself a people through the act of dispersion and



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judgment. Josiah's reading of the covenant and its curses fulfilled Zephaniah's preaching, as in it explains why and how it would come true.

Part of the beauty of Zephaniah's words were that yes God ALWAYS cleans out false worship but also made it very clear, He will ALWAYS redeem true worshippers for Himself. God will not let His name die out therefore there will always be a people for Him.

OK we got our background info out of the way let's go not to this introduction to this Day of Judgment that was coming.

1. The Lord will SWEEP AWAY creation.

The Coming Judgment on Judah

- ² "I will utterly sweep away everything
from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.
- ³ "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.

First thing I want to point out this morning is please notice in all these actions God is the one that gets the credit. He may use other nations, other people, and natural events of nature and disasters, but God is the one that moves redemptive history along! And what is He moving along?

A Sweeping Judgment!

There is a movement, a motion, a **sweeping away**, performed by God, that is two words in the Hebrew, placed side by side, that actually look alike but have two opposite meanings¹. So, the action is to gather everything together and then get rid of it. It's the action of raking leaves into a pile to burn them up, it

¹ סוּפַח **suph** (692d); a prim. root; *to come to an end, cease*:—*come to an end*(2), *completely remove*(1), *fade*(1), *remove*(2), *surely snatch*(1), *surely snatch away*(1), *swept away*(1). Robert L. Thomas, [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries : Updated Edition](#) (Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc., 1998).



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is the removal of the DEI regulator division in the military, they were all gathered up and fired. The actions that God is initiating is not an adjustment, it is not a fixing, a tweaking, a manipulating, a restructuring, a reorganization, it is a gathering up for the purpose of destruction.

When the Day of the Lord comes, none will be missed, time has been spent on the action of gathering up. All those who did not trust in the name of the Lord, they have been allowed lives that have proven their treason towards God. God is doing the sweeping, there will be no misjudgments and not one speck of evil is left out. In Revelation 20, the future Day of the Lord, all the evil are gathered up first and then all are cast out together into the lake of fire, that is to illustrate the second and final death.

Then we see that God will **sweep** away man and beast, sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea. That might sound familiar to you because it is Genesis language. It is the creational order in reverse, man-animal-bird-fish-sea. This is Hyperbole btw; it is the over exaggeration used in writing to emphasize a point.

Evil has influenced ALL of creation, no corner of creation therefore will be left unturned, nothing that holds the taint of sinful man will be left, no sickness unpurged, no contamination not cut out. Instead of God gathering all good things in the garden for His glory in the beauty of creation, He is scattering all away to reveal the glory and awesomeness of His justice.

Then he says he **sweeps away** the '**rubble**' with the wicked. The things that the wicked keep tripping over and over and over on. Basically, what we can deduce is that Zephaniah is saying that "all sinful idolaters and all objects of their idolatry are being removed in God's judgment at the end of days." – Will Wood.

Again, we can see where Paul may have looked back in the OT to teach a point, this time to the Romans.

Romans 1: 21-23 ESV



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²¹For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for **images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.**

Paul is noting that man, in his foolishness, took all the good things of creation, and in his wickedness, took what the Lord made good, twisted it all up, and committed idolatry. The created order became nothing but stumbling blocks for man, and he worshipped creature/creation instead of the creator.

We know from the study of Acts and then 1 Corinthians that man has worshipped every aspect of nature. They have created numerous gods with animal features, distinctions, and natures. They have ascribed to every god and every religion a system by which they could bring an offering to it, to bribe it, to seduce it, into favors.

This is polytheism and all polytheism is a copy of what the serpent did to us in the garden, where he came to us in the form of an animal, offered us a place equal with god, with no power to do it, to get from us-worship. And now we replicate his DNA in us, because every time we go to something other than God with the hope to buy a favor for ourselves, we ask that thing to worship us, to give us what we want, to treat us as if we are more important than God Himself. This is what Zephaniah is facing, it was what Paul faced, and it is what we face now.

That's why we have such a hard time with true God worship, we cannot offer anything to God other than what is already due to Him, **Worship based in Love.** Not to get anything, but just because **He's worthy!** Then we must rely on His love towards us to give us what we need when we need it, based on His desires alone! There is no way to control this God with offerings, for He owns everything to offer.

We have used all of creation to give us what we want, and in the end, God is going to remove all of that, all of that in which we stumble over, this type of mankind will never be again, IN the **"Day of the Lord"**.



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Gathering and scattering is repeated over and over again in scripture. Adam and Eve removed from the garden, Noah and the flood where Cain's line is removed from God's earth, the tower of Babel, culture gathered and dispersed, Abraham sent away from His polytheistic people, Israelites torn away from abusive polytheistic pagans, and now the Israelites themselves having abandoned their God and have become like everyone else are about to be removed from their land and scattered.

Application: To sweep away is the way God judges the world, so family here's where are at right now in our lives. We can look at our nation we all can see in so many ways the inclusion of all things even by those in the church, that have become idols, things we worship, things that if we think we bring a sacrifice to of our attention and our loyalties it will in turn pay us back.

Family, culture will never give you back the love you give it; it can never fill you with the sense of love you crave, and in the end nothing in this world is going to make the final cut, it will all be swept away! There is no hobby that is going to fill you up the way you want, there is no achievement that can sustain your desire for accomplishment, there is no worldly relationship that completes you, but there is one who has achieved for you what you so desperately desire, a right standing before God.

Romans 5:1 ESV

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through Christ you have what you really want - **PEACE!** We are welcomed back into His presence, we are welcomed back into relationship, we are welcomed back into a position of worthiness, we are made desirable again through Christ. Family I pray you hear me today, get out of the pile of rubble that this world is offering you, it will trip you up, and you will be swept away if you do not heed the Words of the prophet today. The Day of the Lord approaches!

2. The Lord CUTS OFF Idolaters.



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- 4 "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,
- 5 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**,
- 6 those who have turned back from following the LORD,
who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him."

Zeph moves from a universal approach, and he narrows the view to a smaller group of people where this all starts. You are going to find this through the rest of the book of Zephaniah there is a universal call for judgment and then he is always narrowing it down on a group of people offering up specific examples and specific sins as to why they are included in the permanent clean-up of all of creation.

Along with sweeping away there is another action that occurs in this judgment it is a **cutting off**. When Adam is removed from the garden a Cherubim, a special angel that guards God's presence, is placed in position with a fiery sword. Adam is swept away and **cut off** from an easy life, an easy reign, away from the presence of God. You have been reading in the Kings, how many times have you seen the northern Kings cut off, even their whole lines, because of their refusal to follow covenant guidelines.

Cutting off speaks to the image that Paul is painting in [Romans 11:17-24](#); the cutting away of those who do not believe. Cutting usually means a death of something; it can't live without being tied to a source. Adam's casting out meant a physical death, then Israel's cutting out meant national/spiritual/cultural death.

Zephaniah says the Lord will **stretch out his hand against Judah**, against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Holy city of God. That stretching out of his Hand phrase, that might sound familiar to you as well. In Exodus God said He



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would stretch out His hand to deliver the Hebrews from the Egyptians and would do wondrous/terrible works ([Ex 3:20](#)). Again, God is the initiator and the conductor of all judgment and discipline.

Cut off, as a phrase, is also known and made famous in [Genesis 15:9-10](#). That's where God makes a covenant with Abraham, he has Abraham **cut the animals in two**, walks between the pieces to signify His covenant with Abraham and all the **future children of faith**. What that meant is that if Abraham did not produce from himself children of faith God Himself would be held responsible, it's a blood pact between Him and Abraham. That is a cutting. The sign for that promise to Abraham and his descendants was the cutting of skin in the male line, the sign of that covenant.

That sign was never saving in and of itself, but it always pointed out to what should be going on in a person's heart. The person who held to physical circumcision should also exhibit to this world a heart that had been circumcised as well, a heart that had been cut out of being in love with this world. The heart of a person that had been delivered from spiritual death by the strong right arm of God.

Instead, now God must stretch out His hand and cut off His own people, for He sees they prefer Baal over Him. The priests that were meant to direct people to God instead were directing people how to pray on their roof tops to the stars, that is a form of Baal worship. This is **syncretism**, what the Corinthians were guilty of, except the priests of God were the ones leading the way! The people have also succumbed to the worship of Molech that is what it means to swear to Milcom. Zephaniah has seen the destruction of the Northern Kingdom and for this very practice of swearing and praying to all gods, and now this is what those who were meant to be seen differently in this world, they too were now guilty of this sin.

So, here's the principle that we learn from Zeph back then, what was shown to us in Corinthians and what is applicable for us still today.

Any worship added to the worship of God of any other thing NEGATES all worship of the creator.



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In other words - You shall have no other God before me & you shall not make for yourself any graven images or IDOL!

Family we still see this in the church today. We see this is how so many churches have fallen to the lure and seduction to become **culturally relevant!** You see we have been in constant bombardment from culture to accept them and all they, are and not just culture, but from those on the inside of the church now! Those we have called pastors have been leading the way in calling us to be culture-centered and not God centered. That the way to win culture is befriend culture, to let them have a place among your places of worship, to open your heart to tolerance. After all God only hates the sin but LOVES the sinner! We don't have the time to go into all the specifics today of how that has happened, we have another 15 weeks to hit all that.

Just know this much this morning family, the church will ALWAYS be out of tune with this world! There is no way we can live for the Lord and live for Him alone and still look like the world; that's an impossibility.

Family the point is, to look to where Zephaniah is looking and look at those who inherit the new heaven and new earth, what does that church look like then? How does that group of people come off different, what has God removed from them in order to NOT be culturally relevant but God glorifying? The Day of the Lord comes family, cut out of your life what the Lord WILL cut out of His!

3. The Lord REDEEMS a people for Himself.

- ⁹ "For at that time 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.
- ²⁰ 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



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before your eyes," says the LORD.

In Zephaniah's time this day of judgment was unavoidable. We know that only one generation later Babylon comes into Jerusalem in 586 BC, destroys the temple, rounds up all the royal line and the priests, and leaves Jerusalem as a shell with only the poor to tend the fields. The Day of the Lord, the reckoning always comes family, God always keeps His Word, God always avenges His honor and name.

But in the end of Zephaniah, as God always does, **He gives hope**. Out of the defeated dynasty and legacy of Jerusalem God promises to redeem a people. God in v.9 says He will change the speech; it is the sign that the heart has been changed for it is the tongue that reveals the heart and true intent of man. Pure speech means a mouth that gives God all praise, a mouth that can only boast in God alone, a mouth that can only praise God not man.

It is at that time that God will bring them in and gather them up in what place? Not Jerusalem, not the temple, but the new temple of God - **the church**. God makes them the most renown of all people in the world and how exactly did God do that?

2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

All the Syncretism, and all of the Idolatry, it was **not overlooked**, it had to be dealt with! In order to change a person's heart, the Lord Himself came, and He became sin, that is bore the price of the sin, the cutting off, the sweeping away, so that the promise to Abraham would not fail! And God on that **1st Day of the Lord 2000 years ago** came and spilled His own blood. Not because He failed to keep the promise of the covenant, but because Abraham's descendants did not keep it! Instead of paying the price of a final death, God comes, offers up His own life, spills His own blood for the children of Abraham, and He circumcises our hearts by opening our eyes to the act of redemption. We are saved by faith in Him that He did that for me, becoming sin/taking mine, for you, for us.



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But God is not done yet! Still more to come and more to talk about, but for right now know this, His people look forward to the day, the conclusion of all of the History of Redemption. The **Day of the Lord** when He returns.

Upon that return He will sweep it all up, all those outside the church and all those inside the church that have shown their falseness by what they worship. God will cut off all idolaters together all at once, and truly His people will be most blessed for all eternity. It will happen for we have seen phase one happen already, in the first advent, and by that we have the promise it will all be finished! Come Lord Jesus, come...

[CALL TO OBEY]

1) Begin to look at your life and get out of the rubble.

Family, all of God's people have rubble that we keep walking in, wading through, and tripping over. It is all those places and things that we keep opening our lives up to that takes up the space reserved for the worship of God alone. God calls it trash and so should you. If there are things in your life that keeps you from worship in your homes on regular basis get rid of it, if there are things in your life that keeps you from honoring the Lord's day get rid of it, if there are things in your life that keeps you from giving God your all, get rid of it! There is no room for syncretism in family of God.

2) Begin to look at your life and cut away your idols.

These might be the things that you have allowed yourself to be led into. There may be places of leadership/influence in your life that have taught you something alternate to God's Word. Perhaps you have gotten caught up in honoring others, what they like, what they do, and you have been trying to emulate them. You have figured if the world brings them happiness through the pursuit of desires, then it can bring you the same thing. Whatever that is it is time to challenge your idols and cut them out for you cannot add the worship of anything else to the worship of God.



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MP

The LORD Cleans out False Worship and Redeems True Worshippers for Himself.

Charge: Family let us take hope, for the Day of the Lord has come, He has redeemed for Him a people, praise God that He always keeps His promises. Family let us pray that we too who are the redeemed that God would be faithful and show us what it is in our lives that needs to be swept up and cut off. And for those that don't know Him, yes accept that He wants to save you, He is calling you to come out of the world, confess your sins today so you too can look at the Day of the Lord with Hope and not Fear.

Prayer

Communion

Mark 14:22-25 ESV

Institution of the Lord's Supper

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus which was lived for us. The Lord never had to sweep up or cut off things that took His praise and worship from the Father. That is not to say He was never tempted not to do so. His ministry began with conquering temptation in the wilderness, and it ended with conquering temptation in the garden. No, He faced this life with a dedication to prayer, fasting, & meditation, all was His true worship to God. This is something we would not and could not do. All praise to our King, who loved the Father with perfect obedience.



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Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood for the new covenant. That blood was poured out on Calvary for many, those that Zephaniah said would be redeemed. To escape the cutting away it took the perfect blood of Christ to fulfill our covenant with God. Our sin required redemption, and our Savior gladly paid that bill. Thanks be to our Lord for His eternal sacrificial love!

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – **“Christians, what do we believe?”** Congregation – recites:

LBCF 1689 Chapter 22. Of religious worship and the Sabbath Day. Paragraph 1. Worship Should Be According to What God Has Revealed

The light of nature shows that there is a God who has lordship and sovereignty over all. He is just, good, and does good to all. Therefore, he should be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served with all one's heart, soul, and might. 1 The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is what he himself has instituted. 2 Worship is limited by his own revealed will. This means that he should not be worshipped:

- according to human imagination and inventions
- the suggestions of Satan
- using any visible representations
- or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures 3

1. Jeremiah 10:7; Mark 12:33
2. Deuteronomy 12:32
3. Exodus 20:4-6

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]



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Go in the name of the Father, that has provided a way for His people to escape the His righteous judgement through the work of the Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that purchased our Salvation with His life, and will return one day to make all things right.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that empowers us to be idol removers instead of idol makers, now go and share with this world whom you truly serve!

[FELLOWSHIP CONVERSATIONS]

- 1) Where do you see “divided loyalties” today (swearing by the Lord and by something else)? Name specific modern idols (comfort, career, approval, politics, screens), and how they compete with worship.
- 2) Zephaniah shows God “sweeping away” what idolatry has marred. How does the cross and resurrection of Jesus turn that judgment into hope for idolaters repent? What encourages you to take refuge Christ this week?
- 3) What does it look like, practically, to “cut off idols in our home? Consider habits for the next month: Lord’s Day priorities, media limits, spending, prayer, family worship, hospitality.
- 4) If God’s aim unhindered worship, can our and church pursue “undivided hearts” together (Ps. 86:11)? What rhythms, liturgies, or accountability do we need to start or strengthen?
- 5) Who in your life is trapped in obvious or subtle idolatry? How can you speak truth in love and offer the better promise of Christ this week? Pray by name and plan one concrete step of obedience.



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