



Zephaniah: The Day of the Lord

Week 7: Zephaniah 2:4-7

“Against the Proud, Mindful of the Remnant”

By Pastor Onan Coca, June 14, 2026

Zephaniah 2:4–7

4 For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted. 5 Woe to you inhabitants of the seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left. 6 And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks. 7 The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.

Main Point: The Lord stands against the proud in judgment, yet remembers and restores His remnant through Jesus Christ.

- I. **The Word of the LORD Stands Against the Proud (vv. 4–5)**
- II. **The LORD Remembers His Remnant (vv. 6–7)**
- III. **Christ Bore the Judgment so the Remnant Receive the Promise (v. 7)**

[READ THE TEXT]

“People of God, this is the Word of God!”

Congregation - “Thanks be to God!”

[PRAY FOR UNDERSTANDING]

Good morning and welcome to Highlands Community Church. If I haven't met you this morning, my name is Onan Coca, and I am one of the elders here, along with Pastors Jody May and Bill Alderson. It's wonderful to see everyone here on this beautiful Lord's Day, and it's good to have our teens back with us this week. If you get a chance, find one of them and thank them for serving as our hands and feet in Tennessee. We missed them, and it's good to be together again.



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I have an important job this morning. I’ve been called to deliver a message of warning and hope through the words of Zephaniah chapter 2. But before we get there, let me tell you something about myself.

I have a love-hate relationship with movies. I grew up in what I consider a golden age of film, not *the* golden age, that’s more Pastor Jody’s territory, but a golden age. The 1980s were full of stories that stuck with you, and I spent way too much time and money in those theaters. They don’t really make them like that anymore. But looking back, I’ve noticed something: every story I loved followed the same pattern. Think *Star Wars* or, more recently, *The Lord of the Rings*. Evil appears to win. The righteous suffer. Hope seems lost. Then comes an unexpected **reversal**.

That’s exactly what Zephaniah is showing us today. Through the rest of chapter 2 our focus will turn from Judah to the nations surrounding them. The prophet will use the four cardinal directions to summarize the judgment coming for the pagan world. He’ll first look West toward the Philistines and the Mediterranean. Then East, South, and finally North.

Today, well focus on what he sees to the West.



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Last week, in verses 1 - 3, the prophet gave one of the most urgent appeals in all of Scripture: “Gather together... Seek the LORD... perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.” He called God’s people to gather, seek, and hide themselves in the Lord before judgment fell. Today, we learn why that call was so urgent, because the Lord really does stand against the proud in judgment.

The God who offers mercy to the humble is the same God who stands in judgment over the proud. The God who calls sinners to seek Him is the same God before whom every nation, every kingdom, and every human heart must one day stand.

And yet, right in the middle of this judgment, we find one of the sweetest promises in all of Scripture: the Lord remembers His people.

Have you ever watched arrogant people prosper while the righteous suffer? Have you ever looked at the world and wondered if God has forgotten His own?

The psalmists did. The prophets did. In fact, God’s people have wrestled with these questions in every generation.

That’s the tension behind our passage.



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For generations, the Philistines had been enemies of God’s people. Their cities were fortified. Their armies were feared. Their trade routes brought wealth and influence. Meanwhile, Judah was small, vulnerable, and standing under the shadow of God’s coming judgment. If you were watching with merely human eyes, you might have thought the Philistines were winning.

But appearances can be deceiving.

Because there is a throne above every throne. There is a King above every king. There is a Judge who never, ever forgets.

In Zephaniah 2:4 - 7, God pulls back the curtain and reminds His people that while the wicked may prosper for a season, their triumph is always temporary. The Lord will judge the proud. The Lord will preserve His remnant. The Lord will restore His people.

This brings us to our main point this morning:

Main Point: The Lord stands against the proud in judgment, yet remembers and restores His remnant through Jesus Christ.

Look again at verses 4 - 5:

4 For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod’s people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be uprooted. 5 Woe to you inhabitants of the



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seacoast, you nation of the Cherethites! The word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.

Our first point today is this:

I. The Word of the LORD Stands Against the Proud (vv. 4–5)

Zephaniah names four cities: Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron. To us, they might sound like names on an ancient map. But to Zephaniah’s audience, these cities represented generations of opposition.

When Samson fought the Philistines, these were their cities. When Saul battled them, these were their strongholds. When David faced Goliath in the Valley of Elah, he stood against a champion from this very people.

For centuries, the Philistines had opposed God’s covenant people and mocked the God of Israel. They trusted in military strength. They trusted in wealth. They trusted in their gods, and most of all, in themselves. And for a long time, it seemed to work. Their cities prospered. Their armies expanded.

But now God announces that their day of reckoning has arrived.



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Notice how thorough the judgment is. Gaza doesn't just decline, it becomes deserted. Ashkelon doesn't merely weaken; it becomes a ruin. Ashdod's people aren't retreating under cover of darkness; they're driven out at noon, publicly, shamefully. Ekron isn't subdued; it's uprooted, completely removed.

Everything that looked permanent was going to disappear. Everything they built apart from God would be swept away.

Then comes the most devastating line in the passage: **“The word of the LORD is against you.”**

There may be no more terrifying words in all of Scripture.

Not because an army stands against you. Not because the government opposes you. But because God Himself is against you.

As we heard a couple of weeks ago at the end of chapter 1, when the Lord stands against a people, no amount of wealth saves them, no military rescues them, no political alliance delivers them.

Psalm 33:10 says, “The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples.”

Every kingdom that rises in defiance of God eventually crumbles. The proud will not stand forever. No, the enemies of God never stand forever.



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Now, it's easy to read this and think only about the Philistines. But Scripture never lets us just sit and observe.

Folks, the Philistines weren't condemned just because they were Philistines. They were condemned because they were sinners living in rebellion against a holy God.

And if we're honest, that description has fit each of us.

Romans 3 tells us, “None is righteous, no, not one.”

Paul also says in Ephesians 2 that we were **“dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”**

Our deepest problem isn't political or financial or cultural. Our deepest problem is that we are sinners and we stand guilty before a holy God.

Apart from Christ, the words spoken against Philistia could just as easily be said against us: “The word of the LORD is against you.”



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That’s why the warning in verses 1 - 3 was so urgent. Seek the Lord. Humble yourself before Him. Hide yourself in Him. Because God’s holiness is real, He takes sin seriously, His judgment is real, and His Word never fails.

But, praise the LORD, judgment isn’t the last word in this passage, because...

II. The LORD Remembers His Remnant (vv. 6–7)

If verse 5 contains one of the most terrifying statements in Scripture, then we must say that verse 7 contains one of the most comforting.

The Philistines hear: “The word of the LORD is against you.”

But the remnant hears: **“For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.”**

This is **the great contrast** of our passage. God stands against the proud, but He remembers His people.

Look at verses 6 - 7:

6 And you, O seacoast, shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks. 7 The seacoast shall become the possession of the remnant of the house of Judah, on which they shall graze, and in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.



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Look at what happens here. The same land that once belonged to God’s enemies becomes an inheritance for God’s people. The cities that threatened Judah become places of peace. The warriors disappear, but the shepherds return. The fortified strongholds become places to rest. The sounds of battle give way to the sounds of sheep grazing in the evening.

What a **reversal**.

And notice that the text doesn’t just say “Judah survives.” It says the land becomes the possession of *the remnant* of the house of Judah.

This idea of the “remnant” is an important one, and it is woven throughout Scripture.

Perhaps you remember this story, from 1 Kings 19, Elijah was despondent and thought he was completely alone. He believed every faithful worshiper had disappeared. Yet God told him, “I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal.”

Isaiah chapter 10:20-21 declares: “20 In that day the remnant of Israel and the survivors of the house of Jacob will no more lean on him who struck them, but will lean on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 **A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God.**”



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And when Paul reflects on God’s saving work in Romans 11, he writes, “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.”

Chosen by grace. Sit with those words for a moment.

The remnant isn’t preserved because they’re stronger. They aren’t preserved because they’re superior or because they’ve earned God’s favor. They’re preserved because God is gracious.

From beginning to end, salvation belongs to the Lord. Left to ourselves, we’d all join the rebellion. Left to ourselves, we’d all stand with the Philistines. But God, in His mercy, preserves a people for Himself.

Which brings us to the most beautiful phrase in the entire passage: **“For the LORD their God will be mindful of them.”**

The covenant language in that sentence should stop us in our tracks. *The LORD **their** God*. That little phrase runs like a golden thread all through Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

In Genesis 17:7, God promised Abraham, **“I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you... to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”**

In Exodus 6:7, God told Israel through Moses, **“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.”**



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In Jeremiah 31:31-33, God promises to send the New Covenant and says, **“Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”**

And in Revelation 21:3, when God's work of redemption reaches its glorious conclusion, we hear: **“Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.”**

Do you see it? Do you see it, church?

The great promise of Scripture isn't merely forgiveness, as wonderful as that is. It isn't just escape from judgment or hell.

“I will be their God.” The great promise of Scripture is God Himself. You. Get. God.



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And here in chapter 2, Zephaniah is telling a people on the edge of exile: the covenant God has not abandoned you. He is still yours, and you are still His. And because He is your God, He is mindful of you.

Now, when Scripture says God remembers His people, we need to be careful. It does not mean He had forgotten them and suddenly is reminded that they exist. God never forgets.

Rather, God “remembering” means **that God acts according to His covenant promises.**

Think about Noah. Genesis 8 says, **“But God remembered Noah and all the beasts... and God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided.”** That doesn’t mean God lost track of the ark. It means **God acted** to bring Noah safely through the flood because He had promised to do so.

Think about Israel in Egypt. Exodus chapter 2 tells us:

“²³ During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.”

God had not forgotten them. He was preparing to deliver them.



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Throughout Scripture, when God remembers His people, **He moves toward them** in covenant faithfulness. **He acts** on their behalf. He fulfills the promises He has made. He demonstrates His steadfast, never-ending love.

That is exactly what Zephaniah is describing for us here.

The Lord remembers His people.

The Lord keeps His promises. The Lord preserves His remnant. The Lord restores what has been lost.

And church, what encouragement this would have been for Judah. Remember the context. Israel has been scattered and no longer exists. Now judgment is looming over Judah. The Babylonian invasion is approaching. Exile is coming. Everything they’ve ever known is about to change.

But God says, “I have not forgotten you.”

Man, did they need to hear that. Maybe you need to hear that today, too? Maybe we all need to hear that this morning?

Maybe you feel forgotten. Maybe you look around and see evil prospering. Maybe this June, you are watching what God calls sin celebrated as ‘Pride,’ while faithfulness to the truth is condemned by the culture around us. Maybe you wonder whether your obedience even matters. Maybe you carry burdens nobody else sees. Maybe suffering has left you weary, and disappointment has left you discouraged.



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Beloved, hear the promise of verse 7: **“The LORD your God is mindful of you.”**

The world may overlook you. People might forget you. Your labor may seem to go unnoticed.

But your God has not forgotten you.

Not one prayer has escaped His notice. Not one tear has been wasted. Not one act of faithfulness has been overlooked.

The same God who remembered Noah remembers His people today. The same God who remembered Judah remembers His church today. The same God who preserved a remnant in Zephaniah’s day still preserves His people today.

And yet, as wonderful as this promise is, Zephaniah is pointing us toward something even greater.

Because ultimately the question must be: How can a holy God stand against some sinners in judgment and yet remember other sinners with mercy? How can God be both just, as He must be, and gracious, as He is? How can rebels like us become the remnant?

The answer is not found in a compromise between justice and mercy, but in the One who satisfied both at the cross. The answer is found only in Jesus Christ.



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And that brings us to our final point.

III. Christ Bore the Judgment so the Remnant Receive the Promise (v. 7)

One more time, verse 7 says, **“... For the LORD their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.”**

Remember, the Philistines heard: “The word of the LORD is against you.” But the remnant hears: “The LORD their God will be mindful of them.”

The most important question in all of human history is how can both of these things be true?

Because at Calvary, the Word of the Lord that stood against us fell upon Jesus instead. The wrath that should have been ours became His. The judgment that should have crushed us crushed Him. The condemnation that belonged to us was placed on the sinless Son of God.

This was never an accident. Nothing that happened at Calvary was an interruption of God’s plan; it *was* God’s plan.

Peter declares in Acts 2 that this Jesus was **“delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God.”**

Again, in Acts 4, everything done against Jesus at the cross was done **“to accomplish whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place.”** The greatest act of evil in all



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of history became the very means by which God accomplished the greatest act of redemption.

At the cross, we see both God’s justice and God’s mercy. Justice, because sin has been punished. Mercy, because Christ bore that punishment for His people.

Isaiah saw this hundreds of years before Christ was born:

“He was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities... and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5).

Peter tells us, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

And Paul sums it up in breathtaking words: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

But, if possible, there’s a wonder here even deeper than that!

All through this passage, Zephaniah has been comforting God’s people with this promise that He sees on the horizon, dimly but definite: the LORD their God will be mindful of them. God remembers His covenant people. God acts for their good. God does not forget His remnant. Their Savior is coming!

And then we come to the cross.



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And we hear something that should shake us to our core. As Jesus hung under the wrath of God, bearing the sins of His people, with the Psalmist, He cried out: **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).**

Think about that.

The One who had eternally enjoyed perfect fellowship with the Father willingly entered into the darkness of judgment, for us.

The Son was treated as though He were the covenant-breaker, so that covenant-breakers like us could be treated as beloved sons and daughters.

The One who was perfectly righteous endured the curse reserved for the wicked. The One who deserved only the Father’s delight endured the Father’s judgment in our place.

Our sins were laid upon Him. Our guilt was placed on His shoulders. Our judgment fell on His back. He was cut off so we could be brought near. He was forsaken so we could be adopted. He drank the cup of wrath so we could receive the cup of blessing.

This is **the great reversal** of the gospel. **This is what makes it so scandalous and so beautiful at the same time.**

The Word that once stood against us now stands for us, because Christ stood in our place.



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And because of Christ, every believer becomes part of God’s true remnant. Not by bloodline. Not by heritage. Not by works or performance. But by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

As the Apostle Paul says in **Romans 11:5, “So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.”**

That’s you, Highlands Community Church. Not because you deserved it. Not because you earned it. Not because you were better than anyone else. But because God is gracious.

And every promise of restoration finds its fulfillment in Him. The seacoast becomes pastureland. The wilderness becomes a garden. The exile becomes a homecoming. The curse becomes a blessing. The meek inherit the earth.

This is why Peter can tell us that we have received **“an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you” (1 Peter 1:4).**

One day, the restoration Zephaniah anticipates will be complete. Every enemy defeated. Every tear wiped away. Every wilderness of judgment turned to pastureland under the care of the Good Shepherd. And we, God’s redeemed remnant, will dwell forever in the presence of our King. All to the praise of His glorious grace.



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Church, do not miss the great contrast, the great reversal running through this passage.

The Philistines heard: “The word of the LORD is against you.”
The remnant heard: “The LORD their God will be mindful of them.”

The difference was not that one group deserved judgment and the other deserved mercy. Left to ourselves, we all deserve the first sentence. The difference is the grace of God. And because Christ bore the judgment our sins deserved, everyone who trusts in Him now hears the second sentence. The Lord is mindful of His people.

So what does this passage mean for us, walking out of here today? It means the same thing it meant for Judah.

Main Point: The Lord stands against the proud in judgment, yet remembers and restores His remnant through Jesus Christ.

The proud will not stand forever. The wicked will not prosper forever. Every kingdom built in opposition to Christ will eventually fall. Every idol will crumble. Every rival throne will bow before King Jesus.



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But it also means this: the Lord has not forgotten His people. The world may hate you. Your culture may oppose you. Your circumstances may wear you down. But because Christ bore the judgment we deserved, He will never stop being mindful of His remnant.

He remembered Noah. He remembered Israel. He remembered Judah. He remembers you.

Call to Obey

As we come to our call to obey, let Zephaniah’s earlier words come back to us.

Gather with the people of God. Don’t isolate yourself from the covenant community. God has always preserved His remnant through worship, fellowship, discipleship, and the ministry of His Word. You need these people. They need you.

Seek the Lord in humility, in repentance, in faith. He opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. If you’re a believer walking in sin, repent, be renewed, and follow Him. If you’ve never trusted Christ, hear this passage as a loving warning. Judgment is real and is coming. But mercy is available today.

Run to Christ. Hide yourself in Him. Trust the One who bore judgment in the place of sinners. And take courage, beloved, the Lord your God is mindful of you. Kingdoms rise and fall. Cultures shift. Enemies come and go.



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Take courage this week, your inheritance is secure, because Christ has already borne the judgment in your place.

The Good Shepherd is leading you toward eternal rest. One day, every wilderness will become pastureland in the kingdom of God.

Because the Lord remembers His remnant. And He will restore our fortunes.

To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

[CLOSING PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

[RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY]

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*

O. Palmer Robertson, *The Books of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*