

Zephaniah

Chapter 2

Gather together, gather together, O shameful nation, ² before the appointed time arrives and that day sweeps on like chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD comes upon you, before the day of the LORD's wrath comes upon you. ³ Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger.

2:1–3 The prophet's exhortation to repent. This call to repentance and the later indictment of Jerusalem for refusal to repent (see 3:6–8 and **note**) frame the series of judgments that illustratively detail God's acts in the coming day of the Lord (2:4–3:5). (CSB)

2:1 *O shameless nation.* The Lord summons Judah to hear His call to repent. (TLSB)

Literally, "that does not grow pale," which till now has felt no sense of shame. (Kretzmann)

2:2 *like chaff.* See **note** on Ps 1:4 – (A simile of the wretchedness of the wicked. Chaff is carried away by the lightest wind, and its removal brings about cleansing by extracting what is utterly useless.) (CSB)

FIERCE ANGER – Frightening picture of the fire (1:18) of God's wrath streaming forth from His flared nostrils (cf 2 Sam 22:9). (TLSB)

2:3 *Seek the LORD.* Even though destruction is imminent, there is still time to be sheltered from the calamity if only the nation will repent. (CSB)

humble. Those who abandon the arrogance of their idolatry and wickedness and humble themselves in repentance before God. (CSB)

SEEK RIGHTEOUSNESS – The only righteousness that counts before God is the Lord's righteousness, His power to save (Php 3:9). All who humbly trust in Him will be spared on the Day of Judgment. (TLSB)

Against Philistia

⁴ Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon left in ruins. At midday Ashdod will be emptied and Ekron uprooted. ⁵ Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the LORD is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. "I will destroy you, and none will be left." ⁶ The land by the sea, where the Kerethites dwell, will be a place for shepherds and sheep pens. ⁷ It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture. In the evening

they will lie down in the houses of Ashkelon. The LORD their God will care for them; he will restore their fortunes.

2:4–3:8 God's coming judgment on the nations—including Jerusalem (cf. Am 1–2). (CSB)

2:4 *Gaza ... Ashkelon ... Ashdod ... Ekron.* These were Judah's enemies. (TLSB)

The four Philistine city-states here mentioned are clearly representative of the entire country. (Kretzmann)

at noon. Ashdod will be destroyed in broad daylight. (TLSB)

Ashdod was the chief seat of the worship of Dagon. Since she would be helpless even at midday, so that there would be no need of resorting to a night attack. (Kretzmann)

uprooted. Like a weed, Ekron will be pulled up by its roots and left to die. (TLSB)

2:5 *Cherethites!* Related to Crete; Philistine origins are partially linked with this island. (TLSB)

Canaan. Ancient name of the land along the eastern seashore of the Great Sea, stretching from Sidon in the north to Gaza in the south, and reaching inland as far as the Jordan Valley. Philistines lived in the southwest part of Canaan. (TLSB)

I ... left. The Lord's announced purpose. (CSB)

The nation as such to be destroyed.

2:6 The once-populous Philistine cities will revert to pastureland. (CSB)

Following the destruction of Judah's enemies, a peaceful, pastoral scene emerges along the seacoast. (TLSB)

SHEEP PENS – Stone-walled enclosures for sheep and goats. (TLSB)

2:7 The faithful remnant of Judah will occupy this land and graze their flocks on it. (CSB)

OT prophets often referred to the remnant of the house of Judah, which would again possess the land following the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity. (TLSB)

be mindful. The Lord will remember His people with a friendly intent. (TLSB)

restore their fortunes. Here and in vv. 9, 11 the prophet anticipates the ultimate outcome of the day of the Lord, which he spells out more fully in 3:9–20. (CSB)

God's people will again enjoy good times. (TLSB)

The members of the Jewish nation that returned from Babylonia were those in whose midst the Lord preserved His Church and among whom He established the Church of the New Testament. So the Messianic idea is brought out even in this connection. (Kretzmann)

Against Moab and Ammon

⁸“I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land. ⁹Therefore, as surely as I live,” declares the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, “surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah— a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land.” ¹⁰This is what they will get in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking the people of the LORD Almighty. ¹¹The LORD will be awesome to them when he destroys all the gods of the land. The nations on every shore will worship him, every one in its own land.

2:8 *taunts*. Insults and reproaches. (TLSB)

Moab ... Ammonites. For the hostility of Ammon and Moab toward Israel see Am 1:13–15; 2:1–3. They had often threatened to occupy Israelite territory (see Jdg 11:12–13; Eze 25:3–6). (CSB)

These two nations east of Jordan and of the Dead Sea, were related to the children of Israel, but later became the enemies of God's people and made known their hostility in bitter blasphemies in proud mockery and scorn. They acted violently against the boundary of the Lord's people, constantly attempting to get into possession of some of Israel's territory. (Kretzmann)

Moab. East of the Salt Sea. *revilings*. Insults hurled at another person. *Ammonites*. Inhabitants of Ammon, a country north of Moab, east of the Jordan River. (TLSB)

2:9 AS SURELY AS I LIVE – This is an oath as certain as the eternal existence of the Lord, who swears it. (TLSB)

Sodom ... Gomorrah. See Ge 19. They were used in the OT to typify complete destruction at the hands of God (see Dt 29:23; Isa 13:19; Jer 49:18), and their mention added ominous overtones to the prophet's description of the day of the Lord. (CSB)

weeds. A symbol of depopulation (see Isa 7:23–25). (CSB)

Moab and Ammon would be completely destroyed, as were Sodom and Gomorrah. (TLSB)

remnant ... will inherit their land. God foretells the time when His people would turn the tables on their enemies. (TLSB)

These events being typical of the destruction of the sinners and the redemption of the Lord's people. (Kretzmann)

2:10 *in return for their pride, for insulting and mocking.* In reprisal, the faithful remnant will occupy Ammonite and Moabite territory. (CSB)

The downfall of the Moabites and Ammonites. (TLSB)

2:11 *famish all the gods.* The gods were thought to eat the sacrifices of their worshipers, so when their worshipers are swept away in judgment, the gods will starve. Wycl: "Who may see a greater abomination than to see the people to be led away from God, and they be taught to worship for God that thing that is not God nor Saviour of the world?" (TT 275). (TLSB)

bow down. All people will fall down to worship the Lord (Php 2:10–11). (TLSB)

This will be when men from every nation of the earth would be gained for the Gospel-truth, this being a further Messianic feature in this chapter. (Kretzmann)

Against Cush

¹² **"You too, O Cushites, will be slain by my sword."**

2:12 *You too.* Without elaboration, the prophet simply announces God's purpose against Egypt. (CSB)

Cushites. Egypt was ruled from 715 to 663 B.C. by a Cushite dynasty. (CSB)

Cush was the ancient name of the territory south of Egypt, later referred to as Ethiopia. (TLSB)

my sword. Probably Babylon. (CSB)

Against Assyria

¹³ **He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert.** ¹⁴ **Flocks and herds will lie down there, creatures of every kind. The desert owl and the screech owl will roost on her columns. Their calls will echo through the windows, rubble will be in the doorways, the beams of cedar will be exposed.** ¹⁵ **This is the carefree city that lived in safety. She said to herself, "I am, and there is none besides me." What a ruin she has become, a lair for wild beasts! All who pass by her scoff and shake their fists.**

2:13 *north*. Although Nineveh was east of Judah, Assyrian armies normally invaded Canaan from the north, having first marched west along the Euphrates. (CSB)

Turning from Ethiopia in the south, the prophet now directs his attention to the north. (TLSB)

Assyria. Located far to the north and east of Judah between the Upper Tigris and Euphrates rivers. (TLSB)

Nineveh. See the books of Jonah and Nahum. Since Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C., Zephaniah's ministry had to be before that date. (CSB)

Capital of the Assyrian Empire, on the Tigris River. (TLSB)

utterly desolate. Even the site of Nineveh was later forgotten—until discovered through modern excavations. (CSB)

The Hebrew for “desolate” implies that people will be astonished at the devastation. Over 150 years earlier, Nineveh's destruction had been averted (cf Jnh 3), but this time it would not be spared. (TLSB)

2:14 WILL LIE DOWN – Proud Nineveh will become a lair for wild animals. (TLSB)

DESERT OWL...SCREECH OWL – ESV has “hedgehog” instead of “screech owl.” Neither creature is normally a city dweller, which underscores that Nineveh will be abandoned to nature. (TLSB)

BEAMS...CEDARS WILL BE EXPOSED – All the beautiful cedar paneling of their palaces the Lord has torn away, and it has fallen into decay. (Kretzmann)

2:15 *exultant city*. Nineveh once rejoiced in its power and greatness. Now its beautiful architecture will be exposed to the elements. (TLSB)

lived securely. Nineveh's citizens believed their city was so secure it could never be conquered. (TLSB)

I am ... none besides me. See Isa 47:10. Assyria's boast belongs properly to God alone (see Isa 45:5–6, 18, 21). (CSB)

has become. Anticipating Nineveh's impending destruction. (CSB)

hisses. People would show contempt for the site of Nineveh with shrill whistles as they passed by. The city that once prided itself on its own importance will become as object of scorn. (TLSB)

Ch 2 Zephaniah urges the people of Judah to seek the Lord, then describes the devastation that will fall on neighboring nations because of their sins. We, too, are guilty of arrogance, pride, and boasting. The Lord calls us to humble repentance and, through trust in Jesus as our Savior, He promises to shield us from His anger. • Lord, may I never boast except in the cross of Jesus, my Savior. Amen. (TLSB)