

## “Nahum & Zephaniah” (Route 66)

All right, let's turn in our Bibles this morning to TWO PLACES... The Books of NAHUM... and ZEPHANIAH...

Now, they do NOT APPEAR right NEXT to each other... (they're SEPARATED by the Book of Habakkuk [which is ONE of the Books we'll study next week])...

By the way... This is where I ALWAYS RECOMMEND people to GO BACK and MAKE SURE you are LISTENING to all of our PREVIOUS MESSAGES in this series... because CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING when studying the Bible...

Because—with the prophets—we have reached a PORTION OF SCRIPTURE where a lot of folks just sort of “BOG DOWN” in their Bible reading...

People can hang-in-there with the CREATION ACCOUNT, and the EXODUS STORY... or the CONQUEST OF THE LAND in Joshua & Judges... the LOVE STORY of Ruth, the KINGS and David and Solomon and the BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE... BUT...

ONCE the UNITED KINGDOM OF ISRAEL **DIVIDES**... 10 TRIBES to the North (Israel)... 2 TRIBES to the South (Judah)—the Biblical Narrative becomes a LOT LESS LINEAR...

The narrator will switch back-and-forth from the KINGS in the NORTH to the KINGS in the SOUTH... as he traces their history SIMULTANEOUSLY...

And so, with the PROPHETS... they're NOT necessarily tracing A SINGLE STORY... THESE ARE INDIVIDUAL MESSENGERS sent to VARIOUS PLACES, at DIFFERENT TIMES with DIFFERING THEMES.

And – without context – a lot of people SKIP OVER THEM... and RESUME in the New Testament with the BIRTH OF CHRIST... But THE PROPHETS offer so much insight and TEXTURE... when it comes to the timing, and history, and scope of the birth of Jesus...

Up to THIS point—we have ALREADY looked at the prophets to the Northern Kingdom in Jonah, Amos, and Hosea... And, in the SOUTH—we have looked at ISAIAH and MICAH... This morning—as I mentioned—we look at the prophets of NAHUM and ZEPHANIAH

This is ONE of the occasions where we'll ‘CHEAT’ a little bit... Because—in NAHUM—the Lord is speaking **AGAINST ASSYRIA** (more specifically, **NINEVEH**)...

And then—in Zephaniah—the Lord addresses LOTS of the nations SURROUNDING Judah—and **INCLUDES NINEVEH and ASSYRIA**...

See, up to THIS POINT, the Lord has USED various prophets to WARN HIS PEOPLE that JUDGMENT would come AGAINST **THEM** through the Assyrian Empire (and—eventually—Babylon)... Isaiah 10 is a good example... In Verses 5 & 6, the Lord The Lord **CALLS** Assyria:

“...the rod of My anger, the staff in whose hand is My indignation.” David Guzik writes: “*God says Assyria is like a stick in His hand... They [ran His] errands; [He] gave them permission.*”

But—in **THESE BOOKS** (particular, Nahum... which—Jon Courson calls—the ‘*Sequel to Jonah*’)—the Lord TURNS HIS ATTENTION **TO** Assyria, and says: “*Now it’s YOUR turn.*”

Nahum OPENS with: “**The burden**”—or the ORACLE—“**against Nineveh.**” – Zephaniah 2:13 announces: “[God] will stretch out His hand against the north, [to] destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation...”

One author writes: “*The most frightening words anyone could ever hear are... directed toward Nineveh by the Lord [in Nahum 2:13 and 3:5]... He says: ‘Behold, I am against you.’*”

You see, ASSYRIA was the **WORLD-DOMINATING EMPIRE** at the time, and one of the **LONG-STANDING ENEMIES** of Israel... And NINEVEH was the capital...

Located where modern-day Mosul, Iraq sits, Nineveh was sort of the LONDON, or NEW YORK CITY of its day... Some estimates place its population around 600,000... It took 3 DAYS to travel across... Jon Courson writes:

“*Nineveh was one of the greatest cities of antiquity. With 1,200... 200-foot-high towers, surrounded by a 100-foot-high wall [so wide] that 3 chariots could drive atop it side-by-side. 60 miles in circumference... [with] magnificent palaces, courtyards of more than 100 acres. Hanging gardens, temples, palaces, libraries, & arsenals abounded to adorn & enrich the city.*”

The *Major Cities of the Biblical World* likens it to: “*ancient Versailles.*”

Zephaniah 2:15 describes Nineveh as: “**The rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in her heart, ‘I am it... and there is none besides me.’**” – They were very **PROUD...** HOWEVER...

They were also very **WICKED...** Nineveh was founded by NIMROD—the world’s **FIRST DICTATOR** (in Genesis 10)... The **FIRST 4 VERSES** of Nahum 3 provide this snapshot:

“**Woe to the bloody city!**” – **THAT** was its **NICKNAME**—“... all full of lies and robbery... a multitude of slain, a great number of bodies, countless corpses... because of the multitude of harlotries... the mistress of sorceries, who sells nations through her harlotries, and families through her sorceries.”

One historian says: “*Assyria [was] the first nation to make... military might its central policy and... to torment its enemies with psychological warfare. They pioneered the use of terror as a weapon...*”

Nineveh was **KNOWN** for SKINNING their victims alive... They would HANG THE SEVERED of their victims like NECKLACES around the survivors... Archeologists have found furniture made of human skin... Pyramids of human skulls... Historians write of:

“...*people being impaled, decapitated, flayed, and tongues pulled out... people being made to grind the bones of their dead ancestors, and vultures plucking out the eyes of the dead!*”

One King—Ashurnasirpal II—left a series of tablets, and in ONE, he wrote: “*I flayed many... and draped their skins over [my] walls... I burned their adolescent boys and girls . . . A pillar of heads I erected in front of the city.*”

Now... I **RECOGNIZE** that people like to say that the world is getting WORSE and WORSE... And—to that—I say: **PLEASE READ HISTORY**... We do NOT have a **WORLD DOMINATING EMPIRE**, right now, who is doing the KINDS of stuff they were doing in Nineveh...

AND, Nineveh was known for WITCHCRAFT and SEXUAL IMMORALITY... James Montgomery Boice writes: “*Thousands of tablets uncovered in the Mesopotamian valley show abysmal superstition. Hundreds of sorcery incantations have been brought to light.*”

**HOWEVER**... About 150 YEARS BEFORE Nahum & Zephaniah... the prophet Jonah had been SENT to Nineveh... And REVIVAL BROKE OUT! – Jonah Chapter 3 says:

“**The people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them... the king of Nineveh... caused it to be proclaimed... throughout [the land]... saying... ‘let man and beast... cry mightily to God... let everyone turn from his evil way and... the violence that is in his hands. [And] God saw their works... and... relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them...’**”

Again, David Guzik writes: “[Nineveh] **heard** the preaching of Jonah... and repented. [Now] Nahum’s call was to address a city that slipped back into sin and was again ripe for judgment.”

Now... to PAUSE... ONE of the things that these Books **REMIND** US OF... is that God not only deals with **PEOPLE**... He deals with **NATIONS**... G. Campbell Morgan said these prophecies: “...set forth... the truth concerning the wrath of God, in its **national** application.”

And, this is THROUGHOUT the Bible... Joel Chapter 3 says God: “**will... gather all nations... And... enter into judgment with them... on account of My people... Israel...**”

In Matthew 25, Jesus says: “**When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.**” –

This is an occasion **OFTEN** referred to as ‘**The Judgement of the Nations.**’ – When “...*Gentiles who are judged... on their kindness and care towards... the Jewish people.*”

Now, we can **DATE** Nahum fairly accurately... He says to Nineveh—in Chapter 3—“**Are you better than No Amon, that was situated by the River... Yet she... went into captivity; her young children... were dashed to pieces... and all her great men were bound in chains.**”

‘**No Amon**’ was the Hebrew name for the Egyptian city of **Thebes**... And, the Assyrians were **RESPONSIBLE** for the **DESTRUCTION of THEBES!**

Nahum is saying to Nineveh: “*Remember what you did to Thebes? The same is coming on you.*”

Now, the destruction of Thebes HAPPENED in 663 B.C.... The fall of NINEVEH happened in 612 B.C. – And BECAUSE Nahum does not mention the RECONSTRUCTION of Thebes in 654 BC...

Chuck Swindoll writes: “*This [helps] us date the prophecy Nahum between 663–654 BC.*” – G. Campbell Morgan said Nahum likely prophesied when Nineveh “*was at the **height** of her power.*”

Now, Zephaniah was the **LAST** PROPHET to write before the Babylonian captivity of Judah. – His writing has been called “*the swan song of the southern kingdom.*”

MANY say that his writings “sum up” the messages of the previous prophets. – SOME consider his work “*unoriginal... because he quotes the words and ideas of many [of the] previous prophets.*”

From Zephaniah 2, Verses 13—15, we see that he writes **BEFORE** Nineveh FELL (which—again—was in 612 BC)... So, scholars put HIS writing to between 630 and 627 BC... probably **BETWEEN** Nahum and Jeremiah...

Now, we don’t know a WHOLE lot about Nahum... His name is a SHORTENED FORM of the name ‘*Nehemiah*,’ and it means “*comfort.*”

Which is IRONIC, because—as one author puts it—“*Nahum is a prophecy of **doom**... do not look here for the spiritual element which we find in Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah.*”

And, Nahum IDENTIFIES himself as an ‘**Elkoshite**,’ in Verse 1... which doesn’t HELP a whole lot, because we don’t know where Elkosh was...

**SIDE-NOTE...** It **IS** interesting that the name *Capernaum*—which was a city PROMINENTLY FEATURED in the earthly ministry of Jesus—means “*village of Nahum.*” – So, SOME have speculated that MAYBE the city was named after the prophet?... [we don’t know that for sure]...

Zephaniah **TELLS** US of his TIME and LINEAGE... Zephaniah 1:1 says: “**The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.**”

So, Zephaniah is of **ROYAL LINEAGE**... He is the great, great grandson of King Hezekiah...

And **HIS NAME** means “*Yahweh hides.*” – So, he was PROBABLY born during the reign of the WICKED KING Manasseh, and then HIDDEN for his OWN PROTECTION.

Which is interesting... Because—in Zephaniah Chapter 2, Verse 3—he writes: “**It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.**” – Which is sort of a PLAY on his own NAME...

Now, here’s the deal... There’s LOTS that I could SAY about BOTH of these Books... They BOTH DESERVE a study of their own... But BECAUSE they address the SAME audience AT roughly the same time... with MESSAGES so SIMILAR... THIS is why we’re looking at them TOGETHER...

So, CONSIDER THIS STUDY... sort of like a ROCK skipping along the surface of Nahum & Zephaniah—just TOUCHING upon some of the highlights...

If you want to do a DEEPER DIVE, come out on Wednesday at 10:30... Better yet, just READ THESE BOOKS on your own... They are SUPER SHORT... but SUPER POWERFUL...

From a STRUCTURE STANDPOINT, Nahum is pretty straight-forward... In Chapter 1—Nahum **DECLARES** Nineveh's Doom... In Chapter 2—Nahum **DESCRIBES** Nineveh's Doom... And—in Chapter 3—we see that **NINEVEH'S DOOM IS DESERVED...**

A Professor by the name of Richard Green Moulton said: “*Nahum hovers between Doom Song and rhapsodic discourse... classic in all its respects... marked by clearness, finished elegance... fire, richness, and originality.*” – James Montgomery Boice calls Nahum: “*...a masterpiece of ancient literature, unsurpassed for its graphic portrayal of a military assault.*”

Now, the **REMAINS of NINEVEH** were discovered between 1846 and 1847... But—as you READ THROUGH NAHUM—take NOTE of a couple of things...

For starters, Nahum Chapter 1, Verse 3 declares: “**The Lord... will not at all acquit the wicked.**” – Charles Spurgeon said: “*God is not like an unjust judge who [just] lets the guilty **GO** out of a false sense of compassion. We can't just hope God will say, 'All is forgiven' when someone passes from this [life] to the next. Sin must be accounted for, because **God will not acquit the wicked.** Every sin [must] be paid for—either in hell or on the cross... but God will not acquit the wicked. Never once has God pardoned an unpunished sin—not in all the years of the Most High has He blotted-out [a] sin without punishment.*” – So, either JESUS pays for our sin, or **WE** pay for our sin...

Which—by the way—is WHY HELL LASTS FOREVER... See, “**the wages of sin is DEATH**” (Romans 6:23)... But, “**the LIFE of flesh is in the blood...**” (Leviticus 17:11)...

And God says that He has **GIVEN** us blood “**to make atonement for [our] souls... [because] it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.**”

So, this is why Jesus HAD to be BORN... He HAD to inhabit a PHYSICAL BODY, so that He could have BLOOD... And—because He lived a SINLESS LIFE—His blood is PERFECT... And—because His blood was PERFECT—HIS DEATH **COMPLETELY PAYS** for sin...

But if we don't let Jesus pay for our sin... then **WE** have to pay for our sin... Because “**God will not acquit the wicked.**” – And—since OUR BLOOD isn't PERFECT—guess how often we will have to PAY for our sin? – We'll have to pay for it over, and over, and over, and over...

And since we'll NEVER ACHIEVE PERFECT STATUS—HERE or IN HELL—we will have to PAY FOR OUR SINS... FOREVER... Or, we can let JESUS pay for our sin... It's a pretty good deal! – But, “**God will not acquit the wicked.**” – EVERY SIN will be PAID FOR...

Now, in Nahum Chapter 1, Verse 8, we read... CONCERNING NINEVEH—that: “**...with an overflowing flood, [God] will make an utter end of its place...**” – Verse 10 says that: “**while... drunken like drunkards, they shall be devoured like stubble...**”

Now, BEAR IN MIND how **MAGNIFICENT** Nineveh WAS... And, I'm just gonna read Jon Courson on this... He says: *"One of the most fascinating prophecies... in this passage... Historians tell us that... 18 years after Nahum's prophecy—the Medes & Babylonians joined together to attack Nineveh. With enough food within her walls to feed her population indefinitely, and the Euphrates River flowing through the city to provide water, Nineveh fended-off 3 separate attacks over 3 years, just by shutting herself off... and hiding within her walls. To celebrate... Nineveh threw a party... A **drunken** orgy that lasted weeks. But as they partied, clouds formed over Nineveh. As rain fell, the Euphrates River overflowed so much that it... caused the foundation of the walls to crumble. The Medes & Babylonians stormed the breaches and torched the city... just as Nahum had prophesied."*

God made an end of them with “**an overflowing flood**,” and—while “**drunken like drunkards**”—they were “**devoured like stubble...**” – That’s amazing!

Now, a similar thing appears in Chapter 3—when Nahum writes: “**fire shall devour the bars of your gates.**” – James Montgomery Boice says: *“Excavators of Nineveh... remark on the large deposits of ash, evidence of [an extensive fire which destroyed a great deal of land and property].”*

In Nahum 1:14, God tells Nineveh: ‘**Your name shall be perpetuated no longer...**’

Now, it’s TRUE... Wikipedia states: *“Mosul is a major city in northern Iraq... the capital of **Nineveh** Governorate... the second largest city in Iraq... Situated on the banks of the Tigris River, the city encloses the ruins of the ancient Assyrian city of Nineveh...”* – **HOWEVER...**

BY AND LARGE... we don’t HEAR a lot about Nineveh today... I mean, how many ASSYRIANS do we know??? – SUPPOSEDLY—

When Alexander the Great came through this region—he did not find a SINGLE STONE on the spot where Nineveh stood... Skeptics even started to wonder if Nineveh EVER EXISTED...

Adam Clarke asks: *“What probability [is] there that the capital city of a great kingdom—sixty miles in compass... [with] so many inhabitants... [was] so totally destroyed that the place is hardly known” today.*

Now, towards the END of Chapter 2... there’s is a REPEATED REFERENCE **LIONS**... Verse 11 asks: “**Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion walked, [and] the lioness and lion's cub...**”

Verse 13 says: “**The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, [and] killed for his lionesses...**” – Verse 14—the Lord says: “**...the sword shall devour your young lions...**”

So, what’s the **DEAL**? – Well, the LION was **NATIONAL EMBLEM** of the Assyrian Empire... And now, Nahum is asking: “*Hey... Where are the lions?*”

Now, we can IMAGINE that—for the people of Judah—Nahum’s PRONOUNCEMENT **OF JUDGMENT** upon one of their PERENNIAL ENEMIES... would have brought INCREDIBLE HOPE and CONSOLATION...

And so, it's **INTERESTING** that—in Chapter 1—right in the middle of these **DARK PRONOUNCEMENTS**, Nahum writes: "**Behold, on the mountains... the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!**" – This should sound familiar...

PAUL takes up this phrase in Romans Chapter 10, and—along with Isaiah 52—asks: "**How... shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? – How shall they preach unless they are sent?**" – Guys, you and I HAVE BEEN SENT...

"**As it is written,**" he says: "**How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!**" – He's QUOTING from Nahum Chapter 1...

Now, Zephaniah is **DIFFERENT**... It's **STILL** a prophecy of **JUDGMENT**... Once described as: "*A Florida hurricane, a Mississippi flood, a California earthquake, a Minnesota snowstorm, and a Hawaiian volcanic eruption all rolled into one...*" – I like that!

But Zephaniah **DOESN'T BEGIN** with Nineveh... In Chapter 2, he pronounces judgment on the **SURROUNDING** nations... the **PHILISTINES**... the **MOABITES** and **AMMONITES**... The **ETHIOPIANS**... and then—finally—the Assyrians, and Nineveh...

And, it's **CLEAR** that what the Lord is doing... He is pronouncing judgement on the nations to the **WEST**... and the **EAST**... and the **SOUTH**... and the **NORTH** of Judah...

We saw a **VERY SIMILAR THING** with the prophet Amos... The Bible Project writes: "*You can look at a map and see... that [the prophets] draw a circle with Israel in the crosshairs...*"

In Zephaniah 1, Verses 1—6, we see **THE DECREE of the LORD**... In Chapter 3, Verses 9 through 20, we see **THE DELIVERANCE of the LORD**... But, from Chapter 1, Verse 7 through Chapter 3, Verse 8, Zephaniah speaks about **THE DAY OF THE LORD**...

This is one of the **DOMINANTING THEMES** to the Book of Zephaniah... And, it **DOESN'T NECESSARILY** refer to a **LITERAL**, specific **DAY**... It's more the "*time of the Lord.*"

David Guzik writes: "*The idea is that now is the **day** of man... but [that time] will not last forever. One day, Messiah will **end** the day of man and herald the day of the **LORD**.*" – "*[It is] a day of wrath... where mankind receives the... penalty for his rebellion against the **LORD**, [and] Zephaniah paints [a powerful picture] with the repeated description of, "**a day of...**"*

He writes: "...**a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.**"

This is a term that appears more than **25 TIMES** in the Bible... Isaiah wrote about it... Jeremiah... Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zechariah, Malachi... In the New Testament, we see it in the Books of Matthew, Acts, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, 1<sup>st</sup> Thessalonians...

2<sup>nd</sup> Peter **THREE** says: “**The day of the Lord WILL come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.**”

Now... HERE’S THE DEAL... The VERY NEXT PHRASE says: “**Therefore...**” – In other words: SINCE WE **KNOW** the Day of the Lord is coming... Peter writes, then:

“**What manner of persons ought [we] to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God... [where] we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells... [and] looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless...**”

IN OTHER WORDS... Because we **KNOW** that JUDGMENT IS COMING... it should **AFFECT** the way **WE**—as **GOD’S PEOPLE**—live our lives... that’s the **POINT** of Zephaniah!

One author writes: “*The often-unwritten theme behind... prophecy is, ‘This is what will happen if you do not repent.’ [In Zephaniah] the prophet pleads with the nation to repent before it is too late.*”

In Chapter 2, he says—and this is him speaking to JUDAH now—“**Before the decree is issued... before the day of the LORD’s anger comes upon you! Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth... Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD’s anger.**” – This reminds me of Jesus’s words in Luke Chapter 21... He says:

“**Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, [and] drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come upon you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.**” – And then, He says: “**Watch therefore, and PRAY ALWAYS that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass...**”

You see—by CHAPTER THREE of the Book of Zephaniah—it becomes CLEAR... that—although Zephaniah has been ADDRESSING all these SURROUNDING NATIONS... the **CRUX** of God’s COMPLAINT is **NOT NINEVEH**... it is **HIS PEOPLE**... Judah... God says:

“**She has not obeyed [My] voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the LORD, she has not drawn near to her God.**” – “**Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.**”

In Chapter 1, God says: “**I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and... all the inhabitants of Jerusalem...**” – “**Those who have turned back from following the LORD, and... not... inquired of Him... I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, ‘The LORD will not do good, nor will He do evil.’**”

PLEASE be CAREFUL of this kind of thinking... This is called **DEISM**... And, it’s MISTAKE that a lot of **PROGRESSIVE**—or ‘**POP**’—Christians make... “[They] believe in God as a great ‘clockmaker’ who created the universe, wound it up and... left it ticking without any further intervention.”

In his book '*The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*,' ... Edward Gibbon described the attitudes **TOWARD RELIGION** in the last days of the Rome... He says:

*"The people regarded all religions equally true... The philosophers regarded all religions as equally false... [and] The politicians regarded all religions as equally useful."* — This sounds A LOT like today...

The **PURPOSE** of God's **PRONOUNCEMENT of JUDGMENT** on the surrounding nations was NOT for His people to be like: "YES! – Get 'em! – Judge *THOSE PEOPLE!*" – It was SUPPOSED to make THEM realize: "If WE don't repent... we're gonna get the *EXACT SAME THING*."

I feel like—as the modern-day church—we are **CONSTANTLY GETTING THIS WRONG**... Although we would never SAY it, we have a TENDENCY to think—and ACT—like the CHURCH is filled with **GOOD** people, and the WORLD is filled with **BAD** people...

And, when something "**bad**" happens—**PARTICULARLY** to a group of people that we think "deserves" it, we're like... "*That's the judgment of God!*"

Like, when a massive SANDSTORM wipes-out the ORGY DOME at the BURNING MAN FESTIVAL, followed by HORRENDOUS FLOODING...

We'll look at that, and think: "*Oh! Dirty hippies! Heathens! That's the WRATH of God!*" – **INSTEAD** of thinking: "*That could happen to ME.*" – Even MORE pointedly: "I deserve that."

Isn't this the POINT of Jesus' message in Luke Chapter 13, when He mentions the Tower of Siloam collapsing? – He says: "**Those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them... do you think that they were worse sinners than [the] other men who dwelt in Jerusalem?**"

And THEN He says: "No." – In fact, He says: "**unless you repent you will all likewise perish.**" – There's no statement of SYMPATHY... There's no CONDOLENCES... He doesn't even ANSWER THE QUESTION! – He simply POINTS THEM to WHAT MATTERS!

This is where I'll get in hot water for being REALLY INSENSITIVE... At the time of this writing, this past week saw September 11<sup>th</sup>... And, the internet was FLOODED with sentiments of '**We Will Never Forget.**'

Can you IMAGINE the backlash if I was on national television, and they asked me about 911, and what my THOUGHTS were all these years later... and I LOOKED INTO THE CAMERA and said: "*If you don't repent... you're gonna die, too.*"

People would FREAK OUT! – I would be accused of being **MORE** INSENSITIVE than I **USUALLY** am! – Instead of being APPLAUDED for trying to POINT PEOPLE to what matters

This is also on the heels of the assassination of Charlie Kirk. And—if can be so bold (and hear my heart on this)... I believe that—if Charlie Kirk could SPEAK today... If we could HEAR HIS VOICE...

I am CONVINCED that he would say: “*Give your life to Jesus.*” – It wouldn’t be about WHO TO VOTE FOR... But, “*Give your life to Jesus.*”

And, I **KNOW** that... from Jesus’ teaching in Luke Chapter 16... This is what **JUDGMENT SHOULD DO** for us... It shouldn’t be an occasion where we just REJOICE... because we think our enemies “*got what they deserved.*”

It’s supposed to be a WAKE-UP CALL... that the VERY SAME THING could happen to US! – Our mindset can often be: “*God, deal with all the CORRUPT PEOPLE OUT THERE!*”

AND HE **WILL**... Just **READ THE BIBLE**... But, make sure we read **THIS** part... Peter says: “...the time has come for judgment to BEGIN”—where?—“**at the house of God**” —the CHURCH! – David Guzik writes:

*“We see empires and nations judged in our own day and in history, just like the Assyrians saw Thebes destroyed... But, like the Ninevites, we somehow think that we will be spared... despite our sinful arrogance and rebellion.”* – This is the **POINT** to Zephaniah’s writings...

And yet—AMAZINGLY—the Lord speaks of RESTORING HIS PEOPLE, in Zephaniah Chapter 3... He says: “**I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, [and] serve Him with one accord...** The daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering... they shall trust in the name of the LORD. The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.” – “**The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak.’**”

And, there **IS** what we call a ‘NEAR-FAR FULFILLMENT’ to this prophecy... YES—the Lord brings back a remnant of His people AFTER their Babylonian Captivity... But **MOST** scholars see this passage **ULTIMATELY FULFILLED** during the MILLENIUM...

The 1,000 YEAR PERIOD—on earth—where Jesus reigns in PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS...

Verse 17 says: “**The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing.**”

Spurgeon said: “[*God*] did not sing when He made the world. He looked upon it, and... said that it was good. The angels sang... but not God. He could have made thousands of worlds by His will.... [But] When... the Lord saw... the salvation of His redeemed, then He rejoiced after a divine manner. Can you imagine? Is it possible to conceive of the Deity breaking into song? God is so happy in the love that He bears... His people that He breaks the eternal silence, and sun and moon and stars with astonishment hear God chanting a hymn of joy.” – He asks: “**If God sings, shall not we sing?**”

And, I THINK that is a GOOD NOTE to END ON.