

■ **COGIC Sunday School Lesson 1, June 7, 2026: Zephaniah 1:4-6,14-16; 2:3**

**The Day of the Lord**

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**BIBLE BASIS: Zephaniah 1:4-6,14-16; 2:3**

**MEMORY VERSE:** Seek the LORD, all who are humble, and follow his commands. Seek to do what is right and to live humbly. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you—protect you from his anger on that day of destruction. Zephaniah 2:3 (NLT)

**BIBLE TRUTH:** The Lord promised punishment to Israelites because of their unfaithfulness and an opportunity for them to seek righteousness and save their relationship with Him.

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**Key Take Aways – Lesson Aim**

**This lesson helps students understand:**

- Why God confronts sin
  - What “the Day of the Lord” means
  - How God uses warnings to call His people back
  - Why repentance is urgent, not optional
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**NAMES THAT MATTER:**

**Author:** Zephaniah the prophet during the reign of king Josiah

**THE LORD:** The Almighty One

**Written to:** Judah and all nation

**Date written:** Near the end of Zephaniah’s ministry (640-621 B.C.)

**Chemarims** - pagan priests in Judah who led the nation into idolatry.

**Malcham** = a false king-god the people trusted instead of God. The national god of the Ammonites Associated with child sacrifice in some contexts Connected to astral worship (sun, moon, stars) A rival to Yahweh for the loyalty of God’s people

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## 1. Lesson Overview

Zephaniah 1 a powerful prophetic warning about **God's coming judgment** on Judah. The people had mixed worship of God with idols, lived in complacency, and ignored God's commands. Through Zephaniah, God announces a **wake-up call**: the Day of the Lord is near, and it will expose every heart.

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### Mega Theme:

**Day of judgment:** Destruction was coming because Judah had forsaken the Lord. The people worshiped Baal, Malcom (Molech), and the starry hosts. Even the priests mixed heathen practices with faith in God. God's punishment for sin was on the way.

**Indifference to God:** Although there had been occasional attempts at renewal, Judah had no sorrow for her sins. The people were prosperous and they no longer cared about God. God's demands for righteous living seemed irrelevant to Judah, whose security and wealth made her complacent.

### Historical Background: When and Where Is Zephaniah Prophesying?

#### Time period:

Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (640–609 BC), likely before Josiah's reforms (which began around 628–622 BC).

#### Location:

Judah (Southern Kingdom), centered in Jerusalem.

#### Global context:

- Assyria was collapsing after centuries of dominance.
- Babylon was rising fast as the next superpower.
- Nations were unstable, and Judah was caught in the middle.
- People assumed God would not act — but Zephaniah announces that God *will*.

#### Spiritual climate:

Judah was full of:

- Idolatry

- Syncretism (mixing Yahweh worship with pagan practices)
- Corruption among leaders
- Complacency (“God won’t do anything — good or bad”)
- Social injustice
- Moral decay

Zephaniah steps into a nation that still *claims* God but no longer *fears* Him.

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### **The Lesson: Zephaniah 1:4-6**

**4**I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, *and* the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

**5**And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship *and* that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;

**6**And them that are turned back from the LORD; and *those* that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him.

### **Filling in the missing pieces:**

#### **Verse 1 – Superscription: Lineage and Era**

Zephaniah introduces himself as “son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah.” His link to Hezekiah gives the prophecy royal credibility and places his ministry “in the days of Josiah.”

#### **Verses 2–3 – Universal Judgment Proclaimed**

The LORD announces a sweeping purge: “I will completely sweep away everything from the face of the earth” (v. 2). Creation is threatened in reverse order—people, beasts, birds, and fish—showing that sin has affected all realms.

## What's Happening here? Zephaniah 1:4–6

### 1. God Is Stretching Out His Hand in Judgment (v. 4)

**This is not random anger — it's targeted correction toward a people who have drifted far from Him.**

#### A. "I will cut off the remnant of Baal"

Baal worship had been introduced generations earlier and never fully removed. Even after reforms under Hezekiah and Josiah, traces of Baal worship remained.

#### **God is saying:**

"I'm removing every leftover piece of idolatry — no more mixture."

#### B. "The name of the Chemarims with the priests"

- *Chemarim* = idolatrous priests dressed in black robes
- These were priests who served pagan gods
- God is removing both the practice and the leaders who promoted it

**This is a cleansing of spiritual leadership.**

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### 2. God Confronts Mixed Worship (v. 5)

**This verse exposes people who tried to worship God AND idols at the same time.**

#### A. "Them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops"

- They worshiped the sun, moon, and stars
- Rooftops were used as private altars
- This was forbidden in Israel
- It represents secret sin and private idolatry

#### B. "Them that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham"

**This is dual allegiance.**

- They claimed God with their mouths
- But they also pledged loyalty to Malcham (also called Molech or Milcom)
- Malcham was associated with child sacrifice and political alliances

**This is God saying:**

**“You can’t serve Me and another master.”**

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### **3. God Confronts Spiritual Drift and Neglect (v. 6)**

- This verse names two groups:

#### **A. “Them that are turned back from the LORD”**

- These are people who once walked with God but backslid. They didn’t reject God outright — they just drifted away.

#### **B. “Those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for Him”**

- To frequent or consult
  - These are the spiritually indifferent.  
Not hostile.  
Not rebellious.  
Just... uninterested.
  - This is the sin of neglect — ignoring God altogether.
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### **Why This Matters Today**

**These verses mirror modern spiritual struggles:**

- Idols of success, comfort, or approval
- Leaders who compromise truth
- People who try to mix Christianity with culture
- Believers who drift into spiritual sleep

Zephaniah’s message is a wake-up call for every generation.

### **4. Teaching Points**

#### **A. God Confronts Idolatry (vv. 4–6)**

- Judah mixed worship of God with worship of Baal and the stars.
- God refuses to share His people’s hearts with idols.

- Modern idols: success, approval, money, comfort, entertainment.
- God calls for **exclusive devotion**.

**Teaching image:**

A heart with two thrones—only one can be occupied.

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**The Lesson Zephaniah 1:14-16**

**14**The great day of the LORD *is* near, *it is* near, and hasteth greatly, *even* the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

**15**That day *is* a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

**16**A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

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**The missing pieces:**

**Verses 7–13 – The Day Near; Silence, Sacrifice, Search**

“Be silent in the presence of the Lord GOD” (v. 7). A divine sacrifice is prepared—Judah herself. The elite, the merchants in the Maktesh district, and complacent homeowners who say, “The LORD will do nothing” (v. 12) will be searched out by lamp and judged.

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 **What’s Happening in Zephaniah 1:14–16**

**1. The Day of the Lord Is Imminent (v. 14)**

**“The great day of the LORD is near... the voice of the Lord...the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.”**

**This is God saying:**

“Judgment is not far away — it’s right at the door.”

**Key points:**

- “Near... and hasteth greatly” means it’s approaching fast.

**“Even the voice of the day of the LORD”**

Describing a sound. It’s describing **the announcement, the arrival, and the authority** of God’s judgment all at once.

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### 1. It refers to the *announcement* of God’s judgment

In Hebrew prophetic language, “**voice**” often means:

- A proclamation
- A divine summons
- A thunderous announcement
- A command that cannot be ignored

**“The very announcement of God’s judgment is terrifying.”**

Before the judgment even falls, the *sound* of it shakes people.

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### 2. It signals that the day has arrived

The “voice” is like:

- A war trumpet
- A royal decree
- A courtroom verdict
- A storm siren

It’s the moment when God says:

**“Time’s up.”**

The voice marks the transition from warning to action.

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### 3. It emphasizes the authority of God

In Scripture, God’s “voice”:

- Splits cedars
- Shakes the wilderness
- Commands armies
- Calls nations to account

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#### 4. It's so overwhelming that even the mighty cry

“The mighty man shall cry there bitterly.”

Meaning:

- Cry in agony, great pain
- The strongest
- The bravest
- The warriors
- The ones who never break

Even they collapse under the weight of God's voice.

This is a reversal of human strength.

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#### Why This Matters Spiritually

This teaches that:

- God's warnings are not empty
- His judgment is not silent
- His arrival is unmistakable
- His authority is absolute

And it reminds us of this: **If the voice is this terrifying, what will the day itself be like?**

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## 2. A Day of Total Upheaval (v. 15)

Zephaniah uses explicit words to describe that day — each one intensifying the last.

### 1. “A day of wrath”

God's righteous anger against sin. Outpoured anger

### 2. “A day of trouble and distress”

Internal panic and external pressure. Emotional and psychological suffering.

**3. “A day of wasteness and desolation”**

Cities ruined, land emptied, structures collapsed. (Beyond repair)

**4. “A day of darkness and gloominess... clouds and thick darkness”**

**This is both literal and symbolic:**

- Literal: smoke, destruction, ash
- Symbolic: spiritual blindness, hopelessness, confusion

**5. This is meant to communicate:**

“This is not a normal crisis — this is divine intervention.”

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**3. A Day of Military Alarm (v. 16)**

**“A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.”**

**What this means:**

- Trumpets were used to signal war, invasion, or danger.
- Fenced cities = fortified cities that people trusted for safety.
- High towers = military watchtowers, symbols of strength and defense.

**God is saying:**

“The things you trust to protect you won’t be able to save you.”

This is a direct confrontation of false security.

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**✦ Summary: What’s Going On?**

**Zephaniah 1:14–16 is God announcing:**

- Judgment is close
- Human strength will fail
- The world as they know it will collapse
- False security will be exposed

- God Himself is stepping into history

**This is not meant to terrify for terror's sake.  
It's meant to wake up a spiritually sleeping people.**

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### **Why This Matters Today**

This passage confronts:

- Complacency
- False confidence
- Secret sin
- Divided hearts
- Trust in human strength instead of God

**The Day of the Lord is a reminder that God takes sin seriously, and His warnings are invitations to return to Him before it's too late.**

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### **C. The Day of the Lord Is Near (vv. 14–16)**

- A day of distress, darkness, and alarm.
- Not symbolic—God's judgment is real.
- The purpose: to shake people awake and call them back to Him.
- God's warnings are acts of mercy.

#### **Teaching image:**

A loud alarm clock waking someone before danger.

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## Background for Zephaniah Chapter 2: Why God Shifts to a Call for Repentance

After the thunder of chapter 1, chapter 2 opens with a surprising invitation:

“Seek the LORD... seek righteousness... seek meekness.”

Why the shift?

1. God always preserves a remnant

Even in judgment, God looks for:

- The humble
- The teachable
- The repentant

Chapter 2 is God saying:

“Judgment is coming — but you don’t have to be swept away with it.”

2. Judah still had time to repent

Josiah’s reforms were coming.

Zephaniah’s message likely helped spark them.

3. God judges nations, not just Judah

Chapter 2 expands the scope:

- Philistia
- Moab
- Ammon
- Cush
- Assyria

This shows:

- God is sovereign over all nations
- No nation is too strong to escape His judgment

- Judah is not the only one accountable

#### 4. God's judgment is purposeful

It is not random wrath.

It is:

- Corrective
- Purifying
- Restorative

Chapter 2 prepares the way for the hope and restoration in chapter 3.

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### **The Lesson: Zephaniah 2:3**

**3** Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

#### **Verses 1–3 – Seek the LORD Before It's Too Late**

Zephaniah summons the nation to assemble and repent before God's judgment arrives. He urges "all you humble of the land" to seek the LORD, righteousness, and humility so they

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#### **What's Happening here? Zephaniah 2:3?**

**"Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth... seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."**

This verse is God's **invitation** in the middle of judgment. It's a call to return, to repent, and to take refuge in Him.

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#### **1. God Is Speaking to the "Meek of the Earth"**

This means:

- The humble
- The teachable

- Those who still care about God’s ways
- Those who haven’t hardened their hearts

These are the people who **respond** when God speaks.

In a nation full of pride, idolatry, and complacency, God still sees a remnant who desire Him.

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## 2. “Seek the LORD” — A Call to Pursue God

This is not casual seeking.

It’s urgent, active, intentional.

To “seek the LORD” means:

- Turn back to Him
- Prioritize Him
- Return to prayer
- Return to obedience
- Return to dependence

This is the opposite of the spiritual apathy described in 1:6.

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## 3. “Seek Righteousness, Seek Meekness”

God is calling for **a change in character**, not just behavior.

- **Seek righteousness**

Live in a way that reflects God’s standards — not culture’s.

What is right, normal and just in the eyes of God.

- **Seek meekness**

A lowliness of mind and status. It is having the attitude of proper self-estimation in relation to God as one who is poor and humble.

Meekness is not weakness — it’s strength under God’s control.

Live humble and submit to God.

This is God saying:

**“Don’t just avoid sin — pursue the kind of heart I can protect.”**

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#### **4. “It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’s anger”**

This is not uncertainty — it’s humility.

It means:

- God protects the humble
- God shelters the repentant
- God hides those who seek Him
- God makes a distinction between the proud and the meek

This echoes:

- Noah being hidden in the ark
- Rahab being hidden in her house
- The faithful remnant being preserved

God is offering **mercy in the middle of judgment.**

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Zephaniah 2:3 is God saying:

**“Judgment is coming — but there is still time to seek Me.  
If you humble yourself, pursue righteousness, and return to Me,  
I will hide you, protect you, and preserve you.”**

It’s a call to:

- Repent
- Return
- Realign
- Rely on God
- Live differently than the culture around you

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## Why This Matters Today

This verse speaks directly to:

- Believers who feel surrounded by a drifting culture
- Those who want to stay faithful in chaotic times
- Anyone who needs reassurance that God sees the humble
- Anyone who fears judgment or uncertainty

God still hides, shelters, and preserves those who seek Him.

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## 5. Summary

Zephaniah is like God sounding a **spiritual alarm**. The people were drifting, distracted, and divided in their hearts. God warns them because He loves them. He wants their whole hearts, not half-hearted worship. The “Day of the Lord” reminds us that God sees everything, cares deeply about how we live, and calls us to stay awake spiritually.

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## 6. Discussion Questions

1. What kinds of “idols” do people today put before God?
  2. Why do you think people become spiritually complacent?
  3. What does it mean for God to “search with lamps”?
  4. How can God’s warnings be signs of His love?
  5. What is one area of your life where God may be calling you to wake up?
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## 9. Closing Prayer

“Lord, wake us up. Remove anything in our hearts that competes with You. Help us live alert, faithful, and devoted to You. Thank You for loving us enough to warn us and call us back. Amen.”

