

**Message #6****Zephaniah 2:4-15**

One of the things that make this passage so intriguing is that many of the places named in this section are the exact places that are part of the present day war in Israel. The Gaza strip sits along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and the cities named in this section of Zephaniah are cities located in that exact spot.

**Now the modern events that are taking place there are not the complete fulfillment of what is described here, but it certainly may be a key prelude to what is described here.** The people who are in these areas would do well to take notice of what is predicted here and what is predicted here is this:

**GOD IS GOING TO POUR OUT HIS WRATH ON THE GAZA STRIP REGION FOR THE PERSISTENT, ARROGANT EVIL THAT THE ARABS HAVE DONE AGAINST ISRAEL.**

What we do know is that Israel has been arrogantly attacked by people who live in these very areas. They have used terrorist methods to demean, threaten and attack the nation Israel. God says this specific area is going to pay a high price for that.

This area has been known for this attitude toward Israel for a long, long time.

People who have lived in the Gaza strip area have been a thorn in Israel's side ever since Joshua took them into that Promised Land. **The land at that time was controlled by the Philistines and now it is land controlled by the Arabs.**

This land is land that God has given to Israel and what God says He will eventually do is give it all to Israel and wipe out all the people who do not belong there.

**PART #1** – The judgments God promises against those in the Gaza strip region. **2:4-5**

God promises specific judgments against those who live in specific locations who have done specific things against His people. These are very specific predictions. Now the order of the list is from south to north. Zephaniah starts with Gaza and moves north from there.

**Judgment #1** - Gaza will be abandoned. **2:4a**

Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron were four of the five major Philistine cities that all were on the Mediterranean coast.

**Judgment #2** - Ashkelon will be a desolation. **2:4b**

Ashkelon is still a city that stands 12 miles north of Gaza.

**Judgment #3** - Ashdod will be driven. **2:4c**

There is a specific time mentioned when this would happen, specifically at noon. Ashdod is still standing. What this means is that the attack against them would come when the people were eating and resting at mid-day. They would not be anticipating an attack to come at that time.

**Judgment #4** - Ekron will be uprooted. **2:4d**

Ekron is modern day Tel Migne.

**Judgment #5** - Seacoast inhabitants will receive a woe judgment. **2:5a**

A woe judgment is the worst of all the judgments.

**Judgment #6** - Cherethites have a specific word that the LORD is against them. **2:5b**

Many suspect that this is a reference to Crete, the island from which the Philistines originated. What is stated is that God's word is against these people. What that practically means is that God will never be on the side of or for these people.

**Judgment #7** - Philistines in the land of Canaan will be destroyed and annihilated. **2:5c**

When God says that there will be no inhabitant, he is speaking of no one existing. So the promise is that God will see to it that no person exists in this area who is not of Israel. God will remove them all.

Notice that Canaan is a land and the land of Canaan covers the plains areas of the coastal region.

**PART #2** – The specific Gaza land will be land given back to Israel. **2:6-7**

**What God promises to do for Israel in the future is give her back every inch of her land.**  
You cannot help but see this when you read the Bible.

God has promised Israel a specific land and for the most part that land is not hers. God says it will be eventually; you have My word on this.

If you look at a breakdown of the land of Gaza today and the area that surrounds it, most of it is not controlled by Israel, but by the Arab-Palestinians. God says that will all change one day.

There are five specific predictions that are made by Zephaniah. As near as I may determine none of them have been fulfilled to this point in time.

**Prediction #1** - The seacoast land will become Israel's pasture land. **2:6a**

This land will become so depopulated that it would become sheep pasture land.

**Prediction #2** - The cave areas will become areas for Israel's shepherds and sheep. **2:6b**

There will be nothing in the land that will threaten or intimidate Israel. People will freely move throughout the Promised Land and even the cave areas will be areas that will help them.

**Prediction #3** - The coastal land will become home to the remnant of Judah. **2:7**

Israel has really never controlled the coastal land of Israel and they certainly do not control it right now. The prediction here is that one day all of the land will be hers.

1) They will pasture their flocks in the land. **2:7a**

The coastal areas are not known today for flocks of sheep. In fact, it is a dangerous area. Primarily the industry includes strawberries, citrus, dates, olives, flowers and various vegetables. There is a small production of textile industry and food processing. But what you don't see are too many flocks of sheep.

In fact, no one would dare to just take sheep out into the coastal areas for fear of serious danger of trespassing. What is predicted here is a time when the land will be open and free to the Jewish people to the point that shepherds may just wander around the land with their flocks.

2) They will live in the houses that were built by the Palestinians. **2:7b**

It is estimated that there are 420 houses in Ashkelon today that house over 1,100 people. There will come a day when all Jewish people will live in the Promised Land and inhabit actual houses they did not build.

**Prediction #4** - God will Personally care for Israel. **2:7c**

Notice what is stated here, the LORD (Jehovah) is Israel's God (Elohim). The Sovereign covenant God of Israel (Jehovah), who is the sovereign creator (Elohim) promises that He will Personally take care of Israel.

**Prediction #5** - God will Personally restore Israel's fortunes. **2:7d**

God makes a promise that He will restore not only the land to Israel, but all of her fortunes.

If Jewish people were wise, they would turn to Jesus Christ right now because God blesses those who do that. If Gentile people were wise, they would turn to Jesus Christ because God blesses those who do that.

**PART #3** – God describes what He has seen and heard from the Palestinians. **2:8**

The Moabites and the Ammonites lived east of Judah. So if we combine this land with the land already mentioned, God is promising that there will come a day when I will give Israel every inch of the land controlled by the Palestinians, Syrians, Jordanians and Arabians. The Palestinian/Arabs have been known for their verbal insults and threats against Israel. We have leaders in Washington D.C. right now who run Israel down and make mockery of her. God listens to it and there will come a time when He will target those who did those things.

**Fact #1** - God has heard the taunting against Israel. **2:8a**

**Fact #2** - God has heard the reviling against Israel. **2:8b**

**Fact #3** - God has seen the arrogance these people have against Israel's land. **2:8c**

Now the group of people who have had this attitude against Israel, in view of the specific areas named, are the Arabs.

**PART #4** – God declares what He will do to these powers. **2:9**

This is one of those “judicial declarations” of what God will do. Notice He identifies Himself as “the LORD of hosts” and as “The God of Israel.” Then He also qualifies the fact that He will do this “as surely as He lives.” There are six specific judgment actions that God says He will take against these powers:

**Judgment Action #1** - God will pour out judgment upon Moab like He did at Sodom. **2:9a**

Moab today is northern Jordan. 94% of the people who live in Jordan are Arabs. We must assume that this means He will literally send fire out of heaven to destroy the people.

**Judgment Action #2** - God will pour out judgment upon Ammon like He did at Gomorrah.  
**2:9b**

Ammon is located today in modern southern Jordan and God's promise is that He will literally send fire out of heaven to destroy the people like He did in Gomorrah.

**Judgment Action #3** - God will turn their places into nettles and salt pits. **2:9c**

Jordan today is known for chemical pharmaceuticals and clothing and chemical products and potash and phosphates. God says I will turn it all to nettles and salt pits.

**Judgment Action #4** - God will turn the people into perpetual desolation. **2:9d**

If God sends fire from heaven to this area, the petroleum oil will burn this place to the ground.

**Judgment Action #5** - God will cause His people to plunder them. **2:9e**

Israel will one day control all the wealth of all the Promised Land.

**Judgment Action #6** - God will cause His remnant to inherit them. **2:9f**

If you look at the map of total land God has promised to Israel, Jordan is a part and she will inherit it all.

**PART #5** – God explains why He will do these judgment things. **2:10**

**Reason #1** - Because of the Arab's pride. **2:10a**

These people have been proud against God and against His nation.

**Reason #2** - Because the Arabs have taunted Israel. **2:10b**

The Palestinians have taunted and threatened Israel for years.

**Reason #3** - Because the Arabs have been arrogant against Israel. **2:10c**

What these people who treat Israel like this don't realize is that this is the nation and these are the people of the "LORD of hosts." This is the Sovereign God's choice of people and land. So when they mock Israel, they are in effect mocking God.

**PART #6** – God explains the relationship these people, who have mocked Israel, will have with Him. **2:11**

There are three facts brought out:

**Fact #1** - God will be a terrifying God to them. **2:11a**

**Fact #2** - God will starve them and their religion and put them all out of business. **2:11b**

The primary religion of the Arabs is the Muslim religion. It is not a coincidence that it is being reported that the fastest growing religion right now in China is Islam. That religion and all other false religion will be destroyed by God.

**Fact #3** - God will cause them to bow down to Him no matter where they live. **2:11c**

Every Arab and every Palestinian and every Gentile God mocker will bow before the God of Israel.

**PART #7** – God describes what He will do to the Ethiopians. **2:12**

The Ethiopians had fought against Israel alongside of the Egyptian Pharaoh (II Chron. 12:3). The Ethiopians had for a time been a dominant power. God says I have not forgotten about what you did to My people and I will see to it that you are destroyed. When God says He will slay them by His sword, He may mean He will Sovereignly direct some military power to go and destroy them.

**PART #8** – God describes what He will do to northern powers like Assyria and Nineveh.  
**2:13-15**

God says My hand of judgment will also head north. The power of a nation like Assyria or the prominence of a city like Nineveh will become the target of My judgment.

Nineveh was located on the Tigris River, which is actually outside of the Promised Land boundaries. It was located about 250 miles north of Babylon, which sits on the Euphrates.

God says I will destroy Nineveh and it will become wilderness land where flocks will eat and animals will graze. All the impressive buildings will be gone, even those made of cedar (**2:14**).

According to **verse 15**, Nineveh was an exalted city, a secure city and an arrogant city. She saw herself as a city high and lifted up.

God says when I am done with her she will be a desolate city that no longer exists. Literally animals will graze in the land where the city once stood.

Everyone who passes by where the city used to stand will hiss.

Literally within 14 years after Zephaniah made these predictions in 612 BC, Nineveh was completely destroyed.

However, today there is a big Sunni-Arab population that lives there and there is a great production of oil. So the complete fulfillment of what is promised here has not yet occurred.

The message to the nation Israel is turn to the Lord your God.

The message to the Arabs is turn from your false religion and arrogance against Israel to The God of Israel.

The message to the world is judgment is coming and all sinners need to turn to Jesus Christ to escape God's wrath.