

## Zion

**Hebrews 4:1** Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it.

**Hebrews 4:2** For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

**Zephaniah 3:16** In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: “Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp.

**In that day.** Much of what is described happens in that transition from the Tribulation to the Millennium. This is to explain the multitude of foundational changes that will take place at that time, “In that day.”

Let us stop and consider what is happening. This is the seam between very different dispensations.

In Genesis chapter 9, God makes the Noahic covenant with Noah and his descendants. He provided new rules. This was a new dispensation.

In Exodus and God makes the Mosaic Covenant with Israel and their descendants. He provided new rules. This was a new dispensation.

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In various Old Testament passages and some New Testament passages, God makes the New Covenant with Israel. He identified new rules which will be in effect in the Millennium. That will be a new dispensation.

Look what happened in Acts chapter 2 when the Church Dispensation started. Peter had to explain what was happening relating it to the change of dispensations from the Tribulation (Jewish Age under the Mosaic covenant) to the Millennium (under the New Covenant). Now, the Church is not under the New Covenant. The Church is not revealed in the Old Testament so Peter had to use a paradigm in the Old Testament to explain what was happening in his day. Church Age believers will be administrators of the New Covenant.

**It will be said.** The text does not say who says this. “It will be said” is OK as a translation. It is singular so, “he” or “it” for an implied subject is suggested. It is passive. This is obviously divine perspective. It sounds like a saying that originates with God and then is repeated by people who have studied God’s Word. Whoever starts this saying, the more I look at it, the more I am convinced this will be like a promise, or an encouragement to the Jewish believers. So what are they being encouraged to do?

**Do not be afraid.** This concept of not fearing is repeated throughout the Old Testament.

**Exodus 14:13 But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.**

**Exodus 14:14 The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent.”**

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Same verb for “do not fear.” Only difference being that the Exodus quote is masculine plural addressing the people whereas in Zephaniah it is feminine singular addressing Jerusalem.

**Isaiah 41:10 ‘Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.’**

There are other passages in the Bible expressing the same concept. And this concept applies to us in the Church Age. Listen in Paul in the book of Romans:

**Romans 8:31 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?**

**Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?**

**Romans 8:33 Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies;**

We are not to be in sinful fear. Yet, in Hebrews 4:1-2, there is a fear that is not sinful. I explained that last week. Our respectful fear is toward God. He is our God and we are His children. Our response is not fear but trust.

**Zion.** There are two mountains in the Jerusalem area that are sometimes contrasted: Sinai and Zion. Let us listen to Robby Dean’s explanation:

“Now some of you may be wondering where in the world Mt. Zion is. Well when you go to Israel and you are there at the Temple Mount, that

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is not Mt. Zion. It is believed that the Temple is built on Mt. Moriah, which is where Abraham was to have sacrificed Isaac. If you are facing the Temple from the south, then there is a little bit of a higher ridge line up to your left that would be to the west of the Temple Mount, and that is Mt. Zion. Mt Zion is the location where the Jebusites had a fortress where David took it back in the early days. It's also right there at Mt. Zion you enter into the old city there. That's the Mt. Zion gate. If you are going in that gate those of you who have been there that's where they had all the bullet holes. It's just all shot up because that's where there was a tremendous amount of fighting during the Israeli War for Independence in 1948 as various Jewish outfits were trying to penetrate into the Old City which was under the control of the Arab forces; and they were trying to rescue about 2,000 Jews that were basically isolated (had been isolated) and starving. They were trying to get in there to deliver them. They never fully succeeded in regaining control of the Old City at that time. It wasn't taken until 1967. That is the literal earthly Mt. Zion.<sup>1</sup>”

“We have the first mountain is Mount Sinai where the Mosaic Law or the Mosaic Covenant was given to Israel. Then the second mountain is Mount Zion. That is the contrast between Mt. Sinai (the Mosaic Law), and Mt. Zion which depicts (which is associated here with) the heavenly Jerusalem and the New Covenant.<sup>2</sup>”

So the point I want to make is this. Mount Sinai, the Law, is not mentioned here. The Jews are going into the Millennium under the New Covenant which is associated with Mount Zion. The Law under the Mosaic Covenant given at Mt Sinai is “expired.”

In another place, Robby Dean explains that the sacrifice of the New Covenant was Jesus Christ on the cross. It was

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<sup>1</sup> <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/hebrews-menuitem/message/212-the-tale-of-two-mountains-zion/read>

<sup>2</sup> <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/hebrews-menuitem/message/2005-hebrews-211b/read>

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**Do not let your hands fall limp.** This concept is expressed in multiple places in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 4:1; Isaiah 13:7; Jeremiah 6:24; 50:43; Ezekiel 7:17; 21:12; Ezra 4:4; Nehemiah 6:9; 2 Chronicles 15:7)

**2 Samuel 4:1 Now when Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, heard that Abner had died in Hebron, he lost courage (literally, his hands were feeble), and all Israel was disturbed.**

**Isaiah 13:7 Therefore all hands will fall limp,  
And every man's heart will melt.**

**Jeremiah 6:2 We have heard the report of it;  
Anguish has seized us, Pain as of a woman in childbirth.**

You see from the paralellism of these passages, that it is a mental attitude which causes people to give up illustrated by a physical malady, weak hands.

Robby Dean dealt with this passage through Hebrews which quoted a passage in the Old Testament.

**Isaiah 35:3 Strengthen ye the feeble hands,  
Yea, the stumbling knees strengthen.**

**Hebrews 12:12 Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble,**

**Hebrews 12:13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.**

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Robby Dean comments on this Hebrews passage:

“The question we have to ask here is: what does that mean "strengthening the hands" and "the feeble knees"? The issue is that now that we have to properly interpret this metaphor and to understand this idiom. Is this a metaphor to return to fellowship? Is that the primary thrust here? That is one interpretation that I have heard. It is the idea here is to recover or return from disobedience to obedience. But I don't necessarily see that as the main thing. He hasn't been going through this section here where he's focusing on "you have been disobedient and now you need to be obedient." That has been the backdrop. I think that's included, but I don't think that's the main thrust of the metaphor here. Is the metaphor more specifically addressing the issue that we need to advance and continue to grow and to become strong spiritually and not to regress and become weak and give up?”

“Now we can think of an athlete in any endeavor. We could think of somebody perhaps even in the arts, in piano, in music and dance that requires discipline - ongoing discipline and endurance in achieving the goal. To excel you have to get a good coach. You have to have a good trainer and you have to focus on the endgame. But what does it mean here when it says that we have to strengthen the hands that hang down? Well, in order to understand this, we have to realize that this comes of the Old Testament. Just like so much in Hebrews we can't just interpret it in isolation from an Old Testament context. Both of these verses that begin this next section (both 12 and 13) are quotes or paraphrases that come out of Old Testament context.<sup>3</sup>”

Here is additional commentary from Robby Dean on our passage (Zephaniah 3:16):

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<sup>3</sup> <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/hebrews-menuitem/message/2005-hebrews-203b/read>

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“What we see here is that this is again a figure of speech called a metonymy. You never studied that in school, but that's a technical term where you talk about the effect or the cause. The cause is fear; the effect is weakness. Because of fear, because of discouragement you become spiritually weak and weary. “

Before moving on with Dr. Dean's explanation, here is a definition/example of metonymy from Merriam-Webster.com:

“In metonymy, a word that is associated with something is used to refer to that thing, as when crown is used to mean "king" or "queen," or when Mark Antony asks the people of Rome to lend him their ears in William Shakespeare's play Julius Caesar. It's also metonymy when an author's name is used to refer to works written by that person, as in "We are studying Jane Austen."<sup>4</sup>”

Back to Robby Dean...

“So the verse in Zephaniah 3:16 says:

"Do not fear, Zion, let not your hands be weak.”

“What we see from all of this is that this imagery that's used in Hebrews 12:12 (and we're not going to get any further than that) has to do with becoming spiritually weary and almost unwilling to go forward with the struggle.”

“In Job 4:3 we have the same imagery. It's a very old idiom. "Behold you have admonished many; and you have strengthened weak hands." Those with weak hands are those who are willing to give up in the struggle.”

“Philo who was an intertestamental Jewish writer used a similar idiom when he compared the Israelites in the wilderness who wanted to give up

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/metonymy>

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the struggle and go back to Egypt to weary athletes who dropped their hands through weakness.”

“So in conclusion what we see is that the phrase describes the one who due to fear, worry, weariness or exhaustion is about to quit the race and give up. In that condition he can't win.”

“What is the solution? The solution is going to be "strengthen those hands and become strong." How do you do that? Well, that's what we'll see the next time. It's done through the study the Word. It's done through shifting your volition, your focus to the Lord Jesus Christ. That goes back to the early challenge in Hebrews 12:3 when it says that we are to consider Jesus.”

**Zephaniah 3:17 “The Lord your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.**

**The Lord your God.** Throughout the Old Testament Yahweh reiterates that He is Israel’s God. No one else. Yet all through the history of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, the people turn their backs on Yahweh, abandoning proper worship and turn toward the Canaanite gods like Baal, even sacrificing their children in the fire of Molech. But God is faithful and Israel is His special people who will be praised and celebrated in the Millennium under the New Covenant.

**In your midst.** I get the impression that this is a kind of “positional truth.” In the Church Age we know that the believer is “in Christ.” As a result of that position, believers inherit many things. In the Millennium and the eternal kingdom Jesus Christ will be in the midst of His people. As a result, there will be many blessings that go beyond what is available to believers today in the Church.



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**A victorious warrior.** Warrior is a single word. It derives from the concept of strength or power. Hence it is often used of military prowess as the mighty men of David (2 Samuel 23:8). The Young's Literal Translation uses "mighty one" for a translation. The NASB translation is OK in this context. Here is some amplification from the TDOT. Note that this word here in Zephaniah is in the intensified form.

"gibbor, with the doubling of the middle radical, is an intensive form, and thus means a particularly strong or mighty person who carries out, can carry out, or has carried out great deeds, and surpasses others in doing so. Therefore, the usual translation is "hero," especially in military activities." So just as Jesus Christ is king of kings, so he is also a hero of heroes.

**Victorious.** This is actually a verb that means to save or deliver. It is strange that the NASB would translate it so. Perhaps a liberal commentator explains this: "...a warrior who delivers/brings victory." Although interpreters are sometimes uncomfortable with the military connotations of such an expression, especially in the context of a passage that speaks of the coming of peace, it must be recalled that the coming era of peace is a direct result of the impending downfall of the Assyrian Empire, which subjugated Judah and much of the rest of the ancient Near East by military force.<sup>5</sup> Although this commentator is a "preterist" believing Zephaniah is talking about events that happened during or near the time of Josiah, even conservative commentators have trouble understanding that the transition from Tribulation to Millennium is marked by the victory of Jesus Christ over Satan and the cosmos diabolicus.

**He will exult over you with joy.** These statements that follow are explaining God's "emotion" over Israel in the Millennium, a believing nation, dedicated to God and blessed with superlative spiritual gifts.

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<sup>5</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003, page 202

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These are anthropopathisms. They attribute to God human-like emotions to explain His orientation to some event or people. In this case, it surely deals with God in the spiritual realm.

**He will be quiet in His love.** The word “quiet” can mean silent. It can also mean to plow or to engrave. If it is taken as “quiet” or “silent” then that contrasts with the next phrase which talks of “shouts of joy.”

**He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.**

The Young’s Literal Translation provides a more literal look at this verse

**Zephaniah 3:17 (YLT) Jehovah thy God [is] in thy midst, A mighty one doth save, He rejoiceth over thee with joy, He doth work in His love, He joyeth over thee with singing.'**

Because these verses deals with God through anthropopathisms, it is apparent that translators had difficulty with them. It is interesting to note the Septuagint translation.

Here is a loose translation from the Septuagint of this verse:

**Zephaniah 3:17 (LXX) *The LORD your God is among you; the mighty one shall deliver (or save) you; he shall bring gladness upon you, and shall make you in His love. (My translation with my wife’s help)***

So, from that perspective, is this how God will impart fruit of the Holy Spirit to Jewish believers in the Millennium? There is no time here to pursue that aspect of Millennium passages. But it would be an interesting endeavor to look at details of spirituality in the Millennium.

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There are yet three more verses in Zephaniah before this study is complete. Next week...

**Zephaniah 3:18 “I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts—They came from you, O Zion; The reproach of exile is a burden on them.**

**Zephaniah 3:19 “Behold, I am going to deal at that time With all your oppressors, I will save the lame And gather the outcast, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown In all the earth.**

**Zephaniah 3:20 “At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” Says the Lord.**