

## Introduction

- What are our expectations of the future?
  - revival? (image: graph up)
  - decline? (image: graph down)
  - status quo? (image: graph level)

## Expectations (1:14a)

- A contemporary, naive understanding of **the day** was that God would bless Israel, his people, while those who opposed him and his people he would judge and condemn
  - Israel forgot, repeatedly forgot, that right relationship with God is not based on **birth** but on **responding** to God's offer of salvation
  - in other words, it is not a **right**, but flowing from the entering into relationship flows **responsibility** for our actions before God
- Amos, writing about 120 years earlier, is grappling with similar popular expectations:
  - *Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light - pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness? (5:18-20)*

## Reality Check (1:14b-17)

- The first thing Zephaniah does in response to this **unreal expectation** is give a reality check:
  - from God, he points out - as others (such as Amos) have done before him that when the holy God comes there will also be a dimension of judgement
  - he amplifies the details!
  - and makes clear where this judgement comes from "**they have sinned against the Lord**" (v.17)

## Self-Salvation impossible (1:18)

- Sort of a continuation of the previous point...
  - but particularly highlighting that in the **Day of the Lord** we cannot save ourselves
- How do we try and save ourselves today?
  - when in the church do we think we are actually doing OK? Big conferences? courses? professionalism?...
  - when in our own lives do we convince ourselves we can please God with our own efforts?

## Call to repent (2:1-3)

- Do something before that day comes
  - imagery is of harvest/chaff... cf image from Amanda
  - command is to **seek the Lord** (v.3)
  - to seek, to head towards - not to fully arrive!
  - **in Christ** we know that the **perhaps** of v.3 can be transformed into the confidence of Romans 8:38-39:
    - *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
- Or perhaps Zephaniah is all too aware that not all who hear his message will heed the call?

## Application

- Identify our own expectations of the future:
  - and bring them humbly, repentantly before God!
  - I suspect they all have an element of truth and an element of danger in them...
  - **whatever truths there are in them, our first call is always to seek the Lord**