

Zephaniah Chapter 3

Verses 1-7

After pronouncing judgment on the nations, the prophet returned to again pronounce woe upon Jerusalem.

Because of that city's favored position among the nations (Exodus 19:5), more was expected.

Zephaniah 3:1 "Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!"

"Woe to her that is filthy, and polluted":

Meaning the city of Jerusalem, and its inhabitants.

Not as before the Babylonish captivity, but after their return from it, under the second temple, as Abarbanel owns.

And even as in the times before and at the coming of Christ, and the preaching of his apostles among them.

As the whole series of the prophecy, and the connection of the several parts of it show.

And there are such plain intimations of the conversion of the Gentiles, and of such a happy state of the Jews, in which they shall see evil no more.

As can agree with no other times than the times of the Gospel, both the beginning and latter part of them.

The character of this city, and its inhabitants, is, that it was "filthy".

And polluted with murders, adulteries, oppression, violent seizure of someone's property, and other sins.

Our LORD often calls them a wicked and an adulterous generation.

And yet they pretended to great purity of life and manners.

And they were pure in their own eyes, though not washed from their filthiness.

They took much pains to make clean the outside of the cup, but within were full of impurity (Matthew 23:25).

In the margin it is, "woe to her that is gluttonous".

The word is used for the claw or crop of a fowl (Lev. 1:16), hence some render it "woe to the claw".

To the city that is all claw, to which Jerusalem is compared for its devouring the wealth and substance of others.

The Scribes and Pharisees in Christ's time are said to devour widows' houses (Matt. 23:14), and this seems to be the sin with which they were defiled, and here charged with.

Some think the word signifies one that is publicly, infamous; either made a public example of, or openly exposed, as sometimes filthy harlots are.

Or rather one "that has made herself infamous"; by her sins and vices.

"To the oppressing city!"

That oppressed the poor, the widow, and the fatherless.

This may have respect to the inhabitants of Jerusalem stoning the prophets of the LORD sent unto them.

To the discouragements they laid the followers of Christ under, by not suffering such to come to hear him that were inclined.

Threatening to cast them out of their synagogues if they professed him, which passed into a law.

And to their killing the Lord of life and glory; and the persecution of his apostles, ministers, and people (see Matt. 23:13).

Some render it, "to the city a dove"; being like a silly dove without heart (as in Hosea 7:11).

R. Azariah thinks Jerusalem is so called because in its works it was like Babylon.

Which had for its military sign on its standard, a dove (see Jer. 25:38; Jer. 46:16; Hosea 11:11).

But the former sense is best.

This is speaking of Jerusalem.

God will destroy Jerusalem's enemies, but He will also, punish Jerusalem for the evil within her.

They are polluted with false gods and idols.

They have rebelled against their God, and committed spiritual adultery.

They thought themselves to be above others, and they oppressed those around them, because of their arrogance.

They thought they would never be destroyed, because of their relationship with God.

Zephaniah 3:2 "She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God."

“She received not correction”:

Jerusalem was soon to learn that to reject God’s correction leads to destruction (Prov. 5:23).

She drew not near to her God”:

The LORD had taken up residence in that city, making Him easily accessible (Deut. 4:7).

Yet they had refused to draw near to Him in proper worship.

This speaks of rebellion toward God.

God had sent judges, teachers, and prophets to warn them, and they still did not live the faithful life.

God loved them dearly.

He wanted to bless them.

He sent prophet after prophet, warning them of the consequences of unfaithfulness.

It seemed the more prophets He sent to warn them, the further they wandered away from God.

They did not repent of their sins.

He drew nigh to her, but she did not draw nigh to God.

She put her trust in the heathen nations around her, and not in God.

Verses 3-5

Four classes of leadership were singled out for condemnation: The political leaders, i.e., the:

(1) Princes; and

(2) Judges; who are both likened to ravenous wolves, endlessly searching for more prey (1:8-9). The spiritual leaders, i.e.; the

(3) Prophets; and

(4) Priests were unfaithful to the LORD whom they claimed to represent.

By contrast, the LORD never failed to manifest a faithful standard of justice and righteousness.

Zephaniah 3:3 "Her princes within her [are] roaring lions; her judges [are] evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow."

"Her princes within her are roaring lions":

Or, "as roaring lions".

There being a defect of the note of similitude; which is supplied by the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, Syriac, and Arabic versions.

This is to be understood, not of the princes of the blood; but of civil magistrates in common.

The members of the grand Sanhedrim; the princes of the Jewish world, that crucified the Lord of glory; and who gaped upon him with their mouths like ravening and roaring lions.

As is foretold they should (Psalm 22:12).

And who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of Christ.

And by their menaces endeavored to frighten and deter them from preaching in his name, and from a profession of him (see 1 Cor. 2:8).

"Her judges are evening wolves":

Or, like them, cruel, voracious, never satisfied.

Especially are very ravenous in the evening, having had no food all day.

Not daring to go abroad in the daytime to seek their prey (see Jer. 5:6).

The Septuagint and Arabic versions read "wolves of Arabia"; but wrongly (See Hab. 1:8).

Such rapacious covetous judges were there in Christ's time.

Who gives us an instance in one, by which we may judge of the rest.

Who feared not God, nor regarded men (Luke 18:2).

Such as these were hungry and greedy after gifts and bribes to pervert judgment, and to devour the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, on which they had no mercy.

"They gnaw not the bones till the morrow":

Or rather, "in the morning".

That is, either they leave not the bones till the morning, as Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it.

They are so hungry, that they eat up bones and all at once, and reserve nothing for the next day.

Which expresses both the greediness of these judges, and the total consumption of the estates of men made by them.

Or else the sense is, that not having gnawn any bones in the morning, or eaten anything that day, hence they are so greedy in the evening.

And so this last clause gives a reason why evening wolves are so voracious; for which such cruel judges are compared to them.

We have spoken, in these lessons before, that being a prince of the people, carries with it a great responsibility to take care of the people.

It seems, the princes did not want any responsibility for the people.

They just wanted to rule, and take what they could from the people.

The judges were greedy and ferocious.

They too, took more than they needed, and left the people ravaged.

Zephaniah 3:4 "Her prophets [are] light [and] treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law."

"Her prophets are light and treacherous persons":

The false prophets, as the Targum and Kimchi explain it.

These seem to design the lawyers spoken of in the New Testament, whose business it was to interpret the law to the people.

These were "light" men, good for nothing, of no worth and value.

Light in knowledge, as Kimchi gives the sense of the word.

Men of no brains; empty headed men, that had no substantial knowledge.

Giddy, unstable, and inconstant, and compliant with the state of mind and vices of the people.

Men of no gravity in their countenance, speech, and conversation.

Schultens, from the use of the word in the Arabic language, renders it "proud", as these men were, proud boasters.

For, though they had but a superficial knowledge of things, they boasted of much, and carried it with a haughty and insolent air to the common people.

And they were "treacherous" to God, and to his truths, and to the souls of men, and took away the key of knowledge from them.

And particularly were so to Christ, of whom they were the betrayers and murderers.

Delivering him up into the hands of the Gentiles to be scourged and crucified (Matt. 20:18).

"Her priests have polluted the sanctuary":

The temple; by selling, or suffering to be sold in it, various things, whereby it became a den of thieves, which once was called a house of prayer (Matt. 21:12).

And also our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the sanctuary or temple was a type, by denying, blaspheming, and reproaching him, and by shedding his blood.

"They have done violence to the law":

By not teaching it as they should; and by their false glosses, senses, and interpretations of it.

And by the traditions of the elders they preferred unto it, and whereby they made it void (see Matt. 5:1; 15:1).

This is a terrible state of affairs, when the spiritual leaders have gone bad.

Matthew 7:15 "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

The very leaders, who were to uphold the law, have destroyed it.

They not only forgot to teach the law, but they polluted the sanctuary with false gods.

They are the blind leading the blind.

Matthew 15:14 "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."

The prophets of that day had power to influence others.

The problem is, some of the prophets were false prophets.

Their messages were not from God.

Their messages were something they dreamed up themselves, for their own advantage.

Zephaniah 3:5 "The just LORD [is] in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame."

"The just LORD is in the midst thereof":

In the midst of the city of Jerusalem, where those princes, judges, prophets and priests, were, that behaved so ill, and saw and observed all their evil actions.

And yet they were not deterred from them by his presence, even though he is the "just" and Holy One, who loves righteousness, and hates iniquity, and will punish for it.

Nor were they directed and allured to do what is righteous and good by his example.

This character of the just Lord well agrees with Christ, who is perfectly righteous in both his natures, and in the execution of his offices.

And is the author of righteousness to his people.

And this is to be understood of his incarnation and personal presence in human nature in Jerusalem, and in the temple, where he taught his doctrine, and wrought his miracles.

"He will not do iniquity":

Christ was holy in his nature, harmless in his life.

He knew no sin; he did not commit any; no violence was done by him, or guile found in him.

He was not guilty of sin against God, or of doing any injury to men.

And should have been imitated by the men of the age in which he lived, as well as by others.

And should have been valued and esteemed, and not slandered and vilified as he was, as if he had been the worst of men.

"Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light":

The doctrine of the Gospel, which he set in the clearest light, and preached with the greatest constancy, day after day, morning by morning.

And very early in the morning, when the people came to hear him in the temple.

And he continued in it all the day.

His waking morning by morning to this service, as was predicted of him (Isa. 1:4; see Luke 21:37).

"He faileth not":

In this work of preaching the word, with the greatest evidence and persistent personal attention.

"But the unjust knoweth no shame":

Those unjust persons, who attacked the character of Christ, and spoke badly about his doctrine and miracles.

Though there was nothing in his life, nor in his ministry, that could be justly blamed, yet they blushed not at their sin and wickedness.

And though they were sharply reprov'd by him, and their errors in principle, and sins in practice, were exposed by him, yet they were not ashamed.

Such were the hardness and unyielding of their hearts.

God dwelt in the midst of His people.

The Lord was the only holy One upon the earth.

His law was perfect.

The people's inability to keep the law was where the problem came from.

They had walked away from the Light of God, and made a habit of sinning.

They know no shame; because they have committed so many sins their consciences have become dull.

God still shines His Light where the people are caught up in sin, but He will not always remain there.

He left the temple in Jerusalem, before the destruction by Babylon.

Verses 6-7

The desolations brought by the LORD on surrounding nations were to serve as warnings to Judah, meant to turn His people back to Him.

But instead, enticed by the fruits of corruption, the people rose early to zealously and deliberately pursue the way of sin.

Zephaniah 3:6 "I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant."

"I have cut off the nations":

Utterly destroyed them, as the Philistines, Moabites, Ethiopians, and Assyrians, as in the preceding chapters.

All which were done before the coming of Christ in the flesh; and by which instances the Jews should have took warning.

Lest by their sins they should provoke the LORD to destroy their nation, city, and temple.

"Their towers are desolate":

Built on their frontiers, or on the walls of their cities, to defend them; these were demolished, and laid waste, and of no use.

Or, "their corners"; towers being usually built on the angles or corners of walls.

Some interpret this of their princes, nobles, and great men, who were destroyed (see Zech. 10:4).

"I made their streets waste, that none passeth by":

The streets of their cities, the houses being pulled down by the enemy, the rubbish of them lay in the streets, so that there was no passing for any.

And indeed, the houses being demolished, the streets were no more in form.

"Their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant":

The houses being burnt with fire, or pulled down, and plundered of the goods and substance in them, and the people cut off by famine, pestilence, or sword.

And the rest carried captive, there was scarce a man or inhabitant left; so general was the destruction.

The nations here are probably, speaking of the nations around them, but it is true of Israel, as well.

God sent His judgments to cause them to repent, and turn back to God.

Israel had trusted in their military strength to save them from the enemy.

They had even made agreements with worldly countries to help them in their wars.

The truth is their strength lay in God's protection of them.

When they stopped trusting in God, their strength was gone.

In their journey to the Promised Land, they had won every battle when the ark of the Covenant went before them.

When they did not have it going before them, they lost.

This in itself, should have told them of their inability to do anything without God.

Zephaniah 3:7 "I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, [and] corrupted all their doings."

"I said, Surely thou wilt fear me":

This is spoken after the manner of men; as if God should say within himself, and reason in his own mind, upon a view of things, surely the people of the Jews will take notice of my judgments executed on other nations, and will stand in awe of me on account of them.

And fear to offend me, lest the same calamities should come upon them.

This, humanly speaking, might be reasonably thought would be the case.

"Thou wilt receive instruction":

By these judgments, taking warning by them; repent, reform, and amend, and thereby escape the like.

"So their dwelling should not be cut off":

Or, "its dwelling"; the dwelling of the city of Jerusalem.

The houses in it; the dwelling places of the inhabitants of it; the singular being put for the plural.

Unless the temple should be meant, as Abendana interprets it; and so it may be rendered "his dwelling".

Their house, which was left desolate to them because they feared not the Lord.

Nor received instruction by the example of others. Nor repented of their sins, and altered their course of life; which, if done, their dwelling would have been preserved (Matt. 23:38).

"Howsoever I punished them":

Or "visited" them.

Chastised them in a gentle manner, in order to reform them, but in vain.

Some render it, "all which I committed to them"; the oracles of God, his word and ordinances, his promises, and the blessings of his goodness, which he deposited with them, in order to do them good, and bring them to repentance.

The Targum is, "all the good things which I have said unto them (or promised them), I will bring unto them.

And to the same sense Jarchi.

The goodness of God should have brought them to repentance, yet it did not.

"But they rose early, and corrupted all their doings":

They were diligent and industrious eager and early, in the commission of sins.

In doing corrupt and abominable works; receiving and tenaciously adhering to the traditions of the elders.

Seeking to establish their own righteousness, not submitting to Christ's.

Rejecting him the true Messiah; blaspheming his doctrines, despising his ordinances, and persecuting his people.

Besides other vices, which abounded among them; for which the wrath of God came upon them to the uttermost, as expressed in the following verse.

God used examples of other countries He had judged, to show Israel and Judah that they must repent.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.

The fear in this, is speaking of reverence.

God wanted their love and respect.

God wanted to instruct them in His ways, but they were not interested in doing what He wanted.

They did what was right in their own sight.

God had told them, over and over, of the punishment, if they did not repent of their sins and walk in His ways.

They did not heed His warnings.

The chastisement God sent was to punish them for their sins and cause them to reach out to Him for help.

All of the warnings, and chastisement, were to cause them to repent, instead they just went deeper and deeper into sin.

Zephaniah 3:8 “Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination [is] to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, [even] all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”

The prophet transitions from the historical invasion of Judah by Babylon to the future day of the LORD.

He speaks of the Great Tribulation, when the Lord will gather all the nations for judgment (Joel 3:1-2; 12-17; Zech. 12:2-3; 14:2; Matt. 24:21).

Those, who are to wait, are the saved.

They are admonished to wait for this day.

The nations gathered, here, are speaking of that time of the great battle of Armageddon.

There has never really been a time in past history, when all of mankind was caught up in battle like this.

The earth will be destroyed by God's fire, and a new heaven and a new earth will come forth from God.

Revelation 16:16 "And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

Verses 9-20

The final sections unveil the blessings of restoration for God's people and the nations.

Zephaniah 3:9 "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."

"Serve him with one consent" (Hebrew shekem, "shoulder"), is a figure drawn from the use of a yoke whereby two animals could be linked together and serve as one.

From this verse until the end of the prophecy, Zephaniah foresees the blessings of the millennial kingdom.

"A pure language":

A remnant of the nations, converted to the LORD, will worship Him in righteousness and truth (Zech. 8:20-23; 14:16).

Pure speech will come from purified hearts. (Luke 6:45).

At the tower of Babel, God punished the sinful people by changing their language, so they could not understand each other.

This has always been a problem in understanding people of other nations.

This is a reversal of that.

God will now, return them all to the same language so they might understand each other.

This speaks of a time of total agreement of people of many nations.

This will be that peace that Jesus Christ brings.

People of all nations will be converted to the Lord.

Zephaniah 3:10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, [even] the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering."

"From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia":

Either the African Ethiopia, or Arabia Chusea, which lay between Judea and Egypt.

Here some particular places and people are mentioned, in whom the preceding prophecy would be fulfilled.

If these rivers of Ethiopia are such as ran in the midst of the country, and so point at some parts of it, though on the other side of them, then this prophecy might have its accomplishment.

At least when the Evangelist Matthew went there, and preached the Gospel, and very likely the Apostle Paul.

As also when the Ethiopian eunuch was converted, who doubtless did what in him lay to promote the interest of Christ in those parts.

"My suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed":

Aben Ezra, Kimchi, Abarbanel, and Ben Melech, take the words "Atharai Bathpusai" to be the proper name of a nation or family beyond the rivers of Ethiopia; whereas they are characters which describe persons there, who should have the pure language turned to them, and call on the name of the LORD.

Even such, who, being made sensible of sin, and of their danger, would be humble supplicants at the throne of grace, and pray to the LORD for the discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy to them, agreeably to the prophecy (in Psalm 68:31), "princes shall come out of Egypt.

Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God"; that is, in prayer.

And these are the sons and daughters of the Almighty, who are scattered abroad in the several parts of the world, and among the rest here.

But as they are gathered together by Christ in redemption, so they are found out and reached by efficacious grace in calling, whether Jews or Gentiles.

Some think the Jews are here meant, even the elect of God among them, who were dispersed in several nations, and particularly in Egypt and Ethiopia.

Who were met with by the Gospel, and converted in the first times of it.

To these Peter and James direct their epistles: and of whom, being called by grace, it is said, they:

"Shall bring mine offering":

Themselves as an offering to the Lord, souls and bodies, with all other spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, and well doing.

And likewise such persons they may be the instruments of the conversion of, called the offering of the Gentiles (Rom. 15:16).

They will return from distant places (Isa. 11:11, 15-16; 27:13).

Revelation 15:4 "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for [thou] only [art] holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest."

Verses 11-13

The LORD will purge the proud and ungodly from among them (Zech. 13:1-6).

Leaving a meek and humble people.

Material prosperity and peace will accompany them as well, allowing them to enjoy the rich blessings of God undisturbed (Joel 3:18-20; Mica 4:4).

Zephaniah 3:11 "In that day shalt thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me: for then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride, and thou shalt no more be haughty because of my holy mountain."

"In that day shall thou not be ashamed for all thy doings, wherein thou hast transgressed against me":

Because these shall not be continued in, but repented of, and forsaken.

And besides, shall be forgiven, blotted out, covered, and remembered no more.

So that they shall not be charged with them, condemned for them, or be confounded before God, angels, and men, on account of them.

Not but that shame always arises from a true sense of sin; and the more, as it is beheld in the glass of pardoning love, which is a branch of true evangelical repentance.

At least a fruit and evidence of it (Ezek. 16:63).

But then such are not ashamed to appear before God; but can with a holy confidence stand in his sight, their sins being pardoned, and their persons justified.

This respects the Christian church or churches in Judea, the few that believed in Christ, called in a following verse the remnant of Israel (Zeph. 3:13).

At the time when the generality of the people of the Jews rejected the Messiah, and their city and temple were destroyed, and the Lord turned the pure language of the Gospel to the Gentiles.

"For then I will take away out of the midst of thee them that rejoice in thy pride":

The Scribes and Pharisees, and those that adhered to them of the Jewish nation, who rejoiced in those things which that people generally prided themselves in and boasted of. Their descent from Abraham, and their observance of the rites and ceremonies of the law.

And the traditions of their elders, and their external legal righteousness. And they rejoiced in their boastings of these things, which rejoicing was evil.

And they, in the pride of their hearts, despised Christ and his righteousness, his Gospel, ordinances, and people.

Which were the things in which they transgressed against the Lord, and for which they were taken away by the sword, famine, and pestilence, at the destruction of Jerusalem.

"And thou shall no more be haughty because of mine holy mountain":

The temple; or, "in" it; since it should now be destroyed.

The Jews gloried in the temple, and behaved proudly and haughtily on the account of it.

Reckoned themselves secure, because of that.

And trusted and gloried in the sacrifices there offered up, and the services there performed (see Jeremiah 7:4).

All Israel shall be turned to the Lord, and they will no longer be a haughty people, believing they are the only children of God.

They had thought themselves better than the rest of the world, because they alone, had the law of God.

This was all removed in the coming of their Messiah who brought salvation to all the world.

Matthew 3:9 "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to [our] father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Romans 3:27 "Where [is] boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith."

Zephaniah 3:12 "I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD."

"I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people":

Of a character just the reverse of the proud and haughty that should be removed from Jerusalem and Judea by death or captivity.

These are they that should be preserved from the general calamity, as the Christians were, and were left in the church of God.

These were an "afflicted" people, as the Lord's people in all ages are afflicted with a body of sin.

With the temptations of Satan; with the hidings of God's face; with bodily infirmities, and with the reproaches and persecutions of men.

The first Christians, both among Jews and Gentiles, justly bore this character, especially with respect to the last article.

And they were also "poor", for the most part the poor of this world, being stripped of their worldly enjoyments for the sake of Christ.

But especially poor in spirit, broken hearted, contrite, lowly ones.

That had a mean opinion of themselves, modest, meek, and humble.

Sensible of their spiritual poverty, and seeking after the true riches of grace and glory.

The Targum renders it, "a meek people, and receiving injuries; quietly and patiently.

"And they shall trust in the name of the Lord":

Not in men, but in the Lord.

Not in descent from men, from the patriarchs, as the Jews were wont to do.

Not in Moses, as they, in his law, and obedience to it.

Not in any creature or creature enjoyment.

Not in wealth and riches.

Not in their own hearts, or in their own righteousness but in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In his person for acceptance with God; in his righteousness for justification; in his blood for pardon and cleansing.

In his sacrifice for atonement; in his fullness for supplies of grace; in his power and strength for protection and preservation.

And in his obedience, sufferings, and death, for salvation and eternal life.

This trust signifies, according to the sense of the word, a betaking of themselves to Christ as a refuge.

A hiding themselves under the shadow of his wings; under his person, blood, and righteousness, where they are covered and sheltered from the avenging justice of God.

From the curses of the law, and wrath to come.

It is a committing themselves into the hands of Christ; a leaning and staying upon him, expecting grace and glory from him. Trusting him with all they have, and for all they want in time and eternity.

And this the chosen, redeemed, and called ones, "shall do".

For, through the efficacious grace of God, faith is given to them, and wrought in them.

And this is drawn forth into act and exercise by the same grace, and is continued in them, and shall never fail, through the powerful intercession of Christ for them.

They shall believe, and go on believing, to the saving of their souls.

The followers of Jesus Christ are the humble people of the world.

They have to give up all their conceit and arrogance to come to Christ.

The power to live the Christian life lies in the ability to trust in the name of Jesus.

Matthew 5:3 "Blessed [are] the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Luke 6:20 "And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed [be ye] poor: for yours is the kingdom of God."

Philippians 2:10-11 "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of [things] in heaven, and [things] in earth, and [things] under the earth;" "And [that] every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ [is] Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Verses 13-15

For the fall of Assyria (see the notes on 2 kings 23:28-29; Nahum 3:7-10).

Zephaniah 3:13 "The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make [them] afraid."

"The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity":

This is the remnant, according to the election of grace, the few the Lord reserved for himself, left in the land, and in his church, for his own glory.

Who, being truly convinced of sin, and brought to believe in Christ, should leave and forsake their former course of sinning.

Not that they should be without sin, or none be committed by them.

But should not live in it, and be workers of it.

Make a trade of sinning, and continue therein.

Or should not commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, as great numbers of the Jews did, in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah, against clear evidence, and the light of their own consciences.

"Nor speak lies":

In common talk and conversation; which a child of God, a true believer in Christ, a real Christian, should not and dare not do (Isa. 63:8).

Or doctrinal lies, lies in hypocrisy; such doctrines as are not of the truth of the Gospel, but contrary to it.

Such as the doctrine of justification by works.

Atonement by ceremonial sacrifices.

Acceptance with God, through the merits of their fathers.

And keeping the traditions of the elders; and other Jewish lies and fables of the same stamp.

But rejected by those who have embraced the truth, as it is in Jesus.

"Neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth":

Having clean hearts created and right spirits renewed in them.

Being Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile, and true followers of Jesus, in whom nothing of this kind could be found.

"For they shall feed":

Like a flock of sheep, to which they may be compared for their innocence and harmlessness, meekness and patience.

Feed in the fat pastures of the word and ordinances of Christ, under the care and guidance of him the good Shepherd.

And so go in and out, and find pasture, food, and fullness of it, in him. His flesh, and blood; in his precious truths, and Gospel provisions made in his house.

"And lie down":

In green pastures of ordinances, beside the still waters of everlasting love and divine grace, and in the good fold of the church.

All which is a reason why they do not and cannot sin as others do.

Nor tell lies, and be guilty of deceit and falsehood; for they are better taught.

And the grace of God, in giving them spiritual food and rest, influences and engages them to such a conduct and behavior.

Or, "therefore they shall feed", etc. being truly gracious and sincere souls, who cannot indulge themselves in sin, or act a false and deceitful part.

"And none shall make them afraid":

Of feeding in those pastures, and lying down in those folds.

Or shall deter them from an attendance on the word and ordinances.

Or joining in fellowship with the churches of Christ therein.

Neither Satan, the roaring lion, nor false teachers, and persecuting tyrants, those grievous wolves, and cruel bears.

Or so frighten them, that in their fright they shall tell lies, and use deceit.

The remnant of Israel, throughout the Bible, is the group who has never bowed their knee to Baal.

This just means they have never worshipped false gods.

They have always remained faithful to God.

These are those people who are holy, because He is holy.

They are not interested in sin.

They are interested in pleasing God.

They have all the good habits of Christ, because Christ lives in them.

These are speaking of those who have made Christ their Lord.

1 John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

Verses 14-20: The messianic era of millennial blessing and restoration is described.

Zephaniah 3:14 “Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.”

"Sing, O daughter of Zion":

The congregation of Zion, as the Targum.

The church of Christ in Gospel times, which has great reason to sing and rejoice, because of the coming of Christ.

Redemption by him, and all other benefits and blessings of grace.

Because of the Gospel, and the ordinances of it, and the numbers of souls converted, both among Jews and Gentiles.

Especially the church in the latter day is here called upon to sing for joy, when the Jews will be converted.

To which these words and what follow relate.

"Shout, O Israel":

The ten tribes, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it.

Which shall now return and all Israel shall be saved (Rom. 11:26).

And therefore just cause of shouting, and of keeping a jubilee on that account.

"Be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem":

The metropolis of the two tribes.

For now the children of Israel and of Judah shall be together, and seek the Lord their God, and the true Messiah, and find him.

And shall embrace him, profess and serve him; which will be matter of great joy.

And this will be sincere and hearty, and devoid of all hypocrisy.

Several terms are used, describing the people of the Jews, to comprehend them all.

And several words to express their joy, in order to set forth the greatness of it, as their happy case would require.

The joy of the daughters of Jerusalem is the fact that they have been restored.

People from all over the world will come to worship there.

This promise of the coming greatness of Jerusalem is spoken just after the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction.

The victory of the Lord over sin, and the promise of the restoration of Jerusalem, should make them rejoice in their hearts.

Verses 15-17

The basis for rejoicing in verse 14 is that Israel's day of judgment is past and her King is residing in her midst.

His departure just prior to Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of the temple is graphically depicted (in Ezek. chapters 8 to 11).

But He will return as Lord and Messiah, a fact so glorious that it is repeated (in verse 17).

Zephaniah 3:15 "The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, [even] the LORD, [is] in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more."

"The LORD hath taken away thy judgments":

Both outward and inward.

Not only exile, poverty, contempt and reproach among the nations of the earth.

But hardness of heart, blindness of mind, impenitence and unbelief, to which the Jews are now given up, in a judicial way.

But at this time these shall be removed, through the goodness of God unto them, and the power of divine grace upon them.

They will be brought to a sense of sin, and an acknowledgment of it; their iniquities will be pardoned; and, the cause being removed, the effects will cease.

And all calamities, corrections and punishment, will end.

And they will be put into the possession of their own land, and enjoy all the privileges of the church of God.

And so, will have just reason to sing, shout, and rejoice.

"He hath cast out thine enemy":

That is, the Lord has removed the enemy that was in possession of their land, and so made way, and prepared it for them.

He has swept him away, as the word signifies, with great force, with much ease, and like so much dirt and filth.

He stood in their way, nor could they have easily removed him; but the Lord did it, or will do it.

Though it may be by instruments, by means of the Christian princes.

This is to be understood of the eastern antichrist, the Turk, now in possession of the land of Israel; but shall be obliged to depart from it, when this prophecy shall take place, for a reason following.

"The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee":

That is, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Messiah.

One of whose titles is the King of Israel, of the spiritual Israel, King of saints, both Jews and Gentiles.

In whose hearts he rules by his Spirit and grace.

And to this passage the Jews in Christ's time seem to have respect, allowing this to be the character of the Messiah (Matt. 27:42; and also Nathanael; John 1:49).

Now at this time Christ will be in the midst of the converted Jews, by his spiritual and gracious presence, as their King, to reign over them, to whom they will be subject.

And to protect and defend them, and deliver them out of the hands of all their enemies.

And so he is in all his churches, and will be to the end of the world.

"Thou shalt not see evil any more":

The evil of affliction or punishment; the evil of captivity, disgrace, and contempt.

This shows that this prophecy does not respect the Babylonish captivity, and deliverance from that.

For since that time, they have seen evil by Antiochus Epiphanies, in the times of the Maccabees; and by the Romans.

And have had a large and long experience of it; but when they are converted, and returned to their own land in the latter day, all their afflictions and troubles will be at an end, they will know them no more.

The Vulgate Latin version renders it, "thou shalt not fear evil any more".

So, the Targum, "thou shalt not be afraid from before evil any more.

The following Scripture is about the very same thing.

Hebrews 8:12 "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

They are forgiven and restored.

Revelation 12:10 "And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Zephaniah 3:16 "In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: [and to] Zion, Let not thine hands be slack."

"In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not":

Do not be afraid of any enemies; neither outward ones, the armies of Gog and Magog, or the Turk, who will threaten, and will attempt to dispossess them of their land, now returned to it.

Nor inward and spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, death, and hell, being all vanquished and subdued by Christ.

This will be said, not by the enemies themselves, who will confess they have no power to stand before the mighty God, as Aben Ezra; but either by the prophets of the Lord, or by the people themselves.

Encouraging one another, every man his neighbor, as Kimchi.

Or rather by the Lord himself, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions supply it, "the Lord shall say to Jerusalem".

This will be said at the time of the Jews' conversion, when reinstated in their own land, and shall be threatened with another remove from it, which they will have no reason to fear.

"And to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack":

Weak, remiss, hang down through fear of mind, and fainting of spirit.

And so unfit to meet the enemy, or perform duty.

But, on the contrary, pluck up a good heart, be of good courage, fear not the enemy, be vigorous, active, and diligent, in the performance of the service of the Lord.

This is said about the natural Israelite, and to the church (Zion), spiritual Israel.

There will be nothing to fear, because the Lord will be with His own.

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee [is] mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isa. 62:4), the LORD will exult over His people with gladness and song, resting in quiet ecstasy over His people in whom is all His delight (Deut. 30:9; Isaiah chapter 54).

The might of man cannot be compared to that of God.

God created the world, and all that is in it.

He controls everything.

Acts 4:12 "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

Revelation 21:3 "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God [is] with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, [and be] their God."

The love that God has for man is agape love.

It is love that is so great, that God sent His Son to die on the cross to save our souls.

There is joy in heaven over one sinner who receives Christ as his Savior.

Zephaniah 3:18 "I will gather [them that are] sorrowful for the solemn assembly, [who] are of thee, [to whom] the reproach of it [was] a burden."

"Them that are sorrowful for the solemn assembly":

Unable to celebrate the appointed feasts (Exodus 23:14-17), while in exile, the godly remnant sorrowed.

But the Lord will remove their sorrow, giving them praise and fame (verse 19).

Those who were sorrowful of losing daily fellowship with God at the temple will be brought again and restored.

Verses 19-20

“At that time”:

The time of the return of the King, Messiah, when the Jews will be re-gathered and become a source of blessing to the world, fulfilling Israel’s original destiny (Deut. 26:18-19; Isa. 62:7).

Zephaniah 3:19 "Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame."

"Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee":

Or, "I will do"; their business for them.

"Slay" them, as the Vulgate Latin version.

And make an entire destruction of them, as the Targum; bring them to utter ruin.

This must be understood of antichrist, both eastern and western, the Turk and Pope.

And all the antichristian states that have afflicted the Jews, or shall attempt to distress them at the time of their conversion.

And will be fulfilled at the time of the pouring out of the seven vials of God's wrath upon them, which will issue in the entire undoing and ruin of them.

Especially the seventh and last of them.

Which, when poured out, will clear the world of all the enemies of Christ, his church and people.

And because this will be a wonderful event, and of great moment and importance.

Hence the word "behold" is prefixed to it, as exciting attention, as well as a note of admiration and emphatic declaration or statement.

"And I will save her that halteth":

That has sinned, and is weak in faith, and cannot walk, at least but haltingly.

Which is like a lame and maimed sheep, of which there is danger of its being left behind and lost.

But the Lord here promises he will take care of such, and save them from all their sins, and out of the hands of all their enemies.

And bring them through all difficulties and discouragements into his church, and to their own land.

They shall none of them be lost, even the meanest and weakest of them, any more than the healthful and strong.

"And gather her that was driven out":

Even everyone that was scattered abroad in each of the nations of the world (See Micah 4:6-7).

"And I will get them praise and fame in every land, where they have been put to shame":

Being converted, they shall be spoke well of everywhere.

They shall be praised for their ingenuous acknowledgment of their sins.

For their sincere repentance of them; and for their faith in Christ.

And for their ready submission to his Gospel and ordinances.

And the fame of their conversion shall be spread everywhere; and they shall be in great credit and esteem in all Christian countries, where their name has been used for a taunt and a proverb.

And so, "instead of their shame", as R. Moses interprets it, they shall have glory and honor in all places.

This is speaking of Israel's restoration to their land.

It also, speaks of restoring her reputation as God's people in all the world.

God will destroy the enemies of Israel, and all of God's people, including the church.

This last destruction of the enemies of God, and His people, occurs just before Jerusalem is totally restored.

Zephaniah 3:20 "At that time will I bring you [again], even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD."

"At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you":

That is, at the time that the Lord will gather them in the effectual calling to himself and to his church, he will return them to their own land.

And, as soon as the Jews are converted, they will not only be gathered into Christian churches, but will be gathered together in one body, and appoint themselves one head.

And will go up out of each of the lands wherein they have been dispersed, and enter into their own land, and possess it.

At the same time they are made partakers of the grace of God, they will enjoy all their civil privileges and liberties (see Hosea 1:11).

"For I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth":

This is repeated from the preceding verse (Zeph. 3:19), for the confirmation of it.

And in connection with the following clause, to show when it will be.

"When I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD":

Or "captivities"; meaning not the several captivities of the kings of Judah in Babylon, as of Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah.

But the two fold captivity of this people, literal and spiritual.

Their present outward exile from their own land, captivity and dispersion among the nations.

And their spiritual captivity or bondage, to sin, Satan, the law; and the traditions of their elders.

From both which they will be delivered at one and the same time; and which will be notorious and manifest.

What their eyes will see with pleasure and admiration; and which may be depended upon will be done, since the Lord has said it.

Whose purposes, promises, and prophecies, never fail of their accomplishment.

He is God omniscient and knows with certainty what will be done.

He is God omnipotent and can and will do whatever he has determined, promised, or said should be done.

God will gather His people from all over the world, and bring them to Jerusalem.

This is speaking of that great gathering in the end times, when all of God's people come home.

In the spiritual realm, this is speaking of all the believers in Christ.

In the physical, this speaks of all the true Jews from all over the world coming home to Israel.

God keeps His promises.

"Saith the LORD" means there is no question about this happening.

God said it, it will be.

Zephaniah Chapter 3 Questions

1. Woe to her that is _____ and _____.
2. This is speaking of _____.
3. What are they polluted with?
4. How were they oppressive to others?
5. Verse 2 speaks of _____ toward God.
6. Who had God sent to warn them?
7. God drew nigh to Judah, but Judah did what in return?
8. Who did she put her trust in?
9. Being a prince to the people, carries with it great _____.
10. Describe the judges in verse 3.
11. Even the _____ leaders have gone bad.
12. The people's _____ to keep the law was where the problem came from.
13. Why did they know no shame?
14. Who are the nations in verse 6?
15. What had been proof to them on their journey to the promised land, that God was their strength?
16. The _____ of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
17. They were interested in walking in their _____.
18. What was the chastisement of God for?
19. Who are those that are to wait upon the Lord?

20. Verse 8 is about what battle?
21. When had God confused the language?
22. What nations will come and worship God?
23. Why had Israel been haughty in the past?
24. Who does verse 12 say will trust in the Lord?
25. Who are the remnant of Israel?
26. Why will there be nothing to fear?
27. The tabernacle of God is with _____.
28. What is one word for God's kind of love?
29. Whose reputation does God restore?
30. Where will God bring His people to?