

Zephaniah 3 - The Millennial Kingdom; The Coming Climax

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Zephaniah 3

III. Woe oracle upon Jerusalem (Zeph 3:1-7)

(1) Jerusalem's unrighteousness (3:1-4)

(A) City's sins (3:1-2)

1 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, The oppressive city!

1 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, The tyrannical city!

1 Woe to this filthy, polluted, and oppressive city!

1 Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!

- "Woe to her" - clearly identified as Jerusalem (v4,14)

— They had the Temple. Privilege creates responsibility.

— Paul's verdict in Rom 3:16: "Destruction and misery are in their ways."

Immorality arises whenever people are treated like things and things are valued as if they were people.

2 She obeyed no voice, She accepted no discipline. She did not trust in the LORD, She did not approach her God.

2 She heeded no voice, She accepted no instruction. She did not trust in the LORD, She did not draw near to her God.

2 It won't obey anyone. It won't accept discipline. It does not trust in the LORD. It does not approach God.

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

- God had sent judgment: 185,000 Assyrians outside their walls scared the daylights out of them (2 Kings 18-19)

— God relieved them, but they "received not correction."

- How about America? Riots, fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes—yet we continue in our arrogance (and our debts), denying the God of our heritage and flaunting our sin (Is 5:18ff)

(B) Citizen's sins (3:3-4)

(a) Princes (3:3a)

(b) Judges (3:3b)

3 Her leaders within her are roaring lions, Her judges are wolves at evening; They have no bones to gnaw in the morning.

3 Her princes within her are roaring lions, Her judges are wolves at evening; They leave nothing for the morning.

3 Its national officials are roaring lions; its judges are like wolves of the night that don't leave the bones for the morning.

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

- Corruption among her princes and judges: Insatiable greed, devouring all in ravenous appetites, leaving nothing till the morning

(c) Prophets (3:4a)

(d) Priests (3:4b)

4 Her prophets are insolent, treacherous men; Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the Law.

4 Her prophets are reckless, treacherous men; Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law.

4 Its prophets are arrogant and treacherous. Its priests have contaminated the sanctuary. They give perverse interpretations of the Law.

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

- By their lives they brought disrespect upon the Temple, the sanctuary of God.

— You do violence to the law when it is not interpreted accurately, or even left untaught.

These were the theological liberals of their day.

— How many pastors really know the Word of God? How many resort to psychology rather than the sufficiency of Christ?

(2) God's contrasting righteousness (3:5-7)

(A) God's righteousness described (3:5)

5 The LORD is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the criminal knows **noshame**.

5 The LORD is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.

5 The righteous LORD who lives within her will do no wrong; he will bring justice to light morning by morning. He never fails, but the unjust are shameless.

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.

- "...no shame" - what ever happened to shame? There always has been immorality—but it had the sensitivity to remain hidden, not publicly condoned.

(B) God's righteousness demands that He judge Jerusalem (3:6-7)

Verses 6-8 present a picture of the Great Tribulation, the great Day of the Lord, Armageddon, etc.

6 "I have eliminated nations; Their corner towers are deserted. I have laid waste their streets, With no one passing by; Their cities have been laid waste, Without a person, without an inhabitant.

6 "I have cut off nations; Their corner towers are in ruins. I have made their streets desolate, With no one passing by; Their cities are laid waste, Without a man, without an inhabitant.

6 "I have destroyed nations— their fortifications are deserted. I have turned their main thoroughfares into wastelands where no one will travel. Their cities are desolate; as a result, not one man remains— no, not even a single resident.

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.
- When studying the glory that was Rome, it is easy to see why they were confident that it would live forever. Yet when you view the ancient ruins, and the stones worn by chariot wheels, it is hard to imagine the great cities of yesterday.

7 "I said, 'You will certainly revere Me, You will accept discipline.' So her dwelling will not be eliminated *In accordance with* everything that I have stipulated for her. Instead, they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.

7 "I said, 'Surely you will revere Me, Accept instruction.' So her dwelling will not be cut off *According to* all that I have appointed concerning her. But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.

7 I have said, 'If only you would fear me, if only you would take my instructions to heart.' Then their houses would not have been torn down. I have chastened them, but they were eager to corrupt everything they were doing."

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.
- The warnings of judgment seem to have little effect

IV. Salvation in the day of the Lord for the righteous remnant (3:8-20)

(1) Judgment upon all the nations (3:8)

8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD, "For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision *is* to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For **all the earth** will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD, "For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision *is* to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

8 "Just you wait!" declares the LORD. "The day will come when I stand up as a prosecutor, for I am determined to assemble the nations and to gather the kingdoms, in order to pour

out my indignation upon them— all of my fierce anger. All the earth will be consumed by the fire of my jealousy.

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.

- "...all the earth" - the Planet Earth is moving toward a definite appointment with a jealous God (Ps 2; Rev 16:13-16)

- The first part of this chapter is almost frightening to read: dark forebodings and ominous rumblings. Now we turn from darkness to the brightness of blessings...

(2) Future blessings upon the Gentiles(3:9-10)

(A) Purification for service (3:9)

Regeneration of Israel

9 "For **then** I will restore to **the peoples pure lips**, So that all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

9 "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, That all of them may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.

9 Indeed, then I will return my people to a pure language so that they all may call upon the name of the LORD, serving him with a united will.

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.

- "...then" - the word "then" signifies a major pivot in the prophet's message both in tone and in content: the Lord now shifts from frightful predictions of destruction to prophecies of blessing and peace...

- "...the peoples pure lips" - refers to the Hebrew language; during the millennial kingdom, the entire world will speak a single language: Hebrew

— This is God's undoing of His work at the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9). God confused their language so that they could no longer coordinate with one another to build a one-world government in opposition to God.

— He undid this to a small extent at Pentecost, where the apostles were speaking in the tongues (languages) of those foreigners who were there to celebrate (Cf. Acts 2:5-8). In the millennial kingdom, He will undo the confusion of languages completely and forever.

(B) Regathering for worship (3:10)

10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, **Will bring My offerings.**

10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, My dispersed ones, Will bring My offerings.

10 "From beyond the rivers of Sudan my worshipers— including my dispersed people— will present offerings to me.

10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

- "...Will bring My offerings" - some believe that the Ark of the Covenant is hidden in Ethiopia (Acts 8)

— "bring" - *yabal*, to bear or carry, as in a royal procession

— "offering" - *minchah*, a gift, tribute, present

See [Ark of the Covenant: A Relic with a Future?](#).

The Return

The return of the Ethiopian Jews in 1991 made history. In 36 hours, 14,000 Jews were flown to Israel. On the Jewish Sabbath, May 24, and continuing non-stop for 36 hours, a total of 34 El Al jumbo jets and Hercules C-130s—seats removed to accommodate the maximum number of Ethiopians. Some of the rows of 10 seats had 18 people crammed into them.

[David Allen Lewis, *Can Israel Survive in a Hostile World?*, p. 240.]

On May 24, 1991, a 747 carried 1,086 on just one flight, and landed with *two more* than they started with: two babies were born en route, making a total of 1,088! [Source: *Guinness Book of Records*, 1995 edition.]

(3) Future blessings for Israel (3:11-20)

(A) Removal of sin (3:11-13)

11 "On that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds By which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst Your proud, arrogant ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain.

11 "In that day you will feel no shame Because of all your deeds By which you have rebelled against Me; For then I will remove from your midst Your proud, exulting ones, And you will never again be haughty On My holy mountain.

11 When this happens, you will not be ashamed of your actions by which you sinned against me, because I will remove from among you those who revel in pride. Arrogance will have no place in my holy mountain.

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.

A Remnant of Israel

12 "But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.

12 "But I will leave among you A humble and lowly people, And they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.

12 I will keep a humble and gentle people among you, and they will trust in the name of the LORD.

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.

- The three Babylonian deportations left the poor, afflicted, and crippled in Jerusalem. God is pledged to take care of the poor (Matt 5:3,5)

13 "The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to frighten *them*."

13 "The remnant of Israel will do no wrong And tell no lies, Nor will a deceitful tongue Be found in their mouths; For they will feed and lie down With no one to make them tremble."

13 The survivors of Israel will not practice lawlessness nor tell lies, nor will a deceitful message be found in their mouths, because they will eat and rest, with no one to cause fear."

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.

- In the Messianic Kingdom, the remnant will be sinless in the land and live in security

The Millennial Kingdom

Unger highlights a seven-fold description:

(1) An era of supreme and exhilarating joy (Zeph 3:14)

(2) An era when the Lord's judgments against Israel will have been removed (Zeph 3:15a)

(3) Favored with the personal presence of the Lord (Zeph 3:15b)

(4) A time when Israel will not experience evil or fear (Zeph 3:15c-17a)

(5) A time when the Lord will rejoice over Israel as the special object of His love (Zeph 3:17b)

(6) Represent the gathering together of the saved remnant (Zeph 3:18)

(7) Preceded by the Lord's judgment of Israel's oppressors and the exaltation of the saved remnant (Zeph 3:19-20)

[Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1981, 2:1939-40.]

(B) Rejoicing (3:14-17)

(a) First round (3:14-15)

(i) Reality of rejoicing (3:14)

14 Shout for joy, daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, Israel! **Rejoice and triumph with all your heart**, Daughter of Jerusalem!

14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout *in triumph*, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all *your* heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!

14 "Sing aloud, daughter of Zion! Shout out, Israel! Rejoice with all of your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!

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

- "...Rejoice and triumph with all *your* heart" - Zephaniah concludes with a paragraph different in tone from the whole of the rest of the book

— The faithful minority have passed through the punishment of the nation. This paragraph is similar in outlook to such passages as Is 52:7-10; 54:1-8; Zech 2:10; 9:9.

(ii) Reasons for rejoicing (3:15)

(a) God's removal of judgment (3:15a)

(b) God's presence (3:15b)

15 The LORD has taken away *His* judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will no longer fear disaster.

15 The LORD has taken away *His* judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more.

15 The LORD has acquitted you; turning back your adversaries. Israel's king, the LORD, is among you; you will not fear disaster anymore.

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 Hebrew verbs here are in the past (the so-called "prophetic perfect" sense), but they really refer to events which are still future.

(b) Second round (3:16-17)

(i) Reality of rejoicing (3:16)

16 **On that day** it will be said to Jerusalem: "Do not be afraid, Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp.

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

16 "When all of this happens, it will be told Jerusalem, 'Don't be afraid!' and to Zion, 'Don't lose courage!'"

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

- "On that day" - the opening words mark explicitly that the prophet is speaking about the future

(ii) Reasons for rejoicing (3:17)

(a) God's power (3:17a)

(b) God's joy over Israel (3:17b)

17 "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will rejoice over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

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.

17 The LORD your God among you is powerful— he will save and he will take joyful delight in you. In his love he will renew you with his love; he will celebrate with singing because of you.

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.

- Jerusalem is to shout for joy and gladness because the city will be redeemed. God Himself will dwell in the city and reign over the inhabitants.

(C) Restoration of Israel's fortunes (3:18-20)

Regathering of Israel

18 "I will gather those who are worried about the appointed feasts— They came from you, *Zion*; *The disgrace of exile* is a burden on them.

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.

18 I will gather the afflicted from the solemn assembly; those who were with you, who were bearing a burden of disgrace.

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.

- The burden of having her children in exile was a reproach to the city of Jerusalem (Cf. Zech 12:10)

19 "Behold, I am going to deal at that time| With all your oppressors; I will save those who limp And gather the scattered, And I will turn their shame into praise and fame In all the earth.

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.

19 "Watch how I deal with everyone who oppresses you! At that time I will rescue the one who is lame, and I will draw to me the one who has been driven away. I will honor them with praise and with a good reputation in every land where they have been put to shame.

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.

20 "At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will make you famous and praiseworthy Among all the peoples of the earth, When I restore your fortunes before your eyes," Says the LORD.

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.

20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. Indeed, I will give you a good reputation, making you praiseworthy among all of the people of the world, when I restore your prosperity before your eyes," says the LORD.

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.

- The judgment meted out against Israel is the result of her sins. These judgments will not have a destructive effect, but a corrective one. Once correction takes place, the regathering will indeed occur, and the final regathering will cause Israel to be a name and a praise among the Gentile nations.

- A major characteristic of Israel's final restoration (in the Messianic Kingdom) is that they will become the center of Gentile attention. This is described in various passages: Is 14:1-2; 49:22-23; 60-1-3; 61:4-9; Micah 7:14-17; Zeph 3:20; Zech 8:23; Cf. Note: **The Center of Gentile Attention** in Ezek 37:23.