

Gleanings of Grace

Zephaniah 3

Lesson 41

The 12 Minor Prophets are divided into two groups: pre-exilic and post-exilic. The first 9 are pre-exilic, writing before the Babylonians conquered and exiled Judah. The last 3 are post-exilic, writing during and after the return of Israel from Babylon to the Promised Land. Zephaniah is the last of the pre-exilic prophets, and can be said to “sum up” the messages of the previous 8 prophets, as he often quotes the words and ideas of many previous prophets. In Zephaniah 3, we see the contrast between a wicked city and a righteous God.

OBSERVATION: Zephaniah 3

1. Read Zephaniah 3 using the Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework). After reading through the chapter, what would you say to someone if they asked you what it is about?
2. Key words help us to better understand the verses. We have listed below key words. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text. Remember to mark any personal pronouns/titles that refer to *LORD*.
Key Words: *LORD* and *will*
3. Consider the use of the word *will* as it indicates what God proclaimed He *will* do. List five promises of encouragement.

4. The term of conclusion, *therefore*, is used in Zephaniah 3:8. Mark the word. Record the conclusion and what it is based upon.

5. The contrasting word *but* is used in twice in Zephaniah. Mark the word. Choose one instance of it use and record what is being contrasted.

Background:

1. Zephaniah began his pronouncements by identifying himself as the grandson of King Hezekiah. He prophesied during the reign of *King Josiah*. What do 2 Kings 22:2 and 23:25 reveal about this *king*?
 - a. King Josiah recognized the sins of the people and made many appropriate changes. How does this personally challenge you?

2. 2 Kings 23:26,27 begin with the word from the LORD, *Nevertheless*. Of what do these verses inform us?

3. In spite of the good reforms of King Josiah, his successor King Jehoahaz, did not follow in his ways. What does 2 Kings 23:31,32 reveal about him?

4. Within about 20 years of King Jehoahaz's reign, the people of Jerusalem would find themselves in the captivity of the Babylonians. Zephaniah's warning of judgment has dual application. His mention of *the Day of the LORD* applied to late seventh century Judah, but more directly to a time in the future when God ultimately will judge the nations who have rebelled against Him. His words parallel those of Joel 2:2. What are those words?

Read Zephaniah 3:1-7 – The Wickedness of Jerusalem

1. Reflect upon the words of verse 1. Although this proclamation of *woe* is aimed at the city of Jerusalem, it certainly can apply to any individual. Define the words:

rebellious

polluted

2. In verse 2, Zephaniah uses four instances to describe *rebellious* and *polluted actions*. What are they?
3. Zephaniah described the actions of both the political and religious leaders of Jerusalem in verses 3,4. Summarize what he wrote.
4. In contrast, Zephaniah described the LORD in verse 5. What four things did he say about Him?
 - a. Moses wrote a song of praise to the LORD, recorded in Deuteronomy 32. He encouraged the people to *ascribe greatness to our God* in verse 3. What did Moses declare about the LORD in verse 4?
 - 1.) Share your thoughts about the *righteousness* of God.
 - b. What did Job declare in the midst of his afflictions, that reminds us that God *will do no unrighteousness*? Job 34:10
 - c. *Morning* was a time when judgments were determined by the leaders of Judah upon those who had violated the law. What does Luke 12:2 add to your understanding of God *bringing justice to light*?
 - 1.) God used His prophets to expose the sins of the land. He also used His word. What have you discovered about the power of God's word to bring your sins to *light*?

- d. As Solomon blessed the assembly of people at the dedication of the temple, he reflected upon God's faithfulness. What did he say? 1 Kings 8:56

- 1.) Reflect upon your life and share your thoughts about the fact that God *never fails*.

5. Both uses of the contrary word *but* in Zephaniah 3 display the contrary behavior of the people. Regardless of these awesome attributes of God, what is said about the *unjust* in Zephaniah 3:5?

- a. There were those who were not moved to repentance even through the reminder of God's just ways. What are some reasons for this kind of stubbornness?

6. The LORD had warned of impending devastations. Using verse 7, answer the following questions:

What did God hope they would do?

What did He desire *not* to do?

- a. *But* in contrast to His will for them, what did they do?

- b. This verse is a sad synopsis of many acts of rebellion. Summarize what it teaches.

Read Zephaniah 3:8-13 - A Faithful Remnant

1. This section of Zephaniah begins with the words, *wait for Me*. This is a call to *wait* for the time when God would *restore* His people. As you bask in the sweetness of the words of Isaiah 30:18, consider the word *wait* as it is applied to both the LORD and His people. What does it say?

- a. Before God's disclosure of restoration, He reiterated His *determination* in Zephaniah 3:8. What did He say He was *determined* to do?

- 1.) Consider the word *determined*. What does it mean to you when you think about something God has *determined* to do?

2. Zephaniah 3:9 begins with the words, *for then*. After destruction comes restoration. Using verses 9-13, describe the changes that will occur in God's people.

a. What are some of the ways that God has changed you?

b. One of the most significant changes in the people will be the transformation from *pride* to *humility*. Using synonyms contrast the two.

pride

humility

Read Zephaniah 3:14-20 – Rejoicing in God's Faithfulness

1. This last section of Zephaniah is much about *singing*. First is the call to the people to sing. Among many other blessings, what reasons are given in verse 15 to *be glad and rejoice with all your heart*?

a. Note, one reason is that *the LORD has taken away your judgments*. What are your thoughts as you reflect upon that fact in your life?

b. Read Isaiah 54:7-10 and describe God's heart for His people.

2. Notice the promise in verse 15, *the King of Israel, the LORD is in your midst*. God's presence is God's remedy to fear. What does Isaiah 41:10 say to confirm this?

a. How were they to respond to God's gracious *restoration*? Zephaniah 3:16

3. The subject of *singing* switches in Zephaniah 3:17 from the people to the *LORD*. Verse 15 declares that He will be in our *midst*. What four things are we assured that the *LORD, the Mighty One* will do?

- a. What are your thoughts as you imagine God *rejoicing over you* and *singing over you*?
 - b. In what ways does God *quiet you with His love*?
4. Zephaniah 3:18-20 contains promises more specific to Israel. God reminds them that He *will deal with all who afflict you*. Record two promises that He made to His people.
- a. Although these promises relate to Israel during the time of the Millennium, the thousand year reign of Christ, it is also a reminder that God sees all harmful deeds that are done to His people and will not let them go without recompense. How does this help you to release vengeance to the LORD for all harm that has been done to you?

REVIEW: Zephaniah 3

1. What is your favorite part of Zephaniah 3? Why?
2. In what ways does the encouragement to *wait* encourage you?
3. What did you glean from your study of Zephaniah 3 about the heart and character of God?

*The LORD takes pleasure in those who fear Him,
in those who hope in His mercy.
- Psalm 147:11*

Observation Worksheet

Zephaniah 3

Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city! ²She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the LORD, she has not drawn near to her God. ³Her princes in her midst are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning. ⁴Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people; her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. ⁵The LORD is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, but the unjust knows no shame. ⁶"I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; there is no one, no inhabitant. ⁷I said, 'Surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction'-- so that her dwelling would not be cut off, despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. ⁸"Therefore wait for Me," says the LORD, "until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all my fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy. ⁹"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the LORD, to serve Him with one accord. ¹⁰From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering. ¹¹In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. ¹²I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the LORD. ¹³The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid." ¹⁴Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! ¹⁵The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. ¹⁶In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: "Do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. ¹⁷The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing." ¹⁸"I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden. ¹⁹Behold, at that time I will deal with all who afflict you; I will save the lame, and gather those who were driven out; I will appoint them for praise and fame in every land where they were put to shame. ²⁰At that time I will bring you back, even at the time I gather you; for I will give you fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I return your captives before your eyes," says the LORD.