

Zephaniah 3: 1-8

LESSON: THE CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE — June 12, 2016

INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 2:4-15 Not only will God's anger be vented against His people for their sins, but it will also overflow and overcome.

- Judah's first enemies are on the west (**Philistia vv.4-7**). Four of the five major cities of Philistia (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron) are singled out for judgment. Gaza will be forsaken, and Ashkelon desolation; they will drive out Ashdod at noon, and Ekron will be rooted up. The sea coast shall be the remnant of the house of Judah. This desolation would be temporary, for God ultimately would give the land to His people following their restoration from the Babylonian captivity. This would be accomplished for Judah because God shall visit them. The visitation would be a visitation of deliverance, for He would turn away their captivity.
- The second enemy upon whom judgment is pronounced is to the east (**Moab and Ammon vv.8-11**). These nations stemming from the incestuous relationship of Lot with his daughters would share the same fate as the cities in which Lot dwelt—utter destruction. Their land will become the possession of Judah after the remnant return from the Babylonian captivity. The reason is given in verse 10. Moab and Ammon are exceedingly proud and in their pride they have moved against God's people and, thus against God Himself. With the destruction of the heathen goes the destruction of the gods that they worship which, in reality, are only products of their own minds. This will result in a universal worshipping the only God, Jehovah!
- The third enemy upon whom judgment is pronounced is in the south (**Ethiopia v.12**). They will be no match for the sword of Jehovah. It will utterly slay them.
- The fourth enemy upon whom judgment is pronounced is in the north (**Assyria /Ninevah vv.13-15**). It would be soon to come that God would stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria and make Ninevah a desolation. It is amplified in detail by the prophecy of Nahum. And it would become a barren waste. Their voices will begin to say "*This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me: how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in!*" Then: "*every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.*"

Thus all points of the compass are covered, indicating the universality of God's judgment. He is truly no respecter of persons. Both Jew and Gentile have sinned, and both will feel the judgment of God. God is wiping the slate clean because He is in the process of establishing a new phase of His program.

LESSON: I. SINS AGAINST THE LORD - Zephaniah 3:1-4

3:1 Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! This is speaking to Jerusalem. The prophet Zephaniah pronounces "Woe" to her! This city is now described as defiled (*corrupted*) and polluted (*adulterated*) with idol worship and becoming like a harlot. The poor, the widow, and the fatherless were



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

oppressed by the oppressing (*harassing*) city. Rather than being holy, and rather than showing care, the city had become filthy and polluted. They no longer cared about the consequences of turning away from God.

3:2 She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the Lord; she drew not near to her God. Jerusalem had not received correction but she would soon learn that to reject God's correction would lead to destruction. She disobeyed the voice of God by not listening. She refused all correction. She went against the Lord by not trusting in Him. And she didn't even seek for God by drawing near to Him. Those who are proud often refuse to listen to anything that contradicts their initiated self-esteem. That's how God's people had become.

3:3 Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Zephaniah singles out four classes of leadership for condemnation within her. The political leaders:

1. Her princes—her leaders were like roaring lions looking for their next victims; out for everything they could get, rather than guarding them.
2. Her judges—were like ravenous wolves at evening time, who at dawn have left no trace of their prey.

3:4 Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The spiritual leaders are also singled out:

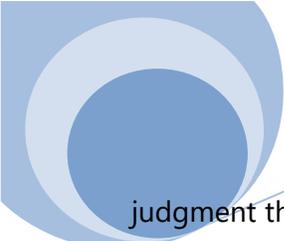
3. Her prophets— rather than being speakers of God's truth, they were reckless and treacherous false prophets which came in sheep's clothing giving messages that were not of God, but something they dreamed up themselves, for their own advantage.
4. Her priests—have profaned the holy and done violence to the law, instead of helping purify sinners through presenting the people's offerings before God, they made them profane and unsuitable to be in God's holy presence. They were to teach life under the law, instead they did violence, leading others to do the same.

Through Zephaniah, God had rebuked all types of leadership in Jerusalem because of the callous disobedience, their irresponsibility, and outright sin against the Lord.

II. TESTIMONY OF THE LORD - Zephaniah 3:5-6

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. Unlike the human leaders, God perpetually shows that He is righteous in not breaking the Law. Even though the people didn't follow Him, He was there within the city. Every morning He did no iniquity, but He was at work, His justice was evident, but they still didn't heed. He didn't fail them. The wicked still knew no shame. All received fair treatment. He is no respecter of persons.

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. This speaks to Judah about Judah's enemies. God describes how He has executed judgment. He lets us know just how powerful He is. He's cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; their streets were made waste, that none could pass through. Why? - Because their cities were destroyed, and no habitation could live there. It describes the



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

judgment that Jehovah executed upon other nations; a warning so that Judah's would not have to go through this, so that they could dwell in peace and come to repentance. He is reminding them that His testimony is true!

III. REJECTION OF THE LORD - Zephaniah 3:7-8

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. By God doing the above, surely He thought the people would fear Him (*reverence Him*) and follow His instructions. It was to serve as warnings to Judah, and was meant to turn His people back to Him. However, Judah rose early, and continued in all their corrupt deeds. They conducted business as usual thinking punishment wouldn't happen to them. God had no choice. I'm reminded of Luke 11:23 " *He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.*" They had out rightly rejected God!

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. We can sin all we want and think there will not be punishment, but there will come a day... if you haven't felt any remorse or shame, just wait! So God admonishes the faithful remnant to stand and wait for Him to be Judge; to carry out His judgment because He's determined to gather the nations, assemble the kingdoms. For this process to work, He will pour out His indignation, even His fierce anger, for God is not pleased! They will see that all the earth will be devoured with the fire of His jealousy! The fire is a symbol of purification. ¹The 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. 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.*" In that day He will rise up against the intended prey.

SUMMARY:

The sins that infect the surrounding nations also infected Jerusalem, and thus she was filthy and polluted, ripe for judgment, upon such a city "woe" was pronounced. She didn't obey and was rebellious to the voice of God and didn't want to receive correction. Jerusalem's princes and her judges were condemned. And Judah's prophets and her priests were also condemned. **(3:1-4)**.

In spite of the nation's sins, God had been in the midst of them, not bringing any harm to them, but other nations have caught the brunt of God's wrath, **(3:5-6)**.

Still Judah had not repented. They kept doing sinful things. God lets us know there will be a day He comes with His indignation and fierce anger devouring all the earth with the fire of His jealousy **(3:7-8)**.

¹ <http://www.bible-studys.org/Bible%20Books/Zephaniah/Zephaniah%20Chapter%203.html>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>