

Zephaniah
Lesson 4

Text: Zephaniah 3:1-20

Intro: Tonight we will conclude the book of Zephaniah. We will look at the immediate future for them at that time, and the distant future for them. Zephaniah will recap why the judgment of God is to come on them, The righteousness of God. How the Grace of God extends beyond Israel to all the world, and the Future promises God has for Israel.

I. The Future of Jerusalem and Israel

A. Immediate Future, Vs. 1-11

i. That “Oppressing” City/ Holy City

a) Jerusalem has often been referred to as the “Holy City” of God

- It was the place that represented the presence of God with the Nation
- After all the important thing in the city was not the Temple mount, not the west wall, not the capitol, the thing that made the city Holy is it was the place where God spoke to the Nation.
- If we take God from the temple, removed God from the Ark of the Covenant, would it be “Holy”?

b) But because of their actions they rebelled against God and became an “Un-holy City”

- Zephaniah called her Filthy and polluted, Vs.1
- but he was not alone, it was considered that by: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, according to Ezra even the Gentiles called it rebellious and wicked
 - **See: Isaiah 1:21; Ezekiel 4-6,9; Ezra 4:12,15**

c) But it is not the location that is corrupt it is the object,

- a lot can be said about this,
- it is not money that is wicked, it is the love of money (I Tim. 6:10)
- nothing wrong with Gold, but if it becomes an idol, silver, diamonds, jewels, all the same.
 - We can take anything and pervert it and make it something that it was never meant to be.
 - So it is not the location, but the inhabitant.

ii. A Wicked People,

a) She Obeyed not the voice of God, Vs.2

- What is the requirement in calling someone Lord?
 - You must first hear, then obey
- **Luke 6:46-49** “**And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?47Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like:48He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock.49But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.”**
- Jesus gives the requirements of calling Him Lord,
 - not only do we do, but, when we fail, and we do, we need to take correction.

b) She Received Not Correction, Vs.2

- **Hebrews 12** tells us that it is the people of God that gets his correction,
 - and the reason for it is to be partakers in His righteousness
- One of the saddest things for a Christian is to go through the correction of God, and not get out of it what we should. Letting it preform in us what it should.

c) She Trusted Not in the Lord, **Vs.2**

- Hearing is one thing, doing is one thing, receiving correction is one thing, but trusting is another.
- Sometimes we can hear and obey, but it is still hard to trust.
- This is something that should become easier as we walk with God and see His faithfulness through life.
- This is nowhere more true than it should have been in Israel,
 - In **Luke 10**, Jesus speaks to Chorazin (a area in Palestine and Bethsaida, and said if the works that had been done there were done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented. (Prophesied by Ezekiel)
 - With all that God had done for and in Jerusalem, they should have trusted God by now.
- We need to learn to trust in God, realizing that He does love us, and only wants the best for us.

d) She Drew Not Near to Her God, **Vs.2**

- the final failure here was, they drew not to God
 - The book of James promises that if we will draw to God, He will draw to us.
 - When problems arise, draw to God. When troubles or tribulation comes, Draw to God. When everything falls apart around us, draw to God.
 - But, the nature of man, is left alone we tend to draw away from, especially in our prosperity.
 - But sin separates, and if we do not obey the voice, if we fear the correction, if we don't trust in God, then we will not draw toward Him.

e) But it wasn't just the citizens of Jerusalem, it was also the leaders,

iii. The Leaders are Corrupt, Vs.3&4

a) Her princes within her are roaring lions;

- this is the leaders, not the enemy, but look what Jesus said:
 - **I Peter 5:8** “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”
- The people in charge of the protection of Israel was the one destroying them.

b) Her judges are evening wolves;

- they gnaw not the bones till the morrow
- they used the law to make the rich richer, and the poor poorer.
 - Taking everything they could, exploiting them

c) Her prophets are light and treacherous persons:

- light here is not as God is light, the word is like a bubble, as in boiling water.
- It is like a vapor, here for a moment, but then gone, with no substance
- the prophets had a very serious job, they were to be the mouthpiece of God,
 - and if there was no substance, and only puffed up the people, they lead them to destruction.
 - As much as a military person dislikes a drill sergeant during the time, afterward they realize they were important.

d) Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,

- they have done violence to the law,
- they used their position to corrupt the law,
- it was in the sanctuary where the presence of God was suppose to be, now there was corruption.

iv. A Righteous God, Vs.5-7

a) God is in the mist there of,

- one of the unfair truths about the representatives of God, is they sometimes fail. And when they do, it may portray God in the wrong light.
- When David was confronted by Nathan, he told him, :
 - **II Samuel 12:14** “Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme,...”
- This was one of the problems God had with the friends of Job,
 - **Job 42:7** “And it was *so*, that after the LORD had spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job *hath*.”
- The nation of Israel was suppose to represent God to the world, but their actions cast a bad light on Him,
 - How does this relate to the modern Church?

b) God will do justly,

- His judgment is sure,
 - the cities will be desolate, and empty.
 - When God moves, the people will fear,
 - it is interesting that other nations often feared God when Israel was following them, when Joshua brought the nation into the Promised land, other nations feared them because of what they saw God do for them.
- Now they are going to see it again,
 - and they are going to see it again the people of God, and they are going to be cut off, but not completely, this is not the end.
 - God has already punished, but they have not harkened to Him,
 - in fact, this is like what Amos said, they rose up early in the morning to plan wickedness.
- The judgment will extend beyond the people of God into the surrounding nations,
 - but the result is to purify the people of God, they will be drawn back to God, and reestablished as a nation.

v. God's Grace to the Gentiles, 9&10

a) The Gospel has always been for all people,

- not just the Jews, but to all nations,
- in fact the promise to Abraham, was that “All Nations would be blessed”
- even in the Old testament, Israel was to represent God to the world, and draw them into a relationship.

b) Now God is saying I extend My grace to beyond Ethiopia,

- the furthest reaches of the world.

B. Distant Future, Vs.11-20

i. Sin Removed, 11-13

- ##### a) after the day of the Lord, God will call His people back to repentance, and the sin

they did will no longer be held against them.

- b) This doesn't mean there will never be sin again, after all if there was no more sin, why would Jesus have to rule with a rod of iron?
- c) But there will be the poor left, **vs.12**
- this is a curious verse isn't it,
 - When Jesus was anointed by Mary, Judas protested, and Jesus responded “**Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. 11 For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.**”
 - **See Matthew 26:10&11; Mark 14:7; 12:8**
 - When we look at the gospels, and see Jesus say this, some have suggested that he is making a comparison between the “Poor in Spirit” and Him,
 - after all He is saying You will always have them, but not me.
 - Some say it is a comparison of the humble and proud,
 - but in Zephaniah he uses the phrase afflicted and poor,
 - also he is talking to the restored Israel, I would think by this time pride is not still a problem, and if we take this stance we must say there will be some humble in the mist...
 - Others suggest, this is an excuse to not worry about the poor, after all we will never stomp out poverty.
 - But if we look at the intent it is to bring Israel back to the place where they were to be concerned with one another and their problems:
 - **Deuteronomy 15:6-11** “For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.⁷If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:⁸But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, *in that* which he wanteth.⁹Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.¹⁰Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.¹¹For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”
 - It was God's desire for the Nation to take care of the poor,
 - What about the Church? Does this translated to the New Testament Church?
 - **Ephesians 4:28** “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”
 - What did Jesus say about giving to those in need?
 - **Luke 3:11** “He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise”
 - What did Jesus tell the rich young ruler in **Matthew 21**?
 - What do I have to do to inherit eternal life? Keep the commandments, to which he replied, I have done this from my youth, then Jesus said if you

want to be perfect, go sell all you have sell all you have and give to the poor.

- Now I want to make a point, Christians should be the most generous people in the world, but Generosity does not mean stupid.

ii. Israel Rejoiced, 14-17

- a) When we are in the will of God we have everything to sing and shout about.
- b) We should be a happy and rejoicing people.
- c) What are some of the reasons we have to rejoice (**vs.15**)
 - The LORD hath taken away thy judgments,
 - David wrote the **32nd Psalm** about his iniquities, how he was sinking and felt like he was dying. But he started it out by saying “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”
 - If we know Jesus, we can rejoice that our sins have been forgiven.
 - he hath cast out thine enemy:
 - We no longer are under bondage of the enemy,
 - We are free from sin.
 - the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee:
 - We have the indwelling of the Spirit of God,
 - For the Nation of Israel, at that time, they will have the Lord ruling in Israel.
 - thou shalt not see evil any more.
 - We are in the protection and trust of the Lord.

iii. Israel Restored, 18-20

- a) At that time,
 - there is a day coming, that this will end,
 - the captivity, the judgment, the correction of Israel, and at that time, God has something He will do,
 - look at the “I will's” of the last two verses
 - I Will- undo all that afflict thee:
 - you will no longer be captive, you will no longer be slaves.
 - You will no longer answer to Assyria, Babylon, Greece, Persia, Rome, Hamas, or the Anti-Christ.
 - I Will- save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out;
 - You will be restored as a Nation, brought back to Israel,
 - restored as a nation,
 - I Will- get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.
 - The nations that enslaved you will honor you,
 - the nations that took you captive will recognize your importance
 - I Will- bring you again, even in the time that I gather you:
 - You will then be my people,
 - not a nation without a God, but the Nation of God
 - I Will- make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth,
 - Remember, this is not new, from the very promises of God to Abraham, it was to “All Nations”
 - not just to Israel,
 - WHEN? when I turn back your **captivity** before your eyes, saith the LORD

- God will be the one to restore,
 - not the works of man's hands.
- b) Once again we see God ending not with destruction and judgment, but with hope and promises.