

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

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

The focus of the message shifts back to Judah at this point. The oppressing city is sadly a reference to Jerusalem. She is described as *filthy* (rebellious and prideful) and *polluted* (soiled and defiled, morally impure). She has refused to respond to God's call to repentance as declared by His prophets. She hasn't responded to correction and instruction for obedience despite the valiant efforts of the good king Josiah. She has just refused to trust in YHWH and draw near to Him in fellowship and gratitude. God has not rejected her; He is still "her God." She has rejected Him.

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

The ruling classes and judges are characterized as animals that prey upon their people with ravenous appetites. Ezekiel's message is a bit more pointed.

Ezek. 22:27 Her princes in the midst thereof *are* like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, *and* to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain.

Zeph. 3:4 Her prophets *are* light *and* treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.

"light" = to bubble up or froth (as boiling water), i.e. (figuratively) to be unimportant

"treacherous" = to act covertly; by implication, to pillage:—deal deceitfully (treacherously, unfaithfully), offend, transgress(-or)

The prophets were supposed to be faithful in delivering the message of the LORD, like Zephaniah. Instead, most of them were caught up in an unfounded attitude of self-importance and deceitful in their ministry to the people. By not faithfully delivering God's word, they were offending God. Like many "pastors" today, they gave messages according to their own purposes and what the people wanted to hear. Jeremiah was much more pointed in his rebuke of the prophets.

Is. 30:9 That this *is* a rebellious people, lying children, children *that* will not hear the law of the LORD:

Is. 30:10 Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits:

Is. 30:11 Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Jer. 23:16 Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: **they speak a vision of their own heart, *and* not out of the mouth of the LORD.**

Jer. 23:17 They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

Jer. 23:25 I have heard what the prophets said, **that prophesy lies in my name**, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

Jer. 23:26 How long shall *this* be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, **they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;**

Jer. 23:31 Behold, I *am* against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

Jer. 23:32 Behold, I *am* against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and **cause my people to err by their lies**, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

Not only were the prophets corrupt and wicked, so were the priests. Other scriptures equate their actions with that of heathen priests and acting with blatant disregard to God's law.

2Chr. 36:14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

Ezek. 22:26 Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them.

Zeph. 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 prophet reminds the people that the Lord is in the midst of His people. YHWH is righteous; He will not do anything wicked or unrighteous.

“every morning...faileth not” – This phrase is a bit harder. Because judgment has not yet fallen, it would seem that the wicked are getting by with their wickedness. (Sounds familiar doesn't it.) The truth is that God was faithful to send His prophets and warn the people of coming judgment and the need to repent. In spite of their refusal to listen, He was faithful to provide the message and the opportunity—day after day after day. I often imagine what it must have been like to be chosen as one of God's prophets and see no evident fruit from your ministry. The prophet Jeremiah proclaimed this same truth.

Jer. 7:25 Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending *them*:

Jer. 7:26 Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers.

“the unjust knoweth no shame” – In spite of the message of God's true prophets against their sin and warning of judgment to come, the wicked people of Judah are unashamed and unrepentant.

Zeph. 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.

Zeph. 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.

This verse is speaking of judgment that has already befallen “the nations” (Gentiles, heathen, foreigners). Their defenses have proven useless, their cities have been destroyed and their people either killed or taken captive. The Lord is emphasizing that it is His sovereign hand that has brought about this judgment. His purpose—to cause His own people to turn back to Him in repentance and obedience. The sad observation is that they refused to learn. Even when the Northern Kingdom was conquered and taken captive, it didn’t deter the people of Judah from their sin or make them understand that they should fear the anger of Almighty God. The Assyrians were bold to proclaim their conquests in hopes of getting the people to surrender as recorded by Isaiah.

Is. 37:11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands by destroying them utterly; and shalt thou be delivered?

Is. 37:12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed, as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which were in Telassar?

Is. 37:13 Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arphad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah?

Zeph. 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 LORD is telling His people that they need to trust Him to respond to these enemies in His own time according to His own purpose. That’s one of the hardest things to do for the man of faith. We are so bound by an earthly mindset that we have a hard time patiently waiting for God to act. I’m always reminded of this Psalm when I consider the Lord’s longsuffering toward the wicked.

Psa. 73:11-19 And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? **Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.** Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. **When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.** Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

I think the application jumps to end times and Armageddon because of the wording—“gather the nations” and “assemble the kingdoms.” His purpose—“to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger.” This is exactly the scenario at the final battle of Armageddon.

Rev. 16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Rev. 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Rev. 16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto **the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.**

Rev. 16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

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

Comment on verse 16 from journal on Revelation: “This is a very interesting “he” used here. You immediately think of the antichrist as the one who is gathering his forces together to do battle. The last person speaking to whom the *he* would apply is Jesus. Jesus is the one in control and has been all along—He will dictate the time and place of this gathering. Where did He choose? Armageddon—the hill country of Megiddo. (cf **Rev 14:20**)

Rev. 19:13 And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Rev. 19:14 And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

Rev. 19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: **and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.**

“the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy” - This is a statement of the reason for God’s judgment. As He declared from the beginning, He is a jealous God.

Ex. 20:3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Ex. 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of *any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth:

Ex. 20:5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God....

Deut. 4:24 For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

Nah. 1:2 God *is* jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and *is* furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth *wrath* for his enemies.

Is. 66:15 For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

Is. 66:16 For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.

Zeph. 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.

After the flood, the LORD confounded the languages of the people in order to keep them from accomplishing their evil purposes.

Gen. 11:6 And the LORD said, Behold, the people *is* one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Gen. 11:7 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.

After destroying the wicked from off the face of the earth once again, the Lord is going to set up His kingdom and rule the world from the throne of David. Jesus spoke of this time to His disciples.

Matt. 19:28 And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

When He establishes His Kingdom, He will once again restore the nations to a "pure language," a common language. This will enable everyone to clearly understand each other. The purpose this time will be to facilitate worship of and service to the LORD and to promote unity in fellowship and obedience.

Zeph. 3:10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, *even* the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering.

I think "beyond the rivers of Ethiopia" is making reference to the lands far off from Israel's perspective. This verse is talking about the continued return of the Jews to Israel. In spite of the increased activity of terrorists, Jews continue to return to Israel today. When the Lord returns and establishes Israel in glory before the nations, the rest of His people will want to come home and bring Him offerings of thankfulness.

Zeph. 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.

"That day" is a reference to the time that the people of Israel will be restored to fellowship with the Lord and in possession of their land with Messiah on the throne. Another blessed promise—they will no longer feel shame for their own past sins or the sins of their forefathers because all the wicked and prideful will have been removed by the Lord. They will understand that they are privileged to dwell in Israel and possess Mount Zion, but they will be eager to share their blessings with the nations. They will finally be the chosen people before the nations that they were intended to be when God first called Abraham.

Zeph. 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.

Zeph. 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.

Who is God going to leave in the land? Those who are afflicted (humble) and poor (weak, needy, emptied). This is a reference to those who recognize their need for a Savior and have turned in faith to the Messiah, Jesus, the Son of God. At that time they will finally be a people of faith and obedience. They will not be wicked or immoral, they will not lie, and they will not speak deceitfully. They will live in fellowship and peace with one another. They will have nothing to fear from one another.

You certainly can't apply this to any time of Israel's existence to this point in history. This will happen when the Lord is on the throne and He has put the new covenant in their heart as prophesied by Jeremiah.

Jer. 31:31 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

Jer. 31:32 Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

Jer. 31:33 But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jer. 31:34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

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

Zeph. 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.

When that day comes, Israel will have cause for great rejoicing. Not only will they face no more judgment, their enemies will have been destroyed, and the King of Israel, the LORD Jesus, will dwell with them physically once again as He did 2000 years ago. When He returns as King, He will rule His kingdom with a rod of iron and will not tolerate evil.

Rev. 19:13-15 ...and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies *which were* in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and **he shall rule them with a rod of iron**: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Is. 2:2 And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Is. 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach

us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Is. 2:4 And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Zeph. 3:16 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: *and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.*

Zeph. 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.*

When Christ sets up His kingdom, Israel will enter the golden age of their existence. They will be safe and secure, living in peace, and delighting in the love of YHWH.

Zech. 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

Zech. 14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

Zech. 14:11 And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

Is. 65:23 They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they *are* the seed of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them.

Is. 65:24 And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear.

Is. 65:25 The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust *shall be* the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the LORD.

Is. 66:12 For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river....

Zephaniah emphasizes the truth that the LORD will rejoice over the restored fellowship of His people. This is in stark contrast to the anger that the people of Judah and Jerusalem provoked in Him at the time of Zephaniah's ministry.

Is. 62:5 For *as* a young man marrieth a virgin, *so* shall thy sons marry thee: and *as* the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, *so* shall thy God rejoice over thee.

Is. 65:19 And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

Zeph. 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.*

The translation in the CJB gave me a clearer understanding of this verse; its wording is a bit hard in the KJV.

“I will gather those of yours who grieve over the appointed feasts and bear the burden of reproach [because they cannot keep them].”
This would have special application to those who were in exile or would be going in exile and mourning the fact that they could not keep the solemn feasts in Jerusalem as commanded by the Lord. It would have future application to the people of Israel who are deceived by the Antichrist and mourn when he sets himself up as “god” and stops all the temple sacrifices.

Zeph. 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.

The LORD is promising that He will eliminate all of Israel’s enemies and gather all those of Israel who have turned to Him in faith back to the land of Israel. Evidently, some of these believers will enter the kingdom with injuries inflicted upon them during those terrible final years. In the nations where the Jew has so often been reviled and mistreated, they will now enjoy praise and honor. They will never again be treated shamefully just because they are Jews.

Zeph. 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.

The LORD continues to affirm His promise. He is going to gather His people from all the lands where they have been scattered and mistreated and make of them a nation that will be honored and respected among the nations. I can’t help but think of a verse in Isaiah that is part of my prayers more often than not.

Is. 62:6 I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, *which* shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence,

Is. 62:7 And give him no rest, till he establish, and **till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.**

The word of God is sure; these prophecies will come to pass. No matter how unlikely it may seem to us today, Israel will become the jewel among the nations.

I can’t help but wonder from my perspective of over 2000 years later at the believing remnant’s understanding of these messages from their prophets that really had more application to the far future than to their day. I would assume the LORD spoke to their heart in comfort and encouragement just as it provides comfort and encouragement for us today. What seems like but a foreshadowing of the fulfillment of these prophecies in their day in light of the revelation we have now through the teachings of Jesus and His apostles and the enlightenment we have available through the teaching of the Spirit, must have been enough to strengthen their faith and encourage them to continue to wait for the establishment of the God’s kingdom on earth in light of the revelation they had then. It’s just amazing to me to know that events that were prophesied over 2000 years ago are yet to come to pass, and that we have already witnessed the rebirth of Israel and are witnessing further evidences of the truth shared by the prophets those many years ago. I can’t wait to see the Lord on the throne and enjoy my part of that glorious future. Even so—Come Lord Jesus!