

ZEPHANIAH: GOD'S JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION

VI: God's Judgment On All Men For Persistent Apostacy

(Zephaniah 3:1-8)

I. Introduction

- A. Unlike the other Old Testament prophets, Zephaniah had a genealogy of four generations, so he was a man "of prominence and even of royalty." (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1523) He offered the prophetic view of the upper class.
- B. However, upper and lower class prophets **both** wrote of judgment and blessing for God's people in "the day of the Lord," a phrase Zephaniah used more often than any other prophet. (Ibid., p. 1524)
- C. In Zephaniah 3:1-8, God's prophet followed his prediction of doom on the Gentiles for influencing Judah to sin to punish the whole world for everyone's persistent apostacy. We view the passage for our application:

II. God's Judgment On All Men For Persistent Apostacy, Zephaniah 3:1-8 ESV.

- A. This passage is best understood in its widest Biblical context of God's workings with the whole world:
 1. After Noah and his family had exited the ark, and mankind began to multiply again on the earth, the human race soon turned paganistic, departing from the Lord at the tower of Babel, Genesis 11:1-9.
 2. To counter this worldwide problem, God chose Abraham, giving him the Abrahamic Covenant promises to bless him and his descendants, the nation Israel, and through Israel to win the Gentile world back to God as He directed Israel to inherit the Promised Land at the crossroads of the continents, Genesis 12:1-3, 4-7.
 3. However, Israel failed to remain true to the Lord, and the Gentile nations surrounding her helped to influence her toward pagan idolatry. Accordingly, God predicted in Zephaniah 2:4-15 His punishment on the nations to Israel's east, west, south and north, for their bad influence and mistreatment of His people.
 4. Nevertheless, returning to deal with Jerusalem's own sins, God in Zephaniah 3:1-7 noted how His own people in Jerusalem had persisted in their apostacy to where they were beyond repentance (as follows):
 - a. Zephaniah claimed that Jerusalem was rebellious and defiled, a city of oppressors, that she listened to no correction, and that she no longer trusted in the Lord or fellowshiped with Him, Zephaniah 3:1-2.
 - b. Her officials were like roaring lions, her judges like evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning in their ravenous appetite of seizing the properties and wealth of the people, Zephaniah 3:3.
 - c. Jerusalem's prophets were fickle, treacherous men who prophesied good or ill depending on how their clients paid them and the priests profaned what was holy, offering up blemished sacrifices in violence to the dictates of the Mosaic Law, Zephaniah 3:4; Ibid., p. 1532.
 - d. In stark contrast, the Lord Who was in the city in His temple's Holiest of Holies was righteous, doing no injustice, every morning showing His justice and each dawn not failing while the unjust in the city did not even know shame for their wickedly oppressive deeds, Zephaniah 3:5.
 - e. God then rehearsed His past actions of judgment on other nations, what by then would include the Northern Kingdom of Israel that had fallen to the Assyrians, how He had cut them off by invaders so that their battlements were in ruins, their streets were laid waste so that no one walked in them anymore and their cities were left uninhabited, Zephaniah 3:6; Ibid.. God said that surely these past divine punishments would cause Judah to accept correction so that their city would not be cut off, too, but that had not happened: the people of Jerusalem were even more eager to make their deeds corrupt, Zephaniah 3:7.
- B. Noting the continued, hardened apostacy of heart in both Gentiles and His people, God had finally decided to direct Judah along with the Gentile world to wait for His judgment when He rose up and seized them both as His prey of sinners, Zephaniah 3:8a. His decision was to gather the nations and kingdoms of the whole world together and to pour out His wrath, all of His burning anger upon them, for in the fury of His jealousy for their devotion to Him and to no other god, be they Gentile or Jew, the whole earth would be consumed, Zephaniah 3:8b. This judgment will occur in the Battle of Armageddon. (Zechariah 14:2; Revelation 16:14, 16; Ibid.)

Lesson: *God's long-term memory and His long-term discipling efforts with the world and with His people and their persistent rebellion against Him was leading to His running out of patience with them all. Accordingly, He would eventually punish the entire world, unloading His wrath upon them all in the future Battle of Armageddon.*

Application: *(1) If we are rebellious, defiled, oppressive, rejecting correction, no longer trusting in God or fellowshiping with Him, may we quickly confess such sins to avoid divine discipline! (2) If we see another party get disciplined by the Lord (as Judah saw Israel fall in judgment to Assyria), may we examine ourselves and repent if needed! (3) If we live among people who are steeped in sins, may we avoid those sins in our own walk!*