

# Let's Worship God

16th-21st July 2018  
Zephaniah



# ZEPHANIAH

## **Monday - Zephaniah 3:1-5 - Judgement on Jerusalem**

We are finishing up our study on Zephaniah with the notes this week written by Rev. Peter Loughridge. In chapter 2 we saw Zephaniah prophesying what would come upon the nations surrounding Israel: to the west (the land of the Philistines, 2:4-7); to the east (Moab and Ammon, 2:8-11); to the south (Cush, 2:12); and to the north (Assyria, 2:13-15). Chapter 2 showed the almighty wrath of God upon the nations. There is no person, no culture and no country that will avoid the judgement.

In chapter 3, we now return to Jerusalem. The Psalms tell us that Jerusalem is 'the city of our God' (Psalm 48:1), and that 'God is in the midst of her' (Psalm 46:5). This city Zephaniah speaks of in chapter 3 has 'the LORD within her' (v5). How could a place that enjoyed so much grace become so corrupt and vicious? One aspect Zephaniah highlights is the failure of the leading men in it: 'her officials ... her judges ... her prophets ... her priests' (v3-4).

As we've already seen (in 1:4-6), Zephaniah turned to the church first (after his initial and more general warning of judgement). Are we, the Church today, listening yet? His Church - yes, even the City of God - contains both wheat and weeds, wise and foolish virgins, sheep and goats, true and false believers. It is in this context of a mixed church where God will also judge. Judgement begins at the household of God (1 Peter 4:17).

It's hard to believe these verses speak of Jerusalem, the holy city! What a mess the church can fall into when: 'she does not draw near to her God' (v2) and when men who should lead actually do her harm instead (v3-4):

## **Questions**

1. We usually think of the outside world when we think of God's judgement. Where should we also be mindful of?
2. What are some of the errors of the church in these verses that can be a lesson to us?

## **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the men who do lead and who should lead in your church.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## **Memory Verse**

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 37 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# ZEPHANIAH

## **Tuesday - Zephaniah 3:6-8 -Jerusalem's Refusal to Repent**

God had set before the eyes of His own people, Jerusalem, unmistakable signposts of His justice. In His mercy, He had warned them: 'I have cut off nations ... I have laid waste their streets ... their cities have become desolate ... I said, 'Surely you will fear me; you will accept correction'' (v6-7). Most notably, the northern kingdom (Israel, ten of the tribes) had been punished by God over 100 years previously, by being taken captive by the Assyrians. Yet the southern kingdom (Judah, the two tribes) seems to continue unwaveringly in the same direction.

Yes, it could be said that enemies or other nations brought this judgement about. But God says (v6) - I cut them off! However, even in this, God is merciful. He intends these to serve as warnings to His people - to put them off their sinful ways! Surely they will not continue to sin like other nations when they have seen the ruin sin brings on them! One old preacher compares it to seeing your neighbour's house on fire but not realising that yours is in danger! Have you seen the ruin sin brings - in your own life, or in the lives of people close to you, or in your community? What warnings is God sending into our lives?

V8 says: 'Wait for me, declares the LORD'. Without doubt, the same verse ends speaking of God's indignation, burning anger, and consuming holy jealousy. Yet there is hope in this 'Wait for me!' Something more wonderful is coming in Zephaniah 3. This hope-filled longing and looking ahead runs all through the Old Testament.

## **Questions**

1. What warnings is God sending into your life?
2. What are some of the errors of the church in these verses that can be a lesson to us?

## **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for anyone who needs to wait on God in hope.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## **Memory Verse**

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 38 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# ZEPHANIAH

## **Wednesday - Zephaniah 3:9-10 - The Conversion of the Nations**

We have seen the first of the two main sections of the book of Zephaniah (1:2-3:8). Zephaniah has warned of 'the Day of the Lord', when God will judge sin and pour out His wrath. The immediate fulfilment of this prophecy was the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 587BC and God's people being carried off into exile in Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. The further fulfilment spoken of by 'the Day of the Lord' is the last judgement, when God judges all people.

The tone of the book of Zephaniah changes now, however, as in 3:9 we come to the second of the two main sections of the book. Now we have an announcement of the redemption that will follow God's judgement. Zephaniah's prophecy so far has been dominated by the imagery of judgement, but it is not without hope. In this closing section of his prophecy, Zephaniah describes another coming day, a day of hope and restoration. He declares that there will be a day when people from all nations will worship God (v9-10).

Although we still await the fullness of this new day (in Jesus' perfect kingdom in heaven), we see glimpses of it now in this period of time between Jesus first coming and His second coming. One aspect we can look forward to is the growing diversity of His Church, incorporating people from all nations - that is, not only does Zephaniah speak of a coming judgement for all the nations (as we saw in 3:8), but also the promise that worshippers will come from all the nations!

## **Questions**

1. God speaks in v9 of changing the speech of the peoples - can you think of ways He does that?
2. What did we previously read about Cush (compare 3:10 with 2:12) and what does this teach us?

## **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the spread of the gospel in another nation other than your own (maybe where you know missionaries, or have visited on holiday).
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## **Memory Verse**

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 39 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# ZEPHANIAH

## Thursday - Zephaniah 3:11-13 - The Transformation of the Nations

In these verses, Zephaniah looks ahead to a day when God's people will be marked by humility and holiness. First, it is promised that the church will one day be marked by humility: 'I will remove from your midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain. But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD, those who are left in Israel' (v11-12).

This promise is pointing us, ultimately, to Jesus - who through His humble birth, lowly life of service, and submissive death has set an example of humility for all of His people to follow. Philippians 2 sets this example before us and commands us to: 'In humility count others more significant than yourselves' and to look 'to the interests of others' (Phil. 2:3-4). One clear mark of a Christian is humility - we won't display it perfectly in this lifetime, but it should still be a distinguishing mark.

Second, it is promised that one day God's people would possess holiness: 'They shall do no injustice and speak no lies, nor shall there be found in their mouth a deceitful tongue' (v13). Christians do continue to struggle with sin, but it is no longer our master. The Bible regularly refers to God's people, even in this world and in this lifetime, as holy! This is what is meant by the word 'saints', which is so often used in the New Testament to describe Christians. Again, like humility, it is not complete in this lifetime, but it should still mark us out as His people.

## Questions

1. What is one practical way you could show humility in Christian living today?
2. What aspect of holiness is God challenging you about?

## Prayer Points

1. Ask for the equipping and enabling of the Holy Spirit for humble, holy living today.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## Memory Verse

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 40 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# ZEPHANIAH

## Friday - Zephaniah 3:14-17 - Rejoicing!

What a difference from the opening two and a half chapters of the book! What magnificent notes this book draws to a close with! Sing! Rejoice! Exult! (v14) 'The LORD has taken away the judgements against you' (v15) - what a clear and powerful description of what God does for the one He saves.

The book of Zephaniah is placed towards the end of our Old Testaments. Soon the New Testament will open and there we read even more clearly about 'the LORD your God ... in your midst, a mighty one who will save' (v17). John is one of the writers who tells us about Jesus, and one of the first things he says is: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). Or, as Zephaniah foretold: 'The LORD your God is in your midst' (v17). What a truth to make our hearts sing!

Amazingly, though, it isn't only the Church that is rejoicing and exulting (v14). It is also God Himself (v17), rejoicing over and exulting over and delighting in us - His Church, His Bride. What an astonishing truth! Our hearts should be singing today.

Zephaniah's prophecy speaks of two contrasting days: a day of judgement and a day of restoration. Jesus is the Lord of both of these days. It is your relationship to Him that will determine how you experience both of them. If you are not trusting in Jesus as Saviour, you will be caught by surprise and you will know the fear and terror of the Day of the Lord. If you are trusting Him as Saviour, then you will experience the rejoicing of the new day. Read again v14 and v17!

## Questions

1. How is the Church to respond to God's presence in her midst (v14)?
2. How does God respond to those He is in the midst of (v17)?

## Prayer Points

1. Think about and give thanks for the wonderful truth (v17) that God rejoices over you with gladness.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## Memory Verse

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 41 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

# ZEPHANIAH

## **Saturday - Zephaniah 3:18-20 - Restoration!**

As we noted yesterday, Zephaniah's prophecy speaks of two contrasting days: a day of judgement and a day of restoration. For us today, this new day of restoration has already dawned with the first coming of Jesus. However, that new day has not come in its fullness. Jesus has not finished saving people from every nation. Christians do not currently display perfect humility, nor do they display perfect holiness in their actions. The new day has partially come, but much more remains to be fulfilled. There is an 'already' aspect to the new day, but there is also a 'not yet' aspect to it. In this present age, Christians will continue to have trials and sufferings, but God promises that one day He will gather us and bring us home. Three times in today's section - once in each verse (v18, v19, v20) - God speaks of 'gathering' us!

There will be mourning (v18) before that day comes. Those whom - as we saw yesterday - God will rejoice in (v17) and who He will cause to rejoice (v14) will, before that day comes in its fullness, still have sorrow. Before we reap in joy, we will often sow in tears (Psalm 126:5-6). But God will make His Church to be 'renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth' (v20). We have seen glimpses of this in our own land and also throughout history. But ultimately this will be fulfilled on that great day when the universal church of Jesus Christ is 'gathered' to Him and is admired and glorified before angels and men.

## **Questions**

1. Can we use yesterday's verses to expect only rejoicing for God's people?

## **Prayer Points**

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

## **Memory Verse**

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing. Zephaniah 3:17

**Praise: Psalm 42 - See [www.rpglobalalliance.org](http://www.rpglobalalliance.org) for Psalm tune helps.**

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that  
Ezra read from  
the book of the Law  
day after day  
and that  
the people of God  
were filled with joy!**

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