

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**12-05-18**

**Zephaniah 3**

**Jerusalem – Verses 1-5**

1 Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled! 2 She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to her God. 3 Her officials within her are roaring lions; her rulers are evening wolves, who leave nothing for the morning. 4 Her prophets are unprincipled: they are treacherous people. Her priests profane the sanctuary and do violence to the law. 5 The Lord within her is righteous; he does no wrong. Morning by morning he dispenses his justice, and every new day he does not fail, yet the unrighteous know no shame.

3:1 After predicting the destruction of the surrounding nations, Zephaniah returned to the problem at hand—sin in Jerusalem. The city of God, and God’s people themselves, had become “defiled”—as sinful as their pagan neighbors. The people pretended to worship and serve God, but in their hearts they had rejected him and continued to be complacent about their sins. They no longer cared about the consequences of turning away from God.

3:2 Do you know people who refuse to listen when someone disagrees with their opinions? Their root problem is pride—inflated self-esteem. God’s people had become so proud that they would not hear or accept God’s correction. Do you find it difficult to listen to the spiritual counsel of others or God’s words from the Bible? Don’t let pride make you unable or unwilling to let God work in your life. You will be more willing to listen when you consider how weak and sinful you really are compared to God.

3:3-4 Leading God’s people is a privilege and a responsibility. Through Zephaniah, God rebuked all types of leadership in Jerusalem—officials, rulers, prophets, and priests—because of their callous disobedience, irresponsibility, and sin. If you are a leader in the church, consider yourself in a privileged position, but be careful. God holds you responsible for the purity of your actions, the quality of your example, and the truth of your words.

3:5 Jerusalem’s citizens, of all people, had no excuse for their sins. Jerusalem, where the temple was located, was the religious center of the nation. But even though the people didn’t follow God, God was “within” the city, present in the midst of corruption, persecution, and unbelief. No matter how spiritually desolate the world seems, God is here, and he is at work. Ask yourself, “What is he doing now, and how can I be part of his work?”

## **Jerusalem Remains Unrepentant – Verses 6-8**

6 "I have destroyed nations; their strongholds are demolished. I have left their streets deserted, with no one passing through. Their cities are laid waste; they are deserted and empty. 7 Of Jerusalem I thought, 'Surely you will fear me and accept correction!' Then her place of refuge would not be destroyed, nor all my punishments come upon her. But they were still eager to act corruptly in all they did. 8 Therefore wait for me," declares the Lord, "for the day I will stand up to testify. I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them—all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger.

3:7 We may wonder how the Israelites could have had such clear warnings and still not turn to God. The problem was that they had allowed sin to so harden them that they no longer cared to follow God. They refused to listen to God's warnings, and they refused to repent. The more God punished them, the more they sinned. In fact, they were eager to sin. If you are living in disobedience to God now, your heart may grow hard, and you may lose all desire for God.

3:8 In the last days, God will judge all people according to what they have done (Revelation 20:12). Justice will prevail; evildoers will be punished; and the obedient will be blessed. Don't try to avenge yourself. Be patient, and God's justice will come.

## **Restoration of Israel's Remnant – Verses 9-20**

9 "Then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him shoulder to shoulder. 10 From beyond the rivers of Cush my worshipers, my scattered people, will bring me offerings. 11 On that day you, Jerusalem, will not be put to shame for all the wrongs you have done to me, because I will remove from you your arrogant boasters. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. 12 But I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the Lord. 13 They will do no wrong; they will tell no lies. A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid." 14 Sing, Daughter Zion; shout aloud, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! 15 The Lord has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The Lord, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The Lord your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "I will remove from you all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals, which is a burden and reproach for you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you. I will rescue the lame; I will gather the exiles. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they have suffered shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the Lord.

3:9 God will purify lips and unify language so that all his people from all nations will be able to worship him together. In the new earth, all believers will speak the same language; the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel will be reversed (Genesis 11). God will purify our hearts, so that the words coming from our lips will be pure as well.

3:10 The "scattered people" refers to scattered Jews who were dispersed beyond the rivers of Cush. It symbolizes that all Jews, no matter how far they have been scattered, will return to worship God.

3:11-12 God will remove the proud people and leave the meek and humble. God is opposed to the proud and haughty of every generation. But those who are meek and humble, both physically and spiritually, will be rewarded because they trust in God. Self-reliance and arrogance have no place among God's people or in his kingdom.

3:14-18 The Lord himself will remove his hand of judgment, disperse Israel's enemies, and come to live among his people. He will give them gladness. We sin when we pursue happiness by cutting ourselves off from fellowship with God—the only person who can make us truly happy. Zephaniah points out that gladness results when we allow God to be with us. We do that by faithfully following him and obeying his commands. Then God rejoices over us with singing. If you want to be happy, draw close to the source of happiness by obeying God.

3:20 "Before your very eyes" does not necessarily mean that this promise would be fulfilled during Zephaniah's generation. Rather, it means that the restoration will be an obvious work of the Lord.

3:20 The message of doom in the beginning of the book becomes a message of hope by the end. There will be a new day when God will bless his people. If the leaders in the church today were to hear a message from a prophet of God, the message would probably resemble the book of Zephaniah. Under Josiah's religious reforms, the people did return to God outwardly, but their hearts were far from him. Zephaniah encouraged the nation to gather together and pray for salvation. We must also ask ourselves: Is our reform merely an outward show, or is it changing our hearts and lives? We need to gather together and pray, to walk humbly with God, to do what is right, and to hear the message of hope regarding the new world to come.