

ZEPHANIAH 3

“HE WILL REST IN HIS LOVE!”

After the threatenings of destruction upon Judah’s foreign neighbors, we now return to Jerusalem, so that we may again hear what God has to say to her. He begins, in this chapter, with words of reproof for the abundance of wickedness that was found in her – of which, various instances are given (verses 1-7). But then He speaks in promises of mercy and grace, which He still had in reserve for them. Two general heads of promises are mentioned. First, the Lord said that He would bring in a glorious work of reformation among them (verses 8-13); He would cleanse them from their sins and bring them home to Himself. And second, He told them that He would bring about a glorious work of salvation for them when He had thus prepared them for it (verses 14-20). These promises were to have their full accomplishment in Gospel-times.

In verses 1-7, it is likely that the mind of the prophet was led by the Holy Spirit to not only be referring to the evil of his own day, but also to speak prophetically concerning Jerusalem in the days of Christ. In support of this thought, notice how the Prophet describes a woe to Jerusalem; and he says that her princes, judges, prophets, and priests are the cause. Now this could not be fulfilled in Babylonian exile; for Jerusalem was trodden down at that time, and had neither Temple nor priest. Besides, he adds that “the just Lord is in the midst thereof” (verse 5). Yes, the Lord was at all times among His people; but He was preeminently so at the time when Christ came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. And the woe pronounced here by the prophet corresponds very closely to our Lord’s own declaration concerning Jerusalem, as a city given up to destruction (Luke 13:34-35). In the character of her judges and priests and prophets, what an exact description is given of the elders and scribes in the days of our Savior’s earthly ministry! (Luke 11:42-51). And above all, Jerusalem’s high crime was that she drew not near to her God. Look in the Gospels and behold the continued contempt which the leaders of the Jewish nation manifested to the Lord Jesus! Moreover, in verses 8-10, there appears to be a corresponding prophecy to that which our Savior spoke concerning the fall of Jerusalem; and we know that it was fulfilled in the appointed season when the city was given up to the destruction of the Roman army (Matt. 24:21). And when we consider how the pure language of the Lord’s Gospel then began to spread among all nations, and how the outpouring of the Holy Spirit caused the work of His grace to prosper – the subject of the prophet’s prediction may well be thought to have respect to those blessed times. His people were brought to Him from all the regions of the earth, as the firstfruits of a glorious harvest of souls!

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Words of reproof for the abundance of wickedness that was found among God’s people – verses 1-7
- ❖ He speaks to His humbled people in promises of mercy and grace – verses 8-20

If we had any doubt concerning the period to which Zephaniah's prophecy referred, the opening of the paragraph which begins in verse 11 would tend to explain it. The phrase "in that day" is often mentioned by all the prophets; and by it, they were referring to the glorious Gospel-day. And the character here given of the gracious impressions which are worked upon the minds of true believers entirely corresponds to the general feature of the Gospel. Those who are awakened, convinced, and truly converted take shame to themselves for their sins and transgressions; and at the same time, they give glory to the Lord. The Church of Jesus is made up of such humbled and afflicted persons, who are "the poor in spirit" that the Savior speaks of. This blood-bought remnant adorns the doctrine of their Savior in all things (verse 13). And they are spiritually fed, sustained, and nourished with the body and blood of Christ; Jesus Himself is both their food and their Shepherd. They lie down in safety under the assured blessing of pardon, mercy, and peace in Him and His righteousness (see Ezekiel 16:63; Matt. 5:3; Eph. 4:22; John 6:51-58).

Verses 14-20 furnish us with a song of praise which is well-suited for the day of redemption, for it is a song that only redeemed souls can sing! It is a part of the same song that is sung in glory, and it comes in most blessedly and properly after what the prophet had said before. How precious are the various parts of this song! "Thou shalt not see evil any more," says the Lord (verse 15). A redeemed soul is a secured soul, a safe soul, and a happy soul! Even his afflictions are angels and messengers of sanctification and wisdom – all working for his good (Rom. 8:28). And how blessedly the prophet speaks of the presence and glory of the Lord Jesus in the midst of His people, as a sun in the center of the heavens! Christ is the Sun of righteousness in the heart of each and every believer; and in His love for them, He will rest! (verse 17) There will be no upbraidings for the things that are in the past, but He will rest in one constant and everlasting act of Divine love and Divine delight (Isa. 62:5). And the next clause is no less expressive: "he will joy over thee with singing." Have you ever seen, on a summer's day, a sweet bird of the air mounting over her little brood, and rising into the air to a great height – still singing as she ascends, while looking down on her darlings in their nest below – until at length, she descends to them again with vast rapidity, and rejoices over them in all the expressions of delight? In the same way, Jesus looks upon every one of His redeemed people here below on this earth; He rejoices over them to do them good, with His whole heart and soul (Jer. 32:41).

Thank You, Lord, for being mighty to save us! And thank You also for the sweet assurance that You rest in loving us, and that Your will never cease to love us! Amen.

