

ZEPHANIAH 3: 1 Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, the oppressing city!

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The prophet reproves Jerusalem, and all her guides and rulers, for their obstinate perseverance in impiety, notwithstanding all the warnings and corrections which they had received from God, Zep 3:1-7. They are encouraged, however, after they shall have been chastised for their idolatry, and cured of it, to look for mercy and restoration, Zep 3:8-13; and excited to hymns of joy at the glorious prospect, Zep 3:14-17. After which the prophet concludes with large promises of favor and prosperity in the days of the Messiah, Zep 3:18-20. We take this extensive view of the concluding verses of this chapter, because an apostle has expressly assured us that in Every prophetic book of the Old Testament Scriptures are confined predictions relative to the Gospel dispensation. See Act 3:24.

Verse 1

Wo to her that is filthy - This is a denunciation of Divine judgment against Jerusalem.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 2 She didn't obey the voice. She didn't receive correction. She didn't trust in the LORD. She didn't draw near to her God.

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Verse 2

She obeyed not the voice - Of conscience, of God, and of his prophets.

She received not correction - Did not profit by his chastisements; was uneasy and ill-tempered under her afflictions, and derived no manner of good from these chastisements.

She trusted not in the Lord - Did not consider him as the Fountain whence all help and salvation should come; and rather sought for support from man and herself, than from God.

She drew not near to her God - Did not worship him; did not walk in his ways; did not make prayer and supplication to him.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 3 Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves. They leave nothing until the next day.

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Verse 3

Her princes - are roaring lions - Tearing all to pieces without shadow of law, except their own despotic power.

Her judges are evening wolves - Being a little afraid of the lion-like princes, they practice their unjust dealings from evening to morning, and take the day to find their rest.

They gnaw not the bones till the morrow - They devour the flesh in the night, and gnaw the bones and extract the marrow afterwards. They use all violence and predatory oppression, like wild beasts; they shun the light, and turn day into night by their revellings.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 4 Her prophets are arrogant and treacherous people. Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law.

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Verse 4

Her prophets are light and treacherous persons - They have no seriousness, no deep conviction of the awful nature of their office, no concern for the immortal souls of the people. Treacherous persons - they betray the souls of the people for the sake of worldly honor, pleasure, and profit. Even in our own enlightened country we find prophets who prefer hunting the hare or the fox, and pursuing the partridge and pheasant, to visiting the sick, and going after the strayed, lost sheep of the house of Israel. Poor souls! They know neither God nor themselves; and if they did visit the sick, they could not speak to them to exhortation, edification, or comfort. God never called them to his work; therefore they know nothing of it. But O, what an account have these pleasure-taking false prophets to render to the Shepherd of souls!

They have done violence to the law - They have forced wrong constructions on it in order to excuse themselves, and lull the people into spiritual slumber. So we find that it was an ancient practice for men to wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 5 The LORD, in the midst of her, is righteous. He will do no wrong. Every morning he brings his justice to light. He doesn't fail, but the unjust know no shame.

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Verse 5

The just Lord is in the midst thereof - He sees, marks down, and will punish all these wickednesses.

Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light - The sense is, says Bp. Newcome, "Not a day passes but we see instances of his goodness to righteous men, and of his vengeance on the wicked."

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 6 I have cut off nations. Their battlements are desolate. I have made their streets waste, so that no one passes by. Their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, so that there is no inhabitant.

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Verse 6

I have cut off the nations - Syria, Israel, and those referred to, Isa 36:18, Isa 36:20. - Newcome.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 7 I said, "Just fear me. Receive correction, so that her dwelling won't be cut off, according to all that I have appointed concerning her." But they rose early and corrupted all their doings.

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Verse 7

Surely thou wilt fear me - After so many displays of my sovereign power and judgments.

But they rose early - And instead of returning to God, they practiced every abomination. They were diligent to find out times and places for their iniquity. This is the worst state of man.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 8 "Therefore wait for me", says 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 on them my indignation, even all my fierce anger, for all the earth will be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

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Verse 8

Wait ye upon me - Expect the fulfilment of all my promises and threatenings: I am God, and change not.

For all the earth - All the land of Judah.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 9 For then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that they may all call on the LORD's name, to serve him shoulder to shoulder.

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Verse 9

Will I turn to the people - This promise must refer to the conversion of the Jews under the Gospel.

That they may all call - That the whole nation may invoke God by Christ, and serve him with one consent; not one unbeliever being found among them.

The pure language, שפה ברורה saphah berurah, may here mean the form of religious worship. They had been before idolaters: now God promises to restore his pure worship among them. The word has certainly this meaning in Psa 81:6; where, as God is the speaker, the words should not be rendered, "I heard a language which I understood not," but, "I heard a religious confession, which I approved not." See Isa 19:18; Hos 14:3; and see Joe 2:28, where a similar promise is found.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 10 From beyond the rivers of Cush, my worshippers, even the daughter of my dispersed people, will bring my offering.

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Verse 10

From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia - This may denote both Africa and the southern Arabia. Bochart thinks that Arabia Chusaer is meant; and that the rivers are Besor, which flows into the Mediterranean; Rhinocorura, which flows into the Lake Sirbonis; Trajanus Amnis, which flows into the Red Sea; and the river Corys. Calmet thinks that these rivers mean the Nile, which by seven mouths falls into the Mediterranean. The Nile comes from Ethiopia, properly so called; and runs through all Egypt, and falls into the sea at that part of Arabia which the Scripture calls Cush or Ethiopia.

My dispersed - The Jews, scattered through different parts of the world. Shall bring mine offering. Shall acknowledge my mercy in sending them the Messiah to bless them, by turning every one of them away from their iniquities.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 11 In that day you will not be disappointed for all your doings, in which you have transgressed against me; for then I will take away out of your midst your proudly exulting ones, and you will no more be haughty in my holy mountain.

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Verse 11

Shalt thou not be ashamed - Thy punishment shall cease, for God shall pardon thy sin.

For then I will take away out of the midst of thee - The wicked Jewish priests and scribes who blasphemed Christ, and would not come under his yoke.

Because of my holy mountain - Thou wilt no more boast in my temple, but become meek and lowly in following him who is meek and lowly in heart, that ye may obtain rest to your souls.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 12 But I will leave in your midst an afflicted and poor people, and they will take refuge in the LORD's name.

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Verse 12

An afflicted and poor people - In such a state will the Jews be found when they shall hear the universal call, and believe in Christ Jesus. Indeed, this is the general state of the Jews in the present day; except a Jew that are called Jews, who are very rich; and who believe just as much in the God of Jacob, as they do in Jesus Christ.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 13 The remnant of Israel will not do iniquity, nor speak lies, neither will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth, for they will feed and lie down, and no one will make them afraid."

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Verse 13

The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity - O what a change! And then, how different shall they be from their present selves! Iniquity, lying, and deceit shall not be found among them! A Jew once said to me "Tere are shome of you Christians who are making wonderful efforts to convert the Tshews

(Jews.) Ah, dere ish none but Gott Almighty dat can convert a Tshew." Truly I believe him. Only God can convert any man; and if there be a peculiar difficulty to convert any soul, that difficulty must lie in the conversion of the Jew.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 14 Sing, daughter of Zion! Shout, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem.

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Verse 14

Sing, O daughter of Zion - Here is not only a gracious prophetic promise of their restoration from captivity, but of their conversion to God through Christ.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 15 The LORD has taken away your judgements. He has thrown out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst. You will not be afraid of evil any more.

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Verse 15

The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee - They have never had a king since the death of Zedekiah, and never shall have one till they have the King Messiah to reign among them; and this promise refers to that event.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 16 In that day, it will be said to Jerusalem, "Don't be afraid, Zion. Don't let your hands be weak."

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Verse 16

Fear thou not - Thou shalt have no more captivities nor national afflictions.

Let not thine hands be slack - This may refer, first, to the rebuilding of the temple of God, after the return from Babylon; and, secondly, to their diligence and zeal in the Christian Church.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 17 The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a mighty one who will save. He will rejoice over you with joy. He will calm you in his love. He will rejoice over you with singing.

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Verse 17

The Lord thy God - יהוה אלהיך Yehovah Eloheycha, "The self-existent and eternal Being, who is in covenant with you;" the character of God in reference to the Jews when standing in the nearest relation to them.

Is mighty - גבור gibbor, is the prevailing One, the all-conquering Hero. The character which is given to Christ, Isa 9:6 : "His name shall be called אל גבור El gibbor, the prevailing Almighty God."

He will save - Deliver thee from all the power from all the guilt, and from all the pollution of thy sins; and when thus saved "he will rejoice over thee with joy," with peculiar gladness. "He will rest in his love," - he will renew his love. He will show the same love to you that he did of old to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

He will joy over thee with singing - The conversion of the Jews will be a subject of peculiar delight and exultation to God himself! There will be a more than ordinary joy in heaven, when the Jews return to God through Christ. This event cannot be at a great distance; they are as wretched and as ungodly as they can well be. The arms of Christians are open to receive them; and all things are now ready!

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 18 I will remove those who grieve about the appointed feasts from you. They are a burden and a reproach to you.

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#### Verse 18

I will gather - sorrowful - This may refer to those who, during the captivity, mourned for their former religious assemblies; and who were reproached by their enemies, because they could not enjoy their religious solemnities. See Psa 137:1-9 : "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song," etc. This very circumstance may be the reference here.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 19 Behold, at that time I will deal with all those who afflict you, and I will save those who are lame, and gather those who were driven away. I will give them praise and honour, whose shame has been in all the earth.

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#### Verse 19

I wilt unto all that afflict thee - They who have persecuted you shall be punished for it. It shows much malignity and baseness of mind, to afflict or reproach those who are lying under the chastising hand of God. This was the conduct of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, when the Jews were in adversity; and how severely did the Lord punish them for it! And he gave this as the reason for the severity of the punishment.

The first clause here is translated thus by Abp. Newcome: "Behold I will work with thee for thy sake at that time." The original is obscure; and it may bear the above sense.

I wilt save her that halteth - See Mic 4:6 (note), where there is a parallel place.

And gather her that was driven out - By captivity. The reference may be to renewing the covenant with the Jews, who were considered as an unfaithful spouse divorced by her husband. I will bring her back to my house.

I will get them praise and fame in every land - They shall become a great, a good, and a useful people. And as they are now a proverb of reproach, full of base wiles and degrading selfishness, they

shall lose this character, and be totally changed; and they shall be as eminent for excellence, as they were before for baseness in those countries where they had sojourned.

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ZEPHANIAH 3: 20 At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you; for I will give you honour and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes, says the LORD.

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Verse 20

At that time - First, when the seventy years of the Babylonish captivity shall terminate. "I will bring you again" to your own land; and this restoration shall be a type of their redemption from sin and iniquity; and at this time, and at this only, will they have a name and praise among all the people of the earth, not only among the Jews, but the Gentiles.

Before your eyes - Some read before Their eyes; that is, the eyes of all people. On their conversion to Christianity, they shall become as eminent as they ever were in the most illustrious days of their history, Lord, hasten the conversion of Israel! Amen.