

ZEPHANIAH 3

REVIEW...

- **Zephaniah** – the 36th book of the Old Testament - 9th of what is known as the 12 Minor Prophets
 - o Was a prophet to the Southern Kingdom - he prophesied during the reign of King Josiah...
 - o Zephaniah spoke about the coming judgment – the Day of the Lord!
- The book is broken into 3 sections:
 - o Chapters 1:2–2:3 – The judgment of Judah on the Day of the Lord
 - o Chapter 2:4-3:8 - The judgment of the nations on the Day of the Lord
 - o Chapter 3:9-20 – Healing and restoration from the Lord
- Judah had become an undesirable nation - because they no longer desired the Lord!
 - o In spite of the terrible destruction that was coming nationally – there was hope individually!
 - o But Judah had a very small window in which to repent – and it was closing fast!
 - o Those who sought the Lord / were meek / upheld justice / sought righteousness / humility...
 - o Might be able to escape the judgment that was coming!
- Including the judgment of the nations – 5 nations broken up into 3 groups
 - o The Judgment of God on the Enemies of Judah / Family of Judah / and the Empires of world!
 - o Because while judgment began with Judah – Chapter 1 – it would not end there!

HEALING AND RESTORATION FROM THE LORD... (3 THINGS)

- **1ST – THE JUDGEMENT OF JERUSALEM ... vs. 1-7**
 - o 1st – The final judgment of Zephaniah is for the city of Jerusalem... vs. 1-2
 - Zephaniah gives his second and final Woe to this wicked city (*first was to the Philistines*)...
 - Saved for last – because they should have been first to follow after the Lord...
 - But instead of loving the Lord – they were **REBELLIOUS** (*marah – bitter*) towards Him...
 - Instead of loving others – they **POLLUTED** / defiled them with their filth...
 - Even **OPPRESSING** strangers / widows / and orphans – **Jeremiah 22:3**
 - **Mark 12:28** – A scribe asked Jesus - what was the greatest commandment...
 - **Jesus responded – Deuteronomy 6:5** Love the Lord / **Leviticus 19:18** love your neighbor
 - All 613 commands of the Law could be boiled down into these 2 simple commands!
 - The simple point being - God has given us an instruction manual for our lives – the Bible...
 - So we know what His expectations are - pretty simple - Love Him / Love others...
 - Jerusalem is a powerful warning of what happens when we refuse those instructions!
 - How Jerusalem became a wicked city – 4 DID NOTS...
 - They DID NOT obey the voice of the Lord – they thought their way was better...
 - And when God tried to correct them – they DID NOT receive correction from the Lord...
 - Instead they took the correction as being bad – so they DID NOT trust the Lord...
 - Which caused them to lose faith – and they DID NOT draw near to the Lord...
 - And they became a wicked city - all because they DID NOT obey God in the first place!
 - The moment we think we know better than God – we are in trouble...
 - When we put anything in life before the Lord – money / career / possessions...
 - When we think we will be happier if we love ourselves – rather than loving others...
 - We have started walking down a path that will lead to destruction...
 - Not that God will abandon us – He will try to get our attention – correct us...
 - But if we do not listen – instead we harden – we will stop trusting in the Lord...
 - And if we are not careful – we will find we no longer want to be around Him!

- Leading us to live a life that is bitter – polluted – and oppressed!
- o 2nd – Woe to the leaders... vs. 3-4
 - God had divided the responsibilities of ministering to His people...
 - The princes were supposed to enforce the Law of God...
 - The judges were supposed to judge people according to the Law of God
 - The prophets were supposed to instruct people in the Law of God
 - The Priests were supposed to act as mediators on behalf of the Law of God...
 - The division was there to make sure the people never trusted in one person...
 - Instead the purpose of the each group was to point the people back to the Lord!
 - Because men would much rather look to someone they can touch and see...
 - Therefore they are much more inclined to trust in a man than God...
 - The problem is we are limited – and cannot always help those who look to us...
 - We have limited abilities and resources – only God has limitless!
 - Jesus is the only answer that we need to give to those who are in need!
 - Our responsibility – it to be a billboard that says - ‘this way to Jesus’!
 - But all of the leaders of Jerusalem were wicked...
 - The princes were roaring lions – devouring the possessions of the people – **Ezekiel 22:27**
 - The judges were like evening wolves – that do not even leave a bone till morning...
 - The prophets were all treacherous liars – there was not one truth in anything they said...
 - The priests polluted the sanctuary – by defiling / contradicting the Law of God!
 - There was not a Godly leader to be found in any of the branches of the government!
 - If you want to know what kind of people are in a nation - look at who leads them...
 - The leaders of a nation are a reflection of the people who are willing to follow them!
 - And any nation that chooses leaders they know are not a Godly men...
 - Are doomed to suffer at the hand of the very men they choose to follow!
 - **Proverbs 29:2** - “When a wicked man rules, the people groan.”
- o 3rd – Ignoring the warnings... vs. 5-7
 - The Lord was in the midst of Jerusalem – He had not abandoned them...
 - He was there to try and bring the people to repentance...
 - Every morning He would bring justice to light – reveal the sin of the people...
 - But the people of Jerusalem knew no shame – they did not care if people saw their sin!
 - The Lord cut off other wicked nations as a warning...
 - God devastated their fortresses – left their streets desolate – their cities destroyed...
 - Hoping Jerusalem would see – receive the instruction – and not also have to be destroyed...
 - But in spite of everything the Lord did – the people rose up early just to start sinning!
 - The danger of a hardened heart...
 - The good news is – when we sin – God fights for us / tries to get us to repent...
 - He allows consequences – to try to bring our sin into the light...
 - He surrounds us with example of what happens to others who are sinning...
 - The question is are we listening when He convicts – are do we harden our heart...
 - When I first learned guitar - my fingers bled from pressing on the steel strings...
 - But eventually with lots of use - they grew calluses and became tough / felt nothing!
 - When we first commit a sin - we bleed with conviction from the Holy Spirit...
 - But if we continue to sin - we can create a callous on our hearts - feel nothing...
 - Sin is devastating - if we refuse to repent of our sin - it will harden our hearts!
 - **Hebrews 3:13** - “Exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”

▪ **2ND – WAIT ON THE LORD ... vs. 8-13**

o **1st – The day of the Lord... vs. 8**

- Since Jerusalem would not repent – instead they would have to wait...
 - God had incredible plans for His people / His Holy City – but their sin postponed them...
 - In **Luke 19:41** - as Jesus drew near the Jerusalem - He wept over it...
 - The day was coming when the city would be leveled – not one stone upon another!
 - Rather than exalted – Jerusalem would be destroyed – 70 AD Titus Vespasian...
 - **Luke 21:24** – “Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until [their time is] fulfilled.”
- When I was a young man – I had a passion to be a missionary in Russia...
 - But poor choices – and a lack of repentance – delayed that calling / blessing...
 - I lost 5 years being broken – humbled – and Russia closed as a mission field...
 - By the grace of God I eventually did become a missionary – but I had to wait!
 - God desires to amazing things in our lives – exceedingly abundantly – **Ephesians 3:20**
 - And the only thing that will stop Him – is us - we can be our own worst enemy!

o **2nd – The remnant of Israel... vs. 8-13**

- Wait until the 2nd coming of Jesus Christ...
 - The day when the Lord will gather the nations together to pour out His fierce anger...
 - When all of the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy!
 - Speaking of the return of Jesus Christ and the battle of Armageddon!
 - The Antichrist will gather his army to the Valley of Megiddo - **Revelation 19:11-21**
 - It will be the place where the nations come to battle – armies of the North / East / West
 - **Joel 3:2** – “I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat.”
 - Then Jesus will come out of Heaven on a white horse – King of Kings / Lord of Lords...
 - With one word he will defeat the Antichrist and his army – **II Thessalonians 2:8!**
- In that Day – God will forgive Israel...
 - He will give them pure lips – so they could call on the name of the Lord / serve Him...
 - In **Isaiah 6:5-7** – the prophet saw a vision of heaven – woe is me I am undone!
 - Then an angel touched his lips – taking away his iniquity / purging his sin...
 - At which point the Lord asked who will go for us – Isaiah cried out – here I am send me!
 - Being a sinner does not disqualify us from being used by the Lord – we all are...
 - But unrepentant sin will – the Lord has to purify us before He can use us...
 - The sooner we humble ourselves before the Lord – the sooner He will use us!
- In that Day – God will bring Israel home...
 - From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia – God will bring home the worshipers...
 - The daughters of His dispersed ones – and they will bring an offering to the Lord!
 - Israel was scattered in the Diaspora – beginning with the fall of Samaria 722 B.C.
 - Concluding with the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in 70 A.D. - but...
 - **Isaiah 43:5-6** – “I will bring your descendants from the east, And gather you from the west; I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not keep them back!’ Bring My sons from afar... from the ends of the earth.”
 - Since 1948 Jewish population in Israel has surged to roughly 6 million...
 - Since 2006 – first time in 2000 years more Jews in Israel than any other nation on earth!
- In that Day – Israel will no longer be ashamed...
 - They had reason to be ashamed – their sinful deeds – but God will remove the prideful...
 - Leaving behind a meek and humble people who trust in the name of the Lord...
 - A remnant (*not many*) – that will practice righteousness / and not speak lies...
 - They will feed their flock (*family*) – and lie down – no one will make them afraid!
 - The 5 years I spent being broken were painful – shameful years...

- But as hard as they were – I would not wish them on my worst enemy...
- Neither would I trade them for anything – they were the crucible that molded me!
- When we loose years to foolish choices – it can be easy to want to beat ourselves up...
- But if those poor choices brought us to a place where we were broken / humbled...
- Then we have nothing to be ashamed about – in fact just the opposite!
- They are often a necessity to reach us to become people who trust in the Lord!

▪ **3RD – THE RESTORATION OF ISRAEL... vs. 14-20**

o 1st – Rejoice Israel... vs. 14-15

- Seeing this distant hope Zephaniah declared – sing and shout Israel...
 - Be glad and rejoice in your heart – because the Lord WILL remove judgment...
 - He WILL overcome your enemies – and the Lord WILL dwell in your midst!
 - An amazing hope – forgiveness / victory / coming in the presence of God Almighty!
 - But this was not a hope that was coming anytime soon – it was at least 2500 years away!
- We have the same hope – but not as long of a wait...
 - Most of us have heard of Publishers Clearing House – magazine subscriptions...
 - If someone came to your door saying your just won millions of dollars – sing / rejoice!
 - But we have ‘won’ something far greater and more valuable than green paper!
 - God has given wiped away all of our sin – forgiven ever mistake – **I John 1:9...**
 - He has give us victory over our arch enemy – satan – **Colossians 2:15...**
 - And we will have access into the very Throne Room of Heaven – **Hebrews 4:16...**
 - When we embrace what we have been given – like Zephaniah – we WILL sing and rejoice!

o 2nd – Do not fear Israel... vs. 16-18

- In THAT DAY people will say to Jerusalem - do not be afraid...
 - Do not let your hands be weak – in other words do not give up serving the Lord...
 - You do not plant a seed - and expect there to be fruit on the braches in the morning...
 - And if you sat there and waited for the plant to grow - you would likely give up!
 - The solution is to keep busy - weeding / plowing - in time the fruit will come...
 - So often we want to see the good fruit from our efforts right now!
 - When the fruit does not come - we get tired - assuming nothing will every happen...
 - It is easy to get frustrated with the failures in our Christian walk...
 - It can be tempting to want to ‘give up’ - thinking things will never change...
 - Rather than looking for the fruit - we just need to keep busy serving Jesus – **Galatians 6:9**
 - In His time we will bear great fruit - be used powerfully for the Lord!
- The Lord your God is with you – the MIGHTY ONE – and He will save you...
 - He will rejoice over you with gladness / His love will calm your fears / He will sing...
 - He will gather those who miss the feast days – who miss their fellowship time with God!
 - One of the hardest things about being a dad – is having to punish our kids...
 - Seeing their downcast faces – their doubt and fear – but when they ask for forgiveness...
 - One of my favorite things to do as a Dad – is hold my baby and sing to her / reassure her...
 - Hold her in my arms – broad smile on my face – so she knows everything will be ok!
 - God is not an vengeful dictator who thrives on the punishing His people...
 - It breaks the heart of our Heavily Father when He has to punish His kids...
 - And He is quick to forgive – scoop us up in His loving arms and comfort!
 - **Psalms 103:8** – “The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love.”

o 3rd – Come home Israel... vs. 19-20

- At that time God will deal with those who oppressed Israel...

- He will deal with them by vindicating Israel – making His people great again...
- God will save the lame / weak of Israel who were driven out of their Land...
- And make them famous in the very lands where they were mocked and shamed!
- It is amazing how many FAMOUS Jews there are even today!
- Albert Einstein / Sigmund Freud / Gal Gadot / Larry King / Calvin Klein / Isaac Asimov
- Stan Lee / Barry Manilow / Karl Marx / Leonard Nimoy / David Copperfield
- At that time God will bring Israel home...
 - And when He gathers them back into the Land – the whole nation will be praised...
 - All the people of the earth will glorify God – because He restored the captives of Israel!
 - Initially fulfilled with the return of the captives from Babylon in 536 BC...
 - But it will be ultimately fulfilled in the restoration of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom!
- God choose Israel to be His special treasure - but not cause they were the best...
 - In fact for just the opposite reason - because they were the least – **Deuteronomy 7:7**
 - From the very beginning they were the very last people you would have chosen...
 - And they never disappointed – they failed God at almost every turn...
 - Yet the Lord never failed them – instead He used / uses / and will use them as an example...
 - Showing the world exactly how amazing power of His Loving Grace can be!
 - God still does not pick just the brightest – beautiful – best – **I Corinthians 1:27**
 - In fact those are the exceptions – God tends to choose the ‘foolish’ of the world...
 - God picks us – the foolish because then the world sees God in us!
 - Then the world knows that God can save/use anyone – **I Timothy 1:16**