

Zephaniah 3:1-7 – The Wicked Woman Rejects Her Rescuer

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Henry, JFB, Clarke, Geneva, Poole, Gaebelein, Delitzsch, INT, Handfuls, Trapp, Calvin, Gill, Ps 99

Brothers and Sisters in the Lord: God wanted his straying bride to remain faithful to him, but **she ran after other gods (like wealth and entertainment)**. So **God encouraged her to repent of her sins and return to faithfully serving him, promising he would give her more if she did.** He would provide for her needs. He would protect her. He would give her more children throughout the world and remove obstacles, near and far, from her path. But she remained **obstinate** and **rejected** his gracious offer! She **loved herself** too much and she loved the things she thought would bring her peace. And **she crushed others** who stood in her way! So God had to act. You will see God's response to his rebellious bride today.

Our headings are:

Rebellious Woman

Refuses Correction

Receives God's Justice

Our goals are: **That you will see that those who spurn repentance and spit at God's promises of blessings will be made to suffer shame.**

Rebellious Woman

1 Woe to her who is **rebellious** and **polluted**, To the **oppressing** city!

1. What a black character to a once beautiful place – how deplorable Jerusalem had become!

How rebellious!

“**Rebellious**” refers to outward actions against God's law.

“**Polluted**” refers to inward corruption, depravity of the soul.

What were the results?

Jerusalem was a glutton...she lived for personal and carnal advantage and ignored God's laws.

Jerusalem was an oppressor. Her leaders and the rich squeezed the poor – the widow, orphan, and foreigner.

Jeremiah 22:3 'Thus says the LORD: "**Execute judgment** and **righteousness**, and **deliver the plundered** out of the hand of the oppressor. **Do no wrong** and do no **violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, nor shed innocent blood** in this place.

In fact, Jerusalem was described as being “full” of oppression.

Jeremiah 6:6 For thus has the LORD of hosts said: "Cut down trees, And build a mound against Jerusalem. **This is the city to be punished. She is full of oppression in her midst.**

Jerusalem was a prostitute...she join in worship of other gods alongside of the one true God.

2. So what was this curse, this woe, that God proclaimed on his bride?

Ezekiel 22:4 "You have become guilty by the blood which you have shed, and have defiled yourself with the idols which you have made. You have caused your days to draw near, and have come to the end of your years; therefore **I have made you a reproach to the nations**, and a mockery to all countries.

“Woe” means that God’s heavy judgment was on his Bride. **Enslavement was bad but it was exacerbated with humiliation!**

3. Lessons:

a. If you only care about meeting your own needs and you ignore the widow, orphans, and immigrants, you will have to answer to God for all he has given you. Selfishness, which is idolatry, causes the sinner to ignore the needs of the weak and take advantage of them. God must act against injustice.

b. There is no escaping God’s judgment. There is no bailout, like the governments did to badly managed companies back in '08. God is patient, but not forever! God is especially angry with those who are close to him who fall away because he knows they know better.

Refuses Correction

2 **She has not obeyed His voice, She has not received correction;** She has **not trusted in the LORD, She has not drawn near to her God.**

1. God’s bride rejected God’s instruction by whip and by word.

Jeremiah 5:3...You have stricken them, But they have not grieved; You have consumed them, **But they have refused to receive correction.** They have made their faces harder than rock...

She refused to hear him because she did not trust him, thinking he was not able to do what she wanted. She did not see him as the fountain of life. **She trusted in the arm of her flesh! God’s bride refused to come near to God to hear his word...and to be safe. She refused to come near to pray for help.**

Deuteronomy 4:7 "For what great nation is there **that has God so near to it,** as the LORD our God is to us, **for whatever reason we may call upon Him?**

3 Her **princes in her midst are roaring lions;** Her judges are **evening wolves That leave not a bone till morning.**

2. Judah’s princes (kings) and her leaders continued to destroy others instead of changing their lives.

The leaders used their power for persecution not for protection. They were like roaring lions. So justice was coming!

Jeremiah 5:6 Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them, A wolf of the deserts shall destroy them; A leopard will watch over their cities. **Everyone who goes out from there shall be torn in pieces, Because their transgressions are many; Their backslidings have increased.**

The leaders were like evening wolves.

Ezekiel 22:27 "**Her princes in her midst are like wolves tearing the prey, to shed blood,** to destroy people, and to get dishonest gain.

Micah 2:2 **They covet fields and take them by violence, Also houses, and seize them.** So they **oppress a man and his house,** A man and his inheritance.

The leaders would not stop consuming God's people, like wild animals that continue eating all night and not care about danger when morning comes. They took all the meat off the bone and continue to gnaw (or grind, from "garam") on it. This was contempt for decency. God's Bride had become like the wild Assyrians.

Nahum 2:12 **The lion tore in pieces enough for his cubs, Killed for his lionesses, Filled his caves with prey, And his dens with flesh.**

4 Her prophets are **insolent, treacherous** people...

3. Her prophets were insolent.

"Insolent" means to "boil over" or to "seem bigger than you are." These arrogant men prophesied lies and fairy stories. They made up fantastic tales in order to deceive.

Jeremiah 23:32 "Behold, **I am against those who prophesy false dreams,**" says the LORD, "and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness..."

The word for "treacherous" is often the word for "faithless adultery" or "apostasy." It means they had left orthodoxy.

4...Her priests have **polluted** the sanctuary, They have done **violence to the law.**

4. Her priests corrupted (or sometimes ignored) worship, making their corrupt worship a stench in God's nostrils.

Instead of purifying the people and offering pure worship, they polluted the people and perverted the worship.

Ezekiel 22:26 "Her priests have violated My law and **profaned My holy things;** they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and **they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths,** so that I am profaned..."

Jesus warned of this evil work of the Jewish leaders.

Matthew 23:14 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a **pretense make long prayers...**

5. None of the 3 leaders was able to subside the wickedness of the covenant people, rather, they exacerbated it.

It is quite insulting if you hold a door for someone and he insults you. That was somewhat how the Jews acted to God.

6. Lessons:

a. There are some political leaders who do whatever people who give them money want. They care nothing about right or wrong. They promote any perversion, thinking of their own self-interest. They keep borrowing money to give away to their electors and stealing from children and grandchildren. **There are pastors who do the same thing in order to be paid.** They are afraid to confront sin, lest people leave. **But preachers must proclaim truth.**

Isaiah 50:4 "The Lord GOD has given Me **The tongue of the learned**, That I should know how to speak A word in season to him who is weary...

b. Children, when you see your parents spank your brother, doesn't that make you shake? It should. But Judah did not care when Israel was punished. This is what will happen if the church doesn't repent and learn from God's earlier punishment.

c. The church should gladly repent.

1 John 3:3 And everyone who has this hope in Him **purifies himself**, just as He is pure.

Receives God's Judgment

5 The LORD is righteous in her midst, **He will do no unrighteousness.** Every morning **He brings His justice** to light; **He never fails**, But the unjust knows no shame.

1. Christ was there to see everything that Jerusalem did so he could not turn a blind eye.

He had to bring justice as there was no sense of shame among God's people.

Jeremiah 3:3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; **You refuse to be ashamed.**

Israel had the badge of a prostitute! What would you expect a judge to do if he keeps giving you breaks but you keep breaking the law? God had to act. God would bring the justice he thought to do to the nations around on his own Bride.

6 "I have **cut off nations**, Their **fortresses are devastated**; I have made their **streets desolate**, With none passing by. Their **cities are destroyed**; There is no one, **no inhabitant.** 7 I said, '**Surely you will fear Me, You will**

receive instruction' — So that her dwelling would not be cut off, Despite everything for which I punished her. But they **rose early** and corrupted all their deeds.

2. God tried to get his people to repent by showing what he did to many nations, but they persistently refused his warnings and they rejected his promises of blessings if they repented.

Isaiah 1:5 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The **whole head is sick**, And the whole heart faints.

Consider what God did in order to persuade Judah to repent.

He destroyed the Philistines and gave Judah the land they have never fully controlled. They had land to their west.

He destroyed Tyre and gave Judah the seacoasts. They had land to the north.

He destroyed Moab and Ammon who threatened Judah constantly and gave them land to the east.

He destroyed the Ethiopians (Arabians), another constant threat. They had land to the south.

He destroyed the Assyrians who had already shown their power to take away the northern 10 ½ tribes into captivity.

He left the streets of these places desolate so his people could inherit them...and pass through them as they spread farther!

God hoped that his bride would have feared him and listened to him and not be cut off like these other nations.

Luke 13:3 "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

3. But Judah “rose early” and lived corrupted lives.

They were excited, like a child might be on Christmas day, but they were excited to do evil.

4. Lessons:

a. Having the Lord “among” you is not a neutral thing. The Lord is here to do justly, to promote his cause. He is here to encourage and support. At the same time, because he is near, he won't support your bad behavior. Thinking that God is always near as genie is near is to have a superstitious view of God.

b. For you to live in freedom and be able to do the work God has called you to do, you have to have (you must have) your enemies destroyed. And that is what God has promised.

c. If the church won't follow the Lord, the judgment he thought to put on our enemies, he will put on you.

d. Our Father is so great and loving that he provided someone to take the punishment for our sins. Yes, Jesus was disappointed when he saw how rebellious Jerusalem had become, and he wanted to gather them under his wings as a hen gathers her chicks, **but yet**

he became their prophet, priest, and king. And did what the Jewish leaders had failed to do.

Isaiah 61:1 "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, Because the LORD has anointed Me **To preach good tidings** to the poor; He has sent Me to **heal the brokenhearted**, To proclaim **liberty to the captives**, And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Do you see the 3 things he did for his people? Do you see his great love? He is your prophet, priest, and king!

Conclusion:

Judah became a rebellious woman who refused God's correction and so she received God's discipline, strong discipline. But God did not wipe away his bride from existence. He simply wanted her to come to her senses, and her suffering had to be severe enough.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't spit at God's ordinances: His Word, his sacrament, his church, prayer, and singing. If you do, you will make him angry. If he is angry, eventually his patience will run out and he will run you out. He will heap shame on your head.

2. Instead, urge your fellow believers to repent...to get back to the ordinances of God...stay close to God...stay in his house...sit at his feet...have fellowship with him...have children...many spiritual children. And then enjoy all the additional blessings he will bring to you! More blessings than you can count!

3. When you wonder why you should do it...look in the mirror and then look at Mt. Calvary.
See who Jesus died for there! Then act.

Finally: If God's own people could not escape God's punishment, neither will you, except you will additionally be sent to hell forever. But you too have an opportunity to get out of hell. All you must do is to ask God to count Jesus' life and death as yours.