

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Read (Primary Text): Zephaniah

Supporting Texts: 2 Kings 22:1-8, 11-13; 23:1-3; Nahum 1:2-3; 3:1, Habakkuk 1:3b-4, Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 5:6-11

***Note: While Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah were not written at exactly the same time (they were all written within 100 years of each other), they all do convey the same theme. For the purposes of this study, we will look at all three books to focus on the main idea for this study which we find in Zephaniah 3.*

MAIN IDEA: God delivers His people from the punishment they deserve through His Son.

OBSERVE

Read Zephaniah 1:1 and 2 Kings 22:1-8, 11-13; 23:1-3. The 2 Kings passage gives us some backstory into the book of Zephaniah. What is going on in the nation of Israel during the writing of Zephaniah? *The Word of God (which had been lost for some time resulting in His people living lives in rebellion to God) was presented to the nation of Israel and used to bring about conviction and repentance of sin.*

After reading Nahum 1:2-3 and Zephaniah 1:14-17, what is the Lord declaring He is going to do? *He is going to punish guilty mankind.*

According to Nahum 3:1, Habakkuk 1:3b-4, and Zephaniah 1:6, 2:10, what are the indictments the Lord is bringing against the nations of the world. *They are guilty of violence, deceit, taking advantage of others (Nahum), constant oppression, violence, and strife, perverting justice (Habakkuk), refusal to seek God, pride, and acting against God's people (Zephaniah). These acts of rebellion towards God require justice and punishment.*

According to Zephaniah 3:8-9, what is the purpose of God's just punishment of sin? *To restore purity which will lead to a unified service of God because of His name's sake.*

What is the result of this restored purity in God's people according to Zephaniah 3:12-13? *God's people will humbly follow and trust God, have truthful lips, and a complete reliance on God.*

INTERPRET

Zephaniah spends all of chapters 1 and 2 declaring the sins and judgement of the surrounding nations. In chapter 3, he pivots towards God's people and the consequences of their sins. After reading Zephaniah 3:1-4, 7, why do you think Zephaniah does this? *Based on 2 Kings, we recall that God's people haven't been pure and innocent leading up to this time. In order to prevent the nation of Israel from becoming haughty in their identity as God's people after reading God's Word for the first time in a very long time, Zephaniah points the spotlight to the sins of God's people.*

Zephaniah does not leave the reader wondering about the severity of the sins, the rebellion of God's people. But, in 3:14-15, he says this most wonderful statement: "Sing for joy, Daughter Zion; shout loudly, Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, Daughter Jerusalem! The LORD has removed your punishment; He has turned back your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is among you; you need no longer fear harm." Read Isaiah 53:5-6. How was the LORD able to remove this punishment (*this is not talking about the natural consequences of our sin*)?

Zephaniah 3:17 says "The LORD your God is among you, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will bring you quietness with His love. He will delight in you with shouts of joy." What does this tell us about how God looks at His people? *God greatly delights in and rejoices over His people. This is indicative not of a patronizing Father who feels obligated to enjoy His children, but a loving Father who truly delights in His creation as they follow Him!*

RESPOND

After reading Romans 5:6-11 and Zephaniah 3:14-15, what do we see is the natural response to the the LORD removing the punishment of His people? *Rejoicing!*

Read Zephaniah 3:18-20 and note how many times God says "I will." What does this imply and how does this bring comfort to God's people? (*It is God and God alone who accomplishes these things for His people and what a tremendous comfort and encouragement and relief that can bring to God's people. It can bring comfort to His people knowing that our redemption doesn't rest on our incapable shoulders, this redemption is secure because it is God who did the work—not us, God redeems even the most hopeless situations, etc.*)

APPLY

How can the knowledge that God finds joy in His people to the point of singing and shouting impact how we live our lives?

- *We don't have to come to God timidly or with fear of rejection (Hebrews 4:16)*
- *We don't have to worry that our fears, emotions, or failings affect how He looks at us (the whole of Psalms!)*
- *We can be equally as joyful as we live our lives, even in the trials, by rejoicing in Him*

We see that the purpose of just punishment of sin is to bring about a purity that points to God. Are there any areas in your life that need purification? How can this give glory to God?