

# Judgment upon Jerusalem

## Zephaniah 3:1-8

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Introduction: Jerusalem is called “*the holy city*” both in the O.T. & N.T. (Nehemiah 11:1, 18; Isaiah 48:2; Matthew 4:5; & Revelation 11:5). The name of the city means “the city of peace.” Yet in Zephaniah’s day there was nothing truly holy or peaceful about the city. Note how Zephaniah begins chapter 3, “*Woe to her that is filthy & polluted, to the oppressing city!*” Such an assessment was also given by Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel in their day. We began our look at Zephaniah’s prophecy last week by considering God’s severity (the reckoning of judgment) & His salvation (repentance to avert judgment) in the morning service, & then God’s judgment upon the Gentile nations in the evening. We noted that the prophet begins with God’s judgment upon Judah, the Southern Kingdom. It is a reminder that judgment must begin with the people of God (cf. I Peter 4:18). Having then prophesied about the judgment of God upon the Gentile nations (2:4-15), Zephaniah returns with the reasons for God’s judgment upon Judah, specifically, its capital Jerusalem, here in chapter 3:1-8. He will conclude his prophecy with a message of hope – restoration after judgment (3:9-20), that we will look at tonight. Consider with me this morning the reasons for God’s judgment of Jerusalem. Such judgment is declared upon her physical sins, described by her spiritual sins, & detailed in her individual sins.

### I. Judgment declared upon her **physical** sins (:1) - Woe upon the “*filthy, polluted, oppressing city!*”

#### A. Her sins of insubordination – cf. Jeremiah 5:1 >

1. None in Jerusalem who serve justice (“*executeth judgment*”).
2. None in Jerusalem who seek truth (“*that seeketh the truth*”).

#### B. Her sins of infanticide – cf. Jeremiah 19:1-5; 32:35 & Zephaniah 1:4 >

1. “*They have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt offerings unto Baal...*” (Jeremiah 19:5).
2. “*And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons & their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech...*” (Jeremiah 32:35).

Application: Babies are not offered on altars for burnt offerings today; just aborted.

#### C. Her sins of immorality – cf. Jeremiah 23:13-14 & Zephaniah 1:4 >

1. Homosexuality – “*I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing... they are all of them unto Me as Sodom, & the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah*” (Jeremiah 23:14).
2. Adultery – Baal worship (Zephaniah 1:4) was licentious in the extreme. The religion of Baal was a fertility cult & its adherents climaxed their worship with temple prostitutes” (Phillips).

### II. Judgment described by her **spiritual** sins (:2)

#### A. “*She obeyed not the voice*” >

1. Compare: Jeremiah 6:16, “*Thus saith The LORD, Stand ye in the ways, & see, & ask for the old paths, where is the good way, & walk therein, & ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.*”
2. Contrast: I Samuel 3:9-10, “*...Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth...*”

#### B. “*She received not correction*” >

1. Compare: Jeremiah 5:1-3, “*...but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return.*”
2. Contrast: Proverbs 3:11-12, “*My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of His correction: For whom the LORD loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.*” (See also Psalm 94:12 & Hebrews 12:5-11).

- C. *“She trusted not in the LORD”* >
1. Compare: Jeremiah 17:5-6, *“Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, & maketh flesh his arm, & whose heart departeth from the LORD...”*
  2. Contrast: Jeremiah 17:7-9, *“Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, & whose hope the LORD is...”*
- D. *“She drew not near to her God”* >
1. Compare: Zephaniah 1:6, *“And them that are turned back from the LORD; & those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for Him”* (cf. Jeremiah 2:12-14 & 17:13).
  2. Contrast: II Chronicles 15:2, to Asa, *“the LORD is with you, while ye be with Him; & if ye seek Him, He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you”* (& cf. James 4:7-8).

Application: How do you respond to the voice of God in His Word? Are you yielded to the chastening of God when it comes? Are you trusting in the Lord completely for your salvation & sanctification? And do you seek to draw near to the Lord daily as you submit to Him?

Summary: “What happens to a nation that has been founded on Biblical principles when it abandons the gold standard of the Word of God? Ample illustrations can be found in our own land” (Phillips).

### III. Judgment detailed in her **individual** sins (:3-5)

- A. *“Her princes within her are roaring lions...”* (:3a).  
Her civil leaders are as fierce lions.
- B. *“Her judges are evening wolves, they gnaw not the bones till the morrow”* (:3b).  
Her civil leaders are as cruel wolves (devour their prey before morning light).
- C. *“Her prophets are light & treacherous persons...”* (:4a).  
Her religious leaders are insolent (“light”) & “treacherous because they were unfaithful to Him whom they claimed to represent, rather encouraging the people in their apostasy from the Lord” (Feinberg).
- D. *“Her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law”* (:4b).  
Her religious leaders “polluted the sanctuary” – treating the holy place as common or ordinary by their unholy deeds (“violence”).

Summary: “Princes, prophets, & priests were alike guilty of polluting the nation by their wicked example & ways” (Feinberg).

Conclusion: In verses 6-7, the Lord recounts His judgments upon other nations, particularly Israel’s enemies, in order to cause Judah to fear the Lord. But rather than fearing the Lord, they continue in their corrupt deeds again & again. Perhaps they reasoned that they were God’s covenant people & that He would always protect them. Yet they forgot that with their covenant privileges, they had also covenant responsibilities. They are therefore subject to the same just God who judges sin & unrighteousness. In verse 8 God again speaks of His judgment on the world. “God will pour out His wrath upon these nations, deliver His people, & establish His kingdom. His jealous anger will burn like fire against all who resist His truth & disobey His Word. The terrible Day of the Lord will dawn & there will be no escape (see Zephaniah 1:2-3)” (Wiersbe). What are the lessons to be learned here? By simply changing the names here - the country of America for the city of Jerusalem – we have a description of judgment that could be well applied today. And note not just the physical & spiritual sins of the city, but the sins of the individuals. Do you see yourself described here in anyway? If so, repent & make it right with the Lord!