

Words of Truth



Woe To Her That Is Filthy And Polluted

By: Brian A. Yeager

Zephaniah writes: *“Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God. Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law. The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame”* (Zephaniah 3:1-5). Let’s examine these verses and then make some applications.

What Made The City Filthy and Polluted?

To begin with, let’s establish that Zephaniah wrote this when Josiah was the king in Judah (Zephaniah 1:1). Israel had already been carried away and no longer was numbered among God’s people (II Kings 18:9-12). The context bears out that Zephaniah is talking about Zion (Zephaniah 3:14-20), which is in Jerusalem (Psalms 135:21 and Isaiah 30:19). Therefore, the city that is being rebuked in the beginning of chapter three is the city that will be exalted at the conclusion of chapter three.

Jerusalem is filthy and polluted because they did not obey the voice of God. Disobedience to God was not something new for God’s people of old: *“But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people: and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward. Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck: they did worse than their fathers. Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them; but they will not hearken to thee: thou shalt also call unto them; but they will not answer thee. But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction: truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth”* (Jeremiah 7:23-28).

Jerusalem is filthy and polluted because they did not receive correction. Those who forsake the ways of God see correction as a grievous act (Proverbs 15:10). Sadly, God often found that His people refused correction and hardened their faces against Him (Jeremiah 5:3).

Jerusalem is filthy and polluted because they did not trust in God. The children of Israel often provoked God by their lack of trust in Him (Psalms 78:16-32). Instead of looking to their captain of salvation, Israel often looked to the help of man in times of trouble (Isaiah 30:1-3). God had been clear in telling His people that trusting in man rather than in Him was vain (II Kings 18:21, Psalms 118:8-9,

Psalms 146:3, and Hosea 10:13). He also showed them that trusting in man would bring curses upon them (Isaiah 36:6 and Jeremiah 17:5-6).

Jerusalem is filthy and polluted because they did not draw near to God. The Psalmist clearly shows the fallacy of not drawing near to God in this statement: *“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts”* (Psalms 10:4). Sadly, God’s people had grown tired of their redeemer (Isaiah 43:22).

Jerusalem is filthy and polluted because her leaders and teachers were corrupt. Isaiah wrote: *“For the people turneth not unto him that smiteth them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. The ancient and honourable, he is the head; and the prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail. For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed”* (Isaiah 9:13-16). When the blind are leaders of the blind you can know for sure that BOTH will fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14). The spiritual blindness among God’s people started with their leaders and trickled down to all of the people (Isaiah 3:12).

Zephaniah chapter three is a great study. There is a lot to learn about God’s justice in that chapter. Yet, we would be amiss if we did not use these Scriptures of the past to make applications for us to consider (Romans 15:4, I Corinthians 10:1-11, and Hebrews 3:7-4:2).

Some Applications For Us...

We become filthy and polluted if we disobey God (Titus 1:16). Therefore, we need to be sure we have cleansed ourselves from ALL filthiness of the flesh (II Corinthians 7:1 and James 1:21). If we choose to reject correction we are like the filthy and polluted city. We should abhor ourselves when we are in sin (Job 42:6, Ezekiel 20:43, Ezekiel 36:31, and I Timothy 1:13-16). However, we should find happiness and joy when we are granted the opportunity to be corrected (Job 5:17 and Psalms 94:12).

How can we be considered faithful if we do not trust in our Creator? We should place our trust in God rather than in people or earthly wealth (Psalms 71:5 and I Timothy 6:17). So many people are constantly under stress because they have not sought the things of God and put their trust in Him. We should not be such a people who are always worried about the things of this life (Matthew 6:24-34).

The only way for us to have a relationship with God is if we cleanse our ways and draw near to God (James 4:8-10). Like Israel of the past, we don’t want to find ourselves looking to the errors of men for guidance (Jeremiah 7:8). We all have to remember that there are a great number of false teachers and false brethren who look the part, but are looking to draw us away (Matthew 7:15-20, Acts 20:28-31, II Peter 2:1-3, and Jude 3-4). If we trust and follow the erring, we’re filthy and polluted!

Conclusion

When you read through Zephaniah chapter three you can see God’s anger and love for His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God (Hebrews 10:31). Therefore, we need to spend our time focusing on being in the love of God (Jude 21). Doesn’t it upset your stomach to think that God would look at you like a filthy and polluted person? We all need to be mindful that when our ways are erring we are an abomination to God (Proverbs 15:9). Therefore, let us be the pure ones (Matthew 5:8).