

○ “will not be put to shame . . . because I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the Lord” – sometimes we may have cause to feel ashamed because of the rebellion, oppression and impurity of our society, but when the Day of the Lord comes, we will no longer have reason to feel ashamed of that. The remnant (those left after judgment) will do no wrong, speak no lies, and be guilty of no deceit.

- Have someone read aloud Zephaniah 3:14-17.
- **What are the four reasons the prophet says we will have reason to rejoice and sing?** (the Lord has taken away our punishment; the Lord has turned back our enemy; the Lord is with us; we need never again fear any harm)

Wrapping It Up

- **As Zephaniah says in 3:17, “The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”**
- Call on someone to lead the class in prayer.

- Have someone read aloud Zephaniah 3:18-30.
- Have learners find and underline the words “bring you home” in verse 20.
- **This speaks of the Israelites returning to their homeland, but in a more futuristic sense it speaks of believers and heaven. All believers are anxiously awaiting that day when the Lord will bring us home.**

Making It Personal

Writing a song

- Give each person a pencil and a copy of Item 2 which leads them in an exercise of writing a song (or poem or essay) of rejoicing over the Day of the Lord.
- Allow five minutes for learners to write. Then let a few volunteers share their creations.

Teacher's Toolbox

*Getting your class into God's Word
and God's Word into your class*

ExcitingBibleStudy.com

Bible Series

Zephaniah 3

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HOW TO USE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: Make a four-page folded teacher's leaflet from the first two sheets by printing two-sided (or by putting the blank sides together). The other two sheets are for duplicating, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using as called for in the lesson plan.

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Faith at Home – A specific application of today's Bible passage to family life, to be used for individual reflection, family discussion, or class activity.

Getting Started

Seeing the good side of judgment

- Write the phrase GUILTY VERDICT on the marker board.
- **How do you react to that phrase? What are your thoughts and feelings?** Wait for responses, which will probably be negative.
- **Why might someone have a positive response to that phrase?** Wait for responses. If they are slow in coming, add this question: **Who might respond positively to that phrase and why?** They may mention: the prosecutor; the victim of the crime; the jury that rendered the verdict; the witnesses who testified against the defendant; the people in the community who felt threatened by the defendant and other criminals.
- **There is a fearful side of judgment, but there is also a thankful side of judgment. What you experience depends on which side you are on.**



Faith at Home

Thinking of the end of the world is sometimes frightening, especially for children. Lead your family to discuss what is good about the end of the world: Jesus returns; we'll all be together forever; heaven; no more pain, suffering, sin or death; God receives the glory He deserves; Satan is defeated; etc.

Exploring God's Word

Setting the scene

- The third chapter of Zephaniah begins by recapping the message of the first two chapters about the terrible judgment God will bring upon Jerusalem and the rest of the world because of their sin; but then quickly moves on to show the flip side of the coming Day of the Lord: restoration, blessing and joy.
- In a moment we will read Zephaniah 3:1-4. As we read that passage, think of a courtroom scene in which a "group action" is being brought against the city of Jerusalem.

The prophet begins in verse 1 with the charges brought: oppression, rebellion, and moral impurity.

Then in verse 2 he lists four character issues that have led to the people's crimes: refusal to obey anyone, refusal to accept correction, refusal to trust in the Lord, and refusal to draw near to God.

Finally, in verses 3-4 he names some specific "defendants" and their specific crimes which, in each case, involves doing the exact opposite of what they should do in their positions: officials who, rather than "serving and protecting," oppress and devour the people like roaring

lions; rulers who, rather than stepping in to stop the officials' oppression of the people, act like wolves, completing the job and finishing off what is left; prophets who, rather than being humble and helpful, are arrogant and treacherous; and priests who, rather than glorifying the temple and upholding the law, profane the sanctuary and do violence (misinterpret, twist, use for their own purposes) the law.

- Now, with that picture in mind, let's read Zephaniah 3:1-4.
- Call on someone to read the passage aloud.
- How do you think bad news for the officials, rulers, prophets and priests could be good news for the people of Jerusalem? Wait for responses.

Reading a related passage

- Have someone read aloud Zephaniah 1:5.
- The Experiencing God study by Henry Blackaby reminds us that "God is always at work around us." The city of Jerusalem seems to have forgotten that God was "within her," and was always at work, dispensing justice and righteousness every single day. They had become blind to the work of God in their midst. As the prophet had quoted them in Zephaniah 1:12, they thought, "The Lord will do

nothing, either good or bad."

- Have learners turn to 2 Peter 3:1-10 and tell how the scoffers Peter predicted would be like the people Zephaniah wrote about.
- God's judgment on the nations around Judah should have gotten their attention, turned them back to the Lord, and enabled them to avoid judgment upon themselves. But it didn't happen.
- Have someone read aloud Zephaniah 3:5-8.

Studying Zephaniah's references to "the Day of the Lord"

- The Day of the Lord is clearly the underlying theme of the Book of Zephaniah, which refers to it 24 times in 16 verses, more than any other Old Testament book. The phrase refers to a time of God's intervention in the world in a way that cannot be denied, even by the scoffers. His intervention will be one of judgment upon the wicked, but also one of restoration of the faithful. When prophets speak of the Day of the Lord, it can refer simultaneously to an imminent event, an event in the near future, an event in the distant future, and an event near the end of time.
- Give each person a pencil and a copy of Item 1 which lists the references in Zephaniah to the Day of the Lord. Have them read the passages silently and take notes on the

sheet.

- After two or three minutes, ask volunteers to tell what they learned about Zephaniah's understanding of the Day of the Lord.

Seeing the good news

- What is bad news for the wicked is good news for the righteous.
- Have someone read aloud Zephaniah 3:9-13.
- What do you see in this passage that shows you the Day of the Lord will be a wonderful day? Wait for responses. During the discussion, share some of these insights:
 - "purify the lips of the peoples" – Isaiah had said, "Woe to me . . . for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:5). His lips were then purified by a live coal a seraph used to touch his mouth and atone for his sin.
 - "may call on the name of the Lord" – Joel 2:32 (and quoted by Paul in Romans 10:13) says that calling on the name of the Lord is the way to be saved.
 - "shoulder to shoulder" – a description of being yoked together. Jesus said in Matthew 11:30 that His yoke is easy and His burden is light (when we serve yoked to Him, shoulder to shoulder).

The Day of the Lord

Read these references to that awful and wonderful day in the Book of Zephaniah and jot down some notes about what he says:

1:7 _____

1:8 _____

1:9 _____

1:10 _____

1:12 _____

1:14 _____

1:15 _____

1:16 _____

1:18 _____

2:2 _____

2:3 _____

3:8 _____

3:11 _____

3:16 _____

3:19 _____

3:20 _____

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be glad and rejoice
with all your heart!”**

That’s what the prophet Zephaniah proclaims in 3:14. Why does he tell us to do that? Because the Lord has taken away our punishment and turned back our enemy.

That is an ever-present reality for those who know Christ. If the Israelites were to sing, shout aloud, be glad and rejoice with all their heart . . . how much more should we do so who have trusted Jesus, had all our sins forgiven, and received the free gift of eternal life.

Write a brief song (or poem or essay) that expresses with heartfelt joy your excitement over the coming Day of the Lord.

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