

Verse 13. The events of rescue mentioned here are both history and prophecy. God redeemed his people from Egypt and promised to rescue them from Babylon.

Verse 14. This verse has special reference to the events in Egypt when the children of Israel were about to be delivered. The pronouns are used in a rather indefinite manner; they stand for Egypt or the Lord or for his people. The thought is that God overthrew all forces of Egypt that had been arrayed against Israel.

Verse 15. This event is recorded in Exodus 14.

Verse 16. *When I heard* is said for the general report that was heard of the marvelous passage through the Red Sea which followed the judgments upon the Egyptians. The *trembling* and *quivering* denotes the impression that was made upon the nations when they heard about the dreadful occurrence. (See Joshua 2: 8-11.)

Verse 17. The misfortunes described in this verse were sometimes brought upon a country as a punishment for the sins of its people. He even sometimes visited his own people with like chastisements.

Verse 18. These judgments did not weaken the faith of the prophet in his God.

Verse 19. Habakkuk gives honor to God as being the source of all strength and success. The chapter ends with a reference to rhythmic measures similar to the term used in its beginning.

### ZEPHANIAH 1

Verse 1. *Word of the Lord came unto Zephaniah* denotes that the prophet wrote by inspiration of God. *Days of Josiah* definitely gives us the date of the book which was near the end of the kingdom of Judah.

Verse 2. *Utterly consume* means to remove the things from the land.

Verse 3. *Consume* still means to remove, although it is used somewhat figuratively with reference to dumb creatures, for we know from history that there was no actual disturbance of such things. But by removing the people from the land it removed them from all use of them. The idols were the chief stumblingblocks of God's people so that is what is meant that would be removed. History shows that Israel never committed idolatry after the return from captivity.

Verse 4. Jerusalem was the capital

of Judah and it was doomed to be taken into captivity. *Cut off the remnant of Baal* refers directly to the idols and they were to be cut off even before the people were removed. (See 2 Kings 23: 4, 5.)

Verse 5. *Host of heaven upon the housetops* refers to the worship of the stars, and the people went to their housetops for that practice. *Swear by the Lord* and by *Malcham* (national idol of the Ammonites) means they tried to mix the idolatrous worship with that of the true God of Israel.

Verse 6. *Cut off* is still the verb that tells what is to happen to certain evil characters. *Turned back from the Lord* means those who proved unfaithful to Him and directed their attention to idols. These persons did not seek information from the Lord nor even make any inquiry after Him.

Verse 7. *Hold thy peace* has about the same force as the bid for "silence" in Habakkuk 2: 20. *Day of the Lord* means the day of judgment against Judah when she was to be taken into captivity. *Prepared a sacrifice* is figurative and refers to the turning over of Judah to the Babylonians. *Bid his guests*. When a man makes a feast he invites a number of guests, and in like manner the Lord bids the whole world to behold the judgments about to be sent upon a disobedient people.

Verse 8. The leaders in Jerusalem were chiefly responsible for the corruptions of the nation and they are given special notice here.

Verse 9. *Leap on the threshold* means those who enter the houses of their abominable masters and thus endorse them in their evil way of life.

Verse 10. The gates and hills are mentioned which indicates that the tumult to be caused by the invasion would be general.

Verse 11. *Maktesh* was a spot in Jerusalem that was evidently a commercial center. The traffic had become questionable and the merchants were to be punished for it which is the reason they are told to howl.

Verse 12. *Candles* should not convey the thought of a weak light because such articles in ancient times were not made as they are today. The original word means something that would furnish a searching light. *Lees* are the settlings of wine that has become fixed and undisturbed. It is used figuratively to indicate the feeling of satisfaction that the leading men in Jerusalem had in spite of the

warning predictions of the prophets that a calamity was soon coming upon the city. *Not do good or evil* means that they did not believe that the Lord was really going to do anything about the situation. They had lulled the people into a state of indifference as to their conduct by the false prophecies of peace made to them by the corrupt teachers.

Verse 13. This verse is a prediction of the invasion from the Babylonian army that was to take possession of the property of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Verse 14. *The great day of the Lord is near*. Zephaniah wrote this in the days of Josiah which was less than a quarter of a century before the captivity.

Verse 15. This verse describes the terrible conditions that came upon the land at the siege and capture of Judah by the Babylonian army. The fulfillment of the prediction is recorded in 2 Kings 24 and 25.

Verse 16. The *trumpet* was sounded in a time of war and this is a prediction of such an occasion. *Fenced cities* were those that were walled and fortified, but all such means of protection or defence were destined to prove insufficient.

Verse 17. This verse is a description of the humiliation to come upon the men of Judah when the Babylonians came against the land. The reason for all this terrible judgment is expressed by the words *because they have sinned against the Lord*.

Verse 18. Sometimes a victorious army can be induced to make peace by the offer of money. But the Babylonians were not wanting that, instead they were bent on the subjugation of the city of Jerusalem and its surrounding territory.

## ZEPHANIAH 2

Verse 1. *Gather together* is an exhortation for them to concentrate their attention upon the situation. *Nation not desired* means that their present state and conduct failed to meet the approval of the Lord.

Verse 2. *Before the decree bring forth*. If anything is to be done to avert the impending doom it must be done soon for the time of the invasion is near. *As the chaff* denotes that the nation was to be threshed and the worthless parts blown away.

Verse 3. Here is another instance

of the apparent disagreement between the different announcements made to the people of Israel. The subject is explained by the long note offered in the comments on 2 Kings 22: 17 volume 2 of this Commentary.

Verses 4, 5. The towns and places named in this paragraph were those of the Philistines and adjoining territory. Those people had been enemies to God's nation and He decreed that they should be punished. And when the Lord's own people have received their just chastisement and have come back to their native land, these other spots will serve for the use of the returning nation.

Verse 6. Some of the uses that will be made of these territories are specified in this verse. One of the chief industries in the land of Palestine was that of the production and raising of sheep. The area under consideration was to furnish shelter for the shepherds and their flocks.

Verse 7. This verse specifically looks beyond the captivity about to come upon Judah and includes the return to Palestine. The captivity was to serve as a chastisement for the people of Judah and was not intended to be continued any longer than was necessary to accomplish the Lord's purposes.

Verse 8. These heathen nations had spoken lightly of the Lord's people and he was aroused in his jealousy over it, so that He was determined to make them feel the sting of divine wrath.

Verse 9. *Sodom and Gomorrah* were destroyed by fire from heaven (Genesis 19), and these Moabites and Ammonites were to be destroyed; not literally by fire, but with a destruction as decisive. *Residue of my people* means the remnant that was to return from the captivity (Ezra 2: 64).

Verse 10. A feeling of self-importance is often attributed to pride, and such was the case of the nations that arrayed themselves against Judah.

Verse 11. The heathen nations all depended upon their false gods and the Lord proposed to expose their weakness. *Men shall worship him* when they see His power to be superior to that of the idols. This does not mean they will become true servants of God in all of the requirements of divine law, but they will recognize Him as the superior deity over all beings claiming the adoration of mankind.

Verse 12. Ethiopia was another heathen nation that had made light of God's people and hence was threatened with divine vengeance.

Verse 13. The rest of the chapter is against the Assyrians and especially against the city of Nineveh which was their capital. That empire had invaded the land of Palestine in the days of the 10-tribe kingdom and had taken it into exile. As a punishment its territory was destined to become a wilderness.

Verse 14. After the Assyrians lost control of their territory, the same was to be used by their successors as a pasturage for their stock. Not only so, but wild creatures were to infest the desirable spots and enjoy themselves in the doleful place. *Uncover the cedar work.* The important buildings of ancient countries were lined with this beautiful wood, and the Lord predicted that they were to be ransacked and the ornamental cedar finishing be exposed to decay.

Verse 15. The disgrace of Nineveh is the subject of this verse. This was one of the proudest cities of the ancient world, but her pride was doomed to be brought down so low that all people passing by would cast reproachful glances and sneers at her.

### ZEPHANIAH 3

Verse 1. The prophet now resumes his accusations against Jerusalem. The *fifth* and *pollution* refers chiefly to her conduct towards false gods and her unjust treatment of her unfortunate citizens in private stations of life.

Verse 2. There were four things that Jerusalem should have done that she did NOT do, namely, *obeyed, received, trusted and drew* not near to her God. This combination of failures resulted in the anger of the Lord till he determined to bring swift judgment upon the city and its surrounding territory.

Verse 3. The leading men in Jerusalem were so cruel toward their brethren that they were compared to roaring lions. *Evening wolves.* A beast that had been without food all day would be especially ravenous. Moffatt renders the last clause, "leave not a bone till the morning," which agrees with the context that describes a greedy beast.

Verse 4. *Light and treacherous* means they are frivolous and unreliable. Such a prophet would refuse

to be serious concerning the danger overhanging the nation. The priests made a mere formality of the services and violated the law whenever it would interfere with their plots against the common people.

Verse 5. The *just* Lord is a significant term in view of the conditions. It denotes that a severe chastisement is to be meted out against these wicked princes. God's disapproval of the corruptions is made known every day, yet the unjust leaders are not impressed thereby but continue in their wickedness.

Verse 6. *Have cut off* is past tense in form but is a prediction of the doom about to come from the Lord. The watchtowers of the cities were destined to be thrown down and the streets exposed to the passing enemy.

Verse 7. *I said, etc.,* denotes that God expected the people to be impressed with the importance of His judgments, yet they continued on in their evil course. Their keenness to do evil is indicated by the words *they rose early and corrupted their doings.*

Verse 8. This long verse is only a prediction of the captivity of the nation that was just due. God had warned and exhorted his people by the faithful prophets, but they would not give heed thereto and hence He was determined to bring complete and prompt judgment upon the nation. *All the earth* is a figure of speech and denotes that the whole territory of Judah was to be devastated by the invading forces.

Verse 9. From this verse through the rest of the chapter the prophet deals with the effects the captivity was to have on the people and then of their return from the exile. *A pure language* means the people will speak in proper words concerning the true God of their nation and of the world. They will praise Him as being the just and holy One instead of the idols they had served in their home land before the captivity.

Verse 10. The main captivity was in the land of Babylon, but God had some people scattered in various other parts of the world, even in Ethiopia beyond Egypt. These dispersed people were to learn of the restoration of the service in Jerusalem and come forth to that place with their offerings for the divine service.

Verse 11. *In that day not be ashamed* might seem to disagree with other statements upon that subject,

but the explanation is in the words later in the verse. The proud leaders will have been taken away and the ones remaining will have a feeling of satisfaction toward God because of their renewal of freedom in their own country.

Verse 12. *The afflicted and poor people* were the ones who had been mistreated by the princes and false prophets. These were to be restored to their native land so that they could resume the holy service.

Verse 13. *The remnant* are the ones designated in Ezra 2: 64. *Shall not do iniquity* is the prediction that idolatry will have been eradicated from the practices of the people by the effects of the captivity. The other good things mentioned in the verse were to result also from the purifying effects of the captivity.

Verse 14. *Daughter of Zion* is an endearing term for Jerusalem and her people. She is bidden to sing and rejoice and that is because her people were to be released from the Babylonian captivity.

Verse 15. *Taken away thy judgments* refers to the reversal of the state of servitude that had been imposed upon the nation for its sins. The enemy (Babylon) was overthrown and God's people were relieved from the oppression.

Verse 16. Zion was a special spot in Jerusalem that was used as the headquarters for the kings. The return from captivity was to bring joy again to the place.

Verse 17. The success of Zion was to be assured by the presence of the Lord who had never ceased to love His people. He is mighty and will enable the nation to express its joy by singing the Lord's praises.

Verse 18. *Solemn assembly* pertains to the national gathering in the name of the Lord. All such meetings had been discontinued during the captivity.

Verse 19. *Undo all that afflict thee* denotes the overthrow of the heathen who had oppressed Israel. *Her that halteth* refers to the nation of God that had been held back by the chastisement from proceeding in the regular services of Jerusalem.

Verse 20. The gist of this verse is in the words *when I turn back your captivity*. The exile in Babylon was decreed by the Lord as a punishment upon his people for their sin of idolatry. When that event had accomplished

the Lord's purpose it was decreed and predicted that the nation would return home.

## HAGGAI 1

Verse 1. The reader should consult the book of Ezra, especially the last part of the 4th and first part of the 5th chapter; that will throw much light on the book we are studying. The Jews had been given authority by the king of Persia to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem but they had let the work cease for various reasons. Then the prophets were used by the Lord to stir up the people and shame them for their selfishness in being more concerned with their own affairs than they were with those of the Lord. After the prodding by these prophets the workers upon the building resumed their task. The reference in Ezra is very brief but our present book will give us a fuller view of the situation. The date of the book is given as the second year of Darius who was king in the Medo-Persian Empire at that time.

Verse 2. This verse reveals the excuse that was given by the people why they were not going on with the work of the temple. It was the age-old attempt at defence by saying it was not the right time yet, or that "there is plenty of time yet."

Verse 3. This was the word of the Lord although the people received it at the mouth of the prophet who was His inspired spokesman.

Verse 4. Haggaï chides them with their inconsistency because they were interested in their own personal affairs instead of the Lord's. They were building homes for their personal use and allowing the Lord's house to lie waste.

Verse 5. As a means of arousing them to a sense of their real position before God, the prophet calls their attention to some circumstances in their affairs that should have indicated to them that something was wrong.

Verse 6. The general subject of this verse is that almost everything in their personal occupations was having very little success. Those were the years when God sometimes punished his people with temporal reverses of various kinds, and their experiences were along that line.

Verse 7. Calling attention to their unrighteous ways, the prophet proceeds to tell his people what they should do to regain the good will of the Lord.