

A Prophecy of Restoration

Key Verse: *“Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.”*
—Zephaniah 3:19

Selected Scripture:
Zephaniah 3:14-20

MUCH OF THE PROPHECY of Zephaniah is that of judgment and trouble which would come upon Israel as a result of their transgressions against God. It is also a prophecy which similarly speaks of coming judgment upon the world in general due to their falling into the ruinous ways of sin. Near the end of Zephaniah’s prophecy, however, a grand hope of restoration is laid out for Israel and for all the families of the earth. The title of today’s lesson is reflective of that hope and its eventual fulfillment.

It is important to remember that the righteous character of God requires that he first exercise judgment against sin, and defeat its power over mankind, prior to blessing the people and restoring them to his favor and to life. The psalmist says, “The LORD abides forever; He has established His throne for judgment, And He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.” (Ps. 9:7,8, *New American Standard Bible*) We are comforted in the knowledge that God’s justice and judgment are often referred to in

the Scriptures together with words descriptive of his grace, love and mercy. We note Isaiah 30:18 as one such example: “The LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.”—*NASB*

Our Selected Scripture passage points out that God’s assurances of restoration follow his promises of removing the troubles and enemies that stand in the way of recovery. In the case of Israel, the prophet indicates that the destruction of Israel’s foes must precede their full restoration. As we view Israel today, although she was re-established as a nation more than seventy years ago, we see her still surrounded by enemies intent upon her destruction. This signifies that the fulfillment of this prophecy with regard to Israel still belongs to the future.

The restoration spoken of by Zephaniah in our lesson will not only be for Israel, but for all mankind. Earlier, in verse 9, the prophet speaks of a time when God will bless all people with a “pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.” The Prophet Micah says that of that time, “Many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.”—Mic. 4:2

The Apostle James spoke of these things, explaining that God’s selection of his church, “a people for His name,” must precede mankind’s restoration, but that “after these things I will return, and I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen, ... and I will restore it, So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name, says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.” (Acts 15:13-18, *NASB*) How thankful we are for the prophets of “long ago,” those such as Zephaniah, who foretold of restoration to come to Israel and all mankind. ■