

**Message #9****Zephaniah 3:14-20**

When we were in Florida, Brian texted me to ask how far a specific PGA National golf tournament in Palm Beach was from where we were. The distance was 14 miles. Actually, in Florida there are several PGA golf tournaments that hit one after another: There is the PGA national in Palm Beach County, then there is the Arnold Palmer Invitational at Bay Hill in Orlando, then there is the Valspar Championship near Tampa, Florida.

It's the last one that really touched my heart. The tournament was won by Peter Malnati. His payday was 1,512,000. Peter Malnati was born in Indiana and he joined the PGA tour in 2009. He has a wife and 2 sons. He was not one of the rich and famous golfers. He has made a decent living over the years, but he certainly is not one of the elite rich. He lives in Knoxville, Tennessee and he had not won a tournament since 2015. In fact, in terms of making money in 2014 he was 178 down the list.

Well, a few weeks ago in Tampa, he won. His wife Alicia and the two boys were there. They don't have the kind of money the big names have. They don't have the private jets and mansions and first class accommodations. When he won, he broke down and cried. He said my tears are not because of the money, it is because I was a kid who had a dream and my family has supported me all these years. What a story. I love stories like that. I love stories with happy endings.

The story for the people of God will be a happy ending. This is specifically a story that Israel will have a happy ending but we may certainly make application of it as well. God's people have lived in the world for a few years and they have made a living and enjoyed things in the world, but the future things God's people have dreamed about will come true in the future.

Zephaniah has been a hard hitting book. It is a book that starts off by God saying I will remove everything from My earth and cut off man from the earth (1:2-3). But Zephaniah does not end on a negative note. In fact, what Zephaniah says to God's people is this:

**AFTER GOD IS DONE POURING OUT HIS WRATH ON A GOD MOCKING, BIBLE HATING, CHRIST REJECTING WORLD, HE WILL HONOR AND BLESS HIS PEOPLE WITH A JOYOUS LIFE FOREVER.**

The eternal dreams of the people of God will come true. The eternal dreams of Israel will come true. It may not look like it this moment, but in the future the nation Israel and the people of God will be happy. There will come a day when everything God's people have wanted to happen will happen. God will see to it that His family will have a happy ending.

There are three final parts to this book of Zephaniah:

**PART #1** – Zephaniah predicts there will come a time when Israel will be joyful. **3:14-15**

**Verse 14** challenges God's nation Israel to shout for joy, to rejoice and exult in all of their hearts. This will be an amazing moment when all of Israel is verbally shouting and happy.

Many Jewish people keep quiet about their identity. It may not be as bad as it was back during the days of Hitler, but it will be even worse during the days of the Antichrist. Jewish people will live a clandestine existence, not telling others that they are Jewish.

Three specific targets are actually named:

Zion, which is a name for Israel, and the mountain place of worship.

Israel, which refers to the entire nation Israel.

Jerusalem, which refers to the capital city of Israel.

During the Tribulation, Jewish people will flee this area because the Antichrist will be after all Jews. He will be in Zion demanding he be worshipped and Jerusalem will be the city he will dominate.

Zephaniah says there will come a day when all Israel will be joyfully shouting in these very places.

Jewish people will joyously worship God from the one spot in the world where they have not been able to joyously worship God. There are four stated reasons why Israel will be a nation of rejoicing.

**Reason #1** - Because God has taken away His judgments from His people. **3:15a**

God's people sometimes experience negative things as a chastising judgment from God. Israel has experienced it and so have N.T. believers. When a believer refuses to respond to God and His word, God will allow negative things to hit. This will be a time when all of that is done. All judgments of God will be over. Life will be wonderful.

**Reason #2** - Because God has cleared out and removed Israel's enemies. **3:15b**

Notice it is God who clears out the enemies, not His people. As we saw last time, God's people can wait on God knowing He will gather all the enemies up and cast them away. That will be cause for joyful shouting and singing.

**Reason #3** - Because the King of Israel, the LORD, is literally there in person in her midst. **3:15c**

Here is a remarkable prediction - the King of kings, who is Jehovah LORD, will actually be there in Person in the midst of His people.

What a glorious hope for the people of God. Jesus Christ will rule the world. He will be King over all and when that happens, the people of God will rejoice forever.

**Reason #4** - Because Israel will never again be afraid of any disaster. **3:15d**

There will never again come any threat against Israel. There will never again be any threat of war, terrorist attack, anti-Semitic hate. Israel will be the esteemed nation of God and she will be able to shout and sing.

We are living in a scary and dangerous world. It has always been that way for the people of God. That is why Jesus told His own disciples when He was going to leave that they needed to buy a sword for protection (Luke 22:36). He would no longer be here to physically protect them, so they would be responsible for their own protection.

Just imagine living in a world where there is never a threat of being afraid of anything. No evil criminals; no predator animals; no deadly disease. What an existence that will be.

That is what the future will be for Israel and for all the people of God.

**PART #2** – Zephaniah describes what Jerusalem will be like when this happens. **3:16-17**

Jerusalem has a history of problems. It is a battleground city. Basically, it is a battleground city between the Arabs and the Jews. The Jews are going to win and the Arabs are going to lose. That is clearly predicted right here.

**Description #1** - Jerusalem will never be afraid. **3:16**

The promise concerns Jerusalem and Zion, which is the place where the Temple will stand. That Muslim Shrine Dome of the Rock will be gone and will never again be a threat to anyone or anything. The phrase “hands fall limp” refers to things that describe things that make people extremely afraid or terrified.

We literally saw a few years ago, December 21, 2017, that when Jerusalem was declared to be the capital of Israel by the President of the United States, it brought out threats and attacks by the Arab world. Even the United Nations seemed to be against it.

Jewish people who live in Jerusalem have lived under threat of war and violence every day of their life. They must be on guard at all times. God says the day will come when nothing will make them afraid. It will be a time of rejoicing for the nation of God and the people of God.

**Description #2** - The LORD Israel’s God will literally be there in her midst. **3:17**

The promise is that Jehovah, the God of Israel, and the God of the people of God, will literally in Person be in Jerusalem.

**(Reality #1)** - The LORD God will be there as a victorious warrior. **3:17a**

The first time He was there in Jerusalem, He did not appear as a victorious warrior. He came as a suffering Lamb/Savior. He was mocked and despised and attacked and killed. The next time He appears He will be the victorious, conquering warrior.

**(Reality #2)** - The LORD God will exalt over Jerusalem and Israel. **3:17b**

Many Jews wonder today if God has forgotten them. He has not. There will come a day when God will exalt Israel and honor Israel over all nations of the world. He will find great joy in the nation Israel.

**(Reality #3)** - The LORD God will be quiet in His love. **3:17c**

God's people will know God loves them. By what He does for them and the way He exalts them, He will not have to even tell them He loves them. They will all know it.

**(Reality #4)** - The LORD God will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. **3:17d**

Just imagine the LORD God rejoicing and shouting for joy over His people. The truth is, His people have not given Him much to be joyful about.

That will all change in the future.

**PART #3** – Zephaniah describes what the LORD will do for Jews who were exiled. **3:18-20**

There were Jews who wanted to be in Jerusalem to worship God but were not able to be there. The LORD will gather all of them and bring them to Jerusalem.

**Future Promise #1** - He will gather them from all over the world. **3:18**

God says there have been Jews from all over the world who have never been able to be in Jerusalem to attend the worship festivals. God says I will gather them all and bring them to share in the national blessings.

**Future Promise #2** - He will deal with all your oppressors. **3:19a**

God says He will personally deal at that time with “all” the oppressors of His people. If you oppress the people of God, your future is not good or bright.

**Future Promise #3** - He will save the lame and gather the outcast. **3:19b**

God delights in rescuing His hurting, helpless people who have been struggling and limping along. God will bring them all to Jerusalem and they will live happily ever after.

**Future Promise #4** - He will turn their shame into praise. **3:19b**

God will ultimately see to it that a transformation takes place from shame to praise. This has several applications. God's people who were disgraced and shamed will be the object of praise and honor. God's people who were ashamed of their sin will be praised for facing it and turning from it.

**Future Promise #5** - He will make them renowned in all the earth. **3:19c-20a**

The famous people of the world will end up being the faithful people of God.

**Future Promise #6** - He will restore your fortunes before your eyes. **3:20b**

In the end, God's people will actually see and experience the blessings of God at the ultimate level.

Rather than being despised and rejected people, God's people will be the most honored people and the wealthiest people on earth.

This book of Zephaniah has a happy ending and if you are in the family of God, so do you.