

Zephaniah



Galatians

God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Doctrine for the Mind and Heart

Westminster Shorter Catechism

Question 62

What are the reasons attached to the fourth commandment?

Answer

The reasons attached to the fourth commandment are God's allowance of six days for worldly tasks, his claim to special ownership of the seventh, his own example, and his blessing of the sabbath day.

Proof Texts

Exodus 20:9; 31:15; Leviticus 23:3;

Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 21:11;3 1:17

Memory verse of the week – Psalm 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
The Lord bestows favour and honour.
No good thing does he withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

Psalm of the Week. Psalm 114B. The words are on page 8.

Pray for:

Mon – Steve, Dominique, Kai and Alicia Hearth

Tues - Ben Herweyer

Wed - Jamie and Heather Hood

Th - Stas, Anna and Jonathan Jesionka

Fri - Damir, Sonya, Huxley and Ponette Karaturovic

4th -8th January 2021

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*The notes on Zephaniah 3 by Rev. Peter Loughridge
have been slightly modified, with questions added.*

Monday - Zephaniah 3:14-17 – Rejoicing!

What a difference from the opening two and a half chapters of the book! What magnificent notes this book draws to a close with! Sing! Rejoice! Exult! (v14) 'The LORD has taken away the judgements against you' (v15) - what a clear and powerful description of what God does for the one He saves.

The book of Zephaniah is placed towards the end of our Old Testaments. Soon the New Testament will open and there we read even more clearly about 'the LORD your God ... in your midst, a mighty one who will save' (v17). John is one of the writers who tells us about Jesus, and one of the first things he says is: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). Or, as Zephaniah foretold: 'The LORD your God is in your midst' (v17). What a truth to make our hearts sing!

Amazingly, though, it isn't only the Church that is rejoicing and exulting (v14). It is also God Himself (v17), rejoicing over and exulting over and delighting in us - His Church, His Bride. What an astonishing truth! Our hearts should be singing today.

Zephaniah's prophecy speaks of two contrasting days: a day of judgement and a day of restoration. Jesus is the Lord of both of these days. It is your relationship to Him that will determine how you experience both of them. If you are not trusting in Jesus as Saviour, you will be caught by surprise and you will know the fear and terror of the Day of the Lord. If you are trusting Him as Saviour, then you will experience the rejoicing of the new day. Read again v14 and v17!

Questions:

1. What does God do for those he saves?
2. How is the prophecy in v17 fulfilled?
3. Who is doing the rejoicing in v17?
4. What determines how you will experience the day of judgement and the day of restoration?

Tuesday - Zephaniah 3:18-20 - Restoration!

As we noted yesterday, Zephaniah's prophecy speaks of two contrasting days: a day of judgement and a day of restoration. For us today, this new day of restoration has already dawned with the first coming of Jesus. However, that new day has not come in its fullness. Jesus has not finished saving people from every nation. Christians do not currently display perfect humility, nor do they display perfect holiness in their actions. The new day has partially come, but much more remains to be fulfilled. There is an 'already' aspect to the new day, but there is also a 'not yet' aspect to it. In this present age, Christians will continue to have trials and sufferings, but God promises that one day He will gather us and bring us home. Three times in today's section - once in each verse (v18, v19, v20) - God speaks of 'gathering' us!

There will be mourning (v18) before that day comes. Those whom - as we saw yesterday - God will rejoice in (v17) and who He will cause to rejoice (v14) will, before that day comes in its fullness, still have sorrow. Before we reap in joy, we will often sow in tears (Psalm 126:5-6). But God will make His Church to be 'renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth' (v20). We have seen glimpses of this in our own land and also throughout history. But ultimately this will be fulfilled on that great day when the universal church of Jesus Christ is 'gathered' to Him and is admired and glorified before angels and men.

Questions:

1. What are the two aspects to the day of restoration?
2. What promise is repeated multiple times in these verses?
3. What should we expect while we wait for this day?

Wednesday – Acts 18:23; Galatians 1:1-5 - Introduction to Galatians

For the next few weeks we are going to be looking at the book of Galatians. We will be relying on Rev. Matthew Henry's commentary for these notes. The book of Galatians is written by the apostle Paul and unlike his other letters it is not directed to a church or churches of a single city, but to the country or province of Galatia. Probably these Galatians first became Christians under the preaching of Paul when he visited their country as we read about in Acts 18:23. But after Paul left, some false teachers got in amongst them and told them that in order to be saved they not only had to have faith in Christ, but they also had to follow the ceremonial laws of the Jews, specifically, that in order to get to Heaven, they needed to be circumcised. They also attacked Paul's authority, saying that he wasn't a real apostle or at least he didn't have the authority that the other apostles had. Paul is writing Galatians to defend his authority and to remind them that salvation is by faith in Christ alone.

Paul starts this letter making it clear that he is an apostle, commissioned not by men but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. Paul also states that he is writing on behalf of the other Christians who are working with him. So, even though he has the authority to speak on his own, he's telling the Galatians, 'It's not just me saying this, but other Christians as well'. Grace is God's good work towards us and in us; and peace is that contentment that comes with grace. There can be no true peace without grace. This present world is an evil world, and it has become so by the sin of man. But Jesus Christ has died to deliver us from this present evil world, not to remove His people out of it, but to rescue them from the power of it, to keep them from the evil of it, and in time to bring us to a new and better world. All of this is according to God's will and for His glory.

Questions:

1. Who wrote the book of Galatians?
2. Who was he writing to?
3. Why did he write this book?
4. What did the false teachers add to the gospel?
5. Who gave Paul his authority?
6. Why did Jesus Christ die?

Thursday – Galatians 1:6-9 – Deserting the Gospel

Paul is really surprised and saddened by the Galatians turning away from the true Gospel. Several things make the actions of the Galatians worse.

- First, they are turning away from the God who has called them through His kindness and mercy.
- Second, they are turning away from the grace and mercy found in Christ Jesus and all the blessings and benefits of being reconciled to God and having eternal life, things that Christ has purchased with His blood.
- Thirdly, Paul is surprised that they turned from the Gospel so quickly.
- Finally, Paul is saddened that they turned to another Gospel that is not true Gospel. Paul calls the beliefs of the false teachers another Gospel because it opens up a different way of salvation - a way where you are saved not by faith but by works. But Paul makes it clear that this is not the true Gospel, and that anyone who thinks they have found a different way is sadly mistaken. Even though Paul is rebuking the Galatians, he does understand that they have been led into sin by the false teachers, so he speaks with compassion as well.

Notice how confident Paul is that the Gospel he has preached to them is the only true Gospel. He is so persuaded of this, that he pronounces a curse upon those who pretend to preach any other Gospel. Paul is speaking against all who try to put their good works in place of what Christ has done on the cross.

Questions

1. Why is Paul surprised?
2. Why does he call the beliefs of the false teachers ‘another Gospel’?
3. What show us that Paul is confident there is only one true Gospel?
4. What is the true Gospel?

Friday – Galatians 1:10-24 – Called by God

In these verses, Paul defends both his calling and his message as being from God. Paul starts by saying that the purpose of his ministry is not to please men but to please God. It is God to whom he is accountable. He makes the very good point that if he wanted to please men, he would not be the servant of Christ. Those two things are incompatible - no one can serve two masters. So, even though he isn't out to offend anyone, he can't please men at the expense of being faithful to Christ. So, from his purpose, Paul shows that he is a true apostle of Christ. We learn here that the great purpose of ministers is to bring men to God and that they are not to seek to please men, but to be approved by God as faithful servants of Christ. Paul goes on to prove his apostleship from the way he received the Gospel that he preached to them. It came from heaven. Apostles were unique because they were called and instructed by Christ Himself.

Paul is showing in these verses that, no matter what his enemies say, he too has been called and instructed by Christ. Paul reminds them of his Jewish education, he reminds them that he was a fierce persecutor of Christianity. But he was appointed to be a Christian and an apostle before he came into the world, or had done either good or evil. He was called by the grace of God, and Christ immediately and specially revealed Himself to Paul, so that Paul could preach Christ to the Gentiles. Paul then explains how he didn't go to the other apostles for instruction and authority - he didn't need to. Christ had already revealed to Paul what he needed to know and had given him authority, and the churches in Judea glorified God for this.

Questions

1. What is the purpose of Paul's ministry?
2. To whom is Paul accountable?
3. When was Paul appointed to be a Christian?
4. From whom did Paul learn about the Gospel?

Psalm 114B

When from Egypt Isr'el Parted

1. When from Egypt Isr'el parted,
Jacob's house left foreign tongues,
Judah was His sanctuary,
His dominion Israel.

2. When it saw, the sea fled quickly,
River Jordan made retreat;
Mountains then like rams were leaping;
Hills were skipping just like lambs.

3. Sea, what made you flee so quickly?
Jordan, why did you turn back?
O why leap like rams, you mountains?
Hills, why do you skip like lambs?

4. Tremble, earth, before the Master;
Here, behold, is Jacob's God –
Who turned rock to pools of water,
Hard flint rock to gushing springs.