The Book of Zephaniah

from the book

Minor Prophets: Major Messages

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How To Use This Study Guide

1. A slow unhurried reading of Zephaniah is essential. Reading the chapter before looking at the notes, while working with the notes, and after finishing with the notes will give each researcher a powerful sense of the series of meanings within each chapter. It is important to be comfortable with all the names and places in the prophecy and to understand the announcements the prophet makes on behalf of the Lord. When possible, historical information will be included in the notes to increase reading comprehension and enhance application.

2. Our study of each chapter of Zephaniah will begin with quotes from a work of the Writings called *Summary Exposition of the Prophets and Psalms*. This work includes a verse-by-verse overview of all three chapters of Zephaniah that provide general information about the internal sense. Our research will help move us from the generals to the particulars of the internal sense.

3. Another important reference tool is *Searle’s General Index to Swedenborg’s Scripture Quotations*. This reference is used to find passages in the Writings where a verse(s) from the Word is either explained specifically or used to illustrate a doctrinal point that we can use in our study. There is also another use of this work. As we study, each researcher will be led by the Lord’s Providence in myriad ways, according to specific needs or states. Knowing how to use this book will help each of us to explore relevant topics and look up related passages to increase our knowledge of the three-fold Word.

4. You will soon discover that not every verse, word, name, etc. is directly quoted in the Writings. But there are often other references to the same name, place, or thing in the explanation of a different verse of the Word. The hope is that reflection on these other doctrinal explanations will help us see possible applications to our study of Zephaniah. We will need to use "derived doctrine" often. Please don’t run away from this maligned term. If we use it properly and admit openly that it is derived doctrine, we bring no harm to the internal sense.

5. Keep some kind of notebook handy during your study times. Write out insights, questions, and any summaries you find helpful in organizing your thoughts about each chapter. **The goal of this study guide is not to give a detailed summary of the internal sense but to start each researcher’s quest for deeper insight.**

6. At the end of each chapter in the study guide, you will find a study review. The review includes a summary of each section to help you reinforce and build on your understanding of several of the key points.

7. Begin each study unit with a devotional prayer asking the Lord to guide and direct your thoughts. Certainly beginning in this sphere has the power to inspire and open
our minds with a higher spiritual priority that will keep us in the company of the Lord’s angels. As the Writings teach, we must seek to love truth for truth’s sake. Such an approach will free each reader from preconceived ideas that might limit his or her ability to "see" the intent and message of the Lord’s Word.

Introduction

As we prepare to study the literal and spiritual senses of the Book of Zephaniah, let’s look at some historical facts that will help us enter into the eternal message of the Lord’s Word. First, let’s consider the following questions:

1. Who was Zephaniah?

2. What kings of Judah preceded Zephaniah’s prophetical work, and what king was reigning during his prophecy?

3. What spiritual issues did Zephaniah address on behalf of the Lord?

4. What hope did Zephaniah bring to Judah from the Lord?

WHO WAS ZEPHANIAH?

Zephaniah gives us a glimpse of his heritage. Four generations are mentioned:

- The son of Cush
- The son of Gedaliah
- The son of Hezekiah
- In the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah.

Zephaniah may be the only minor prophet of the Lord to have royal family connections. Scholars identify him as the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, the twelfth monarch of the kingdom of Judah. Hezekiah reigned for 29 years and was considered a good king in that he sought to lead his people in the ways of the Lord. Some scholars have dubbed Zephaniah "the royal prophet." It is believed that he was born during the reign of King Manasseh and that he worked as a prophet during the reign of Josiah.

If Zephaniah is truly of royal lineage, is this of any spiritual significance? This is a question worthy of speculation, but I found no direct teachings to help us answer this question. My inclination is to follow the teachings regarding the correspondence of "kings" and the "sons of kings," and of "hidden" or "concealed" when spoken of in reference to the Lord.
Kings represent goods and truths having the upper hand. Kings also represent the dominant evils and falsities against which the Lord fought. (*Arcana Coelestia* [AC] 1661-1664) Kings signify divine truth and divine good in and from the Lord, as noted in *Apocalypse Explained* (AE) 446 [10].

Zephaniah's name means **Jehovah hides; Jehovah has hidden or concealed; Jehovah of darkness.** We are not given direct teachings as to why the Lord would call a prophet, at this precise moment, whose name means hidden, concealed, or darkness. We can reflect on possible reasons. Was Zephaniah kept, or protected by the Lord, from the influence and disorders of his times? Or, could it be a representation of the state and spiritual condition of the people to whom he spoke? Had the falsity of the church obscured the light of heaven, concealing or hiding truth in the darkness of ignorance? The idea of something hidden is clearly borne out in Chapters 2 and 3, where the Lord draws out from hiding the meek from among the haughty. The hidden are the remains the Lord uses to restore a New Church.

**WHAT KINGS OF JUDAH PRECEDED ZEPHANIAH’S PROPHECY, AND WHAT KING WAS RULING DURING THE TIME OF HIS PROPHECY?**

The kings of Judah preceding Zephaniah's prophecy are the first three in boldface type below. Zephaniah's prophecy came during the reign of Josiah. During the period beginning with Hezekiah and ending with Jehoahaz, spiritual issues fluctuated according to the leadership of the king. Here is a list of all of the kings (and one queen) of Judah for your reflection:

**The Rulers of Judah**

Rehoboam reigned 17 years  
Abijah reigned 3 years  
Asa reigned 41 years  
Jehoshaphat reigned 25 years  
Ahaziah reigned 1 year  
Athaliah (queen) reigned 6 years  
Joash reigned 40 years  
Amaziah reigned 29 years  
Uzziah reigned 52 years  
Jotham reigned 16 years  
Ahaz reigned 16 years  
**Hezekiah** reigned 29 years  
**Manasseh** reigned 55 years *(695–642 BC)*  
**Amon** reigned 2 years *(642–640 BC)*  
**Josiah** reigned 31 years *(640–619 BC)*  
**Jehoahaz** reigned 3 months  
Jehoiakim reigned 11 years
Jehoiachin reigned 3 months
Zedekiah reigned 11 years

Manasseh became the king of Judah at the age of twelve. For many years, Manasseh permitted cults to exist in Jerusalem and the land of Judah to appease the cult-followers among the people. He allowed and participated in human sacrifices. He even offered one of his own sons as a sacrifice. This is horrific to think about.

When Manasseh was taken prisoner by the Assyrians, he "found religion." He realized he had been disobedient to the Lord. He returned to Jerusalem, where he sought to mend his ways before he died. Some reforms were started, but they ended quickly when Manasseh died and his son Amon assumed the title of king. Amon reintroduced idolatry and immorality, corrupted his office, and concentrated more on accumulating personal wealth than on working for the good of others.

Josiah, a son of Amon, loved the ways of the Lord and sought to reform the kingdom. At the suggestion of the high priest Hilkiah, Josiah ordered the repair of the Temple. During the repairs, a lost book of the law (Deuteronomy) was found. Josiah, when he heard the reading of the book, ordered it to be read to the people. He also took positive steps to clean up the spiritual disorder in Judah. Josiah closed down dozens of shrines, destroyed idols, and centralized all worship in the city of Jerusalem.

Both Jeremiah and Zephaniah were shown by the Lord that the "reforms" were not genuine. Reform was only a surface or cosmetic change in the hearts of the people. The population complied with reforms because the king promoted them. They went along with the popular views of the kingdom. How deeply did the people of Judah believe in the mission?

Jehoahaz’s reign of three months answers this question for us. His tolerance of evil during that brief reign brought cults, idols, and disorder back to their former state of importance in the nation.

WHAT SPIRITUAL ISSUES DID ZEPHANIAH ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE LORD?

Chapter one of Zephaniah carries a message of judgment. The strong words of the Lord are spoken to Judah so that she might see her errors and work for a deeper reformation. The Lord promises to "consume," "punish," "search," and "bring distress" to the unrepentant evil ones.

Chapter two stresses that the Lord will not tolerate the abuse or maltreatment of His Word and church. He promises that the meek (the remnant) will be hidden, cared for, and rescued by Him. The meek are hidden among the haughty.
Chapter three is a magnificent story of the end of the rebellion, the restoration of order, and the rejoicing that will come back to the church. Zephaniah prophesies that there will be a new song sung. The Lord will be in the midst of the church. It will be a time of exhilarating confidence and assurance. The former barrenness will be replaced with productivity.

WHAT HOPE DID ZEPHANIAH BRING TO JUDAH FROM THE LORD?

This question is asked purposefully in light of the preceding summation of the three chapters of Zephaniah. So many scholars highlight the gloom and doom of the first chapter. They don't focus enough on the book's movement to hope and restoration. The third chapter of Zephaniah is a powerful message of hope, restoration, singing, productiveness, new birth, and the Lord's return to the center of His New Church.

Don't we need the prophecy of the "royal prophet" today to bolster our wavering faith? Doesn't this minor prophet named Zephaniah seem extremely relevant for our times, too?

Please read the study guide with an eye to the past, the present, and the future. As always, we need to begin each chapter, verse, or line with a prayer. The Lord told the Pharisees and the Scribes that they had eyes to see and saw not. He told them they had ears to hear but heard not.

Then He looked at His disciples and promised that their eyes would see and their ears would hear. May our prayer be that we will see and hear the positive promises of the Lord as we study the prophecy spoken by Zephaniah.

It is to be hoped that the meek will come out from among the haughty popular opinions of the evil. It is the goal of the Lord that we learn a new song. The Lord tells us that all of the years in which we have felt bound and unproductive will end. The Lord promises births. We need growth and confidence in the regeneration work He calls us to undertake. It isn't impossible. We can achieve the innocence of wisdom promised in the doctrines of the New Church.

So let's sing a new song and be done with the monotony of hell's tune. We are the "apple of the Lord's eye." Freedom is reserved for and awaiting those who are meek and faithful.
Chapter One

ZEPHANIAH 1:1-3

"The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. 'I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,' says the Lord; 'I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,' says the Lord."

Passages From The Writings

Prophets and Psalms (P&P)

- "All knowledge (cognitio) and understanding of truth will perish."
  
  AC 411

- "That the last time of vastation must exist before a new church can arise, is frequently declared by the Lord in the Prophets, and is called 'vastation' or 'laying waste;' in reference to the celestial things of faith; and 'desolation,' in relation to the spiritual things of faith. It is also spoken of as 'consummation' and 'cutting off.'" Zephaniah 1:1-18 is cited as an example.

Apocalypse Revealed (AR) 290

- "[By]...‘every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and in the sea,’ are meant angels... Their being called 'created thing' is according to the style of the Word, in which, by all created things, as well those which belong to the animal kingdom as those which belong to the vegetable kingdom, are signified various things with man, in general such things as belong to his will or affection, and such as pertain to his understanding or thought...since the Word is written by mere correspondences, similar things are said of the angels of heaven and the men of the church; in proof of which a few passages...shall be adduced..." Zephaniah 1:2-3 is cited.

AR 567

- "...harmless and useful beasts signify man as to good affections, and noxious and useless beasts signify man as to his evil affections... The reason is, because the affections of a man, in the spiritual world, appear at a distance as
beasts…and beasts, considered in themselves, are nothing but forms of natural affections... That men, as to their affections, are meant by 'beasts,'...‘by beasts' are signified men as to their affections. By 'man and beasts' together is signified man as to spiritual and natural affection (as in the following passages)..." Zephaniah 1:2-3 and Zephaniah 2:13-14 are cited.

AE 342 [9]

- "'Man and beast' when mentioned together signify the interior and exterior affections of good...and ‘the fowl of the heavens and the fishes of the sea' signify the affections of truth and the thoughts spiritual and natural, but in the passages here cited, that these are about to perish." Zephaniah 1:2-3 is cited.

AE 650 [17]

- "In these passages [Zephaniah 1:2-3] 'man and beast' signifies what is interior or spiritual, and 'beast' what is exterior or natural; and therefore ‘man' signifies the spiritual affection of truth, from which is all intelligence, and 'beast' the natural affection corresponding to the spiritual. What is exterior or natural is signified by 'beast,' because man, in respect to his external or natural man is nothing but a beast; for he enjoys like desires and also pleasures, appetites and senses, so that in these respects man is entirely similar to the beast; therefore the natural man may be called the animal man. But what is internal or spiritual is signified by 'man,' because it is in respect to his internal or spiritual that man is man..."

AC 776 [4]

- "Here [Zephaniah 1:3] ‘man and beast' denote the things which are of love and of good; the 'fowls of the heaven and the fishes of the sea,' the things which are of the understanding, thus which are of truth. These are called 'stumbling-blocks' because goods and truths are stumbling-blocks to the wicked, but not beasts and birds; and they are also plainly spoken of 'man.'"

AC 991

- "In [Zephaniah 1:3] the ‘fowls of the heavens' denote things of reason, and the ‘fishes of the sea' lower rational things, that is, man's thought from sensuous memory-knowledges."
AC 7523 [1&2]

- "...‘beast’ denotes the affection of good, and in the opposite sense the cupidity of evil... ‘Man and beast’ denote interior and exterior good..." Zephaniah 1:3 is cited as an example.

AR 405

- "...[in the spiritual world] the affections and the perceptions and the thoughts of spirits and angels appear at a distance in the forms of animals or creatures upon the earth, which are called beasts, of creatures in the air which are called birds, and of creatures in the sea which are called fishes, therefore in the Word mention is so often made of ‘beasts,’ ‘birds,’ and ‘fishes,’ by which nothing else is meant..." Zephaniah 1:3 is cited as an example.

AR 757

- "...by ‘bird’ is signified everything that is of the thought or the understanding and thence of the design..." Zephaniah 1:3 is listed among many examples from the Word.

AE 280 [8]

- "In Zephaniah (1:3)...‘To take away man and beast’ means to take away the spiritual affection of truth; ‘to take away the fowl of the heavens and the fishes of the sea’ means to take away spiritual truths and natural truths; and ‘to cut off man from the surfaces of the earth’ means to cut off the affection of truth and wisdom."

AE 513 [8]

- "In Zephaniah (1:3)...‘the beast of the field’ means man’s voluntary faculty, ‘the fowl of heaven’ his intellectual faculty, and ‘the fish of the sea’ his knowing faculty..."

AE 1100 [16]

- "In Zephaniah (1:3) ‘To consume man and beast’ signifies to destroy spiritual and natural affection; ‘to consume the birds of the heavens and the fishes of the sea’ signifies to destroy the perceptions and knowledges of truth; and as these signify things pertaining to the church it is said, ‘I will cut off man from the faces of the land,’ ‘man’ signifying everything of the church."
Derived Doctrine

"The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah..."

- "Coming" denotes communication by influx. (AC 5249)
- AC 5272 teaches that "the Word of the Lord" signifies divine truth, from which all things, which are things, exist.
- Most importantly, we get the sense that we are being shown that all that follows in this prophecy is the Lord speaking and not the prophet. His word is the "all" for our spiritual good and truth.

"...the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah..."

- Four generations are mentioned in this first verse. We need to reflect on the possible correspondential meaning of Zephaniah’s lineage. It is necessary for us to consider the meaning of the number four, the idea of a generation, and the offices (uses) that some of Zephaniah’s forefathers served. Especially must we note Zephaniah’s connection with the royal family of king Hezekiah and king Josiah.
- Four signifies union, or disunion in a negative sense, because it is two pairs. (AC 1686) Four signifies the duration and state of temptation. (AC 1856) Four signifies what is conjoined to the full in repayment for an injury or injustice. Four signifies the restoration of interior good to the full. (AC 9103 [2])
- Generations signify those who are perpetually being regenerated, or created anew. (AC 1041) Passages in AC 208 and 280 to 285 help us to reflect on the meaning of "fourth posterity." "...the fourth posterity of the Most Ancient Church [occurred when they allowed] themselves to be seduced by self-love and were unwilling to believe what was revealed, unless they saw it confirmed by the things of sense and of memory-knowledge."
- AC 280-285 gives us the meaning of seven posterities. The fourth posterity denotes a state where "natural good [begins] to be dissipated..."
- I cannot find a representation of the name Cushi, nor can I find a meaning for his name. Is his name a shortening of the name Cushite?
- Gedaliah’s name means "Jehovah is great." Other then this insight, we have no doctrinal teachings about him.
- Amariah’s name means "Jehovah has spoken." Amariah was a son of Hezekiah, and he was a subordinate Levite, one of six assistants appointed to help in the distribution of offerings. (II Chronicles 31:15)
- Hezekiah’s name means "Jehovah is my strength." Hezekiah succeeded his pagan-minded father, Ahaz, and led his people through some frightening days when the Assyrians were on a campaign to conquer all the nations around them. Hezekiah sought to bring the people out of their pagan worship. He destroyed shrines, high places, pillars, Asherah images, and any venerated icon he found being worshipped in the kingdom.
• Unfortunately, Manasseh, his son, did not continue with the work of spiritual cleansing. Instead, Manasseh brought the nation to a low point of spirituality by rebuilding the "high places," restoring the altars of Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Milcom, and Baal. Manasseh allowed the worship of the stars, sun, moon, and astral bodies within the temples. To keep Assyria from attacking his kingdom, he paid tribute to their deity Esarhaddon.

• All of this information is useful when we consider Josiah’s reign. He succeeded Manasseh and sought to restore the worship of the Lord among the people. Zephaniah was called during this period of reformation. Josiah’s name means "may Jehovah give."

• Priestly uses represent the Lord as to the Divine good and the work of salvation. (AR 854) Priests are to teach truth, and so lead to good, and to the Lord. (AC 10794)

• Kings and rulers signify divine truth and divine good in the Lord and from Him. (AE 446 [16])

All of these derived doctrines seem to offer us important clues when we consider the importance and meaning of "four generations" in this passage. Their names, the successive seed that passed on the inherited tendencies toward good and evil in their souls, and their uses testify what tendencies toward good and evil the generations had inherited and to what state Zephaniah was called to speak the words of the Lord.

Remember that the purpose of derived doctrine is to help us see the spiritual sense more fully. Without doctrine, the words about the Lord consuming everything from the face of the earth—men, beasts, birds, and fish of the sea—seem harsh and vindictive.

**Putting It All Together**

"All knowledge and understanding of truth will perish." (P&P) "I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land. I will consume man and beast...the birds...the fish and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land, says the Lord."

Taken at face value, these are chilling words. How could Zephaniah’s listeners ignore or brush off the Lord’s promise to "utterly consume" and "cut off man from the face of the earth"?

The direct teachings of doctrine indicate such things were to happen within the hearts and minds of the people of Judah. "Vastations must exist before a new church can arise..." (AC 411)

There were 20 kings of Judah prior to the great exiles. Of those 20, 12 were bad kings and 8 were good kings. Manasseh, a bad king, ruled 55 years. During that
reign, he allowed serious spiritual disorders to exist and thrive in the kingdom. His evil leadership provided the means and example for the people to move away from the Lord. So the minds and hearts of the people were in great errors, evils, and sins. In the words of our text, their hearts and minds were providing "stumbling blocks" to all that was holy and good.

The Writings picture the "spawning medium" of hell as a self-love out of order. If a church is to be saved or preserved, the stumbling blocks of self-love must be emptied and consumed. AC 5258 expresses what this consuming means: falsities that are not of charity or of faith must be exterminated. This cleansing occurs in the voluntary (love), in the intellectual (wisdom), and in the knowing (use) faculties. Hence we have the representations of the beast, the fowl, and the fish. Each of these inner vessels required a Divine purging to be saved and to make room for the new church to rise up.

Read and Review

Read the selection from P&P.

Read Zephaniah 1:1-3.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. As you read the literal sense about the utter consummation that the Lord would bring about, did you sense or anticipate that this was a spiritual event? Why?

2. Can we imagine what it would be like to live under total spiritual chaos for 55 years? What effect would so many years of worshipping multiple gods have on us and our children? How would this confuse our understanding of the true nature of the Lord?

3. Spiritual stumbling blocks are something we experience daily. For example, when we express a doctrinally based personal belief, it is not always welcomed. An exchange of views on doctrine may bring us into a "point and counterpoint" argument with someone. Stumbling blocks are troublesome and hurtful. How can we face them? Can we avoid them? How can we overcome them without compromising the Lord’s truth? How can we faithfully present the Lord’s truth with charity and conviction?

4. What did you take from the information about the four generations of Zephaniah? What correspondence was most interesting to you? How did the representation of generations add to your reflection? Was the possibility that Zephaniah’s lineage linked him to a royal family of any significance?
5. What do you understand about the concept of vastations? Are vastations welcome, to a degree, as a necessary event for the New Church to begin and flourish?

6. Please note that the Lord promises to empty the church of falsity. Doesn’t that promise give us some hope and confidence while we are waging war against hell?

ZEPHANIAH 1:4-6

"I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, the names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests – those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops; those who worship and swear oaths by the Lord, but who also swear by Milcom; those who have turned back from following the Lord, and have not sought the Lord, nor inquired of Him."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "The church will perish because it is in mere falsities and evils in respect to doctrine and in respect to worship."

AE 608 [7]

- "As the ancients were allowed to swear by Jehovah God, it follows that it was an enormous evil to swear falsely or to swear to a lie, as is evident from these passages." Zephaniah 1:4-6 is cited.

AC 10184 [3]

- "As a ‘roof’ signified good, therefore the ancients had roofs on their houses where they walked, and where they worshiped, as can be seen in...Zephaniah 1:5."

AR 919

- "Since by ‘the sun,’ in the opposite sense, is signified self-love, and by ‘the moon’ one’s own intelligence and faith from himself, therefore, it was an abomination to adore the sun, moon, and stars, as may appear...in Zephaniah 1:5; and that such were stoned."
AE 573 [8]

- "In Zephaniah (1:5)...‘the host of the heavens’ means the sun, moon, and stars, because these signify all goods and truths in the complex, but here all evils and falsities in the complex; for the ‘sun’ in the contrary sense, as here, signifies all the evil flowing from the love of self, the ‘moon’ the falsity of faith, and the ‘stars’ falsities in general (that the ‘sun, moon, and stars,’ in the natural world, when they are worshiped instead of the sun and moon of the angelic heaven, signify direful evils and falsities....)."

Derived Doctrine

"I will stretch out My hand against Judah..."

- AC 7205 offers us an insight into the meaning of stretching out. "...from the signification of a ‘stretched out arm,’ as being Divine power... [That a] ‘stretched out arm’ denotes omnipotence or Divine power, is because when an arm appears stretched out in the heavens, there is represented power from the Divine... Hence then it is, that in the Word, Divine power is very often expressed by a ‘stretched out arm,’ and by a ‘strong hand,’..." AE 684 instructs us that the hand signifies the omnipotence of truth from good, and the arm represents the omnipotence of good by truth.

- The Lord opposing or being against Judah seems obvious. Judah was worshiping idols and other gods, and making unholy pledges. The Lord’s omnipotence and power would come against such evils and sins.

"...against all of the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

- AE 741 indicates that to "inhabit" signifies those of the church who are in (or lacking) the good of doctrine, and thence the good of life. AR 558 says inhabiting signifies those who are principled in the doctrine of faith alone and thence in the evils of life.

- Jerusalem has a positive and negative correspondence. AC 2909 notes that Jerusalem signifies the Lord’s spiritual church and His celestial church. AC 2466 [3] notes that in the opposite sense, Jerusalem represents the church perverted as to truths.

"I will cut off every trace of Baal...the names of idolatrous priests with the pagan priests..."

- AE 315 [23] explains that to "cut" signifies that divine truth shall be taken from the people but shall live again in a new church. AC 9316 explains that to "cut out" signifies that hell is to be removed solely through the protection of heaven and by the hand of the Lord.
● Baal signifies worship motivated by the evils of self-love and love of the world. *(AE 160 [2])*

● Idolatrous priests represent those who should have known better but chose to blaspheme and falsify the truths.

● Pagan priests were gentiles. They polluted truth because of their ignorance. Both idolatrous and pagan forms of worship need to have their names (essence or qualities) wiped out by the Lord when He establishes His new church.

"...those who swear by Milcom..."

● Milcom or Malcam is an Ammonite god also called Molech. Scholars believe that Molech was a pagan deity to whom children were sacrificed as a means of making the most binding vows or pledges, to emphasis the sanctity of a vow.

● The literal sense describes the followers of Molech as people who turn their backs on the Lord. Does the word "traitor" seem to be implied here?

**Putting It All Together**

*P&P* sums up these verses by saying, "The church will perish because it is in mere falsities and evils in respect to doctrine and in respect to worship."

The people of Judah were swearing by the name of the Lord and yet not meaning it. There was a showy appearance (the rooftop walk) that they were doing the right things. They tried to mix all forms of faith together to please everyone, to accommodate the preferences for differing forms of worship. Those who turned away from following the Lord had "not sought Him nor inquired of Him."

Throughout the Word, the Lord reminds His people to "choose this day whom you will serve." He asks them how long they will limp between opinions. He tells us that we cannot serve God and mammon. We will love one and hate the other.

The Lord said He would stretch out His hand. His divine omnipotence of truth from good would eradicate the vain promises of Judah. The twisted doctrines of the Jewish priests and the ignorance of the pagan priests had to be cut out of the heart and mind of Judah. Cutting it out seems like an appropriate representation. Like a cancer, self-love has to be completely removed along with all its extending tentacles. When the Lord deals with evil and sin, there is no room for a compromise with the hells. No deals. It has to be done the Lord’s way. He sees and knows the way of truth —doctrine—and He builds the New Church where open and loving worship will flow from the heart and mind.
Read and Review

Read the selection from P&P.

Read Zephaniah 1:4-6.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. As you read this short section, how did you respond to the imagery of the Lord’s "stretched arm"? The Divine power of the Lord’s arm and hand stretching to cover all things gives us a sense of His protective, controlling power. It is a powerful image to hold onto, especially when hell tries to convince us the Lord’s arms are too short or small to help everyone.

2. What images are conjured up by the picture of the people of Judea walking on the housetop swearing vows to the Lord? Why does this seem representative of what a vain, pompous, spiritually empty person would be like? Can you think of stories in the Word that show a contrasting type of person?

3. The inhabitants of Judah lapsed into a forgetful spirit; they did not seek the Lord, nor did they ask about Him. How can we learn from their mistakes? How can we sincerely "inquire" about the Lord with interest and care?

4. Once again, let’s think about the cutting off or cutting out of dead falsity within our hearts. How does this "surgery" feel? Painful or bearable? Is it life saving? How is it accomplished?

5. Can you identify with what traitor priests and pagan priests do to our lives? Any current examples come to mind?

6. Have you ever "sworn by the Lord’s name" and not kept the promise? Can you imagine a situation where someone intentionally "swears to a lie"?

7. Perjury is an action the courts hold to be a heinous crime. Do life experiences sometimes justify or excuse "white" lies? Why or why not? Is there a limit after which you won't tolerate false "swearing"?

ZEPHANIAH 1:7-8

"Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; for the day of the Lord is at hand, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. And it shall be, in the day of the Lord’s sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king’s children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel."
Passages From The Writings

**P&P**

- "The Lord will come and gather [men] together to the church."

**Doctrine of the Lord 4**

- "...I shall in this first chapter merely adduce passages from the Word which contain the expressions ‘that day,’ ‘in that day,’ and ‘in that time;’ In...
  Zephaniah 1:7, 8, 10, 12, 14-16, 18..."

**True Christian Religion (TCR) 82**

- "See...the places where the Lord's coming is called ‘the day of Jehovah’...
  Zephaniah 1:7-18..."

**TCR 688-689**

- "...John was the prophet sent to make ready the way of Jehovah God, who should descend into the world and accomplish redemption...by means of...baptism...men were introduced into the future church of the Lord, and in heaven were inserted among those who were there looking for and longing for the Messiah; and they were thus guarded by angels, that devils from hell might not break forth and destroy them. Wherefore it is written in...
  Zephaniah 1:7-18... From all this it is clear that unless a way had been made ready for Jehovah...the effect of which in heaven was to close up the hells and guard the Jews against total destruction [they would all have perished]."

**AR 704**

- "That ‘the great day of God Almighty” signifies the coming of the Lord, and then the New Church, is evident from many passages in the Word, as from these...Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zephaniah 2:2, 3 and Zephaniah 3: 11, 16, 19, 20..."

**AC 10287 [15]**

- "In Zephaniah (1:8)...‘those clothed in the clothing of a foreigner’ denote those who are in falsities; for ‘princes and the king’s sons,’ upon whom was visitation, denote the chief truths, and in the opposite sense the chief falsities (that princes have this signification, see n. 1482, 2089, 5044; and that ‘kings’ denote truths themselves, and in the opposite sense falsities themselves...) consequently ‘the king’s sons’ denote that which is derived therefrom."
"He who does not know the spiritual signification of 'kings and priests,' may be hallucinated by many things which are related concerning them in the prophets...as in these in the prophets..." *Zephaniah 1:8* is one of many passages cited.

"The Jewish church is here described, that to it were given truths, because it had the Word; but that they falsified them..." *Zephaniah 1:8* is one many examples cited.

"'Kings' are also frequently mentioned by the prophets in the Old Testament; and there likewise are meant those who, from the Lord, are in truths from good, and in a contrary sense, those who are in falsities from evil; as in... Zephaniah 1:8..."

"In Zephaniah (1:8)...'Princes' and 'king's sons' signify those who are in truths, and in the contrary sense, as here, those who are in falsities; these are said to be 'clothed with the garment of the alien,' because 'garment' signifies falsity, and 'alien' those who are out of the church and do not acknowledge the truths of the church."

The Lord's advent into the world, and His subsequent victory in the Word are described as "...they are dismayed, and that their strong ones being beaten down... His advent into the world for this purpose is meant by, 'that day is to the Lord Jehovih Zebaoth a day of vengeance, that He may take vengeance of His enemies.' *Zephaniah 1:8, 15-16* are cited among other verses.

"Be silent in the presence of the Lord God..."

*AC 8176* explains that "silence" signifies an awareness that nothing can or will be accomplished by one's own strength. *Psalm 46:10* carries this theme: "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth." *Psalm 4:4* urges us to "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still." "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep..."
silence before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20) "When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour." (Revelation 8:1)

- **AE 487** explains the meaning of the words in Revelation 8:1: "When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven..." This "signifies astonishment that the church is such and that its end is at hand... [and signifies] the destruction of the church and the damnation of all in whom there was no church; that is, in whom there was no conjunction of truth and good or of faith and charity; for this conjunction makes the church in every one."

"For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests."

- **AC 5998** explains that a sacrifice signifies worship from charity, or from truths which are from good.
- A worthy sacrifice will have a Divine influx that comes from the Divine Intellectual. Thus, we can see why it is said in our verse that the Lord has prepared a sacrifice. He gives His people a special sacrifice of worship from charity and invites guests to His sacrifice.
- **AC 4205** (Elliott translation) explains the meaning of "guest" this way: "... good flows in from the Lord, but does not become fixed within anything apart from truths, for truths receive good as a guest since the two are congenial... good flowing in from the Lord is able to be received as a guest."

"And it shall be."

- The word "Amen" means may it ever be so. **Doctrine of Faith 6** explains: "... truth and faith are one word in the Hebrew language, namely Amuna or Amen." "And it shall be" seems to be an utterance of the word Amen.

Putting It All Together

"The Lord will come and gather [men] together to the church." (P&P)

Within your heart and mind, picture Zephaniah speaking these words to the people of the church: "Be silent in the presence of the Lord God." In the place of any terror, focus on this calming thought: The Lord is asking us to be still. For just a moment, put aside all other plans and worries. Let your soul drink in the message that the Lord is in charge. His plan, His Providence wants to give us a sacrifice that is full of holiness and a sense of joyous worship. The Lord wants us to receive an influx of His Love and Wisdom, so that we recognize that we can welcome Him in as our desired guest.

There is a required state that we need to create in ourselves and offer up to the Lord. We need to get rid of the "princes and the king's children." We need to throw off such
things that are like "foreign apparel," the pretense, the act of looking good on the outside with evil and sin underneath.

The words of the Lord, "Be still and know that I am God..." carry a soothing message that is important to hear in our "as-of-self" lifestyle. The Lord is in charge, and all will be well with those who trust in His providential guidance.

His first advent defeated all of the disorder the hells sought to use against Him. None of their tricks worked. Now we have a prophetic message that the Lord will "come and gather together the church." Which church? The New Church. How do we know this? The prophets repeat this message over and over again. They are wonderful words of life. They are words to carry in the heart and mind while battling the bullies of hell. They are words worth repeating often.

Let us prayerfully recite these quotes from the Word:

- "Be silent in the presence of the Lord God."
- "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."
- "Be still and know that I am God."
- "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still."

Read and Review

Read the selection from P&P.

Read Zephaniah 1:7-8.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. Are you a calm soul, or are you a hard-driven, schedule-minded soul? Do you recognize that you need some moments of silence to hear the Lord? What can you do to find the time for spiritual silence? Can you spare five minutes each day?

2. What would you describe as foreign or alien clothes one puts over the mind?

3. Are you aware that all of the prophets are messengers of the New Church? Why is this important?

4. The "day of the Lord is at hand." The Lord has prepared a sacrifice, and He is going to invite His guests. What application can be made of this in our day? Are we on the guest list? Are those outside of the New Church on the guest list? What might the "sacrifice" be?
5. Please share in the discussion other questions you have thought about while reading this portion of the chapter.

ZEPHANIAH 1:9-11

"In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold, who fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit. And there shall be on that day, says the Lord, the sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, a wailing from the Second Quarter, and a loud crashing from the hills. Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; all those who handle money are cut off."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "Then those who have adulterated the truths of the Word will perish, and are to be cast into hell."

AR 624

- "...by 'deceit' is signified speech, preaching, and doctrine...and by 'deceit' is signified persuasion to evil by falsity, properly from cunning and design; for he who persuades to anything from cunning or deceit also persuades from design; for cunning or deceit proposes something to itself, conceals its purpose, and does it when opportunity offers ..." Zephaniah 1:9 is cited among many other references.

AE 866 [3-4]

- "...‘deceit’ signifies falsity that is not from ignorance of truth, but from deliberation, thus from the purpose of deceiving...‘violence and blood’ signify perversion of truth and falsification of the Word..." Zephaniah 1:9 is cited as an example.

AC 375

- "A ‘voice crying,’ and the ‘voice of a cry,’ are common forms of expression in the Word, and are applied to every case where there is noise, tumult, or disturbance, and also on the occasion of any happy event... In the present passage it denotes accusation." Zephaniah 1:9-10 is cited as one of many examples.
"In Zephaniah (1:10, 13) where...a ‘cry’ is predicated of the falsities which lay waste."

"That ‘crying,’ in the Word, is said of grief and fear of falsities from hell, and thence of devastation by them, appears from the following passages..."Zephaniah 1:10, 13 are cited as examples.

Derived Doctrine

"In the same day I will punish all those who leap over the threshold..."

- The words "in the same day remind us that on the same day that He invites guests to the special holy sacrifice, He will deal with those not invited. The uninvited are those who chose to ignore the Lord’s invitation. Plain and simple, they did not want to come. Watching the Lord gather His church together caused them anguish. They hated the Lord, and they hated the church. What the church had to offer the soul made them uncomfortable, troubled, and sick.
- What did the uninvited do to bring this on themselves? They leapt over the threshold. What does this represent? A threshold signifies introductory truths. "Spirits who are in the knowledge of the doctrinals of faith, without love, are in such a coldness of life and obscurity of light that they cannot even approach the first threshold of the court of the heavens, but flee..." AC 3833 [3] records this arcanum against those who will not believe: "...it may be known in what obscurity such persons are, and that they do not even see, much less touch, the first threshold of wisdom."
- Leaping in the positive sense signifies having a joy from the perception of truth. (AE 455 [20]) It would seem, then, that in the negative sense, leaping for the evil would be a joy at closing off, evicting, the introductory truths from their lives. The remains of their youth and the first things of faith were stifled and allowed to wither and die.

"Who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit."

- Check AC 3041-45 regarding the meaning of a master. A master signifies knowledge of good in the natural person that exacts a sacred obligation or obedience. It is the pledging of the natural person to the good of marriage love. AE 409 [8] explains that master signifies the internal human whom the external human serves.
• Can we not, with what is given above, see that those who turn away from the Lord wish to fill the master’s house with things that are destructive of the internal or conjugial principles of doctrine?

"...a mournful cry from the Fish Gate..."

• Let’s first look at this from the literal sense. The Fish Gate was the main gate of Jerusalem. There, fish were sold. The fisherman unloaded their catch for sale in the market. Manasseh made some changes, or modifications, at this gate. He fortified the entrance way.
• Nebuchadnezzar made his triumphant entry through the Fish Gate. Indeed, when the city was attacked, there must have been a mournful sound heard as his army pressed on to the next gate.
• Fish signify items of information that arise or spring from sense-impressions and external learning. (AC 991)
• A gate signifies the teachings that introduce one to the truth of faith. (AC 2943)
• A mournful cry signifies grief because truth and good are being destroyed. (AE 1129 [2])

"A wailing from the Second Quarter..."

• This second gate was second in dignity to the Fish Gate, but it had its place of importance because it had V-shaped defensive walls and some of the oldest ramparts of the city. Huldah the prophetess dwelt there. Josiah sent the newly found scroll of Deuteronomy to her. She read the scroll and warned that the day of God’s reckoning was fast approaching. See II Kings 22:14 and II Chronicles 34:22.
• Again, can we see some of the importance of this literal sense to the spiritual sense of our study?

"Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh!"

• Another name for Maktesh is "the Mortar." Its importance to the city of Jerusalem was its silver industry. Silver traders and silversmiths conducted their business there.
• Silver signifies truth; in the opposite sense, it represents falsity. (AC 1551)
• Did the merchants use the silver to make idols?
• To wail signifies to have grief on account of damnation. (AE 659 [4]) To wail signifies the grief of sensuous people in their opposition to truths. (AR 435)

"All of the merchant people are cut down; all those who handle money are cut off."

• Merchants signify those who falsify the Word, speak out, and offer for sale. (AE 543 [10])
• Money handlers signify those who make gain for themselves. (AE 840 [4])
• Both of these are "cut down" or "cut off." This action by the Lord signifies that hell is removed through the protection of heaven. (AC 9316)

**Putting It All Together**

"Then those who have adulterated the truths of the Word will perish, and are to be cast into hell." *(P&P)*

Choices are so important. If we listen to the Lord, we are invited to His Church. If we ignore and reject the invitation, we wall ourselves off from Him. Instead of filling the Master’s home with good things, those who reject Him fill their house with violence and deceit.

The inhabitants of a house of deceit and violence never get to, or past, the threshold. Like blind people, they grope and stumble, never finding the entrance or threshold. The sad part is that these people had the innocence of remains from their childhood. The great spiritual Fish Gate was there. The Second Quarter had its prophetess to read the newly found Deuteronomy. But those intent on their evil ways wanted to hone their skills, to twist the silver truths, to make idols. They were more interested in making money for their own interests than in heeding the Lord’s call. What is to be the end for them? Mourning and wailing, to be cut down and cut off from eternity.

In these passages, we have contrasts. There is the invitation from the Lord to leap for joy, and there is the "leaping over" the spiritual conjunction with the Lord. Obviously, there is a silent question here: Which choice will we want for our soul?

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 1:9-11*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. What did the brief historical overview of the Fish Gate, the Second Quarter, and Maktesh help you discover about the deeper meaning of the spiritual sense?

2. What ideas did you have regarding the Master’s house? Is the house representative of our mind or soul? Is it both? Do we have a way to periodically clear our spiritual house of unhealthy spiritual clutter?

3. Hell always thinks it can win against the Lord. No matter how many times the hells are defeated, their insanity continues to cloud their sense of reality. Do
you think we pay unnecessary attention to their bragging? Do you think they will leave us alone if we remind ourselves often enough of the stories of the prophets (the Word)?

4. Have you ever noticed how often the Word uses the correspondences of fish? Think for a moment about the Lord’s ministry. He called fisherman to be His disciples. He sent them out several times to catch many fish after they had toiled all night with no results. Following His directions, they came back with record catches. The Lord used the correspondence of fish in His parables. He fed the multitude with the loaves and fish. He multiplied the fish and bread so as to have 12 full baskets left over. When the question of taxes came up, He sent the disciples to a brook to catch a fish. In the mouth of the fish was a coin. After His resurrection, He sat on the shore and cooked fish for the disciples and called them in from fishing to sup with Him. Can you think of other uses the Word makes of fish?

5. Can you understand the spiritual reason why Nebuchadnezzar invaded the city of Jerusalem through the Fish Gate first and then worked his way toward the Second Quarter Gate?

**ZEPHANIAH 1:12-13**

"And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and punish the men who are settled in complacency, who say in their heart, 'The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil.' Therefore their goods shall become booty, and their houses a desolation; they shall build houses, but not inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine."

**Passages From The Writings**

**P&P**

- "No truth will then be left in the church."

**AC 1488 [2]**

- "'Houses' mean where there are wisdom and intelligence, thus where there are the knowledges of good and truth... 'House' is used in the opposite sense in Zephaniah (1:12 & 13)...'houses' denote memory-knowledges by which, through reasonings, come falsities."

**AC 1071 [5]**

- "...planting vineyards and drinking the wine thereof is predicated, when [the spiritual church] becomes such as to have faith from charity. In Zephaniah
(1:13)...is described the opposite condition, when the spiritual church is vastated."

**AR 316**

- Note that this number states: "Nearly the same words occur in Hosea 9:2, 3; Zephaniah 1:13; Lamentations 2:11, 12; Micah 6:15; Amos 5:11, Isaiah 24:6, 7, 9, 11."

**AE 376 [16]**

- "In Zephaniah (1:13) the 'wealth that shall be for plunder' signifies spiritual wealth, which is the knowledges of good and truth; 'the houses that shall be for devastation' signify the things of the church in man; that from these when devastated one profits nothing and receives nothing, even though he listens to them, and sees them in the Word, is signified by 'building and not inhabiting, and planting vineyards and not drinking the wine thereof,' 'houses' meaning the goods of the church, and 'vineyards' with 'wine' its truths."

**AE 919**

- "That a 'vineyard' signifies the spiritual church is evident from the passages in the Word where 'vineyard' is mentioned..." (Zephaniah 1:13 is cited among many other passages.) "From the signification of 'vineyard' it can be seen that 'to gather the vintage' signifies to collect for uses those things that will be serviceable to the understanding, and which give intelligence and wisdom; and in the contrary sense it signifies to lay waste the church as to spiritual good... In the contrary sense 'vintage'[is] used in the sense...this signifies... that all spiritual good, and thus all truth that is truth...is destroyed; and this especially effected in the church by falsifications of the Word, likewise when evil of life corrupts all good, and falsity of doctrine perverts all truth..."

**Derived Doctrine**

"I will search Jerusalem with lamps..."

- *AR 140* explains that by "searching" is signified "to see all the things which a man believes and loves, thus the quality of his truth and of his good."
- "Lamps" signify "the light of truth from the Divine Human of the Lord." (*AC 2832 [3]). *AR 796* explains that lamps signify an illumination from the Lord.
- "Jerusalem," as explained in *AR 880*, signifies the church as to worship and its doctrine. "For worship is prescribed in doctrine and performed according to it..."
"...and punish the men..."

- TCR 459 [15] has a helpful explanation for punishment. In essence, this number teaches that punishment has as its end or use amendment. Punishment is to bring the offender into order, and it is to protect the greater good of society and heaven. Anger has nothing to do with punishment when administered by the Lord.

"...who are settled in complacency..."

- The Writings don’t seem to deal specifically with the word "complacent." But if we look for the synonyms of complacent, we find: contentment; satisfaction; and self-satisfaction.
- The Lord with His lamps will show what is at the core of the heart. The people to whom Zephaniah was speaking had no drive to undertake self-examination. They had no desire to make themselves guilty for any transgressions. Nor were they willing to supplicate the Lord for help. They did not want a new spiritual life. They liked what and where they were spiritually. They were content with themselves.

"The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil."

- Do we hear arrogance (the hells) speaking? Do we hear them saying the Lord is a do-nothing deity?
- The prophet Zephaniah tells how wrong they are in this assessment. He speaks for the Lord of action.

Putting It All Together

"No truth will be left in the church." (P&P) How do we know this? With the help of the internal sense, the truth of this statement is easily ratified.

The Lord says that He will come with His Divine lamp (light) and search the heart and mind of all within the church. He will examine what the people believe. He will look at their faith and doctrines. For those who believed in their own prudence, for those who were satisfied with life’s status quo (complacency), there is not good news: their evil ways will bring them self-punishment. They will not find heaven. In spite of their pronouncements of Divine inaction, good will come from the Lord. Rejection of the Lord will bring the evil to their knees. These things are so because the Divine order will serve as the amending force to bring about His new church.

For the evil, the plundering of their houses, the vineyards from which they could not drink wine, their goods becoming booty, the building of houses that they could not inhabit, all illustrate the fruitlessness of their choices. They do not have much to look forward to.
Is this a hard message to consider? It depends on what choice has been made. For the faithful, it is an encouraging and reassuring prophecy. For those who hate the Lord and His ways, it is an ominous prophecy.

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 1:12-13*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. Do you think the complacent will believe the words of this prophecy?

2. Can you anticipate what arguments they might offer to neutralize the potency of the Lord’s promised examination?

3. Do you recall the words of the serpent to Adam and Eve when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit? How might those words relate to this story?

4. The "punishment" of the Lord seems to spring from anger. What do you know about the distinction between anger and zeal? The Lord never acts from anger. He acts from a zeal that is based on love.

5. Order is a state that comes from the Lord. When the Lord establishes order, hell will be curbed. The greater good will be protected, and good people will feel free to perform uses. What other thoughts come to your mind when you hear this promise of the Lord’s?

6. Do you think the complacent will believe the words of this prophecy?

7. Can you anticipate what arguments they might offer to neutralize the potency of the Lord’s promised examination?

8. Do you recall the words of the serpent to Adam and Eve when they were tempted to eat of the forbidden fruit? How might those words relate to this story?

9. The "punishment" of the Lord seems to spring from anger. What do you know about the distinction between anger and zeal? The Lord never acts from anger. He acts from a zeal that is based on love.

10. Order is a state that comes from the Lord. When the Lord establishes order, hell will be curbed. The greater good will be protected, and good people will
feel free to perform uses. What other thoughts come to your mind when you hear this promise of the Lord's?

**ZEPHANIAH 1:14-17**

"The great day of the Lord is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers. I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse."

**Passages From The Writings**

**P&P**

- "They will perish on the day of the judgment by the Lord."

**AC 1839 [5]**

- "In Zephaniah (1:14, 15)...the ‘day of Jehovah’ denotes the last time and state of the church; ‘darkness and thick darkness’ falsities and evils."

**AR 340**

- "That ‘the day of the Lord’s anger’ signifies the Last Judgment is evident from the following passages...Zephaniah 1:14, 15..."

**AR 413**

- "Who...cannot see that the sun, the moon, and the stars of the world are not meant in these cases? That falsities of various kinds are signified by ‘darkness,’ is evident from these passages..." Zephaniah 1:15 is cited among the many references.

**AE 526 [5]**

- "...by ‘the day of Jehovah great and terrible;’ and as this comes when the church is in darkness and in thick darkness, that day is also called ‘a day of darkness and thick darkness,’ and also ‘a day of cloud and obscurity,’ as also in the following passages...In Zephaniah (1:14, 15)..."
In Zephaniah (1:14-18)...it is evident that desolation is the apparent deprivation of truth with those who are being regenerated, but is the absolute deprivation of it with those who are not being regenerated.

"In Zephaniah (1:15)...‘the day of Jehovah’ denotes the last time of the church, which is here treated of; ‘darkness’ denotes falsities, ‘thick darkness’ evils; both therefore are mentioned; otherwise it would be repetition of the same thing, or an unmeaning amplification. But the word in the original language that in this verse is rendered ‘thick darkness’ involves falsity as well as evil, that is dense falsity from which is evil, and also dense evil from which is falsity."

"[In Zephaniah 1:15]...‘darkness’ signifies falsities. In the Word ‘darkness’ also signifies ignorance of truth, such as the Gentiles are in who have not the Word and know nothing of the Lord."

"[In Zephaniah 1:15]...‘darkness’ denotes the privation of truth; and ‘thick darkness,’ the privation of truth and good; if ‘thick darkness’ signified nothing more than ‘darkness,’ it would be an empty repetition which would be far from the Holy Word."

"...all the truth of the church will be consummated, and then it will be night, because the truth of the church is light." Zephaniah 1:15 is cited as one of the examples.

"So the Last Judgment, when those who are in the falsities of evil are to perish, is called: ‘A day of cloud and of obscurity’ (Zephaniah 1:15)."

"Full consummation...is described thus in...(Zephaniah 1:15; 2:9)."
"The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out."

**Derived Doctrine**

"That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers."

- **Heaven and Hell (HH) 155** tells us that "day" and "year" in the Word signify the states of life in general.
- "Day of anger and wrath" relates to the Last Judgment executed at the Lord’s Second Advent. *(AE 413)*
- A day of "devastation" is predicated of good. *(AE 960)*
- A day of darkness signifies a state of ignorance caused by the deprivation of truth. *(AE 526)*
- "Thick darkness" signifies the presence of hatred, instead of charity. *(AC 1860)* The light of heaven effectively appears as darkness to those who are in the love of self and of the world. *(AC 2441)*
- A "trumpet" of alarm signals, or announces, that the intellectual of the church has been laid to waste. *(AC 4592 [10]*)
"A day of darkness and gloominess..." "They...who are in truth and not yet in good, are in shade [gloom] and darkness; because truth has no light from itself, and the light which they have from good is faint, like a light which is going out." (AC 6400)

In TCR 755, we read "'desolation signifies the consummation of truth, 'devastation' the consummation of good..."

"High towers" signify the worship of self which manifests itself when a people exalt themselves above others. (AC 1302) The "highest towers" signify doctrines of falsity, or those who love to dominate by misusing the holy things of the church. (AC 315 [15])

"...they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord..."

To be "blind" signifies being ignorant of truth and so being without understanding. (AE 239 [22])

To "walk" signifies to live (or not live) according to the doctrine, or truth, of faith. (AC 519)

The church, from its high tower of self-love, became like "blind men." The people of the church sinned against the Lord. Their eyes lost the heavenly light. They stumbled and tripped through life, missing the light of the Word because of their sins.

"...their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse."

"Blood" in the positive sense represents charity, or love of the neighbor. (AC 1000 [2])

Blood being poured out like "dust" intends to show us something quite the opposite of charity. "Dust" signifies the sensuous life. Thus, blood being poured out like dust signifies a "charity" that lives only from what is physical and material, or the body and earth. (AC 242)

"Refuse," or litter or rubbish, signifies the worthlessness of such a life of pretense. Real charity begins with the shunning of evils as sins. This kind of life keeps our "blood" rich and contributing to the health and well-being of our spiritual life and vitality. (AE 374 [5])

Putting It All Together

"They [the high and lofty abusers of the Word in the church] will perish on the day of the judgment by the Lord."

The spiritual sense of this portion of Zephaniah deals with the things that will occur following the Last Judgment. The Second Advent of the Lord will cause a positive internal conflict within the church. It is a necessary overturning and emptying of falsities that misled the hearts and minds of the people within the church. His spiritual coming will cause the church to face the most grievous and heart-searching
temptations. Those who sought to hold the course of truth will find themselves on the edge of momentary anxiety and despair. But His Second Advent will be worth the temporary anguish. This Last Judgment will inspire the unification of the faithful throughout the heavens. The Doctrine of the Lord will draw the good and faithful away from the influence of hell.

Hell does not like losing to the Lord. The mere mention of His presence and of restoration of the heavens causes the inhabitants of hell to speak words of condemnation about His uncharitableness to them. He is made to appear dark, gloomy, stormy, terrifying, vengeful, and a destroyer of people.

Those in hell like puffing themselves up. Their blood, their life, is one of pomposity. They love their lofty towers where they speak words and make "erudite" pronouncements solely to attain adulation from those who have joined them in a life of "dust" blood and "refuse." The representation of the "dust" blood and "refuse" is powerful, a stark picture of spiritual reality from the Lord but ever so true. The Lord sees motives and intentions. His heavenly light exposes all corners and dark places where evil loves to hide and cover up its corrupt essence.

The Lord watches the extent of the shallowness of evil people. He permits the pompous pretenders their brief moment of flaunting good and truth. But it is only for a moment. The Lord wants all to know it will not last. It cannot last because it has no light and wisdom. Like a flickering candle in the wind of the Lord’s refreshing truth, their flame will go out.

The hellish spirits lament this. They cry out in protest. They deny that it is of their own choice and actions that these things will come to fruition. No, they say, it is the Lord’s fault. He is the one who causes the dark, gloomy, fierce, vindictiveness that is so unfair.

The Lord’s Second Coming, the Last Judgment, is the great liberator of good and truth. To hell, the trumpet of the Lord is like a piercing "bitter" noise that hurts them. To the angels, the trumpet of the Lord is a delightful "sweet" noise of great celebration and victory.

Read and Review

Read the selection from P&P.

Read Zephaniah 1:14-17.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. Are you anxious about the things that have to come to clear the way for the spiritual New Church? What makes you anxious?
2. The hells protest the Lord’s presence. They love to find examples of "unfair" things in life. Do we assist them in any fashion if we allow negative states to enter our mind? What negative issues capture your attention? How can you counteract this?

3. Hell’s lofty towers seem clear in the mind as a representation. Can you put any natural specifics with the spiritual imagery?

4. Bitter noise versus sweet noise of the Lord’s trumpet is an interesting concept. It seems to go along with the idea that one person’s meat is another person's poison. Can you relate to times of bitter and sweet music from the Word?

5. Any thoughts regarding the blood like dust and the flesh like refuse? How can we illustrate these states?

**ZEPHANIAH 1:18**

"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. For He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land."

**Passages From The Writings**

**P&P**

- "They cannot be preserved."

**AC 4535 [4]**

- "...by ‘land’ in the Word is signified the church...From this it is manifest what is meant ...in Zephaniah by the ‘speedy consummation of all that dwell in the land.’ That the Jewish nation which dwelt in that land was not consummated, but the holy of worship with them..."

**AR 216**

- "...‘zeal’ in the Lord is not wrath; it only appears so in externals, interiorly it is love. It appears so in externals, because the Lord seems to be angry when He rebukes man, especially when man's own evil punishes him. It is so permitted from love, that his evil may be removed; just like a parent, who, if he loves his children, suffers [allows] them to be chastised for the sake of removing their evils." This explanation follows the citing of Zephaniah 1:18 and 3:8."
...by 'the anger of God' is signified evil with men, which, because it is against God, is called the anger of God; not that God is angry with man, but because man, from his evil, is angry with God, and because it appears to man, when he is punished and tormented for it, as is the case after death in hell, as if it were from God, therefore, in the Word, anger and wrath, yea evil, is attributed to God." Zephaniah 1:18 is cited as an example of this truth.

...[that] the consummation of the age is the last time of the church, can be seen from those passages in the Word where it is spoken of... (Zephaniah 1:18)...In these passages 'the land' signifies the church...

In Zephaniah (1:18)...'Consummation' signifies the last state of the church, a state in which there is no longer any truth because there is no good, or in which there is no longer any faith because there is no charity; and when this is the state of the church, then comes the Last Judgment. The Last Judgment then comes, for the further reason that the human race is the basis or foundation of the angelic heaven, for the conjunction of the angelic heaven with the human race is perpetual...when therefore the basis does not correspond the angelic heaven totters; consequently there must then be a judgment...."

Derived Doctrine

"Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord’s wrath..."

"Silver" signifies truth, and in the opposite sense, falsity. (AC 1551) Silver also signifies rational truth. (AC 2575)

"Gold" signifies good. It is representative of good from love and the good of faith from love. (AC 110)

Gold and silver signify knowledge of celestial things and knowledge of spiritual things. (AC 1551 [3])

The word "deliver" means to be saved or to be rescued. To be delivered in the positive sense means to be withdrawn from falsities. (AE 714 [14])

"The Lord’s wrath" signifies the advent of the Lord to judgment. (Divine Love and Wisdom [DLW] 5) This kind of wrath comes about when the Lord turns away the opposition and the consequent penalties the opposition feels from His judgment. (AC 5798 [6])
"...the whole land shall be devoured..."

- *AC 2571* offers us a wide view of what "land" represents. Land may represent the internal man or woman of the church; the region where the church is; the church itself; also in the universal sense, the Lord’s kingdom in heaven and on earth; the doctrine of love and charity, hence the faith of the church.
- To be devoured signifies to destroy goods and truths. It also signifies the destruction of doctrine from its inception. *(AR 542)*

"By the fire of His jealousy...He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land."

- "Fire" signifies the good of love. *(AC 2799)* Fire in the opposite sense represents the love of self and the hell of falsities therefrom. *(AC 2444)*
- "Jealousy" signifies that divine truth is perceived as falsity and divine good as evil by those who do not receive the divine truth of the Lord’s divine good; so they attribute anger and wrath to the Divine, for to be jealous in the case of the Lord means to be zealous. The words jealous and zealous come from the same root meaning. *(AC 8875)*
- Jealousy signifies the Lord’s love of saving humankind. *(AC 5071)*
- "Zeal" signifies a kind of fire, but within it is the love of doing good to others, or, with the Lord, the love of saving humankind. *(AC 5071)*
- Can we now see the meaning of speedy riddance in the land? The Lord’s love is alive. It is quick, meaning it is fervent, thorough, and lively in its task of removing the hells and their attendant evils. Nothing of disorder shall be left when the Lord completes the consummation of the church.

**Putting It All Together**

"They [the great deceivers within the falsified church] cannot be preserved." *(P&P)*

Those who sought to be deceivers of the doctrines of the church cannot use the silver of "rational truths" to talk their way out of the Lord’s spiritual assessment. Nor can they present the gold of imagined celestial knowledge to justify their actions. What looked beautiful and precious on the outside was a veneer—a cover-up—of a valueless base. *TCR 519* likens the pretense of hell to coins made of dung and covered over with gold. Their fine coverings will not save them. So committed to evil were the people of Zephaniah’s time that there was no love left within their hearts to be changed. If they had asked for help, it would have been given to them. But the great falsifiers wanted nothing to do with the Lord.

When the Lord cleans and purifies His church, He does so completely. The whole "land" will receive His cleansing. The "fire" of His jealousy is the way the Word explains what zeal He has to save humankind. The warmth of His love is strong and comforting. He will not tarry over the removal of disorder. Speedy. Complete.
Thorough. Hell has nothing, no power, to stop the Divine process of reformation and regeneration.

Will this happen in our lifetime? Let the people say Amen, which is to say, "may it ever be so."

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 1:18*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. Is there any uncertainty in your mind about what the Lord says will happen during the Last Judgment? What does this section teach you about the refreshing changes the Lord will introduce in His New Church?

2. Will the false charges against the Lord, by the deceivers, stand up in the end? Discuss this.

3. Remember when the Lord called Moses by the burning bush. Do you see something in that story that shows the fire of His love as a preservation of our freedom? The bush burned, but it was not consumed. What does this tell us about how the Lord leads us?

The promise of the Lord’s thorough emptying of the vastated church shows that He offers no compromises to the rebellious. Therefore, we can rest assured that there are no compromises with hell either. Comments?
Chapter Two

ZEPHANIAH 2:1-3

"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together, O undesirable [shameless] nation, before the decree is issued, or the day passes like chaff, before the Lord’s fierce anger comes upon you, before the day of the Lord’s anger comes upon you! Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "They ought to be converted before the Lord comes to judgment..."

Doctrine of the Lord 4

- "...I shall in this first chapter merely adduce passages from the Word which contain the expression ‘that day,’ ‘in that day,’ and ‘in that time;’ in which, by ‘day,’ and ‘time,’ is meant the Lord’s advent...In Zephaniah (2:2, 3)"

AR 340

- "‘The great day of the anger of the Lamb,’ signifies the day of the Last Judgment; ‘and who is able to stand?’ signifies their inability to endure it by reason of their torment; for when the Last Judgment is at hand, the Lord, together with heaven, approaches, and of those who are below in the world of spirits, no others can endure the Lord’s coming, but those who are interiorly good, who shun evils as sins, and look to the Lord. That ‘the day of the Lord’s anger’ signifies the Last Judgment is evident from the following passages... Zephaniah 2:2, 3..."

AR 704

- "...the Lord’s coming and the New Church from Him...are meant by ‘the day of Jehovah’; as in...(Zephaniah 2:2, 3)"

AE 413 [5]

- "In Zephaniah (2:2, 3)...‘the glowing of anger’ and ‘the day of Jehovah’s anger’ mean the Last Judgment."
Derived Doctrine

"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather together..."

- AC 679 explains that to "gather" signifies searching and gathering together (inventorying) the truths in the memory.
- AR 707 presents the negative meaning of gathering as signifying "to excite to combat from falsities against truths...From the purpose of destroying the New Church..."
- Please note the repetition of the word "gather." The cause of repetition in the Word is because the Word treats distinctly of the two faculties, namely the understanding and the will. (AC 707)

"O undesirable [shameless] nation..."

- As we know, there is a good and bad meaning to all words used in the spiritual sense. "Nation" in the good sense represents the Lord’s kingdom or the spiritual church that receives the good of faith. (AC 2699) In the negative meaning, nation signifies falsity from evil, that which comes from the sensuous man that nurtures destructive truths. (AE 724 [27]) "Nation" signifies those who trust in themselves. (AC 249)
- The wording of our text makes it plain as to which of the possible meanings of "nation" we need to reflect on. "O undesirable [shameless] nation..." This seems to call forth the image of a church or nation that was in love with nurturing those doctrines that harbor destructive truths.

"Before the decree is issued..."

- A decree signifies that the Lord was to come into the world. (TCR 101) A decree signifies an eternal law of order. (AC 10248)
- To "issue" means to set forth; to publish; to emit (to give influx); to announce.

"Or the day passes like chaff..."

- "Chaff" signifies things in which there is nothing good and also falsity of every kind that has a hellish origin. (AC 3941 [9])
- "Day" signifies vastation (as taught in Zephaniah 1:14), and "day" represents the last time and state of the church. (AC 488 [3] and 1839 [5])

"Before the Lord’s fierce anger comes upon you..."

- Anger (especially fierce anger) is attributed to the Lord, but it signifies more of the anger of the people, or church. It represents the separation or turning away from things divine; for when wrath or anger is said of the Lord, it means a turning away on the part of the individual. (AC 10431)
Any movement or correction by the Lord, to the evil, appears to be from anger, when in reality, His purpose is a calm and loving motive.

"Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth..."

To "seek" signifies a longing to be instructed in the ways of truth. (AC 3058 [2]) Seeking describes the attitude of those who will nothing and seek nothing except that which is from the Lord, and whatever they ask is granted. (AR 951)

The "meek" signify those who are in the good (love) of charity. (AE 304 [44]) Meekness denotes a willingness to follow the ways of the Lord. Putting aside our unhealthy forms of self-love is a worthy act of meekness.

The spiritual meanings of the word "earth" are manifold. It would be impossible to record the full list in this brief capsulation. Here are but a few of the references to consider. The "earth" signifies the external man. (AC 477 [3])"Earth" signifies a receptacle. (AC 28) "Earth" signifies the exterior things of the church, and interior things are the heavens. (AC 1066 [3]) In the parable of the Sower, four kinds of "earth" are mentioned. The good "earth" represents the good in a person, or church, which receives the Word. (AC 3310 [2]) One last quote might be worth considering, too: "earth" signifies the old church. (AC 8902 [8])

"...who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility."

"Justice" signifies a life that holds dearly to the good of charity. Those who love the good of charity are endowed by the Lord with the ability to know what is true. (AC 615)

To "uphold" represents to support, and to have an inner sustainability in times of temptation. (AE 298 [10])

"Righteous" can be tied in with integrity and perfection, having a clear conscience and thinking from innocence and simple good. (AC 2525)

"Humility" signifies a willingness to give in to the ways of the Lord. It signifies a quieting of one's proprium so that the Lord's Proprium can grow within us and lead the way to good and truth.

"Seeking" indicates a willingness to be instructed in truths. (AC 3058 [2])

"It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger."

When the words "It may be..." occur in the Word, the core of their meaning seems best explained by the following passage from AC 994: "...interior things are as it were asleep, being immersed in the corporeal things. But yet it may be evident to any one who reflects, that all pleasures are such as are the affections that are more and more interior, and that they receive from these all their essence and quality." The words "It may be..." remind the reader of
the words "Nunc Licet." "Now it is permitted..." Interior things will give the faithful a sense of new enlightenment, protection, and pleasures forevermore.

- To be "hidden" by the Lord signifies finding refuge in the protection of the Lord. *(AC 8764)*
- "...in the day of the Lord’s anger..." We best understand this phrase when we study the root meanings of anger and zeal. The Lord has no anger. He is full of zeal. He wishes no harm or destruction on anyone. He doesn't lash out, nor does He seek revenge. Zealously, He wants to save, protect, and deliver all from the anger of hell. We are the ones who project anger on the Lord when in fact it is hell that is full of anger.
- The phrase "day of anger" as used in the *Old Testament* relates, or points, to the judgment that will be executed at the incarnation of the Lord. *(AE 413 [6-7]; AC 488 [3] and 1839 [5])*

**Putting It All Together**

"They *ought* to be converted before the Lord comes to judgment." *(P&P)*

The underlining of the words *ought* and *converted* is added to help us focus on our summary. The word "ought" conveys to us a powerful sense of why we have the Lord’s Divine imperative. The church ought to be proactive in its work of repentance, reformation, and regeneration. It’s a work dedicated to preparing the way for the Lord. To use the imagery of *Isaiah 40:3-4* and *Luke 3:5*, our spiritual work is a specific series of changes. The Word proposes changes that will make His incarnation positively direct and free of stumbling blocks.

"Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth..."

*AE 405 [36]* explains this passage as signifying that we "should prepare [ourselves] to receive the Lord; ‘wilderness’ signifying where there is no good because there is no truth, thus where there is as yet no church; ‘every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,’ signifies that all who are humble in heart, that is, all who are in goods and truths, are received, for such as are received by the Lord are raised up to heaven; while ‘every mountain and hill shall be made low’ signifies that all who are elated in mind, that is, who are in love of self and the world, shall be put down."

The call to be converted will bring us out of the "undesirable [shameless]" nation state. Instead of being like chaff, we can be converted to the "heart" or kernel of wheat. Conversion changes our negative fear of the Lord to a positive love of the Lord. We will seek His counsel. His love and wisdom will give us a sense of being upheld by His justice. In the stream of the Lord’s Providence, we will be carried to
places of innocence, peace, calmness, tranquility, and mutual love to the Lord and the neighbor.

Please note how understanding the spiritual sense of the Word turns us away from negative ideas. Quickly the affirmative side of the Lord’s Providence calls us to gather ourselves together and prepare the way for Him. "Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth...seek righteousness, seek humility."

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 2:1-3*.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. How do the words "ought" and "conversion" sit with you? There are some psychological schools of thought that urge us to give up on compulsion words. Should, ought, and must are seen as enemies of a healthy and balanced psyche. Do you agree with this concept? What about the church’s teachings that tell us there is freedom in self-compulsion?

2. If these compulsion words are not troublesome, how do you incorporate them into a healthy lifestyle?

3. How about the word "conversion"? What does it mean to be converted?

4. What "valleys" in life can you identify that need to be lifted up? In the stories of the Word, wars, despair, and danger exist in the valley. The Twenty-Third Psalm reminds us: "Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for Thou art with me..."

5. The mountains that need to be lowered speak of a mental vanity. What are some spiritual mountains that need to be leveled or moved?

6. Remember, these preparatory events are not just to humiliate us. They are to be experienced to make the way straight for the Lord. We need to get the crooked straight. What does this last process tell us about playing around with truth, twisting it this way and that way for our own ends?

7. Lastly, did the harshness of the literal sense soften for you as the spiritual sense shone through?
ZEPHANIAH 2:4-6

"For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon desolate; they shall drive out Ashdod at noonday, and Ekron shall be uprooted. Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethitest! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: "I will destroy you; so there shall be no inhabitant.' The seacoast shall be pastures, with shelters for shepherds and folds for flocks."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "...for the evil will then perish on account of evils and falsities of many kinds."

AC 1197 [3]

- "The 'Philistines' signify in general a mere memory-knowledge of the knowledges of faith, and specifically those who make faith and salvation consist in knowledges alone, which they make matters of memory..." Thus, "it is evident what is meant by the Philistines, and by 'all of Philistia,' or all 'the borders' of it...So also in other places in the Prophets, as in...Zephaniah 2:5..."

AC 9340 [4]

- "The reason why 'Philistia,' which bordered on the land of Canaan even unto Tyre and Zidon, signified the interior truths of faith, was that the representative Ancient Church had been there, as is evident from the remains of Divine worship among its inhabitants, and referred to in the historic and prophetic books of the Word that treat of the Philistines and the land of Philistia; as in the prophecies of...Zephaniah 2:5..."

AC 1565

- "That 'flock and herd' signify the possessions of the external man, is evident from the signification of 'flock' and 'herd,' as being goods..." And that they also "signify things not good, is evident from the following passages of the Word." Zephaniah 2:5-6 is cited among other references.

AC 2323 [3]

- "...when a Judgment is close at hand, that is, the salvation of the faithful and the condemnation of the unfaithful, then visitation precedes, or an exploration of what quality they are, that is, whether there is any charity and faith. This visitation takes place in the 'evening;' and therefore the visitation itself is called 'evening,' as in Zephaniah...2:5, 7."
Derived Doctrine

"For Gaza shall be forsaken…"

- "...by ‘Gaza’ [are signified] the things that are revealed concerning charity..."
- To be forsaken signifies withdrawal. The apparent absence of the Lord is the result of the lack of charity and the iniquities and sins of the Philistine church. (AE 412 [19])

"...and Ashkelon desolate..."

- Of the five principal cities of the Philistines, Ashkelon is the only one located on a seacoast. Ashkelon's long history shows a spirit of rebellion. She caused the Egyptian Pharaoh, Ramses II, to storm her city. He crushed the rebels, and to record his victory, he inscribed on their temple walls a dramatic representation of the battle.
- Was the spirit of Ashkelon's rebellious nature actively being demonstrated against the Lord? Are we to consider the spiritual meaning, or representation, of a Philistine city on a seacoast? A "sea" represents a collection of spiritual and natural knowledges in the memory. (AC 28 and 991) A "coast" represents the border, the extension of the church from the knowing faculty to the intuitive and thinking faculties. (AC 569 [12])
- To be "desolate" signifies to be without visible truth. (AC 6141) To be desolate connotes ruin.

"They shall drive out Ashdod at noonday..."

- Ashdod, too, was one of the five principal cities of the Philistines. It was the northernmost city (near the coast and half way between Gaza and Joppa.) When the Philistines captured the Ark of the Covenant, they took it to Ashdod, where the temple of the god Dagon was located.
- Since we don’t have a direct teaching about Ashdod, we have to turn to what we do know to draw inferences about what might be represented. The Philistines represent those whose faith is separated from charity. They place everything of religion in knowledge and cognitions. This type of faith sounds like faith alone. (AE 700 and TCR 203) Dagon represents a mixture of doctrine. They made the representation of Dagon in a form that was half man and half fish. Dagon's form testifies to this mixture that lacks intelligence and power and is deficient of spiritual good. Does its northern location also tell us about a "coldness" or indifference to the good and truth of the Lord?
- To "drive out" signifies that the Lord will put to flight all of their evils and falsities. (AC 1835)
- "Noonday" is a period of the day where the greatest amount of light is present. Noonday therefore represents a state of fullness of enlightenment.
The light of heaven presents to the heart and mind of the church the greatest intelligence and wisdom. (*AC 5672*)

"And Ekron shall be uprooted..."

- "'Beelzebul,' who was the god of Ekron, means the god of all falsities, for Beelzebul by derivation means god of flies, and 'flies' signify the falsities of the sensual man, thus falsities of every kind." (*AE 740 [10]*)
- A "root" signifies the proprium as the source of infernal falsity. (*AR 410*) A root signifies that charity cannot bear fruit. (*AC 382 [3]*) In *Doctrine of Life* 93, we read that as the proprium "constitutes the first root of [our] life, it is evident what kind of a tree a man would be unless this root were plucked up, and a new root planted in its place..."

"Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast..."

- "Woe" signifies an admonition of disaster and warns of the danger of eternal damnation. (*AC 3755*)
- Inhabitants in the good sense represent all goods and those who are in charity. (*AC 795 [4]*) In the contrary sense, inhabitants represent evils goods and a lack of charity to the Lord and neighbor. Therefore, we can sense why the Lord spoke words of woe to the inhabitants.
- The "sea" represents a collection of spiritual and natural knowledges in the memory. (*AC 28 and 991*) "Coast" signifies the extension of the church from the knowing faculty to the intuitive and thinking faculties. (*AC 569 [12]*)

"...the nation of the Cherethitest!"

- We need to identify the Cherethites. Cherethites have an interesting background. They constituted a section of David's personal army when he defeated the Philistines and were part of his retinue after he was established in Jerusalem. (*II Samuel 8:18*) Their loyalty to David may be seen when they joined him in the fight against Absalom and his mutinous army. (*II Samuel 20:7*)
- The Cherethit lineage also has family roots that cross lines with the Philistines. Is it the Philistine connection that is being condemned here? Or is the condemnation due to a spoiling of their loyalty and support of Israel’s Lord?
- Since we do not have direct teachings regarding the nation of Cherethitest, we might do well to focus on the Philistine representations. Philistines represent those who are in faith separated from charity. The Philistines also represent those who hold false ideas and reason about spiritual things from their false ideas. (*AC 727*)
"The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines: I will destroy you; so there shall be no inhabitant."

- When the Word speaks of the Lord being against anyone, it means something other than what we would mean if we used these words. For the Lord, it means bringing things back into order. It means bringing hell to the point of being yoked or controlled. Divine power is offered in place of self-interests. \((AC\ 8625)\)
- Canaan has many representations. Let's look at some of them. In the negative sense, it represents a church or an individual who is worshiping externally without internals. In a positive sense, Canaan represents the Lord's kingdom, the church, the man or woman of the church, the celestial of the church, or its good. \((AC\ 5757)\)
- Can we use derived doctrine here? Would it make sense to see this as an announcement from the Lord that He planned to reorder the worship of the church? Can we imagine a movement from a lifeless external worship to a spiritual excitement for internal worship?
- The destruction announced by the Lord is a cleansing process. It "means not to be afraid because of the damnation which comes upon those who are in knowledges and pervert them." In other words, it signifies the removal of perverted memory-knowledges. \((AC\ 1458\ [3])\)
- "Inhabitants" represent goods and truths. \((AE\ 741\ [6])\) To announce that no inhabitants would be left represents the removal of all evils and falsities that had been called goods and truths. See \(AC\ 417\ [10]\) for the meaning of "unpeopled."

"The seacoast shall be pastures, with shelters for shepherds and folds for flocks."

- "Pastures" signify knowledges that contain the goods of truth.
- Pastures also signify what sustains the spiritual life. \((AC\ 6078)\)
- Pastures signify the Word from which spiritual nourishment is derived. \((AE\ 644)\)
- To find pastures signifies to be taught, enlightened, and nourished by divine truths. \((AR\ 914)\)
- A "shelter," or shade, signifies a defense against evil and falsity. \((AE\ 298\ [5])\)
- A shelter in the negative sense represents an obscure general perception of good and truth, especially with one who is in external worship. \((AC\ 2367)\)
- "Shepherds" signify those who lead to the good of life. \((AC\ 6052)\)
- Shepherds signify one who does the goods of charity or who leads and teaches. Shepherds signify the Lord. \((AC\ 375\ [34])\)
- "Gold" signifies good from the celestial things of love, in which innocence may rest. \((AC\ 415)\)
- A "flock" signifies those who are led and taught. \((AC\ 343)\)
- A flock signifies the church of those who are in the truth of simple good. \((AC\ 6828)\)
Putting It All Together

*P&P* sums up this section from the Word with this doctrinal statement: "...the evil will then perish on account of evils and falsities of many kinds."

What evils and sins of every kind were the Philistines guilty of?

- They made memory-knowledges the core of their faith.
- They believed salvation to consist in knowledges alone.
- This attitude took the Lord and charity out of genuine worship.
- They were rebellious and quarrelsome within their hearts toward the good and truth of the Lord.
- Ashdod proudly and defiantly hosted the god Dagon within its temple. Dagon’s image was a mixture, half man and half fish. Dagon signifies a religious faith that separates truth from charity. *(Divine Providence [DP] 326 [12]*)

After looking over the summary of "evils and sins of every kind," do we find anything listed above that makes us cringe with horror and disgust? If nothing affected our sense of injustice, why is that so? Does it mean we have fallen victim to misconceptions about true faith? Some describe this state as being "numbed out." Is this a good description of the process of losing a vital faith?

As I read it, the Philistines placed too much emphasis on mere confession of faith. They chose to have a faith of the lips and not of the heart. In many ways, they were dangerous spiritual hypocrites. They represented a religion that valued the "faith alone" choice. Such a choice spurned real spirituality. They were not interested in finding the spiritual sense of the Word to see the error of their ways or to get a better understanding of their spiritual needs. Instead, they looked for ways to excuse or justify their actions. The Philistines molded a mixture of man and fish ideas to pollute and adulterate truths they had had from the days of the Ancient Church. In other words, they were intent on destroying the "Divine Human Representative" understanding they had of the Lord.

Are we now moving toward a clearer understanding of what the Lord is condemning within the Philistine church? Can we picture the light of the Lord going out? Instead of striving to keep as correct an idea of God as they could, they worked toward worshipping an "invisible" lifeless statue of Dagon, an idol fashioned from their minds and hands.

Real spiritual growth depends on a progressive, deepening faith from the Word and on shunning of evils as sins. A true faith pushes aside spiritual lethargy, negligence, and self-love so as to serve the greater good of the Lord and the neighbor.
Do we still have these enemies of faith among us? Can we sense that the "faith alone" ideas thrive in present-day churches? Are there places where you see the memorization of creedal statements honored as meriting heaven? Do we still try to mold and blend, or bend, the ways of the Lord with time-honored excuses and justifications, such as "we are only human"? Are we still a people of lip service and not heart service?

Recall the position of the nation of Cherethites. David trusted them and made them a part of his inner circle of confidants. They rallied to help him overcome the rebellious army of Absalom. What happened to those virtues within their nation? The Word illustrates the correspondential answer: they turned away and sought to fashion their own spiritual ends.

Our story doesn’t end with this bleak picture. Instead, the prophecy announces: "The seacoast shall be pastures, with shelters for the shepherds and folds for the flocks." The Lord promises that there will be a restoration of knowledge based on the goods of His truth. He promises to teach, enlighten, and nourish the flock. He will bring shepherds who will lead them to the good of life. In the highest sense, the Lord is promising that He will be the Shepherd of Innocence Who will bring peace and rest to His people.

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Zechariah 2:4-6.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

The following questions are drawn from the "Putting It All Together" section.

1. How does this part of Zechariah and its meanings give us a sense of the depth, or seriousness of the spiritual disorder of the Philistines?

2. If nothing appeared serious enough, for you, to warrant total desolation of the Philistines, where do you think we might be missing the point? Have we become somewhat numbed to the seriousness of disorders? Certainly with what we see daily in the media, nothing seems to surprise us anymore. We see and hear all kinds of brutality on a nightly basis. Are we somewhat jaded? Have we thrown in the towel on restoring spiritual values in our world? Are there ways to counteract this numbness?

3. Did the point about the Philistines being part of the Ancient Church register and strike you as something we ought to remember? At one time, they were a church that saw the Divine Human in all of the representative forms around
them. They let their spiritual gift slip away with a mixture of rationalizations and memory-knowledges. Can we find ways to keep lip-service worship from replacing a heart-inspired worship service?

4. Real spiritual growth comes about when we participate in a deeper study of the Word. It comes when we look within ourselves honestly to remove those areas of evil and sin that cause a blockage between the Lord and ourselves. How might a study, like this one, help us develop a more disciplined way to read the Word? What are the fruits of such reading?

5. What were your reflections about the inadequacy of "faith alone" and memorization of facts for achieving salvation? Real faith is an internal acknowledgment of truth—the Lord’s truth. If you believed in the confessional booth and the granting of absolution, would that take away a sense of your individual need to shun evils as sins?

6. What modern application can we make of what we learned about the representative nation of the Cherethites?

7. Did the positive closing prophecy about pastures, shelters, shepherds, and flocks help lift the cloud of doom and eminent destruction? What do these images bring to mind?

8. What other questions would you add to this study?

ZEPHANIAH 2:7

"The coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed their flocks there; in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening. For the Lord their God will intervene for them, and return their captives."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

• "Then some are to be saved."

AC 1565

• "That ‘flock and herd’ signify the possessions of the external man, is evident from the signification of ‘flock’ and ‘herd,’ as being goods...That ‘flock’ and ‘herd’ signify also things not good, is evident from...Zephaniah 2:5-7."
"...when a Judgment is close at hand, that is, the salvation of the faithful and the condemnation of the unfaithful, then visitation precedes, or an exploration of what quality they are...this visitation takes place in the ‘evening’;...as in Zephaniah 2:5-7.

"...the coming of the Lord into the world is signified by ‘evening and morning,’...In Zephaniah 2:7...‘evening’ denotes the first state of the rising church. As ‘evening’ signified the last state of the old church and the first of the new...That ‘evening’ denotes the last state of the church, when there is dense falsity because there is no faith, and dense evil because there is no charity...."

"The coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah..."

"The coast" signifies the extension of the church from one limit to the other, that is, from the knowing faculty to the intuitive and thinking faculties." (AC 569 [12], emphasis added) To grasp the significance of this citation, we must picture the Lord coming to the church to make a judgment. The Lord’s visitation is for the purpose of building up the new church. All of the faulty thoughts and affections must be vastated. Therefore, He opens the aspects of the church concerned with knowing; He visits the intuitive and thinking faculties. He examines the real thinking and affections of the church to rid it of lip service and pretense. Nothing can be hidden if spiritual integrity is to be restored. What is in the heart will be shouted from the rooftops.

"...shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah..." When a church is vastated, a remnant always remains and is continued under the guidance of the Lord. (AC 407) A remnant signifies those who have joined some goods of charity to faith. (AR517)

The house of Judah signifies the celestial church. (AE 710) What are the qualities of the celestial church in comparison to those of the spiritual church? "The truth of good is of the celestial church, and the good of truth is of the spiritual church. With those who were of the celestial church, good was implanted in the will part, which is the proper seat of good, and from this good, that is, through this good from the Lord, they had a perception of truth...But with those who are of the spiritual church, good is implanted in the intellectual part by means of truth..." (AC 5733)
"They shall feed their flocks there; in the houses of Ashkelon they shall lie down at evening."

- To feed signifies to make provision for the increase of the new church. *(AR 547)*
- To feed signifies to teach. *(AR 383)*
- To feed signifies to imbibe good and truth in a state of temptations. *(AC 8527)*
- A flock signifies those who are to be led and taught. *(AC 343)*
- A flock signifies the church and those who are in the truth of simple good. *(AC 6828)*
- Houses represent the natural mind. The rational mind and the natural mind are like a house. *(AC 4982)*
- Houses signify the church. *(AC 3720)*
- Houses signify the will principle. *(AC 706)*
- Houses signify scientifics that are collected together to raise and build up the external human, which is not unlike the building of a house. *(AC 1488)*
- We have no representation given for the city of Ashkelon. The Philistines had five major cities: Ashkelon was one of them. Ashkelon was the only one among the five powerful cities to be on the seacoast.
- To understand the meaning of lying down at evening in the houses of Ashkelon, let us consider first the representation of "down." *AC 1311* teaches that to come down signifies judgment. Can we take this to mean that the houses, the natural-rational mind, were about to be brought "down" to judgment? Does the evening represent the judgment of the last state of the church and the mind prior to the "new day" of the Lord’s advent? Consider this possible meaning in light of the passage below.

"For the Lord their God will intervene, and return their captives."

- To "intervene" means to come between; to mediate, arbitrate, intercede, or interrupt. Recall the wonderful teachings regarding the importance of the "remnant." Whenever a church undergoes vastations, *AC 407* teaches, the Lord sees to it that "...there always remains some nucleus of a church" so that a new light may shine forth to lead the captive back to a state of freedom.
- The Lord "interrupts" evil. His light comes between us and our states of disorder, and cleans or removes the murky and nefarious works of hell.
- *AC 10500* teaches that expiation for our sins "signifies a possibility by virtue of the Divine power of the Lord [to be] with those who have so completely turned themselves away...that their worship be...accepted and heard." (Emphasis added.)
- The Lord will intervene. He will provide a way out of spiritual captivity. He will free us from our cruel enslavement of mind, heart, and soul. His church will renew its work to feed and care for the souls of His flock.
Putting It All Together

Restoration, healing, rebuilding—this work is not always attractive. There is the knocking down and removal of what is worn out, the scarred walls, and weak foundations. With the dust of the rubble clouding our vision and the scattered remnants of steel and cement all over the former foundation, it is hard to picture what the new building is going to look like. The architect and the builder may assure us that the new building is going to please us and more adequately fit our growing needs. We look at their plans and drawings, and hope for the day when it will be completed so we can move in and enjoy the new usefulness of the building.

Surgery is not pretty, either. A hip replacement means cutting tissue and muscles and removing the damaged parts. There will be blood and weeks of soreness. The doctors promise that all of their work and a rehab regimen will bring relief and more mobility. We hope, we fear, we trust that it will happen as they promise.

Zephaniah’s message is direct. What the church had been building was going to collapse in the day of the Lord’s judgment. The doctrines of the church were faulty, based on false logic so precariously unbalanced that it was in eminent danger of collapsing. The worship going on within the church was superficial and nearly empty of holiness. The flock was not being fed. Souls were not receiving care. People were going through the motions of praise, but their hearts were not feeling any excitement. Genuine ends were not evident, and much spiritual ignorance was enslaving the Lord’s flock.

The Lord, as the Divine Architect and Divine Physician, counseled His people that falsity would fall and that it would be cut out of the diseased body of the church. A day of judgment was at hand. Those who loved their man-made truths were going to be separated from the church. They would be cut off not because of Divine anger, but because of their unwillingness to let the Lord lead them in the way of truth. They, the self-promoters, would no longer dictate what was essential to the church.

Zephaniah 2:7 reports that "some are to be saved." Who will be saved? Why only some? Why not everyone? The concept of the "remnant" comes out in this prophecy. The nucleus of a church will remain. The Lord’s intervention begins with a few. Again, we ask, why with a few? Real spiritual growth comes with a degree of slowness. It is a faith that has a line-upon-line and precept-upon-precept mission statement. Growth in the Lord’s church is founded on good and truth, not on popular opinions. Can you accept this plan of the Lord’s? AC 10500 encourages us to see that the Lord’s Divine power can restore the integrity of the church so that worship can be heard and accepted.
Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 2:7*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. As you look at the state of the church (for now, let’s use the church universal as our model), what is your view of its soundness? What is the basis for your opinion?

2. Can you see any signs of the nucleus (remnant) working? Is the New Church part of the nucleus? Are the Writings a nucleus?

3. When we research and judge civil, moral, and spiritual issues, how much are we influenced by popular concepts and how much by the Word?

4. For example, consider the issue of same-sex marriages. Whatever your opinion on this issue, how do you search "objectively" for answers? Will the courts and individual states decide for us? Do we put our heads in the sand and make no stand, hoping that it will eventually sort itself out?

5. What makes for a living and active church? Is a successful church one that fosters activities for all ages? Is a successful church one that provides preaching (worship), teaching, and doctrinal instruction for all ages? How do we avoid going through the motions of empty worship?

6. "A few will be saved." How did your heart and mind react to those words? Did you wish for a larger promise? If the Word had said "many" will be saved, how would that have changed how you felt about the prophecy?

7. We have so much more to learn about the ways of the Lord. We tend to try to get ahead of the Lord. We want faster results, faster growth. Impatience is a factor. What will it take for us to follow the Lord’s pace in growing the New Church?

8. Continuing the thought from question 7, how do we follow the pace of the Lord and avoid being complacent about our need to spread the good news of the Second Coming?

**ZEPHANIAH 2:8-10**

"I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the insults of the people of Ammon, with which they have reproached My people, and made arrogant threats against their
borders. Therefore, as I live, says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, surely Moab shall be like Sodom, and the people of Ammon like Gomorrah—overrun with weeds and saltpits, and a perpetual desolation. The residue of My people shall plunder them, and the remnant of My people shall possess them. This they shall have for their pride, because they have reproached and made arrogant threats against the people of the Lord of hosts."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "Those who have adulterated the Word will utterly perish"

AC 2468 [13]

- "In Zephaniah... (2:8-10)...To ‘reproach the people,’ and to ‘enlarge against their boundary, and against the people of Jehovah Zebaoth,’ is to hold as vile and to reject interior truths, which are the ‘people of Jehovah Zebaoth.’ The consequence of this is that goods become evils of falsity, which are ‘Sodom’ and a ‘place abandoned to the nettle;’ and truths become falsities, which are ‘Gomorrah’ and a ‘pit of salt.’ For it is from internal things that external are capable of being good and true."

AC 1259 [4-5]

- "That the ‘nations’ denote the goods of charity, or, what is the same, those in whom there are goods of charity...This is said of the Lord’s kingdom; ‘peoples’ denote truths; ‘nations’ goods. Those in the church who are endowed with the good of charity are ‘nations,’ and those who are endowed with the truths of faith are ‘peoples;’ for goods and truths are predicated according to the subjects in whom they are..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited as an example.

AC 1666 [3]

- "As cupidities and falsities are what vastate or lay waste man, that is, deprive him of all the life of the love of good, and of the affection of truth, vastation is described in many passages by ‘saltness.’" Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

AC 2455 [3]

- "In Zephaniah...2:9...where a ‘place that is left to the nettle’ denotes vastated good, and a ‘pit of salt’ vastated truth; for the expression ‘place left to the nettle’ refers to Sodom, by which is signified evil or vastated good, and a ‘pit
of salt' to Gomorrah, by which is signified falsity or vastated truth...That the subject is vastation is manifest, for it is said an 'eternal desolation.'"

**AC 9207 [7]**

- "A ‘pillar of salt’ denotes disjunction from truth; for in the opposite sense ‘salt’ signifies the destruction and vastation of truth (Zeph. 2:9...)."

**AC 10300 [6]**

- "In Zephaniah...2:9...‘a place left to the nettle’ denotes the ardor and burning of the life of man from the love of self; a ‘pit of salt’ denotes a longing for what is false, which, as it destroys truth and good, is called ‘a waste forever.’ It is said that it shall be ‘as Gomorrah,’ because by ‘Gomorrah and Sodom’ is signified the love of self (AC 2220)."

**Doctrine of the Lord 39**

- This number gives many references in the Word where the Lord is called "the God of Israel" only. Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

**Doctrine of Sacred Scriptures 86**

- "That repetitions...occur in the Word on the account of the marriage of good and truth, may be seen quite clearly from passages where ‘nations’ and ‘peoples’ are mentioned..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

**AR 483**

- "That ‘peoples’ signify those who are in truths or falsities of doctrine, and ‘nations’ those who are in goods or in evils of life, may appear from the many passages in the Word...where ‘peoples’ and ‘nations’ are mentioned together, from which this may be concluded, since in the Word in each and every thing there is a marriage of the Lord and the church, and thence...‘peoples’ relate to truth, and ‘nations’ to good." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited as an example.

**TCR 93**

- "That Jehovah and the Holy One of Israel are one, although the names are different, is made clear by the passages here quoted..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

**TCR 251**

- "It would be tedious to show from the Word that there are...dual expressions in the Word, which seem like repetitions of the same thing, for to do so would
fill many pages. But to remove doubt, I will cite some passages where 'nation' and 'people,'...are mentioned together..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

**AE 331 [6]**

- "...‘peoples’ and ‘nations’ signify all who are of the Lord’s church; ‘peoples’ those who are of His spiritual church, and ‘nations’ those who are of His celestial church." Later on in **AE 331[8]**, Zephaniah 2:9 is cited.

**AE 653 [6]**

- "In Zephaniah...2:9 ‘Moab’...means the natural man, who from the love of self adulterates the goods of the church, and ‘the sons of Ammon’ mean those who falsify the truths of the church; and as thence is the devastation of all good and truth it is said, ‘a place abandoned to nettles, and a pit of salt, a waste for ever;’ the devastation of all good is signified by ‘a place of nettles,’ and the devastation of all truth, by ‘a pit of salt;’ like things are signified by ‘Sodom and Gomorrah.’"

**Coronis 58 [5]**

- "...passages in which the vastation, desolation, and consummation of [the] church, are further mentioned..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited among the many passages.

**AC 2220 [2]**

- "In Zephaniah...2:9...where ‘Sodom’ denotes evil from the love of self, and ‘Gomorrah’ the derivative falsity, of both of which ‘desolation’ is here predicated, as previously was ‘overthrown.’ ‘Pride’ is the love of self; to ‘reproach the people of Jehovah Zebaoth,’ is to bring evil upon truths; and to ‘enlarge upon the people,’ is to bring falsity upon them."

**AR 502**

- "That ‘Sodom’ is the love of dominating from self-love, may appear from the description of Sodom in Moses, that they wished to do violence to the angels who came into Lot’s house; and that fire and brimstone rained upon them out of heaven...These loves and their evils are signified by ‘Sodom and Gomorrah’..." Zephaniah 2:9 is cited. Then note the continuation of this passage: "That this love is signified by ‘Sodom,’ is not known in the world; but keep this in mind and remember it when you come into the world of spirits, as is done after death, and you will be fully convinced."
Derived Doctrine

"I have heard the reproach of Moab..."

- The word "reproach" denotes shame and disgrace; it means to discredit, to dishonor, and to blame. When Rachel conceived and bore Joseph, she cried out that "God hath gathered my reproach." She meant that God had ended her barrenness. In the context of Zephaniah 2:8, Moab's reproach, or shameful act, was adulteration of good, and it would be removed so that the church's barren state might be ended. Moab signifies the state of people in natural good who allow themselves to easily be led astray. (AC 3242 [3])

"...and the insults of the people of Ammon..."

- "Ammon" signifies those who falsify truths and live evil lives. (AC 6405 [4])
- The insults of Ammon conveyed contempt, abuse, a maligning derision.
- The Lord heard these things. He heard their arrogant threats against Him and His people. Read DLW 50 regarding the seriousness of such derision against the Divine Human.
- In one sense, we get a glimpse of how little their contempt for the Lord accomplished. Their arrogant threats came against the "borders." Borders signify the lowest parts of the church. This was an attack against fixed boundaries that are set up around what is good so that it cannot be approached and injured by evils from hell. (AC 9492)

Putting It All Together

"Those who have adulterated the Word will utterly perish." (P&P)

Those who want to discredit, mock, speak arrogantly about, and shame the Word of the Lord will not get away with their insults. In case they think they can approach and harm spiritual things, the Lord reminds every listener that people with evil intentions can only come to the edge or border of internal spiritual things. Guards prevent them from spoiling all that is holy. They can attack the externals of memory-knowledges but not the living substance of Love and Wisdom.

Accountability is front and center in these two verses. Moab is linked to Sodom. Ammon is linked to Gomorrah. Just as fire and brimstone fell on Sodom and Gomorrah, so will it fall on Moab and Ammon. To illustrate their end, the Lord likens them to overgrown weeds and salt pits. Theirs is to be a life of perpetual desolation.

Does this sound ominous? It depends on which side of the issue one stands on. If a "people" and a "nation" stand with the Lord, it is welcoming and comforting news. If one stands with Moab and Ammon against the "people" and "nation" of the Lord, it has to be distressing news.
There are contrasts throughout these two verses. The repetition has a purpose. The contrasts enable us to see both sides and choose which side we want. Think of Joshua’s words: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." This is a call for dedication against those who would mock and speak arrogantly against the Lord’s truth.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. How many lessons about salt can you recall from the Word?
2. How many good uses of salt can you recall?
3. Is salt always a good thing? Isn’t it a poison, too?
4. Please notice that weeds and their correspondence are also mentioned frequently in the Word. Look for some examples.
5. This question might be more than you care to take up at this time. There has been a long-time discussion in the church about the eternity of the hells. Some would like to believe that the Lord will only allow people in hell to be there until they come to their senses, whereupon He will lift them into heaven. Others believe that hell is to eternity. What are the foundations of each opinion? Do the words of our verse "a perpetual desolation" answer this debate?
6. How does the teaching about the "border" strengthen our faith and offer encouragement?

ZEPHANIAH 2:11

"The Lord will be awesome to them, for He will reduce to nothing all the gods of the earth; people shall worship Him, each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "They will perish that whoever is able may acknowledge the Lord."

AC 1158 [4]

- "In Zephaniah...2:11...The isles of the nations’ denote nations more remote from the knowledges of faith."
"That by 'islands' in the Word are signified the nations which are more remote from the worship of God, but which yet will draw near to it, is evident from these passages..." Zephaniah 2:11 is cited.

"That 'islands' signify nations that are about to accede to the true worship of God, is evident from the following passages..." Zephaniah 2:11 is cited.

"In Zephaniah...2:11&12...signifies that the falsities of evil will be dispersed, and truths and goods given to those who are in falsities indeed, but not in the falsities of evil; 'the gods of the nations that He will make lean' signify the falsities of evil, 'gods' signifying falsities, 'nations' evils, and 'to make lean' to remove evils from falsities..."

**Derived Doctrine**

"The Lord will be awesome to them..."

- Awesome is translated differently in the various translations of the Word. The Writings use the word "terrible." The Authorized Version (King James) uses "dreadful." The New English Bible uses the word "fearsome."
- These words are all related to fear. Fear, holy fear, is a holy state. *(AC 3719)*
- The word "terrible" signifies the omnipotence and omniscience of the Lord. *(AE 298 [7]*)
- *AC 8816* explains that those who do good indeed tremble at the presence of the Lord, but it is a holy tremor that precedes reception.

"He will reduce [thin] to nothing all the gods of the earth..."

- Thinning or reducing the gods of the earth signifies exposing the empty charity in that which was believed to have been fat, or full of charity, in its externals. *(AC 5204)*

"People shall worship Him, each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations."

- From this verse, we can derive the point that everyone’s state will provide some means, some extension, by which he or she can worship the Lord. *P&P* puts it this way for us: "that whoever is able may acknowledge the Lord."
Putting It All Together

Seeing the "awesome," "terrible," "fearsome" God is a good thing. Holy fear inspires and paves the way for the reception of what is holy. The awesome God will cause the gods of pretense to wither away to nothing. They cannot stand His presence. They will disintegrate because their fatness, or substance, was external; it was not based on eternal values. Their form had nothing of spiritual substance. Please note the wonderful transition in P&P. They will perish – that whoever is able – may acknowledge the Lord.

Our spiritual life is richer if we acknowledge the awesome God. If we carry with us a holy fear, we will tremble. I picture the trembling as one of excitement. We see the preparation accomplished by holy fear. It is the preparation to receive greater things then we can imagine.

The false gods are reduced to nothing.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. Would you agree that God is awesome? Before you assume that the answer is obvious, think about how many people tend to make God small in their attitudes. Hell, they say, is stronger than heaven. God can't do this or that. We need to review our belief system and put the Lord back in the "awesome" category. It scares hell when we think like this. How can we, as a church, put the Lord back where He belongs in our lives?

2. Can you see or feel false gods waning in His presence? How?

3. Can you think of any moments when holy fear made an important difference in your life?

4. Some fundamentalist Christians believe there is only one way available to reach heaven. How does our lesson soften and enlarge that narrow view?

5. The voice of Zephaniah 2:11 declares that "each one from his place, indeed all the shores of the nations" shall worship Him. Doesn't this sound like an inclusive God of all people? What are the implications of that type of inclusiveness?

ZEPHANIAH 2:12-15

"You Ethiopians also, you shall be slain by My sword." And He will stretch out His hand against the north, destroy Assyria, and make Nineveh a desolation, as dry as the wilderness. The herds shall lie down in her midst, every beast of the nation. Both the pelican and the bittern shall lodge on the capitals of her pillars; their voice shall sing
in the windows; desolation shall be at the threshold; for He will lay bare the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt securely, that said in her heart, 'I am it, and there is none besides me.' How has she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down! Everyone who passes by her shall hiss and shake his fist."

Passages From The Writings

**P&P**

- "Those who have falsified the knowledges (cognitions) of truth, by means of reasonings and knowledges (scientifica), and have thus destroyed the church, will utterly perish."

**AE 406 [15]**

- "...the Kushites’ signify those who are in falsities indeed, but not in the falsities of evil; and in the abstract sense...in the natural, and, therefore ‘the island of nations’ [signifies] the natural man in respect...to the falsities in the natural man; these falsities are signified by ‘slain by My sword’,..."

**AC 1186**

- "...the spiritual church (Israel), reason (Asshur) and memory-knowledges (Egypt)...These three constitute the intellectual things of the man of the spiritual church, which follow one another in this order. In other places also where Asshur is named, it signifies the rational, either true or false, as in...Zephaniah 2:13..."

**AC 7673 [3]**

- "In many passages...omnipotence is described by 'Jehovah stretching out His hand,' as also by 'His outstretched hand,' and by 'His outstretched arm' – by 'Jehovah stretching out the hand,' in the following passages..." Zephaniah 2:13 is cited.

**AC 1188 [4]**

- "In Zephaniah...2:13&14...Nineveh is here described, but in the prophetic style, and the falsity itself which is signified by Nineveh. This falsity, because it is worshiped, is called 'the north, the wild beast of his kind, the cormorant and the bittern in the pomegranates,' and is described by 'a voice singing in the windows,' and by 'laying bare the cedar,' which is intellectual truth. All these expressions are significative of such falsity."
AC 3391 [2]

- "In Zephaniah...2:13&14...where the destruction of the truths of faith by reasonings, which are 'Asshur,' is treated of (n. 119, 1186); that a 'voice shall sing in the windows' signifies the desolation of truth, thus of the intellectual faculty as to truth."

AC 9552 [2]

- "In Zephaniah...2:13&14...where 'pelican and the bittern in the pomegranates' denote falsities of evil in the memory-knowledges of good."

AR 567

- "...the affections of a man, in the spiritual world, appear at a distance as beasts...beasts, considered in themselves, are nothing but forms of natural affections, but men are not only forms of natural, but of spiritual affections at the same time. That men, as to their affections, are meant by 'beasts,' may appear from these passages..." Zephaniah 2:13-15 is cited.

AE 388 [11]

- "In Zephaniah...2:13-15...This treats of self intelligence, which confirms falsities and evils by reasonings from knowledges (scientifica), and by applying to them things from the sense of the letter of the Word. 'The north' signifies the natural and sensual man, and the knowing [faculty] (scientificum) that belongs to it; and 'Assyria' signifies reasoning therefrom; and 'saying in her heart, I, and none other beside me,' signifies self-intelligence. This makes clear what is involved in these particulars, in series, namely, 'Jehovah will stretch out His hand over the north, and will destroy Assyria,' signifies that He will deprive such a natural man, and its power to understand and reason thence, of all perception of good and understanding of truth; 'the droves shall lie down in the midst of her, every wild beast of the nation; both the pelican, and the bittern, shall lodge in the chapiters thereof,' signifies that there shall be falsities of evil, and falsities of thought and perception in the knowledges from the Word everywhere therein, 'the wild beast of the nation' meaning the falsity of evil, 'pelican and bittern' the falsity of thought and perception, and 'chapiters' the knowledges from her heart, 'I, and none other besides me,' signifies that such intelligence trusts in itself and draws only from self (ex proprio), 'city' signifying doctrine from such intelligence; 'how is she become a waste, a place for the wild beast to lie down in.' signifies that it has nothing of truth in it but is full of falses."
"In Zephaniah...2:13-15...This describes the vastations of the church by the falsities of doctrine which are from self-intelligence. The 'north over which Jehovah will stretch out His hand' signifies the church that is in falsities; 'Assyria which Jehovah will destroy' signifies the reasonings from falsities; 'Nineveh which He shall make a waste, a dry place like the wilderness' signifies the falsities of doctrine; 'droves,' 'the wild beast of the nation,' the 'pelican,' and the 'bittern,' signify the affections of falsities, and falsities themselves interior and exterior."

"In Zephaniah...2:14...This is said of Asshur and Nineveh; 'Asshur' denotes the understanding, here vastated; a 'voice singing in the windows,' reasonings from phantasies."

"That 'wild animal' in the opposite sense is taken in the Word for what is not living, is evident from many passages, of which only the following will be cited, for confirmation... In Zephaniah...2:15..."

Derived Doctrine

Is there a need for derived doctrine for this section? We have some excellent passages that cover almost everything in these verses, but there are a few things we need to add to increase the depth of our understanding. We need some positive correspondences to contrast with the dark and foreboding opposite sense.

"...in the windows..."

- *AE 675 [19]* teaches that the windows of heaven signify the Divine inflowing, from which come intelligence and eternal life.
- *AE 282 [5]* teaches that "windows" signify a thorough investigation of truth.

"...lodging on the capitals of her pillars..."

- *AC 3115* teaches that "lodging" (spending the night) in the positive sense signifies a state of abiding—as in having a state of or affection for truth.
- *AE 219 [5]* teaches that "capitals" (chapiters) signify superior knowledge that helps support heavenly truths.
- *AC 9674* teaches that "pillars" signify what supports heaven and the church, namely the goods of love and of faith from the Lord.
• *Coronis 40* teaches, "The man who has religion, in spiritual things, is like a pelican nourishing its young with its own blood; but the man who has not religion, in those things is like a vulture in a state of starvation devouring its own offspring."

"*Everyone who passes by her shall hiss and shake his fist.*"

- To "pass by" is to know and to perceive the quality. (*AC 3992*)
- Hissing signifies rejection of falsities of the natural mind. (*AC 7444 [2]*)
- A "fist" signifies the weakening of a truth from some external or general truth. (*AC 9025*)
- To "shake" signifies to divest oneself of unclean things. (*AC 1748*)
- Shaking signifies an action taken lest what is damned should adhere to them. (*AE 365 [8]*)

**Putting It All Together**

Where might we focus to get at the heart of these four verses? We might do well to look at the boast of self-sufficiency. "*I am it, and there is none besides me.*" Isn't that the attitude which renders all the correspondences in the negative? The spiritual church (Israel), reason (Asshur), and memory-knowledges (Egypt) become falsified. Falsity becomes the thing, or god, to be worshiped. The Lord is absent from the hearts and minds of people with this attitude. They wallow in a pitiful self-sufficiency. The windows of their minds could have received the shining light of heaven. The pillars of their faith could have been supported by superior knowledge. Instead, they chose to have windows turned away from the light of heaven. Instead of turning to the "east," they were cold and indifferent, turning to the north. They were dry as a desert, barren, empty, with a life worthy of the hisses and shaken fists of all who pass by it. The church within them was not a sanctuary for the Lord; it was a sanctuary of wild beasts serving the base desires of their self-love.

In light of these teachings, we can see the meaning of what is in *P&P*: "Those who have falsified the knowledges of truth, by means of reasonings and knowledges, and have thus destroyed the church, will utterly perish."

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Zechariah 2:12-15.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. Were these verses hard to take? Just about everything that might have been a positive correspondence came out negative.
2. We need to spiritually shake our fists at this self-sufficient attitude to make sure none of its haughtiness adheres to us. The hissing is a rejection of the falsities of the natural mind. Again, we must face the fact that the natural mind, left unprotected and unguarded by the Word, will probably think of itself as beyond everyone and everything. Can you picture these correspondences applying to real happenings in your life? The haughtiness? The hissing? The shaking of the fists?

3. In a world where getting ahead requires using the word "I" often, do we forget to thank the Lord for His major influence and strength in our life? Does it help to be "we-focused"? Why and how?

4. These verses urge us to apply their truths positively to our lives. How can we do that?
Chapter Three

ZEPHANIAH 3:1-4

"Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted, to the oppressing city!
She has not obeyed His voice,
She has not received correction;
She has not trusted in the Lord.
She has not drawn near to her God.
Her princes in her midst are roaring lions;
Her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning.
Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people;
Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,
They have done violence to the law."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "Everything of the doctrine of truth and good has been perverted."

AC 6367

- "...a 'lion' denotes the power possessed by the evil of the love of self when it destroys and lays waste..." Zephaniah 3:3 is cited as an example.

AC 6441

- "...by a 'wolf' are signified those who seize...The signification of a 'wolf' is in a similar category to that of a 'lion,' also a rapacious animal..." Zephaniah 3:3 is cited.

AC 6353 [8]

- Psalm 140:1-4, 11 is cited regarding those who seek to destroy the truths of faith and the goods of charity. Such people sharpen their tongues as a serpent and have poison under their lips; it describes the evil hunting what is good to overthrow it. "(And so in other passages, as...Zephaniah 3:4...)

AE 624 [18]

- "In the Word ‘priest and prophet’ are also often mentioned, and ‘priest’ means there one who leads men to live according to Divine truth, and
‘prophet’ one who teaches it.” Zephaniah 3:4 is listed as one of many examples.

Derived Doctrine

"Woe to her who is rebellious and polluted..."

- "Woe" signifies the danger of eternal damnation. (AC 3755)
- Woe signifies lamentation over the unhappy state of the evil in anyone. (AR 416)
- Woe signifies grief because of the vastation of good and its truth in the church. (AE 918 [5])
- Woe is lamentation over their doctrine and religious persuasion. (AE 1165)
- To be "rebellious" signifies to be against the divine good and the divine truth. (AE 412 [33])
- "Rebel" or "revolt" signifies trespasses and transgressions against the truths of faith. (AC 9156)
- "Pollution" signifies a conjunction that is not legitimate. (AC 4433)
- Pollution signifies the defiling of the truths of faith. (AC 4504)

"...to the oppressing city!"

- Oppression signifies an attempt to subjugate by those who are in falsities. (AC 6861)
- A "city" signifies everything doctrinal or heretical. (AC 402)
- A city signifies the church as to its doctrines. (AE 518 [26])

"She has not obeyed His voice."

- AC 1937 outlines what obedience means. To be obedient is to be humble. Obeying means exercising self-compulsion so that we may place ourselves under the controlling power of interior truths in order to do good, to obey what the Lord commands. Obedience allows the Divine good and truth to reign.
- "She," the affections, was not willing to abide by the principles of obedience.
- "His voice" signifies the Word, the doctrines of faith, and it also signifies hearing the internal dictate of a spiritual conscience. (AC 219)

"She has not received correction..."

- "Correction" or amendment signifies to walk in the right way, or to live goods and truths from the Word. (AC 10422)
- Correction or recovery signifies the healing power of the Lord. (AC 6988 [3])
"She has not trusted in the Lord..."

- Trust carries with it contentment and confidence in all things provided by the Lord. *AC 8478* reminds us that in those who are not content with their lot, who do not trust in the Divine, there universally reigns a solicitude about things; they become anxious, and they grieve over the loss or lack of things.

"She has not drawn near to her God."

- To come near signifies to be conjoined by love, and to hearken signifies to obey and to be instructed. (*AE 331 [3]*)

"Her princes in her midst are roaring lions..."

- "Princes" signify the primary precepts of charity. (*AC 2089*)
- *AR 548* teaches that a prince, or ruler, signifies a principal or leading truth.
- "In the midst" signifies what is inmost and primary. The best and purest things, and those closest to perfection, are in the center. (*AC 9666*)
- A roar or "roaring" signifies lamentation from grief of heart. (*AE 601*)
- A roar signifies infernal loves of self and the world. (*AE 601*)
- Roaring signifies an ardent desire to destroy and devastate the church. (*AE 601*)

"Her judges are evening wolves that leave not a bone till morning."

- How are judges to act? *AC 3921* describes the way the Lord judges us. "He judges from righteousness, and hears everyone from mercy. He judges from righteousness in that He does so from Divine Truth. He hears from mercy in that He does so from Divine Good." Such is the model to be emulated by those chosen by the Lord to be a judge.
- "Evening" signifies a state of obscurity. (*AC 22*)
- "Wolves" signify those who teach falsities as if they were truths. (*AE 195 [13]*)
- Wolves signify cunning in deceptions by falsities. (*AE 355 [24]*)
- Wolves signify an eagerness to snatch away, to scatter. (*AC 6441*)
- Bones correspond to external truths. They are like hard facts in fixed form on which higher truths may rest for support.
- To lose a bone represents being without a basis or support system for spiritual thoughts.

"Her prophets are insolent, treacherous people..."

- Those who teach truths are called "prophets." (*AE 100*)
- Prophets and priests signify those who teach and live according to what is taught. (*AC 382*)
• Prophets are those who are in truths of doctrine and live accordingly. (*AR 526*)
• Arrogant, haughty, flippant, sassy, and smart aleck are but a few synonyms for the word "insolent."
• "Treachery," or guile, signifies malice from the will, with premeditation. (*AC 9013*)

"Her priests have polluted the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law."

• Priests are to teach truth, and so lead to good, and to the Lord. (*AC 10794*)
• Pollution signifies that the truth of faith has been defiled. (*AC 4504*)
• Pollution signifies a conjunction with that which is not legitimate. (*AC 4433*)
• "Sanctuary" in the supreme sense signifies the Lord and those things in heaven and the church. Everything that the church has comes from the Lord. (*AC 9479*)
• *AC 2258* offers this insight: "...in the Representative Church...the priests... were at the same time judges; for as priests they represented the Divine good, and as judges the Divine truth..."

**Putting It All Together**

*P&P* states that "everything of the doctrine of truth and good has been perverted." The passages from *Zephaniah 3:1-4* give concrete examples of this perversion. The church was rebellious and polluted. The church would not obey the voice or bidding of the Lord. The church would not allow the Lord to make corrections in its doctrines and behaviors. The church trusted itself more than the Lord. Such an attitude drew the people away from the Lord. The primary, introductory truths were not used for the salvation of souls. Instead, the people were devastatingly calloused and full of self-centered ends. The priests and judges did what was right in their own eyes. Worship, judgments, and truth became pawns in the hands of the highest bidder. What was the result? The prophets were insolent and treacherous. Wolves ripped the structure to shreds. Not a bone was left to support doctrine. There was no "new day," only nighttime. Arrogant, haughty, flippant, sassy attitudes replaced love of the Lord and the neighbor.

Sadly, the end result was that the church became polluted. Illegitimate unions or conjunctions became part of the church. Violence was done to the law. Is it any wonder then that the Lord had to tell them:

"Everything of the doctrine of truth and good has been perverted."
Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read **Zephaniah 3:1-4**.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. What are two or three important points from the Derived Doctrine section?

2. The church got so involved in its own agenda that it ignored the Lord. What can we do personally and collectively to make sure this doesn’t happen today?

3. Without becoming negative, can you recall a time when a church got arrogant or insolent?

4. What are situations you remember in which people were left to the wolves and roaring lions so that not a bone was left in the morning? How might it have been prevented?

5. I’m hoping you have questions you can add to this discussion.

**ZEPHANIAH 3:5**

"The Lord is righteous in her midst, He will do no unrighteousness. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails, But the unjust knows no shame."

**Passages From The Writings**

*P&P*

- "When the Lord comes He will investigate."

*AC 2405 [5]*

- "In Zephaniah...(3:5). The ‘morning’ denotes the time and state of Judgment, which is the same as that of the Lord’s advent; and this is the same as the approach of His kingdom."
AC 9857 [5&6]

- "...‘judgment’ denotes intelligence from Divine truth, and the consequent life." 
  
  Zephaniah 3:5 is quoted. "In these passages ‘judgment’ and ‘judgments,’ denote Divine truth."

AR 151

- Zephaniah 3:5 is cited with the following explanation: "By ‘morning,’...is meant the Lord’s coming, when He came into the world and established a New Church...And because the Lord alone gives those who will be of His New Church intelligence and wisdom; and all things which the Lord gives are Himself because they are of Himself, therefore the Lord says that He is ‘the morning star’..."

TCR 764

- "As the successive states of the church in general and in particular are described in the Word by the four seasons of the year, spring, summer, autumn, and winter; and by the four divisions of the day, morning, noon, evening, and night; and as the present church in Christendom is the night, it follows that the morning, that is, the beginning of a new church, is now at hand. That the successive states of the church are described in the Word by the four states of the light of day, can be seen from the following passages..." Zephaniah 3:5 is one of the passages given.

AE 179 [9]

- "That ‘morning’ signifies the Lord’s coming into the world and then a new church is evident from the following passages..." "Here likewise the Lord’s coming and the end of the former church and the beginning of a new one are treated of. In Zephaniah...similar things are meant..." Zephaniah 3:5 is cited.

Coronis 5

- "...the successive states of the church are meant by ‘morning,’ ‘day,’ ‘evening,’ and night,’ in the Word...The subject there treated of is the Consummation of the Age, and the coming of the Lord at that time..." Zephaniah 3:5 is cited as one of many examples.

AC 8211 [4]

- "As ‘morning’ signifies the state of enlightenment and salvation of the good, and the state of thick darkness and destruction of the evil, therefore also ‘morning’ signifies the time of the Last Judgment, when they are to be saved
who are in good, and they are to perish who are in evil; consequently it signifies the end of a former church, and the beginning of a new church, which things are signified in the Word by the Last Judgment." Zephaniah 3:5-6 is cited.

Derived Doctrine

"The Lord is righteous in her midst..."

- Right, righteous, rightness, and upright. Think about the meaning of these words.
- AC 1813 teaches that "...the Lord was not born righteousness, but became righteousness through combats of temptations and victories, and this from His own power. As often as He fought and overcame, this [righteousness] was imputed to Him...as a continual increase, until He became pure righteousness."
- "In her midst" signifies that the Lord brought His best and purest things to the church. His midst is perfection. (AC 9666)

"He will do no unrighteousness."

- Do we need any quotes to explain this? The Lord is perfect. He will not do wrong.

"Every morning He brings His justice to light; He never fails."

- Evil loves darkness. Evil seeks to hide its intent under the cover of darkness.
- The Lord is light. Everything is open to be seen. No hidden agenda. His justice is fair to all. "He never fails" says it all.

"But the unjust knows no shame."

- Would it be fair to say that in order for someone to feel shame, there must be good, innocence, and honesty present within him or her? The unjust people, who knew no shame, emptied the good and truths of the Lord from their lives. Therefore, they felt no shame. Kindness, care for the Lord and the neighbor, were, for them, buried under the weight of selfishness.

Putting It All Together

Is it striking to you that this verse of Zephaniah is not tied in with others? It stands alone—it is not grouped with 2 or 3 verses. Why might that be so? The derived doctrine helped us see that the Lord alone is perfect. He is righteousness because He fought and overcame every temptation hell brought against Him. The Lord never failed while facing even the tiniest of temptations. He brings the purest and the best
to His church. Is this a hard concept to relate to in our lives? We make unintentional errors all the time. Being perfect is something we never experience except as we read and believe the teachings about the Lord in His Word. "He never fails" is a profound statement to believe and live by.

Like the morning light, the Lord stands against the malevolent desires of hell. His judgment is not to punish anyone. Those who hate Him and the neighbor have to be faced and shown how wrong their ruling love is. For the greater good, they cannot remain unchecked. So, with love for all that is good and true, He comes to put an end to the reign of terror. The falsity of that kind of "church" must be vastated so that new truths and clean loves can replace it. "When the Lord comes He will investigate." (P&P)

Why does this verse stand apart from the others? We have no doctrinal reason. What does your heart tell you as you reflect on the message of the Lord’s righteousness and perfection?

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 3:5*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. How hard do you think hell will work to hide the words "He never fails" from the new church? Can you predict what sneaky and subtle strategy they might use?

2. What has happened to a person if he or she is unable to feel shame for opposing the Lord?

3. *P&P* teaches us that "When the Lord comes He will investigate." The Lord doesn’t really need to investigate. He knows everything. So why call it an investigation? Why not call it the exposure of evil?

4. Is His investigation due to the intricate, entangled, complicated connections evil weaves to conceal its true hiding place? I can picture the Lord untangling evil piece by piece so that no tiny sliver of corruption is left. The Divine operation will be complete, and the patient, the church, will be built up anew.

Does the Lord want us to participate in this "investigation"? Why or why not? If so, how?
ZEPHANIAH 3:6-8

"I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated; I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; there is no one, no inhabitant. I said, surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction—so that her dwelling would not be cut off, despite everything for which I punished her. But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds. Therefore wait for Me, says the Lord, until the day I rise up for plunder; My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger; all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy."

Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "The evil will perish and are to be cast into hell."

AC 2336 [5&6]

- "As ‘streets’ signified truths, it was a representative rite among the Jews to teach in the streets...In the Prophets, ‘streets,’ wherever named, signify in the internal sense either truths, or things contrary to truths...the ‘chariots’ denote the doctrine of truth..." Zephaniah 3:6 is cited among other passages.

AC 2712

- "That ‘to dwell’ is predicated of the good, that is, of the affection, of truth, is evident from many passages in the Word where cities are treated of, by which truths are signified, and...truths without good are like a city in which there is no one dwelling. So in Zephaniah...3:6."

AC 3134

- "In Zephaniah...3:6...‘No man’ denotes no truth; ‘no inhabitant,’ no good..."

AR 194

- "That ‘cities’ signify doctrinals, may in some measure appear from the following passages...In these places by cities, in the spiritual sense, are meant doctrines..." Zephaniah 3:6 is cited.

AR 342

- "The four quarters are also called ‘the four corners’...because [corners/quarters] relate to heaven or hell..." Zephaniah 3:6 is cited.
"By streets,' in the Word, almost the same is signified as by 'ways,'...because ‘a city' signifies doctrine...and by 'ways' are signified the truths or falsities of the church..." Zephaniah 3:6 is cited among other passages.

In Zephaniah...3:6...'nations' are those who are in evils; ‘to desolate streets' means to desolate truths, and ‘to lay waste cities' means to lay waste doctrines.

The destruction of all the goods of the church is signified by ‘I will cut off the nations, and their corners shall be laid waste;' ‘nations' meaning the goods of the church, and ‘corners' all things of it, because its outermost parts...The destruction of the truths of doctrine is signified by ‘I will make desolate their streets and I will lay waste their cities;' ‘streets' meaning truths, and ‘cities' doctrinals; total destruction even until there is no truth and good left is signified by ‘that none pass by, and there is no inhabitant;' for ‘to pass by' in the Word is predicated of truths, and ‘to dwell' of goods.

The ‘nations that shall be cut off,’ signify the goods of the church; the ‘corners that shall be laid waste’ signify the truths and goods of the church in the whole complex...The ‘streets that shall be made desolate, that no one may pass through,’ signify the truths of doctrine; for the ‘cities that shall be laid waste, that there may be no man nor inhabitant,' signify doctrinals, ‘man' and ‘inhabitants’ meaning in the Word in the spiritual sense all who are in truths and goods, thus in an abstract sense truths and goods.

"That ‘to dwell' signifies to live, and thus life, can be seen from passages in the Word, where ‘to dwell' is mentioned..." Zephaniah 3:6 is cited.

...that the ‘spoil’ denotes those who have been rescued and delivered, is manifest. That...spoil...[is] also spoken of the Lord in the Word because of His rescuing and delivering the good..." Zephaniah 3:8 is cited as an example.
AC 6997 [3&4]

- "...the Israelites and Jews were driven by punishments to observe the statutes and precepts in outward form; and from this they believed that Jehovah was angry and punished, when yet it was themselves who by idolatries brought such things upon them, and separated themselves from heaven...From all this it can now be seen what is meant in the Word by 'anger and wrath of Jehovah'...

Zephaniah 3:8 is cited as an example.

AC 8875

- "...the zeal of the Lord, which in itself is love and compassion, appears to [the evil] as anger; for when the Lord from love and mercy protects His own in heaven, they who are in evil are indignant and angry against the good, and rush into the sphere where the Divine truth and Divine good are, with the endeavor to destroy those who are there...then the Divine truth of the Divine good works in them and makes them feel torments such as are in hell...yet in the Divine there is absolutely nothing of anger, and absolutely nothing of evil; but pure clemency and mercy." In AC 8875 [7], Zephaniah 3:8 is cited as an example.

AC 9143

- "(That the zeal of Jehovah is love and mercy, and that it is called 'anger' because it so appears to the wicked when they incur the penalty of their evil, see n. 8875.)" Zephaniah 3:8 is cited as an example.

AR 216

- (Zephaniah 3:8) "...'zeal' in the Lord is not wrath, it only appears so in the externals, interiorly it is love. It appears so in externals, because the Lord seems to be angry when He rebukes man, especially when man's own evil punishes him. It is so permitted from love, that his evil may be removed..."

AR 494

- "...'anger,' and 'fury'...It is not meant that this comes from Jehovah, but from the infernal love of the wicked. Such things are said in the Word, because they are appearances; and the Word, in its literal sense, is written by correspondences and appearances..." Zephaniah 3:8 is used as an example.
**Doctrine of the Lord 4**

- Zephaniah is quoted often in this number regarding "that day," "in that day," "in that time." One of the quotes offered is *Zephaniah 3:8*. The "Lord's advent" is represented by the words in this passage.

**Derived Doctrine**

*I have cut off nations, their fortresses are devastated...*

- "Cut off" signifies that divine truth shall be taken from the people, but it shall live again in a new church. *(AE 315 [23])*
- "Nations" signify evils of the will, or lusts, while "people" signify falsities of the understanding, or persuasions. *(AC 622)*
- "Fortresses," strongholds, and citadels signify confirmations in falsities and evils from the Word, and memory-knowledges. *(AC 7102 [3] and AE 388 [19])*
- Devastation occurs within a church when the Word is falsified, when the Word is explained to favor earthly loves and to confirm falsities of doctrine. When this happens, the church is laid to waste because then heaven is closed up. When heaven is closed up, there is no longer any church with humanity. *(AE 914 [3] and AC 7573)*

*I have made their streets desolate, with none passing by. Their cities are destroyed; there is no one, no inhabitant."

- These teachings are well covered in *AE 417 [10]*, but add to this what we learned earlier about the word "desolate."
- To be "desolate" signifies to be without visible truth. *(AC 6141)* To be desolate connotes ruin.
- The combination of these two passages seems to explain well the meaning of "no one, no inhabitant."

"...surely you will fear Me, you will receive instruction—so that her dwelling would not be cut off..."

- "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." *(Psalm 111:10)* Holy fear springs from love. It is holy because it fears to do or say anything that would hurt the Lord.
- Holy fear provides ways for instruction. A holy fear longs for instruction.
- Holy fear keeps influx flowing in. Such a state strengthens our spiritual dwelling places.
"But they rose early and corrupted all their deeds."

- The positive sense of "early" signifies to perceive clearly. "Early" also signifies a light of confirmation.
- Rising, in the positive sense, signifies that the spiritual truth is seen to be in agreement with external truth. *(AC 2028)*
- Could the negative sense of rising mean they perceived quickly how to bend truth to their own ends?
- This derived doctrine seems to explain the meaning of "corrupted all of their deeds."

"Therefore wait for Me, says the Lord, until the day I rise up for the plunder..."

- "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait I say on the Lord." *(Psalm 27:14)*
- *AC 6402* teaches that to "wait" signifies to look upward or inward for salvation.
- *AE 514 [11]* teaches that to wait signifies to long for the Lord’s coming.
- *AR 217* says that to wait signifies to be prepared for the reception of truth, or the presence of the Lord.
- To "rise up for the plunder" signifies that the Lord will rescue and deliver the good. *(AC 6442)*

"My determination is to gather the nations to My assembly of kingdoms, to pour on them My indignation, all My fierce anger..."

- Determination, resolve, restoration, setting things right—these meanings seem to go well with the teaching in *AC 5620* that to set right signifies that heavenly goods and truths will re-emerge when a new church is established.
- The re-emergence of truth will seem like indignation and fierce anger to the hells, but to the faithful, it will be the re-emergence of Divine love.

**Putting It All Together**

Without the internal sense, these verses would seem to be hard and full of irreversible gloom. Let us look at the series of fearful things predicted by the Lord: "Cut off"; "fortresses devastated"; "streets desolate"; "no one, no inhabitants"; "corrupted deeds"; "plunder"; "pour on them My indignation"; My fierce anger"; "devour [them] with the fire of My jealousy."

With the direct teachings and derived doctrine, we get a totally different message to those who "wait on the Lord"; to those who hold hope for the church; to those who eagerly long for the Lord’s coming to rescue the church. The Lord is determined to gather the nations and restore order. The Lord’s jealously, His zeal, will triumph over those who "rose early" to corrupt spiritual uses, and they will perish. Their love of
disorder will make them jump into hell to remove themselves from the Lord’s presence.

Once again, the apparent darkness of the literal sense is turned from gloom to bright optimism for the church that stands patiently waiting for the Lord’s leadership. The Lord in Matthew spoke these words: "Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt. 11:29)

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Zephaniah 3:6-8.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. Did your initial reading of this section make you want to stop reading? Our minds don’t usually want to hear stern words of condemnation from the Lord. We prefer happy themes. So, how can we learn to persevere and wait until we discover the internal meaning of the Word before closing or setting aside the lessons of divine investigation?

2. Learning from the Lord is something we do best with regular study and reflection. How much spiritual learning comes from life experiences? Are life experiences enough to build a strong fortress to resist the forces of hell? Why or why not?

What did you think about the teachings on devastation and desolation? Read the teachings in *AE 914* and *AC 7573* to formulate an answer.

**ZEPHANIAH 3:9-10**

"For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, the daughter of My dispersed ones, shall bring My offering."

**Passages From The Writings**

**P&P**

- "Then a new church made up of those who acknowledge the Lord will arise."
"In Zephaniah...to serve Him with one shoulder [accord] (3:9)...meaning with one soul, thus with one might."

"In Zephaniah...3:9...'a clear lip' manifestly denotes doctrine."

"By the 'shoulder,' in the Word also is signified all power, as is evident in the following passages..." Zephaniah 3:9 is cited.

"That 'carrying upon the shoulder,' when said of subjection, signifies servitude, may be seen in...Zephaniah 3:9...but that when said of command, it signifies supreme power..."

"In Zephaniah...3:10...'Ethiopia' denotes those who are in possession of celestial things, which are love, charity, and the works of charity."

"In Zephaniah...'the crossing of the rivers of Cush, My worshipers'...denoting those who are without knowledges, that is, the Gentiles."

"...external gifts signified internal or spiritual gifts, namely, such as go forth from the heart, and thence are of the affection and faith; and as by these conjunction is effected, in the spiritual sense 'gifts' in reference to God signify conjunction, and in reference to men consociation." Zephaniah 3:10 is cited.

"...I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they may call on the name of the Lord..."

To "restore" signifies to render up spiritual truth without taint from the rational. (AC 2532-2537)
To restore or "set right" signifies that heavenly goods and truths will re-emerge when a new church is established. (AC 5620)

AR 29 teaches that there is an inherent language in us from creation, a universal language. It is that inherent language that connects us with angels and spirits. The unity and purity of language speaks of a deeper and profounder language—the language of the soul—the unity of the utterance of the church. The people of the Ancient Church possessed one universal doctrine until they sought to build the tower of Babel to become gods.

A "name" signifies the quality of all the affections. (AC 143-145) To "call upon the name of the Lord" signifies to call on the Lord to give us the affection to be receivers of His new church. (AR 816)

"...to serve Him with one accord."

Serving signifies that externals must serve as servants. (AC 5127)

Servants, or the act of serving, signify that external knowledge will serve the internal person. (AC 1486)

AR 380, explaining Revelation 7:15, teaches: "...and serve Him day and night," signifies that they constantly and faithfully live according to the truths...the precepts, which they receive from Him. By ‘serving the Lord’ nothing else is signified..."

To understand "with one accord," we can read AC 1316, which explains that "one" signifies that which is authentic, or genuine. "Accord" represents unity. Thus, the passage seems to mean that the Lord will raise up a church, a people, who will serve Him with genuine, authentic doctrinal worship.

"From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers..."

Some of the synonyms for "beyond" are farther, over, higher, and superior.

"Rivers" in AC 107 signify a wisdom from love to grant intelligence.

Rivers signify truths in abundance, serving the rational person. (AR 683)

Rivers signify the opening and explanation of the Book of Revelation. (AR 932)

"Ethiopia" signifies the mental faculty, or the understanding of knowledges of good and truth. (AC 116)

AC 349 teaches that Ethiopia signifies possession of celestial things such as love, charity, and the works of charity.

Worship signifies humiliation and adoration from the heart. (AC 9377)

"My worshipers" seem to connote a Divine possessiveness that is like that of a proud and loving Parent. It is like a Divine approval of those whose hearts are humble enough to listen, follow, and accept the ways of the Lord.

"The daughter of My dispersed ones..."

A "daughter" signifies the church of faith in which there is good. (AC 3963)

A daughter signifies the affection of a church. (AC 3963)
The "dispersed," scattered, or outcasts signify those who are not in truths, but still are in the desire to learn them. \((AE \ 433 [7])\)

"...shall bring My offering."

- An "offering" represents worship of the Lord. We have cited \(AC \ 349\) before regarding \(Zephaniah \ 3:10\). Note that this number also deals with various kinds of offerings.

**Putting It All Together**

*P&P* sets us on a prudent course to spiritually understanding these verses: "Then a new church made up of those who acknowledge the Lord will arise."

The literal sense employs an active voice of the Lord. "I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord..." The Lord promises that His people will serve Him with "one accord." The Lord will gather together those who were dispersed. Those who were pushed out of the church by the evil blasphemers will be called and collected together to learn anew the ways of the Lord. The impoverished will and understanding (good and truth) of the righteous will be granted an intelligence that will extend beyond the rivers of Ethiopia. The Lord says that His worshipers, His daughters, shall bring Him offerings. These words of the Lord ring out with a sense of pride for His vindicated and reclaimed children.

The Lord’s church will flourish with unity, clarity, honesty, genuineness, and righteousness.

"And all the people of the Lord shall answer and say 'AMEN!'" \((Deuteronomy \ 27:15)\)

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 3:9-10*.

**Questions To Stimulate Reflection**

1. Do you feel uplifted with the Lord’s promise to restore the dispersed outcasts? Do you identify with the outcasts at all?

2. In the course of our life, we are often rebuked for taking a stand on moral and spiritual issues based on the Word. Labels are placed on us. Names of derision are put on the thinking of those who seek to find answers in the Word. What encouragement can you find to remain steadfast from the teachings within *Zephaniah 3:9-10*?
3. Hell tries to cast us out of the church universal with the trick of making us think from person instead of state. Can you think of situations in which thinking from person and not state would taint the truth of the Lord?

4. The "Amen!" quote given above is taken from Deuteronomy. The children of Israel came to their senses after making a golden image to worship. They were called before the Lord to repent and to promise they would not do a similar thing again. Do you recall what the word Amen means? See Doctrine of Faith 6 for an answer.

5. If you had a positive feeling about these two verses, wait until you read what comes next. There are words of encouragement for those who wonder, or worry, about good winning out over evil.

**ZEPHANIAH 3:11-12**

"In that day you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgress against Me; for then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain. I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

**Passages From The Writings**

**P&P**

- "Those who are in falsities of evil must be separated, and thus the few must be saved."

**AE 405 [26]**

- *Zephaniah 3:11* is cited with reference to the words "holy mountain." "...‘for the mountain of holiness’...[signifies] spiritual good, which in its essence is truth from good, as can be seen from the following passages."

**AR 704**

- *Zephaniah 3:11* is cited as a passage where "...the Lord's coming and the New Church from Him at that time are meant by 'the day of Jehovah'..."

**AC 9209**

- *Zephaniah 3:12* is cited as an example of the meaning of "needy." "In these passages 'the needy' denote those who are in ignorance of truth and long to be instructed."
AC 10227 [20, 21, & 22]

- "...by the 'poor...are meant those who are outside the church and have not the Word, and yet long for the truths and goods of heaven and of the church. From this also it is plain that by the ‘rich’ are meant those who have the Word, consequently Divine truths..." Zephaniah 3:12-13 are cited.

HH 365

- "...the ‘poor’ in the spiritual sense signify those who do not possess knowledges of good and truth, and yet desire them..." Zephaniah 3:12-13 is cited.

Derived Doctrine

"In that day..."

- AC 488 [3] and AC 1839 [5] tell us that the day of the Lord signifies a reckoning of the last time and state of the church. Thus, it seems appropriate to understand these words to mean that a day will come when a judgment and examination will be made by the Lord to determine the spiritual state of the church.

"...you shall not be shamed for any of your deeds in which you transgressed against Me..."

- "Shame" signifies a lack of power to resist evils and falsities. (AC 10481)
- Shame (disappointment) signifies having no power to resist evils from the proprium. (AE 654 [59])
- Shame signifies unclean loves, which are infernal—said to those who will be of the Lord’s New Church, to encourage them to learn truths and to retain them. (AR 706)
- Is this passage saying that deeds done while lacking power to resist are forgiven if we learn from them? Would this be likened to times when our "spiritual freedom" was impaired?

"For then I will take away from your midst those who rejoice in your pride, and you shall no longer be haughty in My holy mountain."

- Who are those in our midst who would rejoice in our pride? Might they be our inherited tendencies to do evils?
- Haughtiness and pride are similar. "Pride" signifies the love of self. Pride in the external person denotes self-confidence and reasoning from what is one’s own. (AC 1585 [4])
The Lord’s "holy mountain" signifies heaven, especially where love to the Lord prevails. *(AE 314 [4])*

Can you picture the demise of inherited tendencies to do evil in the holy mountain of the Lord?

"I will leave in your midst a meek and humble people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord."

- Meekness signifies those who are in the good of charity. *(AE 304 [44])*
- Humility signifies an acknowledgment that self is nothing but evil and falsity, and that the Divine is nothing but good and infinite. *(AC 7640)*
- To "trust in the name of the Lord" signifies to have confidence in the essence or qualities of the Lord. His name cheers and lifts our souls. *(AC 2724)*

**Putting It All Together**

Life’s moments of reflection are powerfully essential for our spiritual growth. *The Spiritual Experience (SE) (Spiritual Diary)* reminds us of the importance of reflection. There are more heavenly arcana to be learned in the doctrine of reflection than in any other doctrine of the church. Given the importance of this teaching, we would do well then to reflect on the words of our text. **The Lord will not shame us for any of our deeds in which we transgressed against Him.** If we erred, if we made a decision in a moment of duress and our freedom or rationality was not functioning well, the Lord will forgive us. If we were weak and unable to resist the leading of our proprium, He will forgive us.

The intention to not commit sins against the Lord is an important doctrine of the church. If you need to reflect on the importance of intentions, read *Conjugial Love 453*. Note the two men. They dressed alike. They participated in the same forms of entertainment. They heard the same jokes about love affairs and lust. They both laughed. But one was excused and the other was condemned. What brought about the exemption? What brought about the condemnation? Intention. One did not intend to smear the conjugal principle, so he was excused. The other intended to bring shame on marriage love, so he was condemned.

For people who want to learn from mistakes and who long to overcome them, the Lord can take away the enemy that is in our midst. He can rescue and restore our meekness and humility. He can bring us back into a state where we trust in the name of the Lord. Without trust, we are cautious, timid, afraid, and hesitant to venture any rehabilitation of our motives.

Open the last volume of *AE*. Turn to *Divine Love 17*. "If a man by means of combats against evils as sins has *acquired anything spiritual* in the world, *be it ever so small, he is saved, and afterwards his uses grow like a grain of mustard seed... into a tree." (Emphasis added.)
Together, the harmony of these teachings gives us hope and strength to fight against feelings of spiritual inadequacy.

Read and Review

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read Zephaniah 3:11-12.

Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. How powerful do you think this section from Zephaniah is for your life?

2. Isn’t the message of the Lord’s forgiveness a happy one?

3. The quote from *Divine Love 17* is a powerful tool. Would you count this quote a "must" to be copied and shared with others?

4. Intentions: are they important? Is there a need to make this teaching more accessible to the church? What do we know about our own intentions?

5. Do you picture a meek and humble person as being "soft" and gullible? Why or why not?

6. Can the message of God’s forgiveness in spite of our transgressions be abused? Might we get complacent about our daily regeneration process? How can this be prevented?

ZEPHANIAH 3:13-20

"The remnant of Israel shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth; for they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid. Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy, the King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: do not fear; Zion, let not your hands be weak. The Lord your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly, who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden."
Passages From The Writings

P&P

- "Then there will be a new church of those who will acknowledge the Lord, and He will remove evils and falsities from them; concerning this church."

AC 5201 [4-6]

- "As it has become customary to call teachers 'pastors' and learners a 'flock,' it has also become common to speak of 'feeding' when speaking of preaching, or of instruction from doctrine from the Word..." Zephaniah 3:13 is among the many passages cited.

AC 5897 [6]

- "In Zephaniah...3:13...are described remains in respect to their quality, and it is known that this quality never belonged to the people called 'Israel.' From this also it is manifest that by 'remains' are meant other things; and that these are goods and truths is clear, because these are what do no perversity, nor speak a lie, neither is a tongue of deceit found in their mouth."

AC 8908 [4]

- Zephaniah 3:13 is cited. "In these as in many other passages 'a lie' denotes the falsity and evil of faith."

AR 383

- "'To feed' is to teach, because the church, in the Word, is called 'a flock' and the men of the church are called 'sheep' and 'lambs,' hence 'to feed' signifies to teach, and 'the shepherd' one that teaches..." Zephaniah 3:13 is cited.

AR 624

- "By 'the mouth' is signified speech, preaching, and doctrine...and by 'deceit' is signified persuasion to evil by falsity, properly from cunning and design; for he who persuades to anything from cunning or deceit also persuades from design; for cunning or deceit proposes something to itself, conceals its purpose, and does it when opportunity offers. By a 'lie,' in the Word, is signified false speaking...as in the following passages..." Zephaniah 3:13 is cited.
"As it is known in the church that ‘to feed’ signifies to instruct, ‘pasture’ instruction, and ‘shepherd’ an instructor, a few passages only in which ‘feeding’ and ‘pasture’ are mentioned shall be quoted..." Zephaniah 3:13 is cited.

"...in Zephaniah...3:13...‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ mean those in the church who are in goods and truths; and ‘none terrifying and making afraid’ signifies that nothing of evil and falsity from hell shall infest them."

"In Zephaniah...3:13...‘The remnant of Israel,’...means those who are in spiritual faith, because they are in the good of charity; ‘to speak a lie’ signifies to teach falsely from ignorance of truth; but ‘deceit’ signifies falsity that is not from ignorance of truth, but from deliberation, thus from the purpose of deceiving, as is the case with the wicked."

"There are two affections, namely, of good and of truth...The former, or the affection of good, constitutes the celestial church, and is called in the Word the ‘daughter of Zion,’ and also the ‘virgin daughter of Zion;’ but the latter, or the affection of truth, constitutes the spiritual church, and is called in the Word the ‘daughter of Jerusalem.’" Zephaniah 3:14 is cited.

"In many places it is said ‘the virgin and the daughter of Zion;’ by whom is not meant any virgin or daughter there, but the church as to the affection of good and truth..." Zephaniah 3:14 is cited.

"In Zephaniah...3:14...the establishment of the church by the Lord; ‘trumpets,’ ‘sound of the horn,’ and ‘sounding,’ signify joy on account of Divine truth coming down out of heaven."
"In place of joy exultation is...mentioned, because exultation, like joy, is predicated of good, because it relates to love, to the heart, and to the will; as in the following passages..." Zephaniah 3:14 is cited.

"These passages treat of the Lord’s coming and of His kingdom in the heavens and on earth, and as that kingdom is meant by ‘Zion and Jerusalem’ it is said that...Jehovah the Holy One and the King of Israel shall dwell there...‘Zion’ means heaven and the church, in which the Lord reigns by Divine truth, and ‘Jerusalem’ heaven and the church as to doctrine from that Divine truth.” Zephaniah 3:14-15 is cited.

"...from the Word which contains the expressions ‘that day,’ ‘in that day,’ and in that time;’ in which...is meant the Lord’s advent." Zephaniah 3:8, 11, 16, 19, 20 are cited.

"In Zephaniah...3:14-17, 20...[it] treats of the Lord and of the church from Him, over which ‘the King of Israel’ (who is the Lord) will be glad with joy, will exult with a shout, and in whose love He will rest, and whose members He will make a name and a praise to all people of the earth."

"In Zephaniah...3:14, 15, 17, 20...the Lord and the church from Him are treated of, over which ‘the King of Israel,’ who is the Lord, ‘will rejoice with joy, will exult with shouting,’ and in whose love ‘He will rest,’ and who will give them ‘for a name and a praise to all the people of the earth.’"

"...hence it is, that by ‘Jerusalem’ is signified the church. That by ‘Jerusalem’ is meant the church, is very clear from the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning a New Church to be established by the Lord, wherein it is called ‘Jerusalem.’ The following passages only shall be quoted, from which any one of interior reason may clearly see, that by ‘Jerusalem’ is meant the church..." Zephaniah 3:14-17, 20 are cited.
"That ‘Jerusalem’ means the church can be clearly seen from the prophecies in the Old Testament respecting the new church to be established by the Lord, in that it is there called ‘Jerusalem.’ Those passages only shall be here cited from which any one endowed with interior reason can see that ‘Jerusalem’ there means the church." *Zephaniah 3:14-17, 20* are cited.

"That by ‘mount Zion’ is signified heaven and the church where the Lord alone is worshiped, may appear from the following passages..." *Zephaniah 3:14, 16* are cited.

"The reason why the Lord, as King, is the Divine truth, is because this is signified by ‘a king.’ Hence it is that by ‘kings’ are signified they who are in Divine truths from the Lord...That the Lord is called King is evident from the following passages..." *Zephaniah 3:15* is cited as an example.

"In Zephaniah...3:19...[that] by the 'lame' and the 'halt' are not meant the lame and the halt, may be seen by every one, for it is said of them that they 'shall leap,' 'shall be assembled,' 'shall be made for remains,' and 'shall be saved;' but it is evident that those are signified who are in good and not so much in truths, as is the case with well-disposed Gentiles, and also with those of a similar nature within the church."

"In Zephaniah...3:20...This, too, means the bringing back of the Gentiles from spiritual captivity."

"The remnant of Israel..."

These words in the larger sense signify the goods and truths stored up interiorly by the Lord. *(AC 2851)*

When a church is vastated, a remnant always remains. *(AE 407)*

"Israel” signifies in the highest sense the Lord in relation to the internal things of the church. *(AE 768 [15])*
"...shall do no unrighteousness and speak no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth..."

- This passage indicates that they will not unrighteously alter goods and truths for their own personal gain.
- Speaking signifies expressing one's thoughts. Therefore, Israel will not teach, or speak lies of, what is evil and false. (AR 582)
- The "tongue" signifies opinions, principles, or persuasions. (AC 1159)
- A "mouth" signifies thought, as a person's speech comes forth from it; it also signifies various things from thought, such as teaching, preaching, and reasoning. (AE 580 and AE 782)

"...they shall feed their flocks and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid."

- Feeding signifies a desire for doctrinals and to have good and truth conjoined. (AC 3320)
- To "lie down" signifies conjunction and to be consociated to one another by love, and to enjoy eternal blessedness and felicity, and this from the Lord alone. (AE 252 [3])

"Sing, O daughter of Zion!"

- To "sing" signifies the glorification of the Lord on account of liberation from spiritual slavery. (AC 8261)
- To sing a new song signifies acknowledgment that the Lord alone is Judge, Redeemer, and Savior, thus the One God of heaven and earth. (AR 279)
- "Zion" signifies heaven and the church where the Lord alone is worshiped. (AR 612)
- The Daughter of Zion signifies those who are wise and intelligent in the church. (AE 637 [11])

"Shout, O Israel!"

- To "shout" signifies to worship from the delight of good. (AE 391 [11])
- To shout signifies to worship from the good of love. (AE 405 [11])
- "Israel" signifies in the highest sense the Lord.

"Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem!"

- To "be glad" signifies pleasantness and enjoyment from the affection of truth which is of love. (AC 7002)
- Gladness signifies the enjoyment of truth and its love. (AE 660 [3])
- "Rejoice" and "gladness" are often mentioned together in the Word because of the marriage of good and truth. (AC 3118)
"O daughter of Jerusalem" has to be seen in the context of the Lord and His church.

"The Lord has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy..."

- Does "taken away your judgments" mean the eradication of all man-made concepts that have no place in the establishment of His New Church?
- "Cast out" signifies banishment of some kind. AC 2655 speaks of cast out as representing the banishment of the human rational.
- "Cast out" in AC 4728 indicates a process of exposing falsities.
- An "enemy" signifies the antagonism of our proprium against the Lord. (DP 211)

"...the Lord is in your midst; you shall see disaster no more."

- "Midst" signifies what is inmost and primary, the best and purest things. Therefore, we can understand why the Lord is in the midst. (AC 9666)
- With the Lord's perfection leading the New Church, disaster is a thing of the past.

"...let not your hands be weak."

- "Hands" signify ability and power, and confidence. (AC 878)
- Weakness signifies a feeble and wavering understanding. (AC 3820)
- To be "weak" signifies to be without supporting truths. (AC 6344)
- Weakness signifies a lack of nourishing goods and truths. (AC 9050 [7])

"He will quiet you with His love..."

- "Quiet" signifies a state of peace when one is safe from evil spirits. (SE 2344)
- Quiet signifies a state of peace after a time of temptation, when a person is in a state of regeneration. (AC 851)

"I will gather those who sorrow over the appointed assembly..."

- Sorrow over the assembly seems to represent a momentary, temporary look at what had been in the church they had grown up in. Could it represent a brief anxiety over what was going to be new in the church under the Lord's direction?
- Gathering signifies truths in the memory. Remains of innocence are goods and truths that have been stored up interiorly by the Lord. (AC 2851 [6])
"...who are among you, to whom its reproach is a burden."

- Reproach, or humiliation, is a burden. AC 3969 uses "reproach" when talking about Rachel's barren state. The Lord took away her barrenness (deadness) with the opening of her womb. Is this closing verse a promise of the Lord's that His church will no longer experience feelings of emptiness? Can we hear instead a message that His church will be eternally fruitful? The New Church will never know reproaches that are burdens. There will be no sickness. There will be no pain. There will be no death anymore: "Behold I make all things new."

**Putting It All Together**

With the gentle leading of our derived doctrine and the direct teachings, a tangible picture emerges of the Lord's gentleness and love. He is going to give us rejoicing hearts. He is going to take away our spiritual disasters. He will remove our fears. Our enemies will be cast out. The hands of our efforts will be strengthened. We will experience a sense of rejoicing. Gladness will lift up our spirits. The teaching of the Word, "Be still and know that I am God," will be a new song of comfort and encouragement. The Lord is in our midst. How can we possibly fail? He will awaken the remains of our innocence and goodness. Gone will be the feelings of inadequacy and hopelessness.

Don't worry about the newness of the Lord's church. The old ways we thought were comfortable and reassuring are nothing in comparison to what is ahead. The Lord is going to remove our reproach. He will take away our barren states. In His presence will be joy and gladness forever. Our moments with the Lord will produce a progeny of spiritual births. Isn't this reminiscent of the words found in the Psalms?

*Psalm 127: 3-5*

"Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,
The fruit of the womb is a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior,
So are the children of one’s youth,
Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them;
They shall not be ashamed,
But shall speak with their enemies in the gate."

**Read and Review**

Read the selection from *P&P*.

Read *Zephaniah 3:13-20*. 


Questions To Stimulate Reflection

1. How did this closing chapter affect you?

2. Isn’t it a work of comfort and encouragement? What are your favorite parts? What do you see at work in the life of your church?

3. The promise of the New Church is given so we might long for its arrival. How is your sense of expectancy doing? Is it alive and excited?
Epilogue: A Summary of the Book of Zephaniah

CHAPTER ONE

The Lord will come and gather together His church. Why is this gathering necessary?

1. The knowledge and truth of the former churches had perished.

2. Their doctrines perished because people loved falsities, and in the course of time, the worship of the Lord became ritualistic and empty of genuine emotional love for the Lord.

3. With the absence of the Lord in their hearts, the Word was adulterated, and those who willfully adulterated the truths of the Word chose hell in their minds and hearts.

4. The wayward condition of the church emptied the rich storehouse of spiritual truth. The proud and self-serving people within the church plundered and emptied out the goods and truths of the Lord.

5. The Lord sent the message that a day of judgment was at hand. His word to the church was clear. The defilers would not continue to preserve their seats of prominence. Their day was at hand. The cleansing of the church would happen. Who would overturn the ways of the evil? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle.

CHAPTER TWO

With the certainty of judgment at hand, those who have not completely hardened their hearts need to be converted. Why? If the Lord’s warning is not heeded, the evil will perish. Does the Lord want anyone to be destroyed? No. The Lord wants all to be saved. The evil will be the ones who cast themselves out of the Divine sphere. They falsified the knowledges of truth by means of reasoning and knowledge. Those who actively worked to destroy the church will utterly perish.

Some will listen. Some will be converted. The work of the faithful remnant is at hand.

CHAPTER THREE

The Lord will come to investigate the condition of the church. The perverted doctrine of truth and good will be seen and thoroughly exposed. Nothing will escape His cleansing work.
The new church will be made up of those who love and acknowledge the Lord. When the faithful emerge, they will be forgiven for any transgressions committed against the Lord. The faithful will be humble, and they will trust in the name of the Lord. They will have a new song to sing. Their hands will be strengthened. Feebleness will be taken away. Gladness and joy will lift the hearts of the faithful. Songs will be sung telling of the Lord’s might and power.

With the influence of the evil cast out of the defiled church, the purity of the Lord’s New Church will return. The Lord will be returned to the midst of the new church. Barrenness will give way to productiveness. In place of hopelessness, there will be exhilarating confidence and assurance.

"Then there will be a new church of those who will acknowledge the Lord, and He will remove evils and falsities from them..." (P&P)