

Zephaniah And Not Seeking God

Wayde Miller

It goes without saying that unless people are seeking God, they are moving away from God. The Lord said so in Zephaniah 1:6 when He spoke of, “those who have turned back from following the Lord, who do not seek the Lord or inquire of him.” Unless people, churches, or nations are moving toward God, they are moving away from God. It is no more complicated than that. Not seeking the Lord leads to open rebellion against Him.

Notice God’s description of Jerusalem, “Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! She listens to no voice; she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord; she does not draw near to her God.” (Zephaniah 3:1-2.) The people of the holy city didn’t listen to God. When God tried to teach the people, they wouldn’t make any corrections to comply with His wishes. The people didn’t trust in God at all, choosing rather to put their trust in themselves, their possessions, and/or other nations to protect them. All of this was because they didn’t draw near to God. Pride and a lack of joy in God got in their way.

Throughout the Minor Prophets, the sins of Israel were many. Oppressing the poor, murder, theft, idolatry, indifference, selfishness, greed, and so many others are described. Yet, Zephaniah gets to the root cause in a clear and concise fashion. Not seeking God is at the heart of their sins. The people stopped drawing near to God and indifference set in. Sacrifices may have still been offered but without any heart toward God. And we know that half-hearted, lukewarm service is something that makes the Lord sick. The church at Laodicea is an example of Christians that took pride in themselves that led them to lukewarm service and the Lord was sick because of it (Rev. 3:15-17.) And once the lukewarm status has been achieved, sin is only a hop and a skip away.

Zephaniah also described how God’s people would act under the Messiah. Chapter 3:9-20 describes a people that do seek the Lord. They will speak with “pure speech, calling on the name of the Lord” (v.9, 13.) Over and over, the New Testament admonishes Christians to speak as God has taught. Zephaniah said the people would serve the Lord “with one accord.” Christians are to be unified in their desire to serve God not just in a set of functions. Zephaniah 3:11 says there will be no room for pride among God’s people as does Phil 2:1-4. Oh, and 3:12 says, “But I will leave in your midst a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord.” Is this not what Jesus called us to learn about Him when He said, “Come to me...? (Matt. 11:28-30.) In particular, note Zeph. 3:17, “The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” When God came to walk among us in Jesus (John 1:14,) he did so to save us. For that I am thankful. But I also love that “he will quiet you by his love.” Past sins are forgiven so there is no anxiety or confusion over past sins. Who doesn’t want to seek a God that takes joy in us and imparts that joy freely?

But unless we seek God, religion will become a mere formality and ritual. And that takes (and has taken) the joy from so many. If the fire has gone out (or is going out,) Zephaniah has given us the answer. Inquire of the Lord and draw near to Him, making Him your heart’s desire. The joy will return and any fear of the day of the Lord is cast out.