

Zephaniah 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.

Analysis

Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem—after judgment and purification (verses 1-13), restoration erupts in joyful worship. The verse issues four commands using different Hebrew terms for celebration, building intensity. "Sing" (roni, רָנִי) means to cry out joyfully, to give a ringing cry of gladness—the exuberant shout accompanying victory or celebration. "Shout" (hari'ut, הָרִיעוּ) means to raise a shout, give a war cry, or sound the trumpet—loud, public declaration of triumph.

"Be glad" (simchi, שִׂמְחִי) means to rejoice, be joyful, experience delight—inner emotional joy. "Rejoice" (aletzi, אֵלֵצִי) means to exult or triumph—joy expressed in physical movement and celebration. The phrase "with all the heart" (be-khol-lev, בְּכָל-לֵב) emphasizes wholehearted, unreserved celebration—complete abandonment to joy without hesitation or restraint. This contrasts with the half-hearted, superficial repentance earlier condemned (3:7, Jeremiah 3:10).

The three addressees—"daughter of Zion," "Israel," "daughter of Jerusalem"—use poetic variation to address the covenant community. "Daughter" personifies the city/nation as a woman, emphasizing tenderness and covenant relationship. Zion and Jerusalem represent the holy city and God's dwelling place; Israel represents the covenant people collectively. The repetition emphasizes comprehensiveness: all God's people, from every direction and designation, should join unreserved celebration. This anticipates eternal worship when redeemed from every nation join the new song (Revelation 5:9-10, 7:9-10, 19:1-7).

Historical Context

Zephaniah 3:14 begins a concluding section (verses 14-20) of restoration promises following judgment oracles. These verses functioned as hope during the Babylonian exile (586-538 BC) and guided expectations for the return. When Cyrus of Persia issued the decree allowing Jewish return (538 BC, Ezra 1:1-4), it sparked celebration—though the reality of a struggling, weak community rebuilding amidst opposition tempered initial joy. The completed temple dedication (516 BC) brought celebration (Ezra 6:16-22), as did the later dedication of Jerusalem's rebuilt walls (Nehemiah 12:27-43).

However, post-exilic prophets like Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi indicate the return didn't fully realize Zephaniah's promises. The community remained under foreign domination (Persian, then Greek, then Roman), the temple's glory was modest compared to Solomon's, and spiritual struggles persisted. This drove messianic expectation: greater fulfillment must lie ahead. The prophecy thus pointed beyond immediate restoration to ultimate redemption through Messiah.

The New Testament presents Christ's first coming as beginning fulfillment. Christ's birth announcement echoed Zephaniah: "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy...unto you is born...a Saviour" (Luke 2:10-11). Jesus entered Jerusalem to shouts of celebration (Matthew 21:5-9). The resurrection produced joy (Matthew 28:8, Luke 24:52). Yet full realization awaits Christ's return when all mourning ends, death is destroyed, and God's people experience unending joy in His presence (Revelation 21:3-4, 22:1-5).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1. What hinders wholehearted, unreserved celebration of God's salvation, and how can believers cultivate appropriate joy?
2. How should the church's worship reflect the exuberant celebration Zephaniah describes while maintaining reverent awe?
3. In what ways does looking forward to ultimate fulfillment in the new creation sustain joy during present trials and partial realization?

בְּכָל־
 שִׂמְחָה־יִישְׂרָאֵל־הַר־יְעֹצִי־בַת־רָנִי
 and rejoice be glad O Israel shout of Zion O daughter with all the heart
 H3605 H8055 H3478 H7321 H6726 H1323 H7442 H3820

Isaiah 12:6 (References Israel): Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Micah 4:8 (References Jerusalem): And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 54:1 (Sin): Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the LORD.

Isaiah 35:2 (Sin): It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.

Isaiah 40:9 (References Jerusalem): O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

Isaiah 51:11 (Sin): Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.

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