

Introduction

- Different author? So different...!
 - no - filling out a multi-hued portrait of God...
 - he is not only judge (1:1-3:8), but also saviour
 - and he is only judge before the exile and saviour after - those are both aspects, dimensions, facets of his character....
- Picture that emerges is more of the loving parent who disciplines his children:
 - there are painful, uncomfortable episodes, but the love remains, and there are glorious, joyful times too

The Nations (vs.9-10)

- Nations surrounding previously judged
 - remember particularly their mocking and threatening words were picked out...?
 - those lips which mocked have been turned to praise
 - recognition that sin was present, but has been dealt with - this stands behind "purify" in v.9

Jerusalem (vs.11-13)

- God's attention again comes to Jerusalem ("this city", v.11):
 - as before, nations then Jerusalem in the centre
 - God offers hope
 - strand of purification here again - sin was present (v.11), but has been dealt with

Rejoicing (vs.14-17)

- Zephaniah visualises the blessings from God's hand as already accomplished
 - removal of punishment (though exile was still ahead)
 - removal of fear
 - removal of distance between the Lord and his people, replaced with a close sense of his presence
- All this is so certain - at God's hand - it can be spoken of as having happened
 - like having to do things as a couple - eg insurances, etc - before the wedding, on the basis that that which is still ahead is so certain it can be spoken of as already true...

Promises (vs.18-20)

- v.18 a bit obscure - and the exact text in the Hebrew is obscure!
- But big picture is reasonably clear:
 - though the people already have reason to rejoice, the depths of God's blessings are not yet plumbed! There is more...
 - there is home
 - there is honour and praise
 - there is restoration of fortune
 - there is healing (lame)
- Note again how personally present and active the Lord is:
 - eight times in these last three verses God says "I will" or a close variation of it

Conclusion

- Do we have too strong a sense of ourselves as remnant, and too little sense of ourselves as redeemed?
 - these are strong, expansive promises of blessing, that were true both in the now and in the not yet!
- Note how strong the sense is of God being the actor here:
 - it is he who has accomplished this, not the people (and he has not changed...)