

Reading 1

[Zep 3:14-18a](#)

Shout for joy, O daughter Zion!
Sing joyfully, O Israel!
Be glad and exult with all your heart,
O daughter Jerusalem!
The LORD has removed the judgment against you
he has turned away your enemies;
the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst,
you have no further misfortune to fear.
On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem:
Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged!
The LORD, your God, is in your midst,
a mighty savior;
he will rejoice over you with gladness,
and renew you in his love,
he will sing joyfully because of you,
as one sings at festivals.

A Joyful Psalm of Zion (3:14-18a). Zephaniah, or a later editor, invites Zion to rejoice because her salvation is at hand.**15.** *the King of Israel, the Lord:* The Lord himself shall stand at the head of Israel's army. With such leadership the nation need fear no enemy, from within or without.**17.** Jerusalem's most important citizen, so to speak, her savior, shall feel toward that city as a bridegroom for his bride (Is 62:5; Jer 2:2; 8:19; Hos 2:21), and in coming to the city he shall be attended by gladness and love, joyous shouts and dancing. The dance played an important role in ancient feasts (Ex 15:20-21; Jgs 21:19-21). The presence of God ("in your midst") is notably emphasized.

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¹Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. The Jerome Biblical commentary (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Responsorial Psalm

[Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6](#)

R. (6) Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.
God indeed is my savior;

I am confident and unafraid.

My strength and my courage is the LORD,
and he has been my savior.

With joy you will draw water
at the fountain of salvation.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Give thanks to the LORD, acclaim his name;
among the nations make known his deeds,
proclaim how exalted is his name.

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

Sing praise to the LORD for his glorious achievement;

let this be known throughout all the earth.

Shout with exultation, O city of Zion,

for great in your midst

is the Holy One of Israel!

R. Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

THANKSGIVING TO THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL (12:1-6). The short chapter is made up of an enthusiastic hymn, possibly two hymns, of gratitude for salvation. Date and origin are not certain; the verses were seen to be a fitting conclusion to a major division of the prophecy. Israel had lifted up her voice in thanksgiving after the first Exodus (Ex 15:1-18); this outburst of thanksgiving would be appropriate for the announcement of the new Exodus.

1. *on that day*: Refers to the time of the new Exodus.**2.** *my courage is the Lord*: perhaps better translated as “my protection is the Lord” (W. Moran, *CBQ* 14 [1952] 202).**3-6.** See Jgs 5:11 for the kind of scene suggested in these verses. The well was a favorite place for recounting the deeds of Yahweh; its life-giving waters symbolized his saving power. The style and language of the thanksgiving hymn are closer to Pss than to the prophetic literature.

Reading II

[Phil 4:4-7](#)

Brothers and sisters:

Rejoice in the Lord always.

I shall say it again: rejoice!

Your kindness should be known to all.

The Lord is near.

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
make your requests known to God.

Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Counsels of Harmony, Joy, and Peace (4:4-9). **4. *goodbye*:** See comment on 3:1. Paul says farewell in the Lord in view of his still uncertain destiny. **5. *the Lord is near*:** Paul hopes once again to see the Lord's parousia. He echoes the prayer of the early Church (*maranā tha*, 1 Cor 16:22; Ap 22:20 under a different form). This assurance should be the foundation of the Philippian Christians' forbearance. **7. *the peace of God*:** The peace that God gives is personified; like a sentinel it will stand guard over the hearts and minds of Christians. *surpasses all understanding*: Either because the ordinary mind of man cannot comprehend it, or such a state of serenity surpasses all human efforts to attain it. **8. *whatever is true...*:** Paul recommends as the pursuit of his cherished Philippian community a whole series of distinctively Gk virtues. He is not afraid to recommend to them the ideal of contemporary philosophers. Verse 9 gives them a new setting; he speaks as if all these things represent what has been seen and heard in him. If they pursue such things, then the God of peace (see comment on 1 Thes 5:23) will be with them.

²Brown, R. E., Fitzmyer, J. A., & Murphy, R. E. 1968]; Published in electronic form by Logos Research Systems, 1996. The Jerome Biblical commentary (electronic ed.). Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Gk Greek

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Gospel

[Lk 3:10-18](#)

The crowds asked John the Baptist,

“What should we do?”

He said to them in reply,

“Whoever has two cloaks

should share with the person who has none.

And whoever has food should do likewise.”

Even tax collectors came to be baptized and they said to him,

“Teacher, what should we do?”

He answered them,

“Stop collecting more than what is prescribed.”

Soldiers also asked him,

“And what is it that we should do?”

He told them,

“Do not practice extortion,

do not falsely accuse anyone,

and be satisfied with your wages.”

Now the people were filled with expectation,

and all were asking in their hearts

whether John might be the Christ.

John answered them all, saying,

“I am baptizing you with water,

but one mightier than I is coming.

I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear his threshing floor

and to gather the wheat into his barn,

but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

Exhorting them in many other ways,

he preached good news to the people.

John the Baptist (3:1-20). Lk, composed after Mk and Mt, manifests suspicion against an attempt in early Christianity to make the Baptist a rival or even an open opponent of Jesus. Jn, the last Gospel, will be most explicit in pointing out that the Baptist is not the Messiah (1:8, 19;

34). Comparing Lk with Mt (both depended upon Q), we find that: (1) Lk omits John the Baptist's announcement that the Kingdom of God is close at hand (Mt 3:2) and reserves this statement for Jesus (Lk 10:9, 11); (2) Lk suppresses the description of the Baptist in the role of Elijah (Mt 3:4 par. Mk 1:6) and an account of the Baptist's activity, especially his baptizing (Mt 3:5f.); (3) in the statement, "There is, i, coming one after me, mightier than I" (Mk 1:7; Mt 3:11), Lk removes the words "after me," lest Jesus be considered a disciple of the Baptist or even an intimate friend. Lk considers John the last and greatest prophet of Israel, but clearly distinct from the glorious Messianic moment that begins with Jesus (Lk 16:16; Acts 13:24f. where it is stated that John came "before his [Jesus,] entrance").

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10-14. These verses, which are exclusive to Lk, reveal the Evangelist's interest in the universal aspect of redemption. John the Baptist pronounces his sociological message to publicans and their bodyguards.**12. publicans:** These were tax collectors, men who bought from the Romans the right to collect taxes; they were despised by the Jews (Mk 2:15; Mt 11:19 [Lk, 7:34 par.]) and also by Gentiles (Herodas, 6. 64).**14. soldiers:** These men did not belong to the regular troops of Herod Antipas or the Roman procurator; they rather provided armed support for the tax collectors (so M. J. Lagrange, A. Plummer, I. de la Potterie). *rob no one:* Lit., "shake no one violently," in order to extort money from them. Luke does not ask of these men a high mysticism but only a practical spirituality.**15-17.** Luke now presents the Baptist's Messianic preaching. But first, in a verse exclusive to himself, he gives the psychological setting: "The people were on tiptoe of expectation" (NEB).**16. mightier than I:** Jesus is the great liberator in the war against Satan. The word "mighty" is often used in Scripture for the leader of the final struggle with evil: Mk 3:27; Lk 11:20-22; Ap 18:8 (cf. W. Grundmann, *ThDNT* 3, 399-401). In the Gk text the chiasm (a-b b-a arrangement of words) of the next part of v. 16 highlights the sublimity of Jesus' baptism over that of John:

I with water (a) baptize you (b)...

Q Quelle

par. Parallel passage(s) in the Synoptic Gospels

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par. Parallel passage(s) in the Synoptic Gospels

NEB New English Bible (Oxford and Cambridge version)

ThDNT G. Kittel, ed., Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, 1964-). English version of ThWNT

Gk Greek

he you (b) will baptize with holy spirit and fire (a)

This style is typical of Lk. *baptize with the Holy Spirit*: The Scriptures frequently attribute messianic achievement to the Spirit (Ez 36:26ff.; Is 44:3; Jl 3:1), but special prominence is given to the Spirit in the Lucan writings (→ 11 above). Throughout the Bible many extraordinary accomplishments reveal the presence of the Spirit (the life-power) of God: creation (Gn 1:2); warriors (Jgs 3:10; 11:29; 1 Sm 11:6); particular offices (Gn 41:38-40; Nm 11:17, 25; 27:18); Servant of the Lord (Is 42:1); messianic king (Is 11:1ff.). (See *ThWNT* 6, 330-453; M.-A. Chevallier, *L'Esprit et le Messie dans le bas-Judaïsme et le Nouveau Testament* [Paris, 1958].) *baptize with...fire*: In Scripture, fire very often indicates the presence of the Savior-God. Fire has a prominent place in liturgical services where man meets his savior (Lv 1:7ff.; 6:2, 6). Great theophanies surround God with fire (Gn 15:17; Ex 3:1ff.; 13:21f.; Nm 14:14; Is 6; Ez 1:4ff.; Jl 3:3). God comes “in fire” to judge, that is, to fulfill his promises to the elect and remove evil from their midst; and this nuance shows up in the Qumran texts: 1QpHab 10:5; 1QS 2:15; 4:13. The “fiery” arrival of messianic judgment may have its roots in Nm 31:23 and/or Mal 3:3, 19 (see G. W. H. Lampe, *The Seal of the Spirit* [London, 1951] 27; F. Lang, *ThWNT* 6, 927-53). In view of this rich biblical background it is difficult to decide whether the Baptist’s statement about Jesus identifies fire with the Spirit’s purifying and sanctifying action or, instead, adds a new dimension of eschatological judgment. The latter, more convincing opinion is adopted by P. van Imschoot (*ETL* 13 [1936] 653-66); R. Bultmann (*HST* 246, 424); E. Schweizer (*ThWNT* 6, 306). **17. his winnowing fork**: The image of winnowing wheat is a frequent one in the Bible for separation (purification) and fiery judgment (Is 29:5-6; 41:16; Jer 15:7). With a wooden shovel the Palestinian farmer tossed the crushed stalks of wheat into the air. The heavier grain fell quickly to the ground, while the lighter chaff was blown by the wind to the edge of the threshing area, where it was gathered and later burned. *unquenchable fire*: Ferocious heat (Is 66:24; Mk 9:43f.). **18-20**. Lk concludes the Baptist’s apostolate, stating that he frequently exhorted the people with this good news; the use of a participle (parakalōn, root for the word “paraclete”) and the impf. tense of the verb (euaggelizō, root for the word “gospel”) indicate constant repetition. **19. but Herod**: Luke records what actually takes place later, the incarceration of the Baptist by Herod Antipas at Machaerus, a fortress E of the Dead Sea (Mt 14:1-12; Mk 6:14-29). Luke not only rounds out the story of the Baptist with a fine literary conclusion, but he effectively removes John from the Messianic work now entrusted by the Father to Jesus (see C. H. H. Scobie, *John the Baptist* [Philadelphia, 1964]).

ThWNT G. Kittel, ed., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (8 vols.; Stuttgart, 1933-). German version of *ThDNT*

1QpHab Peshier on Habakkuk from Qumran Cave 1 (→ 68:77)

1QS Serek ha-Yaḥad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline) (→ 68:71)

ETL Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses

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