

Book of Zephaniah

Study BIBLE



Introduction

Book No	36
Name	Zephaniah
Written By	Zephaniah
Testament	Old
Category	Minor Prophets
Date Written	Approx. 640 - 621 BC
Place Written	Judah
Audience	To the people of Israel
Purpose	To shake the people of Judah out of their complacency and urge them to return to God
History Covered	640 – 621 BC
Chapters	3
Verses	56
Key Verse	Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger. (2:3)
Key People	❖ Zephaniah
Key Places	❖ Judah

Purpose of the Book

Hope is the silver shaft of sun breaking through the storm-darkened sky, words of comfort in the intensive care unit, a letter from across the sea, the first spring bird perched on a snow-covered twig, and the finish line in sight. It is a rainbow, a song, a

loving touch. Hope is knowing God and resting in his love.

As God's prophet, Zephaniah was bound to speak the truth. This he did clearly, thundering certain judgment and horrible punishment for all who would defy the Lord. God's awful wrath would sweep away everything in the land and destroy it. "I will sweep away both people and animals alike. Even the birds of the air and the fish in the sea will die.

I will reduce the wicked to heaps of rubble, along with the rest of humanity,' says the LORD" (1:3). No living thing in the land would escape. And that terrible day was coming soon: "That terrible day of the LORD is near. Swiftly it comes—a day when strong men will cry bitterly. It is a day when the LORD's anger will be poured out. It is a day of terrible distress and anguish, a day of ruin and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, of clouds, [and] blackness" (1:14-15). We can sense the oppression and depression his listeners must have felt. They were judged guilty, and they were doomed.

But in the midst of this terrible pronouncement, there is hope. The first chapter of Zephaniah's prophecy is filled with terror. In chapter two, however, a whispered promise appears. "Beg the LORD to save you—all you who are humble, all you who uphold justice. Walk humbly and do what is right. Perhaps even yet the LORD will protect you from his anger" (2:3). And a few verses later we read of "the few survivors of the tribe of Judah" (2:7) who will be restored.

Finally in chapter three, the quiet refrain grows to a crescendo as God's salvation and deliverance for those who are faithful to him is declared. "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! For the LORD will remove his hand of judgment and will disperse the armies of your enemy. And the LORD himself, the King of Israel, will live among you! At last your troubles will be over, and you will fear disaster no more" (3:14-15). This is true hope, grounded in the knowledge of God's justice and in his love for his people.

Four timeless lessons for both believers and unbelievers are found in Zephaniah:

1. God is perfect justice (3:5) as well as perfect love. If the call to repentance is continually ignored, God's judgment must consequently fall.

2. Punishment is not God's choice, for "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

3. To settle into the complacency of financial prosperity (1:10–13) and to participate in the ritual of a well-structured religious life without obeying God's voice, receiving correction, or drawing near to Him (3:2) is an ever-present possibility. Even more tragic is to have no awareness of such spiritual emptiness.

4. Even to the rebellious, God offers last-minute reprieve (2:1–3). The remnant who humble themselves and seek righteousness will be hidden in the Day of the Lord's anger (2:3). They will be gathered to Him and healed (3:18), for God dwells in their midst (3:17). This abiding promise to God's people is the essence of the gospel.

As you read Zephaniah, listen carefully to the words of judgment. God does not take sin lightly, and it will be punished. But be encouraged by the words of hope—our God reigns, and he will rescue his own. Decide to be part of that faithful remnant of souls who humbly worship and obey the living Lord.

Overview

- ❖ 36th book of the BIBLE, Old Testament, 9th of the 12 minor prophets and 14th of the 17 prophetic books
- ❖ Zephaniah was:
 - Born during the later part of the reign of King Manasseh.
 - The great-great grandson of the godly king Hezekiah
 - The only prophet of royal descent.
- ❖ Zephaniah was a contemporary of:
 - Jeremiah
 - Habakkuk
- ❖ Zephaniah was indeed an "11th hour" prophet to Judah.
- ❖ Zephaniah pronounces God's coming judgment upon the nations that surround Judah.
 - To the west: Philistia
 - To the east: Moab and Ammon
 - To the south: Ethiopia
 - To the north: Assyria

❖ Jerusalem is characterized by:

- Spiritual rebellion
- Moral treachery

❖ The Book of Zephaniah:

- Opens with:
 - Idolatry
 - Wrath
 - Judgment
- Closes with:
 - True worship
 - Rejoicing
 - Blessing

Hebrew Names of GOD used in Zephaniah

❖ JEHOVAH-ELOHIM

Revelation of JESUS CHRIST

The meaning of Zephaniah's name ("The LORD Has Hidden") conveys the ministry of Jesus Christ. The truth of the Passover in Egypt, where those hidden behind blood-marked doors were protected from the angel of death, is repeated in the promise of 2:3, where the meek of the Earth who have upheld God's justice will be hidden in the Day of the Lord's anger. Colossians 3:2, 3 spells out this aspect of Christ's ministry: "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

The rejoicing over a saved remnant (3:16, 17) is connected with the work of Jesus, the Savior. Jesus spoke, "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). The picture of a joyful Redeemer who waits to receive His own is again depicted in Hebrews 12:2, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Work of THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus said that one of the works of the Holy Spirit would be to convict the world of judgment because the ruler of the world is judged (John 16:8–11). Since His coming, the Holy Spirit has been crying out to the world as Zephaniah did: “Gather yourselves . . . 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” (2:1, 2).

Now as then, a refusal of the warning is a rejection of the Holy Spirit. In the address that sealed his martyrdom, Stephen declared to the council, “You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you” (Acts 7:51).

A more joyous work of the Holy Spirit is found in the promise that God will restore to the peoples a pure language that they may serve Him with one accord (3:9). The curse of Babel was the confusion of languages, which prevented people from working in unity to achieve their evil goals (Gen. 11:1–9). The outpouring of the Spirit promised in Joel 2:28–32 came to pass on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–11) to begin God’s process of messianic restoration. In light of Zephaniah’s prophecy, it is interesting to note that Pentecost included the dimension of languages.

Furthermore, the gift of tongues was used to bring believing Gentiles and astonished Jews together in unity of faith and purpose during Peter’s reluctant visit to the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:44–48). It is this pure language, this gift of tongues, that has also served to merge believers of widely divergent theological persuasions into the modern charismatic movement. They have been enabled to transcend boundaries of tradition and nationality and serve the Lord together in the unity of the Spirit. These may be partial fulfillments of 3:9.

Mega Themes of Zephaniah

DAY OF JUDGMENT

Destruction was coming because Judah had forsaken the Lord. The people worshiped Baal, Molech, and the starry hosts. Even the priests mixed pagan practices with faith in God. God’s punishment for sin was on the way.

To escape God’s judgment we must listen to him, accept his correction, trust him, and seek his guidance. If we accept him as our Lord, we can escape his condemnation.

INDIFFERENCE TO GOD

Although there had been occasional attempts at renewal, Judah had no sorrow for its sins. The people were prosperous, and they no longer cared about God. God's demands for righteous living seemed irrelevant to the people, whose security and wealth made them complacent.

Don't let material comfort be a barrier to your commitment to God. Prosperity can lead to an attitude of proud self-sufficiency. We need to admit that money won't save us and that we cannot save ourselves. Only God can save us.

DAY OF CHEER

The day of judgment will also be a day of cheer. God will judge all those who mistreat his people. He will purify his people, purging away all sin and evil. God will restore his people and give them hope.

When people are purged of sin, there is great relief and hope. No matter how difficult our experience now, we can look forward to the day of celebration when God will completely restore us. It will truly be a day to rejoice!

Life Lessons in Zephaniah

Truth	Lesson
<p>Growing in Godliness</p> <p>Zephaniah helps us to understand God's intense hatred of sin. Through his vivid portrayal of the Day of the Lord's wrath and judgment, New Testament believers are able to appreciate more deeply the invaluable work of Jesus. He not only took God's wrath for us, He also gave His righteousness to us. In response to Jesus' immeasurable gift of grace, let us walk in a manner pleasing to Him (Rom. 5:8, 9; 12:1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Turn to Jesus. He is able to save you completely from God's wrath and judgment. If you already know Jesus, ask God to use these verses to break your heart for those who have not yet received His forgiveness (John 3:16–18; Heb. 7:25). ❖ Receive God's forgiveness through Jesus' completed work on your behalf. Rejoice with all your heart because God has removed His judgment from you! Live your life in ways that honor the Lord and bring glory to His name purify your heart

	and your speech will be pure also allow GOD to purify your lips and language
<p>Cultivating Dynamic Devotion</p> <p>Zephaniah contains a beautiful word picture that gives deep insight into God’s love for His children. In it, we see the Lord singing, shouting for joy, and dancing over us with intense love.</p> <p>We no longer need to fear; our God is with us and in us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Rejoice in the Lord! Did you know that God sings, shouts for joy, and dances over you because He loves you so much? Take time to think about that; let the Holy Spirit imbed this truth in your spirit. Allow this understanding to bring new joy, fresh freedom, and tender love for God into your devotional life. ❖ Persevere in following the LORD. Do not turn back. Find your answer in GOD ❖ Remain zealous. Refuse complacency ❖ Seek GOD faithfully everyday. Trust that the LORD behaves justly ❖ Keep your appointments with the FATHER
<p>Pursuing Holiness</p> <p>Judah allowed the social, religious, and political trends of ungodly nations to influence them until they became indistinguishable from the people around them. God calls His people today, as He did then, to be “in the world but not of the world.” As believers we need to guard our hearts and behavior so that we do not follow the ways of the world around us. We are called to be light shining brightly in the darkness (Matt. 5:14–16; John 17:15–20).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Do not allow the ungodly practices of those around you to influence you. Set your heart on the Lord, and look to Him alone for your answers. ❖ Seek the Lord. Seek His righteousness, and seek humility. In Jesus, you will be hidden and delivered from God’s wrath and judgment against sin. Understand that it is the holiness of Jesus that makes you holy. Walk in His ways, and honor Him (Col. 3:1–15). ❖ Reject anything foreign to GOD’s kingdom rule in your life

<p>The Walk of Faith</p> <p>Times of persecution challenge our faith, but times of prosperity can be equally challenging. The people of Judah allowed themselves to be lulled into complacency by the relative ease of their times. They began to believe they could live any way they chose.</p> <p>They allowed their faith to grow cold, believing they no longer needed God's involvement in their lives. Guard your faith; remain vitally connected to the Lord; and live for Him daily with your whole heart.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Guard against complacency. Do not allow peace and prosperity to lull you to sleep in your faith or make you believe that God does not care about your lifestyle. Do not believe that God is passive, unaware, and/or weak. Set your heart to earnestly seek the Lord. Remember that God is actively present in every moment of your life.
<p>Lessons for leaders</p> <p>The wise leader accepts the scripture's testimony about man and rejects the prevailing, humanistic doctrine that teaches man's intrinsic goodness. An unteachable attitude is the tip of the iceberg of ungodliness. This wisdom should influence one's self view causing all of us to guard ourselves from insincerity and pride in any of its manifestations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ leaders understand that the clearest evidence that someone does not trust the LORD or seek HIM diligently is a rebellious, disobedient and unteachable nature ❖ leaders avoid being among those who speak loudly who promise great things but produce nothing that lasts or bears fruit in the long run ❖ leaders avoid diligently any form of arrogance or pride in your ministry ❖ do not profane the ministry by mishandling GOD's WORD in any way ❖ never teach your own opinions as GOD's WORD

Praise Points in Zephaniah

- ❖ Speaking to us through his servants (1:1)

- ❖ Confronting those who are indifferent toward the lord (1:12)
- ❖ Giving people an opportunity to repent (2:2)
- ❖ Restoring the prosperity of the faithful ones (2:7)
- ❖ Remaining faithful in the midst of a disobedient people (3:5)
- ❖ Removing our shame and pardoning our rebellion (3:11)
- ❖ Blessing us before all people (3:20).

Worship Insights in Zephaniah

Worship is the celebration of God's presence in our midst. To know the Holy One, to sense his love and forgiveness, can bring us to moments of great joy. But do we ever wonder how God feels about his people? Zephaniah gives us a glimpse of the Lord's regard for us: "He will rejoice over you with great gladness. . . . He will exult over you by singing a happy song" (3:17). When we gather to worship God, we exalt him and sing his praises, and God does the same for us! In this we can rejoice.

- ❖ The Lord hates idolatry (1:4).
- ❖ The Lord detests compromise regarding worship; he demands total and unyielding devotion to him alone (1:5).
- ❖ Reverent silence before the Lord should be our response as we reflect upon God's judgment of sin (1:7).
- ❖ The Lord calls people from every nation to worship him (3:9).
- ❖ The Lord desires humility in worship (3:12).

An Outline of Zephaniah

- I. The Announcement of the Day of the Lord [Zep_1:1-18](#)
 - A. A Day of Universal Judgment [Zep_1:2-3](#)
 - B. A Day of Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem [Zep_1:4-6](#)
 - C. A Call for Silence [Zep_1:7](#)
 - D. A Day of Judgment on God's People [Zep_1:8-13](#)
 - E. A Day of Judgment on the World [Zep_1:14-18](#)
 - F. Conclusion
- II. The Invitation to Seek the Lord [Zep. 2:1-3:20](#)
 - A. An Exhortation to Seek the Lord [Zep_2:1-3](#)
 - B. The Lord's Purpose in Punishing the Nations [Zep_2:4-15](#)
 - C. The Lord's Purpose in Punishing Judah [Zep_3:1-8](#)

D. The Lord's Purpose in Restoration [Zep_3:9-20](#)

1. The Conversion of the Nations [Zep_3:9-10](#)
2. The Preservation of the Remnant [Zep_3:11-13](#)
3. A Psalm of Joy [Zep_3:14-17](#)
4. The Regathering of Israel [Zep_3:18-20](#)

E. Conclusion