

The Book of ZEPHANIAH

Introduction & Chapters 1 - 3

Teacher: John M. Brown, Flatwoods church of Christ, Sunday am Bible Class

AUTHOR: Zephaniah (meaning, "he whom Jehovah is hidden"), apparently of noble birth (1:1).

DATE: 625 BC

1. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King Josiah.
2. Contemporary prophets include Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk.

THEME: Warning of judgment against Judah.

THE TIMES:

1. The reigns of Manasseh and Amon had been characterized by great evil in Judah.
2. Under Josiah, reforms swept the land and the people returned to God (see 2 Kings 22:1-23:30 and 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27).
3. Zephaniah prophesies just prior to this great "revival" breaking out, and even though Josiah seeks to turn the people back to God, still judgment will come against Judah in the form of Babylonian captivity.

606.....1 st DEPORTATION
597.....2 nd DEPORTATION
586.....3 rd DEPORTATION

536.....RETURN

SOME IMPORTANT IDEAS IN THE BOOK:

1. "The day of the Lord"
 - a. It is a day that is near: 1:7, 14
 - b. It is a day of darkness and terror: 1:15-16
 - c. It is an event accompanied by great convulsions of nature: 1:15
 - d. It is a day of God's judgment against sin: 1:2-3,17; 2:1-15; 3:8
2. Jehovah is God! All other "gods" of the Gentile world are not really anything; God rules over all nations (chapters 2-3).

PURPOSE: To anticipate both the judgment against Judah and the return of a remnant to the land

THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

I. GOD'S THREATS & JUDGMENTS, 1:1-18

A. Prologue, 1:1-6

1. God will consume ("remove") all things from the land!
2. God's blessings will be withheld.

B. Instructions for all as God judges all, 1:7-13

1. God has prepared for Himself a sacrifice (Jerusalem!).
2. God will punish princes, the king's son, those who have given themselves to foreign gods, and those who "leap on the threshold" (see 1 Samuel 5:1-5).
3. Howling in the land!
4. Complacency, apathy, and indifference abound in the land.

C. A description of the day of the Lord, 1:14-18

1. Who can withstand the day of the Lord? No one!
2. Nothing will be able to help them on that day (compare Deuteronomy 5:8-10).

II. GOD'S WARNINGS & ADMONITIONS, 2:1- 3:8

A Instructions to be sheltered from God's wrath, 2:1-3

1. God calls them to gather themselves together (note how God views them as a group: compare Hebrews 10:19-26 or Romans 12-14 or 1 Corinthians 12).
2. The only hope for escape is to seek the Lord!

B. Prophecies against heathen nations, 2:4-15

1. To the west: Gaza, 2:4-7
2. To the east: Moabites & Amonites, 2:8-11
3. To the south: Cushites or Ethiopians, 2:12
4. To the north: Nineveh (Assyria), 2:13-15

F. Woes!, 3:1-8

1. Four charges are leveled against Jerusalem.
2. Four groups to whom the people looked for guidance have proven unfit.

III. GOD'S PROMISES & BLESSINGS, 3:9-20

A. God desires to resume His mercy, 3:9-13

1. After impending judgment, a picture of hope is given.
2. In that day, the people won't have to be ashamed: God will cleanse them (John 3:16-21)

B. Rejoicing, 3:14-20

1. Because of God's mercy, all can rejoice!
2. It is God Who had scattered them, and it is God Who must bring them back.