

36 - Zephaniah

Zephaniah

Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

"Zephaniah" means "the Lord of darkness" or "the Lord has concealed." Zephaniah 1:12 says that the Lord will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent. So medieval art portrays Zephaniah carrying a lamp. Zephaniah lived in Jerusalem during the reign of King Josiah, and was a contemporary of Jeremiah. He was a 4th generation descendant of King Hezekiah, so he belonged to the upper class of society. King Josiah feared God as had his great-grandfather Hezekiah, but his father Amon and his grand-father Manasseh were two of the most corrupt kings ever to occupy the throne of Judah. They had brought a period of darkness and corruption to Judah that was irreversible.

Zephaniah warned that the day of judgment on the world was coming because God's people worshiped the gods of the Canaanites, but neglected the worship of the Lord God. He spoke about the "Day of the Lord"--the day of judgment. God punishes so that his people may repent and return to him and be restored. In 1:1-2:7 he announces God's judgment, describes God's punishment of Judah and calls on Jerusalem to repent and seek righteousness and humility. In 2:8-3:7 he announces God's judgment on the nations and on Jerusalem. In 3:8-20 he promises the redemption of God's remnant.

THE DAY OF GOD'S WRATH

Zephaniah 1:1-18

Key Verse: 1:12a

1. Warning of coming destruction (1-3)

Zephaniah saw that corruption was a world-wide problem, and the coming destruction was God's judgment on all the earth.

2. The Lord has prepared a sacrifice (4-13)

God's people had turned from God to worship idols. People were complacent about this, thinking, "God will do nothing." When God's people are complacent about sin, God himself will prepare a sacrifice. This time the Lord's sacrifice would be the city of Jerusalem and all its people. In the distant future he would prepare a different kind of sacrifice--his one and only Son. Zephaniah is like a man with a lamp, searching the city for complacent people so that God may uproot and punish them.

3. The fire of his jealousy (14-18)

On the day of the Lord, God's wrath will be poured out on the whole earth. The whole world will be consumed in the fire of his jealousy. Gold and silver cannot save anyone on the day of God's wrath.

Prayer: Lord, save me from complacency. Help me to love and worship you daily.

One Word: The day of the Lord will come

SEEK THE LORD

Zephaniah 2:1-15

Key Verse: 2:3

1. Repent before the day of judgment (1-3)

The prophet warns of God's wrath and of the coming judgment so that men may repent. What is repentance? It is to seek the Lord. The Lord can only be found by those who humble themselves to obey God's commands. Let us seek the Lord (3). This is the only way to escape the day of God's wrath.

2. Every nation will worship God (4-15)

The wrath of God is not reserved for the people of Judah. God loves the whole world. So his wrath is poured out on the surrounding nations of Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Cush (Upper Nile) and on the mighty empire that was already cracking--Assyria. God will destroy the gods of every land so that the people of every nation might worship him (11). God eagerly wants all the world to fear him, love him, and worship him alone.

Prayer: Lord, give me a humble and contrite heart so that I may seek and find you. Bring the people of every nation to repentance and faith in Jesus.

One Word: Let all the world seek the Lord

MIGHTY TO SAVE

Zephaniah 3:1-20

Key Verse: 3:17

1. A righteous Lord in an unrighteous city (1-7)

Even though the Lord dispensed his justice in the city of Jerusalem morning by morning, the people were rebellious (5). They did not obey him or follow his laws because they had become proud and complacent. God punished wicked nations around them, hoping that his people would

fear him and accept correction. But still they would not repent (7). So, in his anger, he would pour out the wrath of his judgment on the whole world.

2. God who purifies and saves (8-20)

The purpose of God's discipline and judgment on the nations is to purge wickedness and save a remnant of people who love God and call on him with pure hearts and clean lips. God's people are the meek and humble people who trust the name of the Lord (12,13). God will be with them to comfort and protect. He is mighty to save those who put their trust in him (17).

Prayer: Lord, help me to be a part of your remnant. Make my heart and lips pure.

One Word: The Lord is mighty to save