

Zephaniah

MEANING: “Yahweh Hides”

AUTHOR: Zephaniah

TIME WRITTEN: Between 640 and 612 B.C.

POSITION IN THE BIBLE:

- 36th Book in the Bible
- 36th book in the Old Testament
- 14th of 17 books of Prophecy
- 9th of 12 Minor Prophet Books
- 35 have preceded it. 30 to follow it.

CHAPTERS: 3

VERSES: 53

WORDS: 1,617

KEY WORD: The Day of the Lord

TWO KEY PASSAGES:

1. **Zephaniah 1:14-15** - “The great day of the LORD is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the LORD is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out.

That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

2. **Zephaniah :2-3** - “Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth, who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the LORD'S anger.”

KEY CHAPTER: Zephaniah 3

1. The last chapter of Zephaniah records the two distinct parts of the day of the Lord:
 - a. Judgment.
 - b. Restoration.
2. Following the conversion of the nation, Israel finally is fully restored.
3. Under the righteous rule of God, Israel fully inherits the blessings contained in the Biblical covenants.

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT ZEPHANIAH:

1. Apparently, Zephaniah was born during the later part of the reign of King Manasseh.
2. If, in fact, Zephaniah was the great-great grandson of the godly king Hezekiah, he was the only prophet of royal descent.
3. During Judah's hectic political and religious history, reform comes from time to time.

- a. Zephaniah’s forceful prophecy may be a factor in the reform that occurs during Josiah’s reign—a “revival” that produces outward change, but does not fully remove the inward heart of corruption that characterizes the nation.
 - b. Zephaniah hammers home his message repeatedly that the day of the Lord, judgment day, is coming when the malignancy of sin will be dealt with.
 - c. Israel and her Gentile neighbors will soon experience the crushing hand of God’s wrath.
 - d. But after the chastening process is complete, a blessing will come in the Person of the Messiah, and that will be cause for praise and singing.
4. Zephaniah solves the problem of dating his prophecy by fixing his prophecy “in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah” (1:1)
 - a. Josiah became king of Judah at the age of eight, and by the age of sixteen his heart had begun to turn toward God.
 - b. There were two sets of reforms.
 1. The first reform took place in the 12th year of his reign (626 B.C. 2 Chronicles 34:3-7 when he:
 - a. Tore down all the altars of Baal.
 - b. Destroyed the foreign incense altars.
 - c. Burned the bones of the false prophets on their altars.
 - d. Broke the Asherim (carved images) and molten images in pieces.
 2. Six years later in 622 B.C. Josiah’s second reform was kindled when Hilkiah the priest found the book of the Law in the temple (2 Chronicles 34 - 35:19).
 - c. Thus, Zephaniah’s prophecy can be dated more precisely as occurring between 630 and 625 B.C.
 - d. The evil reigns of Manasseh and Amnon (a total of 55 years) had such a profound effect upon Judah that it never recovered.
 - e. Josiah’s reforms apparently were too little and too late, and the people reverted to their crass idolatry and teaching soon after Josiah was gone.
 5. As a contemporary of Jeremiah and Habakkuk, Zephaniah was one of the eleventh-hour prophets to Judah.
 6. The “day of the Lord.”
 - a. Zephaniah discusses the day of the Lord and describes the coming day of judgment upon Judah and the nations.
 - b. God is holy and must vindicate his righteousness by calling all the nations of the world into account before Him.
 - c. The sovereign God will judge not only his own people but also the whole world: no one escapes from His authority and dominion.
 - d. The day of the Lord will have universal impact.

- e. To some degree that day has already come for Judah and all the nations mentioned in 2:14-15, but there is a future aspect, when all the earth will be judged.
7. Zephaniah is also written as a warning to Judah as well as a call for repentance (2:1-3).
- a. God wants to spare the people, but they ultimately reject Him.
 - b. His judgment will be great; but God promises His people a future day of hope and joy.
 - c. Wrath and mercy, severity and kindness, cannot be separate in the character of God.

SUMMARY OF ZEPHANIAH

INTRODUCTION:

- A. On the whole, Zephaniah is a fierce and grim book of warning about the coming day of the Lord.
 - 1. Desolation, darkness, and ruin will strike Judah and the nations because of the wrath of God upon sin.
 - 2. Zephaniah looks beyond judgment to a better time.
- B. The book begins with God's declaration, "I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land: (1:2): but it ends with this promise, "At that time I will bring you back" and "return your captives before your eyes" (3:20).
- C. There are two major divisions in the book:
 - 1. The Judgment in the Day of the Lord. (1:1 - 3:8)
 - 2. The Salvation in the Day of the lord. (3:9-20)

THE JUDGMENT IN THE DAY OF THE LORD. (1:1 - 3:8)

- A. The prophetic oracle begins with an awesome statement of God's coming judgment upon the entire earth because of the sins of men (1:2-3).
- B. After that beginning statement, Zephaniah then concentrates on the judgement of Judah (1:4-18), listing some of the offenses that will cause it to come.
 - 1. Judah is polluted with idolatrous priests who promote the worship of Baal and nature, and her officials are completely corrupt.
 - 2. Therefore, the day of the Lord is imminent, and it will be characterized by:
 - a. Terror
 - b. Desolation
 - c. Distress
 - 3. However, by His grace, God appeals to His people to repent and humble themselves to avert the coming disaster before it is too late (2:1-3)

C. Zephaniah pronounces God's coming judgment upon the nations that surround Judah (2:4-15)

1. He looks in all four directions:
 - a. To the west: Philistia
 - b. To the east: Moab and Ammon
 - c. To the south: Ethiopia
 - d. To the north: Assyria
2. Then he focuses on Jerusalem, the center of God's dealings (3:1-7)
 - a. Two things characterized Jerusalem:
 1. Spiritual rebellion
 2. Moral treachery
 - b. **Zephaniah 3:2** - "She has not obeyed His voice, she has not received correction; she has not trusted in the Lord, she has not drawn near to her God."

THE SALVATION IN THE DAY OF THE LORD. (3:9-20)

A. After a broad statement of the judgment of all nation in 3:8, Zephaniah changes the tone of the remainder of his book to blessing: for this, too, is an aspect of the day of the Lord.

1. The nation will be cleansed and will call on the name of the Lord. (3:9-10)
2. The remnant of Israel will be re-gathered, redeemed, and restored (3:11-20).
3. They will rejoice in their Redeemer, and He will be in their midst.

B. Zephaniah:

1. Opens with . . .
 - a. Idolatry
 - b. Wrath
 - c. Judgment
2. But closes with . . .
 - a. True worship
 - b. Rejoicing,
 - c. Blessing.