

Snapshot of Zephaniah

The Prophet:

The name Zephaniah means “Jehovah hides” or “he whom Jehovah has hidden.”

All that we know of him is contained in the book which bears his name.

His stated ancestry lists the name of Hezekiah, probably the former king of Judah.

The Date:

Zephaniah’s ministry was carried out during the reign of Josiah (640-609 BC). The prophecy was likely given during the period just prior to the reforms begun by Josiah in 621 BC.

The Message:

The book has judgment as its theme. It looks to the coming of the “day of the Lord.” The Babylonians would strike soon.

Zephaniah not only foretells the judgment of his own people but also speaks of the fate of the surrounding nations.

A promise of mercy and restoration is presented.

The Book:

The first section of the book (1:1-2:3) announces a universal and consuming judgment against the earth.

The second section (2:4-3:8) makes it clear that no nation would escape judgment in the day of the Lord.

The third section (3:9-20) presents the glory which the penitent and purified people would receive after the judgment.

Outline of Zephaniah

- I. The Day of the Lord (1:1-2:3)
 - A. Superscription (1:1)
 - B. God's righteous judgment upon the world (1:2-6)
 - 1. Upon the entire earth (1:2-3)
 - 2. Upon Judah and Jerusalem in particular (1:4-6)
 - C. Sinners of every rank to be judged (1:7-13)
 - D. The day of the Lord is near (1:14-18)
 - 1. A terrible time of wrath (1:14-17)
 - 2. No escape by carnal means (1:18)
 - E. An appeal for men to seek deliverance from God (2:1-3)
- II. The Judgment of the Nations (2:4-3:8)
 - A. Judgment against all nations (2:4-15)
 - 1. Small nations nearby (2:4-11)
 - 2. Great nations afar off (2:12-15)
 - B. If the heathen are punished, Judah cannot escape either (3:1-8)
 - 1. Woe to the polluted city of Jerusalem (3:1-7)
 - 2. Its rejection of God demanded punishment (3:8)
- III. Salvation For the Remnant (3:9-20)
 - A. A righteous remnant to be gathered from among the heathen (3:9-10)
 - B. The remnant to be cleansed and sanctified (3:11-13)
 - C. Israel exalted before all (3:14-20)

Lessons for Today:

- 1. All men and nations are within the power of God and are accountable to him.
- 2. The day of the Lord was that day on which a nation received its just due for sin. The times in history foreshadow the ultimate day of the Lord when all men will be judged before the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 17:30-31).
- 3. The day of the Lord was not only a day of wrath for sinners but also of salvation for the righteous.