

Zephaniah Chapter 1

Introduction:

Authorship: Zephaniah - "Protected by the LORD" - "Concealed of God" - "Treasured of Jehovah"

- He is a son of "Cushi" and he prophesied in the days of Josiah. A descendant of King Hezekiah, (great, great grandson) of royal lineage, kin to King Josiah during who's reign he prophesied. Born during king Manasseh's reign.
- The detailed genealogy is unique for a prophet, but possibly intended to distinguish him from other Zephaniah's listed in the Bible.

Written to: Southern Kingdom of Judah.

Time: during the reign of Josiah: 639-608 BC.

- Last of the pre-exilic prophets.

Theme: "The day of the Lord" - Impending day of wrath, a call to repentance.

Key verse: **Zephaniah 1:14** "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."

V: 1 The Word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah - great great grandson of Hezekiah, during the reign of Josiah.

Jeremiah 1:1-2 "1The word of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests... 2to whom the word of the LORD came in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, in the thirteenth year of his reign."

- Zephaniah and Jeremiah were contemporaries, both ministering up to the end.
- Jeremiah was the weeping prophet, he grieved and mourned over the people as he warned them of the judgment to come - he was brutally honest and sincerely grieved.
- Zephaniah was brutally honest, hard hitting, and direct - almost like good cop, bad cop.
- Jeremiah was part of the priesthood, Zephaniah was part of the aristocracy. Jeremiah was jailed for a time, we don't know what happened to Zephaniah.

- Josiah's reforms were sparked by the re-discovery of God's Word during the repairs to the Temple. On Josiah's part, the reforms were heartfelt and sincere, but sadly on the people's part they were mostly superficial, a fad, and not a real heart felt change.
- As a result when Josiah died, the people went right back to their pagan ways.

V: 2 God is going to utterly wipe them out:

2 Kings 22:16-17 “¹⁶Thus says the LORD: behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants - all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read - ¹⁷because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched.”

Micah 7:13 “Yet the land shall be desolate because of those who dwell in it, and for the fruit of their deeds.”

V: 3 This describes a dual judgment. Certainly this is describing a terrible time of judgment against Judah for their idolatry and so forth, but it also extends beyond Judah to seemingly the whole earth during the Great Tribulation that will follow the rapture of the church.

- During the great tribulation of the end times, there are specific judgments against the seas, 1/3 of the fish are killed along with the other cataclysmic events.

Hosea 4:3 “Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away with the beasts of the field and the birds of the air; even the fish of the sea will be taken away.”

- Along with all of that He makes it a point to say that He will also destroy the “stumbling blocks” along with the wicked. The “stumbling blocks” are a reference to what caused them to stumble - their idols.

Ezekiel 44:12 “Because they ministered to them before their idols and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity, therefore I have raised My hand in an oath against them, says the Lord GOD, that they shall bear their iniquity.”

V: 4 This moves from a universal, world wide judgment back to a specific judgment, back to Judah and Jerusalem.

- This prophecy would be fulfilled within 25 years of it being spoken by the prophet.
- Zephaniah along with Jeremiah are the last of the “pre-exilic prophets” - meaning prior to their exile into captivity. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are considered

“post-exilic” prophets because they prophesy after the conquest, captivity, and exile of the nation under Babylon.

- He’s going to cut off, stamp out every vestige of Baal from this place.
- Baal = god of intellectual prowess, Canaanite god of fertility, in people and lands, sun, wind, rain.
- “**idolatrous priests**” - “Chemarim” - Hebrew - “black robed priests.”
- Many religions have their priests wear black robes - in those days the pagan priests of Baal wore black robes...
- “**pagan priests**” (NKJV) in the KJV is simply says “**priests.**”
- “**Priest**” (H-3548) “ko-han-im” (Kohen) - Levitical priests.
- The word “pagan” is in italics and was added to the NKJV as a form of commentary that these were not good / normal priests.
- These were paganized priests who worshipped Baal and also outwardly worshipped the True and Living God - but not in sincerity.
- These “**priests**” speak falsely concerning God. They are using their office for their own gain. They have forsaken the law of God, so God’s going to cut off both the idolatrous priests, as well as those priests that stood in the temple of God, but were no longer representatives of God. If there were pagan priests back then, you can bet there are “pagan pastors” in our midst today who’s fate will be the same, God will deal with them.

Jeremiah 2:8 “The **priests** did not say, “where is the LORD?” And those who handle the law did not know Me; the rulers also transgressed against Me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.”

Jeremiah 23:11 “For both prophet and priest are profane; yes, in My house I have found their wickedness, says the LORD.”

Jeremiah 14:15 “Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the prophets who prophesy in My name, whom I did not send, and who say, “sword and famine shall not be in this land” - by sword and famine those prophets shall be consumed!”

V: 5-6 These “priests” were lying on their housetops worshipping the host of heaven and at the same time swearing oaths by the LORD, and “Milcom” at the same time.

- Astrology, the worship of the sun, moon, stars, and planets goes back to Babylon - which is coming to them sooner than they think.
- “Milcom” (Molech) being one of the Ammonite gods.
- Molech = (Milcom) god of pleasure. Torso of a man with the head of an ox.
 - ❖ Large bronze statues hollowed out, with a fire built on the inside. Babies placed in outstretched arms were burned / fried to death in sacrifice.
- They’ve turned away in their hearts from following after the LORD, not having sought after nor inquired of Him.
- King Josiah stopped these things, but after his death the priests and people started them up again.

2 Kings 23:12 “The altars that were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down and pulverized there, and threw their dust into the brook Kidron.”

Ezekiel 8:16-18 “¹⁶So He brought me into the inner court of the LORD’s house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshiping the sun toward the east. ¹⁷And He said to me, “Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. ¹⁸Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them.”

V: 7 It’s time to be quiet.

Ecclesiastes 3:1, 7b “¹To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: - ⁷... a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;”

- Right now it’s time to be quiet.

Ecclesiastes 5:2 “Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.”

- Ominously, judgment day has arrived.

Isaiah 13:6 “Wail, for the day of the LORD is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”

Jeremiah 46:10 “For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that He may avenge Himself on His adversaries. The sword shall devour; it shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood; for the Lord GOD of hosts has a sacrifice in the north country by the River Euphrates.”

- He’s prepared a sacrifice and invited His guests...

Revelation 19:17-18 “¹⁷Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, “come and gather together for the supper of the great God, ¹⁸that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.”

V: 8 God is going to deal with the leadership of the nation because amongst other things they wore the apparel of the nations around them, they adopted the manners and customs of the pagan nations around them. Who influenced who?

- God’s people then, and God’s people now are admonished:

2 Corinthians 6:17 “Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.”

V: 9 Those that “leap over the threshold” - is a reference to those who commit burglary, that break into another’s house, leaping over the threshold.

- The other prophets have amply described the various reasons why judgment would come upon Judah - idolatry being just one reason, another is blood shed, along with covetousness, taking what is not theirs.

Proverbs 1:10-13 “¹⁰My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. ¹¹If they say, come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; ¹²let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down to the Pit; ¹³we shall find all kinds of precious possessions, we shall fill our houses with spoil.”

- God says don’t do that. They did it, and now it’s time to pay.

V: 10-11 The fish gate, the market place, place of business and commerce. Maktesh, the market place.

- The fish gate was on the Northern side of the city - which is where the Babylonians first broke into the city - they were the first to fall victim, the first to wail and cry.

Revelation 18:11 “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore.”

V: 12-13 The Lord will search through the city, carefully, with lamps - looking into all the dark corners, into all the hiding places, He will search it out - there will be no place to hide.

- There were those who were settled in their complacency - settled in their “lees” - they were relaxing, living a care free life while those around them were suffering, indifferent to those around them - God will see to it that they are “engaged.”
- They are not taking God into consideration, “it doesn’t matter what He says one way or the other” is their attitude - which is a grave mistake to any people.

Proverbs 1:25-26 “²⁵Because you disdained all My counsel, and would have none of My rebuke, ²⁶I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes.”

- All their houses, goods, and whatever they have will be booty for the enemy.

Amos 6:1 “Woe to you who are at ease in Zion...”

V: 14-16 The great day of the LORD is near - they are warned!

Joel 2:1-3 “¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand. ²A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them, even for many successive generations. ³A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns; the land is like the Garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; surely nothing shall escape them.”

V: 17 Distress seems to be an insufficient term...

They were warned:

Deuteronomy 28:15, 28-29 “¹⁵But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:” - “²⁸The LORD will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. ²⁹And you shall grope at noon-day, as a blind man

gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.”

Psalm 79:3 “Their blood they have shed like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them.”

V: 18 Whatever money or wealth they may have will not be of use to them.

Psalm 49:6-7 “⁶Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, ⁷none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.”

Matthew 16:26 “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

Proverbs 11:4 “Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”

2 Corinthians 6:2 “... in an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you. Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”