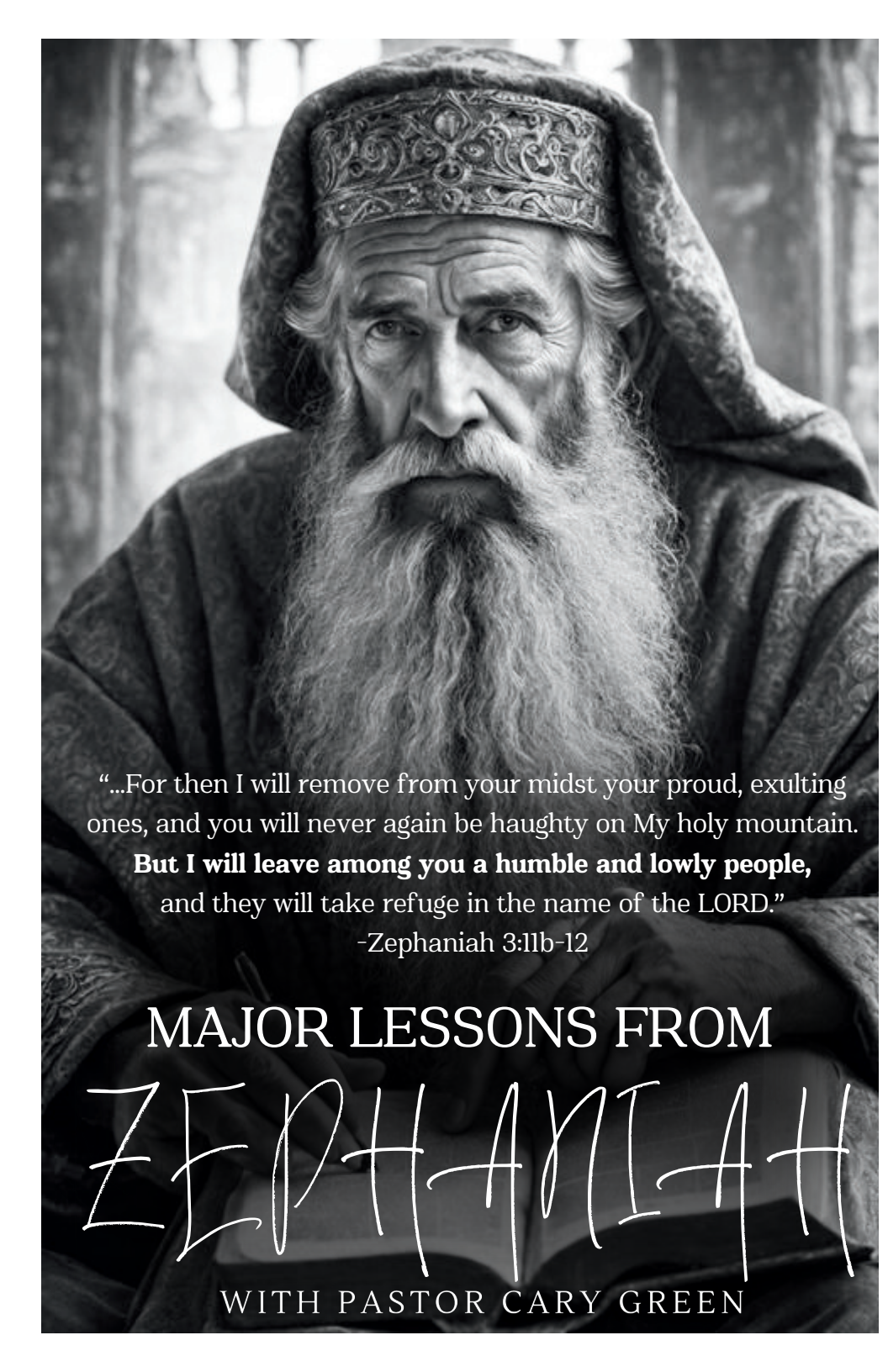


MAJOR LESSONS FROM

ZEPHANIAH

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“...For then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.

But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people,
and they will take refuge in the name of the LORD.”

-Zephaniah 3:11b-12

MAJOR LESSONS FROM

ZEPHANIAH

WITH PASTOR CARY GREEN

TITLE:

As with each of the twelve Minor Prophets, the prophecy bears the name of its author, Zephaniah.

AUTHOR AND DATE:

Little is known about Zephaniah.

Three other Old Testament individuals share his name.

He traces his genealogy back four generations to King Hezekiah (ca. 715–686 BC), making him the only prophet who descended from _____ blood (1:1).

His royal genealogy would have given him the ear of Judah's king, Josiah, during whose reign he preached (1:1).

It seems very likely that Zephaniah was either a native or a long-time resident of _____ as he wrote of it as "*this place*" (1:4) and refers to locations such as "*the Fish Gate*" and "*the Second Quarter*" as well as "*the hills*" and "*the Mortar*" (1:10-11).

The prophet himself dates his message during the reign of _____ (640–609 BC).

The moral and spiritual conditions detailed in the book (cf. 1:4–6; 3:1–7) seem to place the prophecy _____ to Josiah's reforms, while Judah was still languishing in idolatry and wickedness.

In 628 BC, Josiah tore down the altars to Baal, burned the bones of false prophets, and smashed the idols (2 Chron. 34:3–7).

In 622 BC, he ordered the temple to be repaired, and in the course of that work, the Book of the Law was found (2 Chron. 34:8–18) and read to the king.

King Josiah took the words of the Law very seriously, and his reforms had such an impact on the land of Judah that we read, *“Throughout his lifetime they did not turn from following the Lord God of their fathers”* (2 Chron. 34:33b).

Consequently, in light of the degree of moral decay Zephaniah addresses, he most likely prophesied from 635–625 BC, _____ and concurrent with Josiah’s initial purges of the land, making Zephaniah a contemporary of Jeremiah.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

Zephaniah prophesied during a time of almost universal upheaval.

The imminent transfer of Assyrian world power to the _____ had weakened Nineveh’s hold on Judah, bringing an element of independence to Judah for the first time in fifty years.

King Josiah’s desire to retain this newfound freedom from taxation and subservience undoubtedly led him, much later in life, to interfere with Egypt’s attempt to interdict the fleeing king of Nineveh in 609 BC (*cf.* 2 Chr. 35:20–27).

The previous reigns of Josiah’s wicked grandfather Manasseh (who was good King Hezekiah’s son) (*ca.* 695–642 BC), extending over four decades, and Josiah’s father _____ (*ca.* 642–640 BC), lasting only two years, were marked by wickedness and spiritual rebellion (2 Kings 21; 2 Chron. 33).

The early years of Josiah’s reign were also characterized by the evil remaining from his fathers (2 Kings 23:4–14), though Josiah himself, *“while he was still a youth... began to seek the God of his father David”* (2 Chron. 34:3).

It was during those early years that this eleventh-hour prophet, Zephaniah, prophesied –no doubt influencing the sweeping _____ Josiah brought to the nation. Sadly, the effects of half a century of evil leadership left a nation steeped in sin, and King Josiah’s reforms resulted in little more than surface changes.

Josiah’s reforms were too late and didn’t outlast his life; however, his _____ was in the right place, and he received the honor of going down in Scripture with the following high tribute:

2 Kings 23:25

Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; **nor did any like him arise after him.**

KEY WORDS IN ZEPHANIAH:

_____ : Hebrew *anavah* (עֲנָוָה)–2:3–may be translated as *humble* (Psa. 34:2) or *meek* (Psa. 37:11, ESV) and is derived from a verb meaning “to be afflicted” or “to be bowed down” (Psa. 116:10). Forms of this word occur twice in 2:3, first translated as *humble* and then as *humility*. The word frequently refers to the poor or oppressed (Prov. 14:21; Amos 2:7). But it also signifies strength of character in enduring suffering without _____ (Num. 12:3; Zeph. 3:12). Such character is rooted in a strong faith in God and His goodness and a steadfast submission to the will of God.

KEY NAMES IN ZEPHANIAH:

Zephaniah–generally thought to mean “Yahweh hides” or “Yahweh has hidden” (*cf.* 2:3). Since Zephaniah was evidently born during the latter part of the reign of King _____, his name may mean that he was “hidden by Yahweh” from the king’s atrocities.

The people of Judah–led by King Josiah to repent, but they were eventually led into the Babylonian captivity.

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES:

Zephaniah's forceful prophecy was most likely a _____ factor to the reform which occurred during Josiah's reign.

Though the wave of outward change could not remove the corruption which characterized the nation as a whole, Zephaniah's message undoubtedly changed individual lives, like King Josiah's.

Zephaniah repeatedly hammers home his message that the Day of the Lord, _____, is coming, and the malignancy of sin will be dealt with.

Judah and her Gentile neighbors will soon experience the crushing hand of God's wrath.

But after the chastening process is complete, blessing will come in the Messiah, Who will be the cause for praise and singing.

Zephaniah's message about the Day of the Lord warned Judah that divine judgment at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar was very _____, ca. 605-586 BC (1:4-18).

Yet, Zephaniah's prophecies also look beyond their immediate future to a far fulfillment in the judgments of Daniel's Seventieth Week (1:18; 3:8).

Zephaniah describes the Day of the Lord as near and coming very quickly (1:7), and as a day of wrath, trouble, distress, destruction, desolation, darkness, gloom, clouds, thick darkness (1:15), of trumpet and battle cry (1:16), of distress and bloodshed (1:17), and of terror (1:18).

Yet even within these oracles of divine wrath, the prophet exhorted the people to seek the Lord, offering a shelter in the midst of judgment (2:3), promising the restoration of their God-given land boundaries (2:7), and proclaiming the promise of eventual _____ for Judah's believing remnant (3:9-20).

KEY DOCTRINES IN ZEPHANIAH:

The Day of the Lord—(1:7, 14-16, 18; 3:8; *cf.* Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18-20; Obad. 1:15; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5)

God's _____ in the midst of judgment—(2:3; 3:12-20; *cf.* Isa. 26:20; Joel 2:14; Amos 5:14, 15; Zech. 12:10; Rom. 5:21)

_____ for the believing remnant—(3:9-20; *cf.* Isa. 35:4; 45:17; Jer. 29:14; Mic. 5:4-5; Zech. 9:16; John 3:16; Luke 1:68; Acts 5:31; Rom. 11:26)

GOD'S CHARACTER IN ZEPHANIAH:

God is judging—1:2-3; 2:2; 3:6, 7

God is _____—1:14-18

God is righteous—3:5

God is just—3:5

God is _____—3:17

God is victorious—3:17

God is joyful—3:17

God is loving—3:17

God is _____—3:19

CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIBLE:

Both _____ and Zephaniah deal almost exclusively with the concept of the coming Day of the Lord.

Using different expressions, Zephaniah refers to it _____ times in only three chapters.

Zephaniah teaches that the Day of the Lord:

- will fall upon all creation (1:2-3)
- is imminent (1:14)
- is a day of terror and judgment upon sin (1:15-17)
- will fall upon the nations of the world (2:4-15; 3:8)
- will involve a returning remnant (3:9-13)
- will bring great blessing to God's people (3:14-20).

CHRIST IN ZEPHANIAH:

Jesus Himself alluded to Zephaniah on two different occasions:

- in Matthew 13:41, referring to Zephaniah 1:3, and
- in Matthew 24:29, referring to Zephaniah 1:15.

Both of these passages about the Day of the Lord are associated with Christ's _____ Coming.

Although the Messiah is not mentioned by name in Zephaniah, He is portrayed as the loving King and victorious _____ (Zeph. 3:15-17).

ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS:

Question #1—How much validity can be given to the interpretation of 3:9 (NKJV), “*I will restore to the peoples a pure language,*” as a prophetic anticipation of God’s restoration of a _____ language?

Although some have taken this phrase to refer to an undoing of God’s decision to confuse the languages at the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9), it is _____ that Zephaniah had in mind a single world language.

Although it is true that the word *language* (NKJV)/*speech* (ESV)/*lips* (NASB) is identical to the one used in Genesis, the overall context indicates that Zephaniah had in mind a purification of heart and life (Zeph. 3:9-13).

Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for *language* is most often translated “*lip,*” and when combined with “*pure*” refers to a cleansing from sin (Isa. 6:5) in one’s speech (Mat. 12:33-37), including the removal of the names of false gods from their vocabulary (Hos. 2:17).

OUTLINE:

I. **Superscription (1:1)**

II. **The Lord's _____ (1:2-3:8)**

A. *On the Whole Earth (1:2-3)*

B. *On Judah (1:4-2:3)*

C. *On the Surrounding Nations (2:4-15)*

1. *Philistia (2:4-7)*

2. *Moab/Ammon (2:8-11)*

3. *Ethiopia (2:12)*

4. *Assyria (2:13-15)*

D. *On Jerusalem (3:1-7)*

E. *On All Nations (3:8)*

III. **The Lord's _____ (3:9-20)**

A. *For the Nations (3:9-10)*

B. *For Judah (3:11-20)*

THE MEAT OF THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah introduces himself as *“the son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah”* (1:1).

This is the _____ genealogy we have for any of the Biblical prophets; it tells us that as the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah, Zephaniah may have been the only prophet with royal blood in his veins.

Zephaniah prophesied *“in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah”* (1:1), who was also descended from Hezekiah and who reigned from 640 to 609 BC.

Josiah replaced his evil father Amon, whose two-year reign was riddled with immorality and corruption, and who was assassinated in a palace coup.

In complete contrast, Josiah, who became king when he was _____ years old and began to rule actively ten years later, *“...did **right in the sight of the Lord** and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left”* (2 Kings 22:2).

Josiah may have been something of a figurehead in his pre-teen years, but by the time he took over the levers of power, he was truly _____ to God (2 Chron. 34:3).

He destroyed the centers of idolatry, reformed temple worship, restored the Passover feast, and worked tirelessly to clean up the polluted legacy his father and grandfather had bequeathed to him.

However, these reforms had yet to take place when Zephaniah was called to the prophetic ministry, at which time the nation had been in a moral and spiritual tailspin for about _____ years.

Judah & Surrounding Nations at the Time of Zephaniah



Things were in such a sad state that he could say the following to Jerusalem:
“Woe to her who is **rebellious** and **defiled**, the **tyrannical** city!” (3:1)

He also pinpointed the fundamental reason for her ruin:

“She **heeded no voice**, she **accepted no instruction**.

She **did not trust** in the Lord, she **did not draw near** to her God” (3:2).

Chapter 2 pronounces God’s fearful judgment on the pagan nations that surrounded Judah.

These were _____ (including its city-states of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Gath, and Ekron) to the west, Moab and Ammon to the east, Ethiopia (the Cushites) to the south, and _____ (including its capital city of Nineveh) to the north.

The language Zephaniah uses against these nations is downright terrifying.

Gaza would become “*abandoned*” and Ashkelon “*a desolation*”; Ashdod’s population would be “*driven out*”; the lands of the Cherethites would be destroyed “*so that there will be no inhabitant*” (2:4-5); Moab and Ammon would be “*possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation*” (2:9); and Assyria would become “*a desolation, parched like the wilderness*” (2:13).

Militant critics of the Bible use such passages to justify their attacks on God’s character.

Quote:

“The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: . . . a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser . . . a capriciously malevolent bully.”

–The God Delusion by Richard Dawkins

BUT those familiar with the Bible understand that this is merely his own distorted caricature of God.

Dawkins, like many others, overlooks the fact that the nations against which God executed such severe judgment were _____ righteous, morally respectable people who had done nothing to deserve any kind of punishment.

On the contrary, they were pagan idolaters, sworn _____ of God and of His people, whose daily life was steeped in violence against the helpless (including children), greed, injustice, and rank immorality.

How **could** a holy God of perfect justice _____ this?

The Bible teaches, "*God is a righteous Judge, and a God Who has indignation every day*" (Psa. 7:11).

His holiness inevitably results in His anger at sin of any kind—a principle consistently borne out throughout Scripture.

And while Zephaniah's prophecies against the heathen are terrifying, God also has searing words to say to _____.

He begins by targeting the religious leaders, singling out the "*idolatrous priests*" (1:4) and those who "*bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom*" (1:5).

Milcom was a pagan god described elsewhere in the Bible as "*the detestable idol of the Ammonites*" (1 Kings 11:5), yet Israelite priests in Jerusalem were swearing by him, while still claiming to worship the true God.

Next came the _____ community, whose members would soon "*cry*" and "*wail*" and be "*cut off*" (1:10-11).

Zephaniah does not specify their sins, but we know from his contemporary, _____, that greed and corruption were rife in their ranks.

The general state of the nation was such that God warned, "*So I will stretch out My hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem*" (1:4).

This stark warning should have gotten Judah's urgent attention, but apparently it didn't.

God had graciously sent Judah one warning after another, but since those previous prophecies had not yet come to pass, the people thought Zephaniah's prophecy was just one more scare story.

They supposed life would go on as _____, and God wouldn't do anything.

They were very, very wrong.

Little did they know that Zephaniah would be the last of the prophets sent to warn them.

And God would ensure that those who, in their breathtaking arrogance, made the catastrophic mistake of treating the Lord and His Word _____, would be sought out and punished.

Listen to the words of the Almighty:

*"It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and **I will punish** the men who are **stagnant in spirit**, who say in their hearts, '**The Lord will not do good or evil!**'"* (Zeph. 1:12)

The ungodly often take Judah's approach.

One of the psalmists speaks of such a person:

*"He says to himself, 'God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; **He will never see it!**'"* (Psa. 10:11).

Such people are oblivious to the fact that

*"...there is **no creature hidden** from His sight, but **all things are open and laid bare** to the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do"* (Heb. 4:13).

The Day of the Lord WILL come!

Many of the prophets wrote about *"the Day of the Lord,"* using that term to refer to what one commentator called *"a complex interweaving of momentous events"* (Gareth Crossley), each one marking God's dramatic intervention in human history.

These events included:

- God's impending punishment for sin (_____ to Babylon),
- the return of God's people to their homeland after 70 years of captivity,
- the First Coming of Messiah in the Gospels of the New Testament,
- and His Second Coming to usher in the final day of judgment in the book of Revelation.

No Minor Prophet emphasizes *"the Day of the Lord"* more than Zephaniah, who mentions it one way or another no fewer than _____ times, including this statement which we will take as our "major point":

"Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly" (Zeph. 1:14).

In its immediate sense, this prophecy was fulfilled shortly afterwards when the Babylonians ransacked Jerusalem and swept thousands of people off to captivity.

Its more _____ fulfillment relates to the Second Coming of Christ, which will lead to a day of final judgment, when all of humanity will stand before its Maker and hear its eternal destiny declared.

This is what Zephaniah has in mind in the longest section of his prophecy, in which he warns of the terrible but righteous judgment that God will execute upon the _____.

Skeptics try to shrug off the whole idea that they are accountable to their Maker, but one wonders whether they are ever entirely successful, as the idea of justice seems to be built right into our moral DNA.

Quote:

"The whole of recorded history is one great longing for justice"

-Rousas John Rushdoony

There is a universal instinct that people should get what they _____; good should be rewarded, and evil should be punished.

This points to the world being a moral creation and at least hints at the certainty of its coming to a moral _____.

God's interventions, both to reward and to punish, point to Him as a God of ultimate justice.

There are four words about the final day of reckoning which will help us to get a clearer picture of what the Bible actually teaches (And if you're at all familiar with my favorite little Gospel presentation—*Ultimate Questions* by John Blanchard, then you will recognize these four words).

The Day of the Lord/Judgment Day

1. It's _____

The writer of Hebrews says that belief in "*the **resurrection** of the dead, and eternal **judgment***" (Heb. 6:2) is foundational Biblical truth.

Nothing is more clearly taught in the Bible than the fact that there will be a final judgment of all mankind on what Zephaniah calls "*the great Day of the Lord.*"

_____ times in the first four verses of his book Zephaniah records God emphasizing the certainty of His judgment with the words "*I will.*"

Moving to the New Testament, two-thirds of the parables Jesus told were related to the coming Judgment Day.

And the Apostle Paul told Greek philosophers in Athens, "*...He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness*" (Acts 17:31).

The word "*fixed*" comes from a Greek verb meaning "to single out."

In other words, with all of future time at His finger tips, God has settled on a precise moment when He will call EVERYONE into judgment. Nobody on earth knows when that will be, but it is firmly fixed in God's calendar, and nothing can move it.

The day of final judgment will not be when God's final verdicts are *decided*, BUT RATHER when they will be _____.

The Apostle Paul goes on to warn evildoers, *"Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"* (Rom. 2:4-5).

This fits in perfectly with what Zephaniah tells the people of Judah.

They had played fast and loose with all the warnings the earlier _____ had given, BUT they were only making things worse for themselves, and the day would come when their evil behavior would be exposed.

The Minor Prophets want us to realize that God is a God of _____, and that our eternal destiny is at stake.

When the prophets write about the _____ of God's people, about the yoke of the enemy being broken, about restoration and salvation for God's people—they are referring not only to immediate and intermediate events, BUT also to those events that will take place at the end of time, when God's elect will spend eternity in the *"new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells"* (2 Pet. 3:13).

When the prophets write about God's enemies being captured, _____, and destroyed—they are again referring not only to immediate and intermediate events, but about what will ultimately take place when the ungodly will *"go away into eternal punishment"* (Mat. 25:46).

Malachi writes that on the day of final judgment "...you will again distinguish between the **righteous** and the **wicked**, between one who **serves God** and one who **does not serve Him**" (Mal. 3:18).

FOR NOW, men foolishly debate whether or not those who seek to obey God are better off than those who live for themselves.

HOWEVER, on Judgment Day that debate will die an _____ death.

Nobody who reads Zephaniah seriously can ever come to the conclusion that "*the great day of the Lord*" can be brushed aside.

It IS coming. It is **factual**.

2. It's _____

Quote:

"I'm not afraid of dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens."
- Woody Allen

Countless people with no faith in God claim to have no fear of death, BUT they ignore the fact that although death is certain, it does **not** mean the end of one's _____.

As the Bible makes clear, "...it is appointed for men to die once and **after this comes judgment**" (Heb. 9:27).

Death marks the end of temporal existence here on earth, but the beginning of eternal existence beyond the grave.

To have no fear of death is irrelevant, as it is only the first of _____ appointments we must ALL face—the second being final judgment at God's hands.

When we consider the _____ of God, His perfect and complete knowledge of every thought, every word, and every action of every human being who has ever lived, His righteous anger against sin, and His perfect justice—it is easy to see why the Bible says that, “It is a **terrifying** thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

Lawbreakers can go through life cleverly avoiding many of the consequences they deserve—BUT _____ puts a final STOP to all the running, hiding, and excuse making.

Quote:

*“We often escape from men; we **cannot escape** the judgment of God.”*

– John Calvin

Some people give occasional thought to the final day of judgment, but think of it as rather like going through security at an airport, hoping not to be stopped or questioned very closely.

BUT the Minor Prophets present a much different picture of what to expect on that day.

For those who did not get right with God while living on earth, Zephaniah said it will be “*A day of wrath... a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness*” (1:15).

Quote:

*“Those who will not deliver themselves **into the hand of God’s mercy** cannot be delivered **out of the hand of His** _____.”* – Matthew Henry

Those poor wretched souls will hear the dreadful words, “*Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Mat. 25:41b). The Bible’s most common word for that fire is “_____.”

To believe in Heaven but not in Hell is to claim that there were times when Jesus was telling truth and times when He was lying.

It has been calculated that of 1,870 verses recording words spoken by Jesus, _____ are about judgment and Hell.

SO, how does God describe Hell?

The Bible gives us a number of telling images describing what one author has called "*the ultimate horror of God's universe.*"

- **First, it's a _____.**

When Jesus warned hypocrites that they would be "*sentenced to Hell*" (Mat. 23:33) the word He used was *Gehenna*.

This was based on the Greek word *Ge Hinnom*, a place just outside of Jerusalem into which all the city's _____ was dumped, along with the bodies of dead animals and the corpses of criminals.

This was then left to rot or to be destroyed by the fire that was always burning there.

Jesus used the word *Gehenna* a further ten times, as if to underline the gruesome truth that those who reject God will ultimately be rejected and cast out by God.

- **Second, it's a _____.**

Jesus urged people to get right with God while they still had an opportunity to do so.

He said that doing this would be like settling a lawsuit out of court rather than letting the accuser "... *drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer **throw you into prison***" (Luke 12:58b).

There will be no _____, no pleasures, no friendships, no rest, and no recreation in Hell. Its inmates are in *"the pit of destruction"* (Psa. 55:23).

In earthly prisons, only the _____ is confined; the spirit is free to create, imagine, anticipate, hope, and even worship—BUT in Hell both *"soul and body"* (Mat. 10:28) are imprisoned.

- **Third, it's a place of utter _____.**

Jesus said that the ungodly will be *"thrown into the outer darkness"* (Mat. 8:12), and the Apostle Peter calls it *"pits of darkness"* (2 Peter 2:4).

Zephaniah prophesies that *"the great Day of the Lord"* will be *"a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness"* (1:15) for God's enemies.

The darkness of Hell will be infinitely worse than any physical, mental, or spiritual darkness ever experienced on earth.

- **Fourth, it's a place of _____.**

The Bible uses fire as a picture of Hell over twenty times.

One of the Minor Prophets wrote of God's anger at sin being *"poured out like fire"* (Nah. 1:6), and in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned that the ungodly were *"guilty enough to go into the fiery Hell"* (Mat. 5:22b).

The image of Hell as a place of fire is terrifying, and when we grasp what it means, it becomes even worse.

People tend to think of Hell in terms of being _____ from God for ever, but the Bible does not say this. Instead, it teaches that the ungodly will spend eternity *in the presence of God*, Who is described in the Bible as *"a consuming fire"* (Heb. 12:29).

The Bible makes it clear that in eternity those who reject God will “*be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and **in the presence of the Lamb***” (Rev. 14:10).

“*The Lamb*” is a Biblical title for the Lord Jesus Christ, into Whose hands the judgment of all mankind has been committed.

The ungodly will be inescapably faced with the *glory, majesty, and holiness* of the Lamb of God, Whose sacrifice they _____.

They will know nothing of His *grace, love, mercy, kindness, patience, or forgiveness* which had once been offered them, but they will be relentlessly exposed to the awesome fire of His righteous and unrestricted anger.

For those who reject God there remains nothing but “*a terrifying expectation of judgment*” (Heb. 10:27).

The Day of the Lord IS coming. It is **factual**, and it is **fearful**.

3. It's _____

No doubt you've been asked, “How can a God of love send anybody to Hell?” BUT this question misses two critically important points.

The **first** is that God is NOT ONLY a God of love, BUT He is also a God of _____ and holiness Who utterly hates sin.

The Bible says more about God's anger than it does about His love, and we dare not ignore one and concentrate on the other.

The fact that God condemns _____ **sinner**s to Hell leaves no stain on His character. He is “*the righteous Judge*” (2 Tim. 4:8) and takes no vindictive pleasure in doing so.

When the Judge of the universe sentences sinners to eternal punishment, He is not acting out of spite or retaliation; He is acting out of holy justice.

The **second** point is that those who despise God's authority and reject God's patience and love are designing their _____ appalling destiny.

Quote:

"Nobody stands under the wrath of God save those who have chosen to do so. The essence of God's action in wrath is to give men what they choose, in all its implications; nothing more, and equally nothing _____." –J.I Packer

Jesus described himself as *"the Light of the world"* (John 8:12) and warned, *"... the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil"* (John 3:19).

Quote:

"There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell _____ it." – C. S. Lewis

The Day of the Lord IS coming. It is **factual**, it is **fearful**, and it is **fair**.

4. It's _____

Most judicial systems have a carefully designed structure that allows convicted criminals to appeal to a higher court.

But God's verdicts on *"the Day of the Lord"* are irreversible.

There IS no higher _____. His verdicts are final.

A second sense in which God's judgment on the ungodly is final, is that those condemned to Hell will _____ be released.

The Bible says, "*When a wicked man dies, his expectation will perish*" (Prov. 11:7).

Nobody in Hell will ever be released.

Quote:

*"There are a million roads **into** Hell, but not one road _____ of it."*

– Leonard Ravenhill

Nowhere does this terrible truth come across more clearly than when Jesus told people what would happen when He judged the world.

After warning His hearers that He would tell the ungodly, "**Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the **eternal** fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels,**" He added, "*These will go away into **eternal** punishment, but the righteous into **eternal** life*" (Mat. 25:41, 46).

Both words for "eternal" are the Greek word *aionios* (αἰώνιος).

And by using the exact _____ word Jesus was making it crystal clear to His hearers that **both** destinies are endless.

Yes, the thought of countless people enduring appalling agony forever and ever pounds at our emotions like a relentless sledgehammer—AND YET, we must submit to all that Scripture says, not merely to that which sits comfortably with our feelings.

The Day of the Lord IS coming. It is **factual**, it is **fearful**, it is **fair**, and it is **final**.

Is it any wonder that Zephaniah's prophecy about the Day of the Lord had such a note of _____ to it?

He warned his hearers that it was not only "*near*" (1:7) but "*near and coming very quickly*" (1:14).

The first stage of its fulfillment for Zephaniah's hearers was only a few years away—Judah's devastation by Babylon.

But what about the prophecy's ultimate fulfillment? Zephaniah's prophecy reached further into the _____ than Babylon.

As we move into the New Testament we're told that "*the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night*" (1 Thess. 5:2). And Jesus Himself warned His hearers that He would return "*at an hour when you do not think He will*" (Mat. 24:44).

Both these passages are referring to the _____ when the Church is whisked away to Heaven.

Zephaniah doesn't directly address the Rapture, but that event opens the door for the Day of the Lord to begin on earth—the Great Tribulation, as described in the book of Revelation as well as in Zephaniah (1:2-3, 18).

After the Tribulation comes the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth—something prophesied some _____ times in the New Testament alone.

Is this "*near and coming very quickly*"?

Preaching on the Day of Pentecost, seven weeks after Jesus had risen from the dead, Peter said that the world was **then** in "*the last days*" before "*the Day of the Lord comes*" (Acts 2:17, 20).

Furthermore His return to the earth is now over 2,700 years nearer than when Zephaniah prophesied, and 2,000 years nearer than when Peter preached.

The whole concept of His return is ridiculed by most people, but the Bible anticipates this and warns that *"scoffers will come in the last days . . . [and] will say, 'Where is the promise of His coming?'"* (2 Pet. 3:3-4)

Zephaniah's prophecy reaches even further into the future, describing a _____ Jerusalem ruled by King Jesus.

Zephaniah 3:14-15, 17

"Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!...

*The **King of Israel**, the Lord, is in your midst...*

The Lord your God is in your midst,

A victorious Warrior.

*He will **exult over you with joy,***

He will be quiet in His love,

*He will **rejoice over you with shouts of joy."***

The Day of the Lord will usher us, God's children, into the Kingdom of God for which we were _____, for which our hearts yearn.

But as we wait, we must remember the words of the Apostle Peter:

*"Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in **peace, spotless and blameless**"* (2 Pet. 3:13a-14).

Elsewhere, the Apostle John urges us to _____ in such a way that *"...when He appears, we may have **confidence** and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming"* (1 John 2:28a).

It's always a bad sign when believers debate eschatology rather than _____ for the coming of Christ with a daily determination to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel.

Quote:

*"He who loves the coming of the Lord is not he who affirms it is far off, nor is it he who says it is near. It is he who, whether it be far or near, awaits it with **sincere faith, steadfast hope, and fervent love.**" – Augustine*

LIST OF PROPHECIES IN ZEPHANIAH:

The following is a list of prophecies found in the book of Zephaniah.

Possible fulfillment time periods include:

the Old Testament, the First Coming of Christ, the Last Days (our age), the Tribulation, the Second Coming of Christ, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Eternal State.

Statistics

Total Verses: 53

Prophetic Verses: 47

Prophetic Percentage: _____%

Prophetic Count

- ✓ Historically Fulfilled: 3
- ❖ Partial Fulfillment: 2
- ❖ Awaiting Future Fulfillment: 9

Zephaniah 1:2-13

...I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem... Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near, for the Lord has prepared a sacrifice, He has invited His guests...

➤ **Prophecy:** The time for God's _____ will be coming against the Jewish people.

❖ **Status:** Partial Fulfillment (2 Kings 25:1-21), Awaiting Future Fulfillment



Period: Old Testament, Tribulation

Zephaniah 1:14-18

Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly... And all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.

➤ **Prophecy:** The time for God's judgment is coming to the _____, culminating in the Messiah returning in wrath and with great cataclysm.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment



Period: Tribulation, Second Coming

Zephaniah 2:1-3

...Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger.

➤ **Prophecy:** The time for God's judgment is coming to the world, but the _____ will be saved.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment




Period: Tribulation, Second Coming

Zephaniah 2:4-6

*For Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon a desolation;
Ashdod will be driven out at noon and Ekron will be uprooted. Woe to the inhabitants
of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites!...*

➤ **Prophecy:** _____ will be destroyed.

✓ **Status:** Historically Fulfilled (gradual decline and destruction)

 **Period:** Old Testament

Zephaniah 2:7

*And the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah, they will pasture on it.
In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening;
for the Lord their God will care for them and restore their fortune.*

➤ **Prophecy:** _____ will possess the land of its neighbors.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment

 **Period:** Millennial Kingdom

Zephaniah 2:8-10

*"Surely Moab will be like Sodom and the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah—a place
possessed by nettles and salt pits, and a perpetual desolation. The remnant of My
people will plunder them, and the remainder of My nation will inherit them."*

➤ **Prophecy:** Moab and Ammon will be destroyed, and Israel will inherit their
_____.

✓ **Status:** Partial Fulfillment (gradual decline and destruction), Awaiting Future
Fulfillment

 **Period:** Old Testament, Millennium

Zephaniah 2:11

The Lord will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place.

➤ **Prophecy:** The Messiah will defeat the fallen powers of this earth and the whole world will _____ Him.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment (Battle of Armageddon)



Period: Tribulation, Millennial Kingdom, Eternal State

Zephaniah 2:13-15

And He will stretch out His hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and He will make Nineveh a desolation, parched like the wilderness.

➤ **Prophecy:** _____ and its capital city, Nineveh, will be destroyed.

✓ **Status:** Historically Fulfilled (612 BC)



Period: Old Testament

Zephaniah 3:8

"Therefore wait for Me," declares the Lord,

"For the day when I rise up as a witness.

Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, to assemble kingdoms, to pour out on them My indignation, all My burning anger; for all the earth will be devoured by the fire of My zeal."

➤ **Prophecy:** The Messiah will rise to bring judgment and destruction to the fallen _____.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment (Battle of Armageddon)



Period: Tribulation, Second Coming

Zephaniah 3:9-10

"For then I will give to the peoples purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him shoulder to shoulder..."

➤ **Prophecy:** At the end of the Tribulation/beginning of the Millennium, God will cleanse the speech of His believing Gentile and Jewish remnant, that they might worship the Lord in holy _____.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment

 **Period:** Millennial Kingdom

Zephaniah 3:11

"In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you have rebelled against Me; for then I will remove from your midst your proud, exulting ones, and you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain."

➤ **Prophecy:** God's judgment will remove the _____ of Israel and their transgressions will be forgiven.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment

 **Period:** Tribulation, Millennial Kingdom

Zephaniah 3:12-20

“But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord. The remnant of Israel will do no wrong and tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths; for they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble.”

➤ **Prophecy:** The _____ will bring salvation to a Jewish remnant, purify them, and grant them peace and safety.

❖ **Status:** Awaiting Future Fulfillment (Jesus' return results in the salvation of a Jewish remnant [vv. 12-13], all the people of the Kingdom are purified and worship God [vv. 9-13a], Israel lives securely in its land [vv. 13b-19], rejoicing prevails [vv. 14-15], Jesus reigns [vv. 14-17], a remnant of Israel will be regathered into its land [v. 20], Israel becomes the prime nation of the world [vv.19-20])

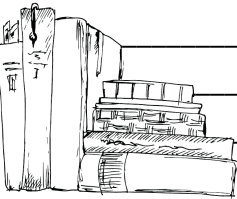


Period: Second Coming, Millennial Kingdom

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Why is it necessary, when studying a book of the Bible, to believe that the book was infallibly inspired? Do you believe that Zephaniah's prophecies are wholly accurate?
- What is your definition of sin? Compare the phrase "*against the Lord*" (1:17) with 1 John 3:4.
- Is sin a justifiable cause of the severe judgments described in Zephaniah (e.g., 1:17)?
- What various kinds of sins are exposed in 3:1-5? Are such sins common today?
- Can a sinner become so hardened in his sin and rebellion against God that any possibility of salvation is cancelled? In other words, is there such a thing as "a point of no return" in this life, spiritually speaking?
- The Old Testament prophets spoke more about the Messianic Kingdom of the End Times than about the earthly life of Jesus. Can you think of a reason why this is so?
- Do you believe that God is distant and uncaring about the sin of the world?
- Do you believe that God will at some point deal in justice with the world's sin?

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines.



THEMES

HOSEA: GOD IS FAITHFUL

JOEL: GOD IS WRATHFUL

AMOS: GOD IS JUST

OBADIAH: GOD IS JEALOUS

JONAH: GOD IS MERCIFUL

MICAH: GOD SEES EVERYTHING

NAHUM: GOD IS PATIENT

HABAKKUK: GOD WANTS OUR FAITH

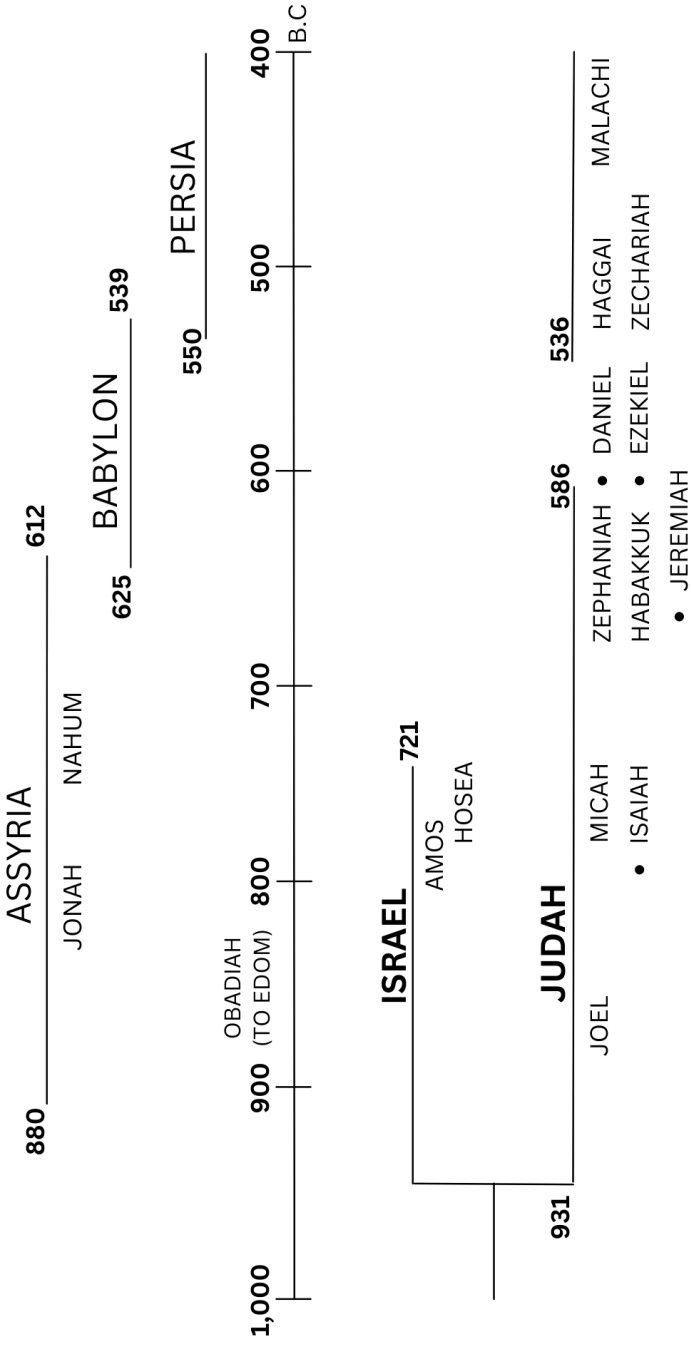
ZEPHANIAH: GOD IS WITH US

HAGGAI: GOD WANTS FIRST PLACE

ZECHARIAH: GOD CHOSE JERUSALEM

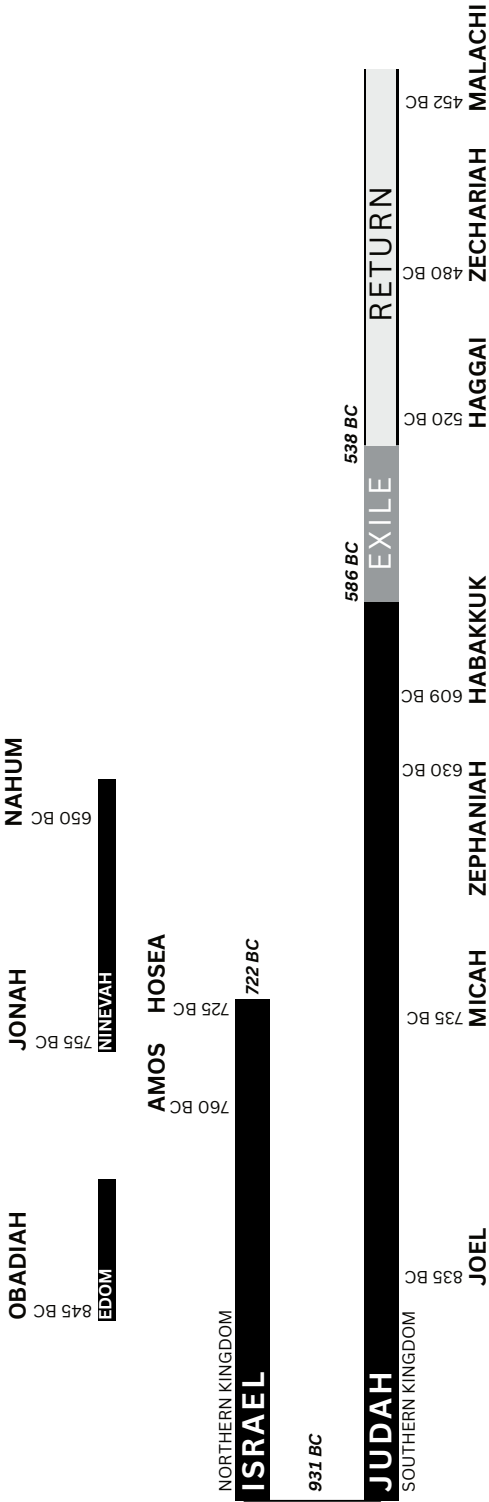
MALACHI: GOD WANTS OUR LOVE

Chronology of the Prophets of Israel and Judah



• -MAJOR PROPHET

TIMELINE



ORACLES AGAINST THE NATIONS IN THE MINOR PROPHETS

	Isaiah	Jeremiah	Ezekiel	Joel	Amos	Obadiah	Jonah	Nahum	Zephaniah	Zechariah*
Ammon		49:1-6	25:1-7		1:13-15					
Arabia	21:13-17									
Assyria (Nineveh)	10:5-19; 14:24-27						(Nineveh)	(Nineveh)		
Babylon	13:1-14:23; 21:1-10; 46:1-47:15	50:1-51:64								2:9-12?
Damascus	17:1-6?	49:23-27			1:3-5					9:01
Edom	21:11-12	49:7-22	25:12-14		1:11-12	1-14?				
Egypt	18:1-20:6	46:2-26	29:1-32:32							
Elam		49:34-39								
Ethiopia									2:12-15	
Gaza					1:6-8					9:05
Kedar and Hazor		49:28-33								
Lebanon										11:1-3?
Moab	15:1-16:14	48:1-47	25:8-11		2:1-3				2:8-11	
Philistia	14:28-32	47:1-7	25:15-17	3:4-8					2:5-7	9:06
Tyre Sidon	23:1-18		26:1-28:19; 28:20-23	3:4-8	1:9-10					9:2-3

