







Seeing Jesus in the Minor Prophets

Zephaniah

Historical Background

- Like Habakkuk, Zephaniah prophesied in Judah during the reign of king Josiah (640-609 B.C.). We know this because Zephaniah himself tells us in...
 - ❖ **Zephaniah 1:1**
- However, unlike Habakkuk, Zephaniah tells us a little bit about himself. In this first verse, He gives us a fairly detailed account of his lineage revealing to us that he is the great, great grandson of king Hezekiah and, therefore, a cousin to king Josiah. So we are hearing from a prophet with royal blood. Of this prophet's great, great grandfather Hezekiah it was said...
 - ❖ 2 Kings 18:5-6--*He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel, so that there was none like him among all the kings of Judah after him, nor among those who were before him. 6 For he held fast to the Lord. He did not depart from following him, but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses*
- Something very much like this would one day be said of Zephaniah's cousin Josiah...
 - ❖ 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*
- However, that time was still a distant future. The book of Zephaniah was likely written at the very beginning of Josiah's reforms. Thus, the evil practices instituted by the wicked king Manasseh (698-642 B.C.) and Amon (642-640 B.C.) are still in place. Judah is still full of "idolatrous priests" and priests who "swear by Milcom (Zephaniah 1:4-5)." So we can probably conclude that the book of Zephaniah was written in support of Josiah's newly introduced reforms.

Outline

1. The Day of the Lord: Cycle 1 (1:2-1:18)
 -  Judgement against the whole wicked world (1:2-3)
 -  Judgement against the wicked in Judah (1:4-6)
 -  A message of hope ([2:1-3](#))
2. The Day of the Lord: Cycle 2 (2:4-3:20)
 -  Against the whole wicked world ([2:4-15](#))
 -  Against the wicked in Judah (3:1-8)
 -  A portrait of hope ([3:9-20](#))

The Message of Zephaniah

1. The Day of the Lord: First Cycle (1:2-1:18)

-  Judgment against the whole wicked world

- ❖ **Zephaniah 1:2-3**

- *two things to see here*
 - 1. The judgement that God is announcing is not some local thing. In the past he brought fire and brimstone, but only against Sodom and Gomorrah. He brought plagues, but only against Egypt. He made war, but only against certain nations. In Zephaniah, the destruction

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he speaks of in is on the scale of the global flood in Genesis. He is announcing death and destruction upon the whole of creation.

2. God takes sin incredibly seriously. So if you find yourself being tempted to sin and think “how big of a deal is this anyway?” Or you find yourself trying to rationalize a sinful behavior or attitude with thoughts like “it’s not really that bad.” Tell yourself, “It is a huge deal, it is REALLY bad! So bad that God is willing to destroy the whole world because of it.”



Judgment against the wicked in Judah

❖ Zephaniah 1:4-6

- Here we see that this judgement will even come to those who call themselves God’s people. Salvation on this day of judgement is not guaranteed to all Judeans just because they were born Jewish. This is exactly what Paul is teaching us this in Romans 9 when he says...
 - ❖ Romans 9:6-7--*For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring*
- Wicked Judeans will perish right along side wicked Ninevites, Edomites, Babylonians, etc.

❖ Zephaniah 1:7-9

- There will be a sacrifice. God will sacrifice many who call themselves his people. Most of the time we Christians hear the term sacrifice and think of atonement. We think of a sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins. However, that is not the sacrifice spoken of in Zephaniah 1:7-9. There is no forgiveness spoken of, only punishment by death. It is much like what we see in Romans 9...
 - ❖ Romans 9:22--*What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.*

❖ Zephaniah 1:10-18

- *Three things to see here...*
- 1. The day of the Lord is imminent. Twice (10, 14) the prophet declares that the day of the Lord is near. We MUST NOT live as if God’s judgement is far off. Rather, the New Testament teaches us...
 - ❖ 2 Peter 3:10-11--*But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. 11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God*
- 2. The day of the Lord is incited by sin. We have already seen (Zephaniah 1:4-6) that idolatry is one of the sins that God will punish on the day of the Lord. Here in verse 12 we see another one, complacency. Those who fail to see God’s sovereign hand working all things for our good (Romans 8:28) and those who fail to see God punishing the wicked...
 - ❖ Colossians 3:25--*For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality*
- The scary thing about this is that we do this all the time. Think about the last meal that you ate. Did you really understand and acknowledge that God almighty sovereignly, lovingly

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provided it for you? Most of our meal time prayers include grateful language but do we really acknowledge God's sovereign provision? Think about the last time you sinned. Was any part of you even slightly uncomfortable with the reality that God saw you? Was any part of you even slightly afraid that God might choose to bring discipline upon you? If we are being honest, many of spend way to much of our lives living as if God isn't there. This is a big deal because the day of the Lord comes violently upon people who live their lives this way. We need to repent. We need to turn away from our complacency and become more aware of God's sovereign activity in every single instant of life.

3. The day of the Lord is violent. Verses 15-18 make this very clear.



A message of hope in repentance

❖ Zephaniah 2:1-3

- Zephaniah, along with Josiah (see 2 Kings 23), calls the people together to repent. This passage demonstrates for us the truth that people in the Old Testament get saved the same way that people in the New Testament get saved. They aren't saved because they are Jewish. They are saved when they repent of their sin and put their faith in the God who saves alone. Only then is there hope. Only then can they say...

❖ Zephaniah 2:3--*perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord*

2. The Day of the Lord: Second Cycle (2:4-3:20)



Judgment against the whole wicked world

❖ Zephaniah 2:4-15

- *Four things to see here...*

1. The destruction of these nations actually happened. God used the Babylonians to bring judgment upon these wicked nations. He brought desolation upon the Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Ekron, and Canaan as well as the nation of Assyria. He brought Sodom and Gomorrah like destruction upon the nations of Moab and Ammon and the Cushites were indeed slain by his sword.
2. This is a foreshadowing, or type, of the wrath of God to come on the ultimate day of the Lord. On the day of the Lord, all wicked people will experience eternal desolation. On the day of the Lord, all the wicked of the world will experience God's fire and brimstone. On the day of the Lord, there will be one who rides on a white horse and strikes down the nations with his sword.
3. God uses the destruction of these wicked nations to benefit the true people of God. He declares that the beautiful coastal property of Philistia will one day belong to the remnant of Judah (God's true people). He declares that the remnant will plunder and possess Moab and Ammon.
4. This too is a foreshadowing, or a type. On the day of the Lord the remnant, the true people of God, will possess all of the new earth...

❖ Revelation 21:27--*But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.*

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Judgment against the wicked in Judah

❖ Zephaniah 3:1-8

- *Four things to see here...*

1. Most of Judah was just as wicked as the rest of the world.
2. God demonstrated his powerful wrath which ought to have invoked fear and respect for God. He has “cut off nations” and annihilated entire populations so that his people would see that they ought to fear him.
3. Judah demonstrates the radical pervasiveness of their depravity. They are so enslaved by sin that even though God has shown them quite clearly that they will endure God’s mighty and terrible wrath if they don’t come to him, they don’t come to him. This is exactly what Paul teaches us in Romans 8...

- ❖ Romans 8:7-8--*For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God 's law; indeed, it cannot. 8 Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.*

4. Because of their sin, the wicked in Judah will find itself under the wrath of God just like the rest of the wicked among the nations.

- ★ At this point, we are left with a very bleak picture. The whole world is awaiting the wrath of God on the day of the Lord. Sin has humanity, even God’s chosen people, so enslaved that they aren’t even able to repent of their sin and come to God. Thus it appears certain that all are doomed. The question is, does God leave things this way? Will he intervene?



A portrait of hope in God ([3:9-20](#))

❖ Zephaniah 3:9-10

- God will sovereignly change and purify the speech of many people all over the world. No longer will they call on gods who aren’t real and cannot save, now they will “call upon the name of the Lord!” Furthermore, God will assemble all of these people as one so that they “serve him with one accord.”

❖ Zephaniah 3:11-13

- God will declare his people to be righteous and God will sovereignly make his people righteous. All who are wicked will be cast out on the day of the lord and the Lord will cause his people to lie down in green pastures. Even though they have walked through the valley of the shadow of death, now, they will fear no evil because he is with them and will be with them forevermore.

❖ Zephaniah 3:14-20

- *two things to see here...*

1. God’s people will rejoice over what God has done for them. God will declare his people righteous. He will remove all enemies. God will save! and because of all of this the people of God will be called to loud, festive, rejoicing!
2. God will rejoice over what he has done for us. God will look at his people. he will examine what he has done for his people and he will rejoice greatly! He has taken the weak, the lame, the outcasts and has made them into a renowned people. He has taken sinful and

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shameful people and made of them a people worthy of praise. They have become a credit to him, they are an honor to his majesty. They are a people who have been saved “to the praise of his glorious grace” (Ephesians 1:6) and so he rejoices over them with singing. He exults over them with LOUD singing!

In the book of Zephaniah, Jesus is...

1. The terrifyingly just judge that the wicked will face on the day of the Lord.

- How do we know this?
 - ❖ John 5:22--*The Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son,*
- How does the New Testament describe him?
 - ❖ Matthew 13:41-42--*The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
 - ❖ **Revelation 19:11-16**

2. The glorious savior who accomplishes all that we see at the end of Zephaniah.

- When God purifies our speech, it is Jesus's name we call on to be saved...
 - ❖ Romans 10:13--*For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*
 - ❖ Acts 16:31--*“...Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved”*
- It is in Jesus that we are being assembled together to “serve him in one accord”
 - ❖ Ephesians 2:22--*In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.*
 - ❖ Romans 12:4-5--*For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.*
- In Christ, we are justified (declared righteous)
 - ❖ Romans 5:1--*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- In Christ, we are being made righteous and will one day be completely righteous
 - ❖ 1 Thessalonians 5:23--*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. 24 He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it*
 - ❖ Philippians 1:6--*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*
- Jesus is our good shepherd. He is the one who will have us “graze and lie down” without fear.
 - ❖ John 10:11--*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
- Jesus has accomplished all of this to the praise of his glorious grace
 - ❖ **Ephesians 1:4-6**