

The Book of Zephaniah

Chapter 1

Introduction

- Zephaniah's name means "God has concealed".
- Zephaniah appears to have been the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah – 1:1
- There are three other Zephaniahs in the Bible:
 - ancestor of Samuel – I Chronicles 6:36
 - a priest that interacted with Jeremiah – Jeremiah 21:1, 29:25-26, 29:29, 37:3, 52:24
 - father of Josiah/Hen – Zechariah 6:10,14
- Reese dates this book to 628 B.C.
 - King Josiah reigned from 640-609 B.C. He was the last good king of Judah and led a great revival in 623 B.C (see II Kings 22-23, II Chronicles 34-35)
 - He would be a contemporary of Nahum and Jeremiah.
- The subject of this book is the coming "Day of the Lord".
 - This is seen two-fold: its coming judgment and the restoration in its wake.
 - Zephaniah has two "mountain peaks" in view: the coming judgment when Babylon conquers Judah in 586 B.C. and the future judgment at the close of the Tribulation period.
 - His approach of tying near and far off events is, I think, similar to Joel's.
- Outline
 - Future Judgment – 1:1-3:8
 - Restoration of Israel – 3:9-20

Chapter 1

- vs. 2-3 – a picture of utter destruction.
 - Note "the wicked" in vs. 3. God is purging the land, not destroying it.
- vs. 4-6 - God is doing surgery (an "idol-ectomy"?) on His people, removing the cancer-like sin in their midst in the time of Zephaniah. Note who He is cutting out:
 - "the remnant of Baal" – Israel would not worship Baal any more after the Babylonian Captivity.
 - "the Chemarims with the priests" – pagan priests and the Jewish priests that interacted with them.
 - "them that worship the host of heaven" – another popular pagan religion was the worship of the sun, moon, stars, and planets.
 - "that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham [a.k.a., the Ammonite god Molech]" – those who religion accepts or syncretizes true and false worship.

- “that are turned back from the LORD” – have rejected the truth
- “that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him” – indifferent and irreligious.
- vs. 7 – “the day of the LORD” – this phrase is used to denote End Times events – examples: Isaiah 2:12, Joel 2:11, II Peter 3:10
- vs. 7 – the “sacrifice” here is the slaughter of the Lord’s enemies. It foreshadows the supper of Revelation 19:17-18.
- vs. 8 – wicked leaders who have turned against their Jewish heritage.
- vs. 9 – both clauses speak of plunderers and their swiftness and greed.
- vs. 10-12 – describes the fall of the city, focusing on its fall to Babylon. First, defenses are breached at the Fish Gate to the northwest. Next, the invaders overrun internal defenses as the besieging forces on the surrounding hills begin to close in. There is no escape or hiding for the inhabitants, or even hope of bribery.
- vs. 11 – “Maktesh” – Strong’s H4389, “hollow, mortar”. Perhaps it is the Tyropoeon Valley (“Valley of the Cheesemakers”) between Mounts Zion and Moriah.
- vs. 12 – How many Christians today that think the Lord will do nothing? Too many!
- vs. 13 – the suddenness or unexpectedness of judgment.
- vs. 14 – the mightiest men will only be able to shriek in horror as they witness God’s judgment unfold.
- vs. 15-18 – what a description! If these were the only words we had telling us of the coming judgment we would still have enough to grasp its severity.
 - If the Jews could not escape God’s wrath in the past and if His enemies will not escape in the future judgment, how dare any man think they can escape from God’s justice?