



PART 4 THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

Before studying the Book of Zephaniah, it is advisable to read the Preface in Part 1, also the Introduction to the Minor Prophets preceding the Study on Hosea. The section on each prophet is a complete Bible Study. It helps to read the whole book first.

Only a brief outline of the words of *The Voice of the Lord* (*red italics*) can be conveyed.

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah began his ministry as a young man and came from a high social background in Jerusalem. He was the first prophet, after an interval of about 70 years, to follow the prophets Isaiah and Micah. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah and probably Nahum and Habakkuk and prophesied in the early part of the reign of good King Josiah. As prophet, he gave God's judgement on the nations and also Judah, especially Jerusalem because of the wicked and cruel reign of Manasseh – also his son, Amon.

Like other prophets, Zephaniah's message pronounced God's judgement on the nation's sin to save Judah from the Northern Kingdom's calamity of conquest and exile. Although Judah was then threatened by Assyria, it was the Babylonians that fulfilled the *Voice of the Lord*.

JUDGEMENT OF THE NATIONS

Zephaniah Chapter 1

The theme of Zephaniah's prophecy was God's warnings of immediate judgement on the nations and His final universal judgement in the End Times. His prophecies were strongly condemnatory but as other prophets he foretold the ultimate restoration of Israel.

Zephaniah 1: 2

All things meant God's judgement on man and beast and included idols and their worshippers, sweeping away all evil in His sight. In their worship of pagan gods of the surrounding nations, His Chosen People had broken God's covenant relationship. There was even *child sacrifice* in the land. His vengeance was against the Baal, Molech and star worshippers, the false priests and those who no longer followed the Lord or sought Him wholeheartedly.

I will also stretch out My hand over Judah and over all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Zephaniah 1: 4a

Prompted by God's word through Zephaniah and Jeremiah, King Josiah made many reforms in the 18th year of his reign after the Book of the Law was found in the Temple. Zephaniah, like the prophet Habakkuk, called for reverent silence before the Lord.

On the death of Josiah the evil ways of the leaders and people returned.

Zephaniah gave dire warning that the sins of all officials, the king's sons, the merchant classes would be punished. Those who dressed in non-Jewish clothes following the fashions of the surrounding nations would suffer the same destruction.

God's wrath was against all violence, deception and theft.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The *Voice of the Lord* stated that He would search Jerusalem with lamps to punish the complacent. In their hearts they thought that the Lord would do nothing at all!

The Lord will not do good, nor will He do evil. Zephaniah 1: 12b

The wealth of Jerusalem will be plundered and their houses destroyed.

*The great day of the Lord is near – near and hastening fast.
Hark! the voice of the day of the Lord!* Zephaniah 1: 14a

Zephaniah's words are apocalyptic in his vivid description (vs. 14 – 18) of the horrific and sudden day of the Lord's anger upon the whole earth because of the people's sin.

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's indignation and wrath. Zephaniah 1: 18a

Zephaniah Chapter 2

The *Voice of the Lord* through His servant Zephaniah gave warning that the time for repentance was fast disappearing, like chaff blown away in the wind. There was no shame for sin in the land.



Zephaniah 2: 3

Zephaniah's name means – *he whom the Lord has hidden.*

In the evil reigns of Manasseh and Amon, Zephaniah's life in his younger years was certainly hidden and protected.

WOE TO THE NATIONS

Woe to the cities of the Philistines. They will be destroyed. Their land will be possessed by the remnant of Judah when the Lord restores them after their captivity.

The hand of the Lord would also be against Moab and Ammon. These nations shall become like Sodom and Gomorrah because of their idolatry and enmity against Israel.

The remnant of My people shall make a prey of them and what is left of My nation shall possess them. Zephaniah 2: 9b

Then will the nations worship the Lord.

God's hand would be against Ethiopia - meaning Egypt, then ruled by the Cushites.

The proud city of Nineveh (Assyria) would become desolate, the haunt of wild creatures and the place for herds to roam. Nineveh was destroyed in 612 B.C.

WOE TO JERUSALEM

Read Zephaniah Chapter 3

Zephaniah 3: 1, 2

Jerusalem's leaders and her judges oppressed the people. Her prophets and priests spoke their own word and not the righteous *Voice of the Lord*. The Lord Almighty had destroyed nations for them; but Israel nevertheless had constantly departed from God's ways and thus suffered punishment according to His word.

Zephaniah 3: 8

In a Day to come God's anger will be poured out upon the nations that they may be purified and call upon the name of the Lord.

Zephaniah 3: 10

Zephaniah 3: 12

Zephaniah 3: 14

Then there will be no iniquity in Israel for the Messiah, King of Israel, will be among you and the people will no longer be afraid. God's judgement leads to Gospel Blessings.

Zephaniah 3:17

The Lord will gather scattered Israel and afflict those who afflicted you.

At that time I will gather you, for I will make you a name and a praise among all the nations of the earth when I reverse your captivity before your eyes, says the Lord.

Zephaniah 3: 20



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