

Study Outline of Zephaniah

- A. The book dates itself, “in the days of Josiah...king of Judah.”
- B. The audience includes several groups:
 - a. Judah/Jerusalem – 1:4, 12; 3.
 - b. Philistia – 2:4-7.
 - c. Ammon & Moab – 2:8-11.
 - d. Ethiopia – 2:12.
 - e. Assyria/Nineveh – 2:13-15.
- C. The key phrase is “the day of the Lord” and is used 5 times in three chapters.
 - a. Prophetically this is usually used in the sense of an impending judgment on a particular nation.
 - b. Occasionally it refers to events during the first century.
 - i. 1:7 – the day of the Lord is at hand.
 - ii. 1:14 – the great day of the Lord is near. *Great* emphasizes the size, importance, or significance of the approaching day.
 - iii. 1:18 – the day of the Lord’s wrath. God’s fury or overflowing anger.
 - iv. 2:2-3 – the day of the Lord’s anger. *Anger* is a Hebrew word meaning nose or nostril. A play on words showing the expression on one’s face.
- D. 1:1-7 – God’s punishment is coming on His people.
 - a. 2 Kings 23 records these events taking place. Josiah was a “reformation” king for Judah. Ultimately, though, these prophecies against Judah were fulfilled by Babylon from 606-586 BC.
 - b. The day of the Lord is “at hand.” It was not many days (years) from the time Zephaniah was writing. This phrase helps us understand “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” during the days of John the Baptizer and Jesus.
- E. 1:8-13 – Judgment is coming to all men of all rank.
 - a. Princes, king’s children (v. 8).
 - b. Thieves (v. 9).
 - c. Merchants, business men (v. 10-11).
 - d. Complacent people (v. 12-13).
- F. 1:14-18 – Nothing can deliver the people from the coming judgment! The reason is stated in verse 17.
- G. 2:1-15 – Judgment is also coming to the nations surrounding God’s people.
 - a. 2:1-3 shows that the only way to escape God’s wrath is through meekness, righteousness, and humility.
 - b. The Philistine people (2:4-7) had been an enemy of God’s people for many years.
 - c. Verse 7 is very important. KJV reads *visit* and the NKJV reads *intervene*. It is from a Hebrew word that means, “God paying attention to persons either to do them good or to bring punishment or harm.”
 - d. Moab & Ammon (2:8-11) were nations to the East of Judah and the Jordan River. They were a constant threat to God’s people and He would be *awesome* or *terrible and frightening* to these nations.
 - e. Ethiopia is included (2:12).

- f. Assyria is mentioned next (2:13-15). Her arrogance (v. 15) and cruelty was the cause of her downfall.
- H. 3:1-7 – God’s disobedient and unfaithful people will be punished.
 - a. Verse 2 clearly identifies the problem.
 - b. Four groups are mentioned specifically in the condemnation (v. 3-4).
 - c. Regardless of man’s doings, God will always do what is right (v. 5).
- I. 3:8-13 – The remnant of Israel.
 - a. To *wait* on the Lord is to faithfully serve Him.
 - b. The people who are faithful will worship God in unity with pure lips (v. 9-11). This gives us a picture of God’s desire for the church today (Eph. 5:25-27).
- J. 3:14-20 – Rejoicing in Jerusalem.
 - a. There are those who apply this strictly to the Messianic/Church Age.
 - b. God is in her midst – 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.
 - c. These events are going to happen “among all the peoples of the earth” (v. 20).