

## Zephaniah 1 The Day of the Lord

As we look at this short book over these 3 weeks, we will see the book is divided into 3 chapters with 3 focuses.

Zephaniah 1—The God who Disciplines

Zephaniah 2—The God who Defends

Zephaniah 3—The God who Delights

Let's ask 5 questions of the text as we consider chapter 1 this morning.

### I. Who was Zephaniah? v1

*1 The word of the LORD which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:*

1. Zephaniah was the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah; not your normal “out of the wilderness, lower class prophet.”
2. He prophesied during the reign of King Josiah several decades before his prophecies were fulfilled.
3. In a way, he took Jeremiah's 52 chapters and condensed them into 3.

### II. What was his message? v2-3

*2 “I will completely remove all things From the face of the earth,” declares the LORD. 3 “I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky And the fish of the sea, And the ruins along with the wicked; And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.*

His message was one of future and complete judgement, but also immediate and partial judgment by the Babylonians which is recorded in Daniel 1:1-4 Jeremiah 52:12-30.

1. We find out that Nebudchanezzar burned the king's house and all the houses of the great men in Jerusalem.
2. They also destroyed the walls that surrounded and secured Jerusalem.
3. They took all of the tools the priests ministered with, the silver utensils they worshipped with, and the bronze from the temple and took it to their temples, proclaiming that the Chaldean god defeated YHWH God.
4. They came in and took the best of the best and made them eunuchs, in the palace of the king of Babylon.
5. They reeducated them according to the customs of Babylon.

By the time the Babylonians were finished with Jerusalem, the city was a heap of ruins and the temple was a smoking mass of rubble.

### III. Who was his message for? v4-13

#### 1. Idolators v4-5

a. Baal 4 *“So I will stretch out My hand against Judah And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, And the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.*

1. The religion of Baal was a fertility cult and its worship was often characterized by sexual immorality.

b. Creation 5 *“And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven,*

1. worshipping the creation rather than the creator...self worship

c. Milcom 5b *And those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom,*

1. Milcom was also known as Moloch, the fierce Ammonite god to whom little children were sacrificed.
2. Jeremiah 7:31 *They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.*

3. Imagine trying to swear by both the Lord and Moloch!!

d. How was Judah in Zephaniah’s day any different than the USA in our day? Are we not characterized by rampant sexual immorality, self-absorption, and child sacrifice?

#### 2. Backsliders v6 6 *And those who have turned back from following the LORD,*

a. Jeremiah 15:6 *“You who have forsaken Me,” declares the LORD, “You keep going backward. So I will stretch out My hand against you and destroy you; I am tired of relenting!*

b. Put hand to the plow and look back.

*And those who have not sought the LORD or inquired of Him.”*

c. We may not admit to turning back but are we truly seeking Him? Are we truly inquiring of Him as we go through life?

#### 3. Rulers v7-8

*7 Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near, For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice, He has consecrated His guests. 8 “Then it will come about on the day of the LORD’S sacrifice That I will punish the princes, the king’s sons And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.*

a. The rulers would pay for their infatuation with foreign attire, customs, values, and religion. God would give them their fill of foreigners.

b. If you want to live like a Babylonian, I’ll give you the full experience.

c. 2 Kings 25:7 *They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.*

#### **4. The Money Lovers            v9-11**

9 *“And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold, Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.*

- a. The picture here is of someone leaping over the threshold of the temple in order to injure an innocent person or steal from a worshipper.
- b. It is blatant robbery and love of money...but there was also a subtle type of robbery that was occurring.

10 *“On that day,” declares the LORD, “There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate, A wail from the Second Quarter, And a loud crash from the hills. 11 “Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar, For all the people of Canaan will be silenced; All who weigh out silver will be cut off.*

- a. People of Canaan is often translated “merchant people.”
- b. Zephaniah used this term to refer to the businessmen who had become so iniquitous that they were acting like heathens.

#### **5. Stagnant Men            v12-13**

12 *“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!’*

- a. God would search for them as a man searches his house with a candle. God was going to be feared!
- b. Amos 6:1 *Woe to those who are at ease in Zion And to those who feel secure in the mountain of Samaria*

#### **IV. When is this prophesy coming?    v13-17**

13 *“Moreover, their wealth will become plunder And their houses desolate; Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them, And plant vineyards but not drink their wine.”14 Near is the great day of the LORD, Near and coming very quickly;*

1. He refers to what is coming as the Day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is a reference to the coming judgment of God.
2. You may ignore the Lord...the Word of the Lord...but you will not ignore the day of the Lord!

14b *Listen, the day of the LORD! In it the warrior cries out bitterly.*

1. The Chaldeans would come speedily and even the mightiest warrior would be panic-stricken and cry out in terror.
2. Listen to how it is described.

*15 A day of wrath is that day, 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, 16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. 17 I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung.*

Ultimately...*“In the day of the Lord everything will be dark and nobody will be safe. Alarms will be sounded everywhere, but people will not be able to find refuge in cities and high towers, for no defenses will be strong enough to withstand the onslaught. God’s wrath will be unleashed against a world that murdered His Son, spurned His Holy Spirit, scoffed at the Scriptures, and persecuted His saints.”* John Phillips

## **V. What is our only hope? v18**

*18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD’S wrath; 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.*

The day of the Lord is coming!

1. Your silver and gold will not save you!
2. Ezekiel 7:19 *They will fling their silver into the streets and their gold will become an abhorrent thing; their silver and their gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD. They cannot satisfy their appetite nor can they fill their stomachs, for their iniquity has become an occasion of stumbling*

Is there any hope?

1. Jeremiah 46:28 *“O Jacob My servant, do not fear;” declares the LORD, “For I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations Where I have driven you, Yet I will not make a full end of you; But I will correct you properly And by no means leave you unpunished.”*
2. God is sending judgment and discipline because He desires their repentance, return to Him, and restoration before Him.
3. His wrath then, is an act of love, intended to accomplish the best for His children. Seek me!
  - a. *The wisdom of God has ordained a way for the love of God to deliver us from the wrath of God without compromising the justice of God.* John Piper
  - b. I would flip it around and say as well...that the wisdom of God has ordained a way for the wrath of God to deliver us to the love of God without compromising the justice of God.

Zephaniah 2:3

Conclusion/Invitation