

Preface To The Prophet Zephaniah (1532)

Zephaniah lived in the time of the prophet Jeremiah, for as the title shows, he prophesied under King Josiah, as did Jeremiah. For that reason he prophesies the very same things as Jeremiah, namely, that Jerusalem and Judah shall be destroyed and the people carried away because of the wicked life, of which they do not repent.

He does not, however, like Jeremiah, name the king of Babylon as the one who is to inflict this destruction and captivity, but only says that God will bring misfortune and affliction upon them so that He may move them to repentance. For none of the prophets could ever persuade this people that God was angry with them. They relied continually on the claim that they were, and were called, God's people, and whoever preached that God was angry with them must be a false prophet, and must die, for they would not believe that God would leave His people. It was just as it is today, when all who teach that the Christians err and commit sin and that God will punish them, are denounced and killed as heretics.

But he prophesies this disaster not to Judah only, but also to all the surrounding and neighboring lands, such as the Philistines, Moab, the Ethiopians and the Assyrians. The King of Babylon is to be God's rod upon all lands.

In the third chapter, he prophesies gloriously and clearly of the happy and blessed kingdom of Christ, which shall be spread over all the world. Although he is a small prophet, he speaks more about Christ than many other great prophets, more than even Jeremiah. By this prophecy he gives the people rich comfort, so that they may not despair of God because of the Babylonian Captivity and their disaster, as though God had cast them off forever, but might be sure that, after their punishment, they would receive grace again and get the promised Savior, Christ, with His glorious kingdom.