

# Zephaniah

(Read verse 1) Zephaniah traces his family back to Hezekiah. This could potentially be King Hezekiah from 2 Kings 18-20. He says this was during the reign of Josiah, which places this book 25-50 years before the exile.

The book has 3 sections: (1:2-2:3), (2:4-3:8) + (3:9-20)

The theme of section 1 is the Day of the Lord.

(Read verses 2-6) In verses 2+3, God declares He will destroy all living creatures in a way reminiscent of the Genesis creation account, except He adds idols to the list. Why will He also destroy idols?

They are the source of evil + cause men to turn away from God.

In verses 4-6, God specifically addresses those who have stirred His wrath. What are the groups?

Those who worship other gods, those who worship other Gods + Yehweh, + those who are atheists.

(Read verses 7-8) Why is God preparing a sacrifice?

God's people are living in sin. The wages of sin are death. Sin requires atonement. (Lev 17:11)

(Read verse 9) Who is God referring to? (Hint: 1 Sam 5:1-5)

Pagan worshipers - those who adopt the practices of pagans.

(Read verses 10-11) Who has the focus shifted to in these verses?

Merchants + traders - this may be the site of enemy invasion.

Fish Gate was at the northwest corner of the city, closest to the Mediterranean sea coast <sup>from</sup> where fish were brought to sell in the market.

New Quarter/Mishneh was on the western hill overlooking the Temple mount + the city of David.

(Read verses 12-13) Why is He searching with lamps?  
This indicates the thoroughness of the search.

The complacent people have stopped worrying about God. They may still believe in Him, but they don't believe He affects their lives. Since He is not involved, there is nothing to fear.

Why do you think it is the wealthy who are complacent?  
They have placed their faith in their possessions instead of in God.

(Read verses 14-16) Why is so much emphasis placed on the nearness of that day?

Because so many people have become complacent.

The bitter crying seems to be an answer to the complacent ones. Not only is God going to do something, but it will be terrible.

In verse 15, it says it will be a day of ruin (רָחֹק). This is the same Hebrew word used to refer to the Holocaust.

(Read verses 17-18) Previous prophets have listed specific sins of the people, but Zephaniah simply states they have sinned. Why so general?

Humans classify sin as severe or minor, but God does not have these distinctions. Sin is the cause of God's wrath.

Blood & entrails being spilled conveys the image of animals being slaughtered for sacrifice.

What is God jealous for & why?

For us, we have been separated by sin.



## Chp. 2

(Read verses 1-3) These verses end section 1. Many religions tell people to become humble & righteous. Here, Zephaniah instead tells us to seek the Lord. Why this difference?  
We cannot be righteous or adequate without a relationship with God.

The theme of section 2 is Judgement & Hope.

(Read verses 4-7) The 3 cities listed in verse 4 were Philistine port cities used by the Assyrians to facilitate sea trade.

What is the purpose of the destruction in verses 4 & 5?  
God is getting ready to restore the remnant of His people. This land will be blessed by God for them to live on.

(Read verses 8-9) As cousins of the Israelites, how are the Moabites & Ammonites supposed to treat the Israelites?  
As family. Instead, they have been hostile. Because of their sin, God is destroying them.

(Read verses 10-11) Up to this point, Zephaniah has had a regional focus. How do these 2 verses shift from that?  
God's actions will be seen around the world & all will submit to Him.

(Read verses 12-15) The Cushites are only mentioned in verse 12. There is no mention of their guilt, so we are left to assume they have acted similarly to the other nations listed.

In verses 13-15, God pronounces judgment against Nineveh & the Assyrians. What is the root cause of their guilt?  
Pride

### Chp. 3

(Read verse 1-5) God turns His attention back to Jerusalem. However, He does not reveal the identity of this new city for several verses. What is achieved by this?

Without knowing they are reading about themselves, the Israelites are painted a picture of a sinful city who turns from God & embraces injustice. It is not until after they are able to appreciate the guilt of the city that it is revealed to them it is their own guilt.

(Read verses 6-8) What destruction is verse 6 referring to?  
~~They~~ Likely the destruction foretold at the beginning of the book.

In verse 7, Jerusalem's identity is revealed. Though God hoped to spare them, they refused to turn from their <sup>evil</sup> ways.

Why are we to wait on the Lord in verse 8?

Even when we stray from God, we've never gone too far away from Him to return. He is calling us to return to Him before it is too late.

The theme of section 3 is Hope in All Its Glory.

(Read verses 9-13) What is God reversing in these verses?

The people have brought disaster upon themselves by their wrongdoing, but God is removing the causes of wrongdoing from them.

Do you think verse 12 is related to Mat 5:5?

(Read verses 14-17) In these verses, God once again describes the restoration of Jerusalem. There is, however, one significant new element. What is it?

"God is with you."

(Read verses 18-20) In the final verses of the book, God



says He is going to restore the Israelites from their oppression, deal with those who have oppressed them, & gather all those who have been exiled. All will be set right & according to God's plan in place of the distorted version we have seen which was caused by sinful ways.