

# The Minor Prophets

## ZEPHANIAH

- I. Central Message: The coming of the terrible day of the Lord.
- II. Introduction
  - A. About the prophet
    1. name means, "He whom Jehovah has hidden"
    2. the only prophet to trace his ancestry back so far (1:1)
    3. contemporary of Jeremiah
    4. artists from the Middle Ages painted Zephaniah as the man with the lamp because of 1:12
  - B. About the book
    1. written prior to the destruction of Ninevah, during the reign of Josiah in Judah and before Josiah's reformation in Judah (probably in the 620s BC)
    2. some place the book before Nahum in time and some after
    3. two sections
      - a. 1:1-3:8 - denunciations and warnings of punishment against Judah and surrounding nations
      - b. 3:9-20 - promise of salvation and glorification of God's people
- III. First section (1:1 -3:8)
  - A. 1:1-6
    1. the punishment is coming and can neither be avoided, stalled or escaped
    2. verse 4
      - a. Josiah led the overthrow of Baalism (see II Kings 23:5)
      - b. the Chemarims were the priests of Baal
    3. verses 5-6
      - a. the false worshippers to be destroyed
      - b. some worshipped the host of heaven (sun, moon and stars)
      - c. some sought to combine worship of both Jehovah and Malcham (probably the same as Molech)
      - d. some turned their backs completely on God, neither seeking Him personally nor having any interest in what others had to say about Him but being indifferent toward Him
  - B. 1:7-13
    1. verses 7-8
      - a. imagery of a feast in which the attacking nations are the guests and Judah is the sacrifice (the meal)
      - b. corruption was in the government ("the princes, and the king's children")
      - c. "strange apparel" had reference to their idolatrous ways (Titus 2:10 tells us to adorn (clothe) ourselves in the "doctrine of God our Savior in all things," but in Zephaniah's day they were clothing themselves in the ways of false gods)
    2. verse 9
      - a. also punished will be those who have been devoted to violence and deceit



2. verse 18
  - a. their wealth will not be able to buy their salvation
  - b. in fact, their wealth will have been destroyed so that they could not fall back on it even if they wanted to
- D. 2:1-3
  1. verse 1
    - a. "gather yourselves"
      - i. sift yourselves, separating the wicked from the good
      - ii. or be gathered up and ready to meet God
    - b. "nation not desired" - unlovely, impure and unholy people (Judah)
  2. verse 3
    - a. the destruction would come, but the meek and humble will be able to save themselves
    - b. the meek are those who surrender to God (and God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked - Genesis 18:25)
- E. 2:4-7
  1. the judgment against the Philistines detailed (Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron were four of the chief cities of Philistia)
  2. verse 6
    - a. the completeness of the destruction
    - b. it would become suitable only for grazing sheep and nomads
  3. verse 7 - God's plan for returning Judah made known to the Philistines
- F. 2:8-15
  1. the judgment against the Moabites, Ammonites, Egyptians and Assyrians
  2. verses 8-11 - the Moabites and Ammonites
    - a. we see pride as their downfall
    - b. their end compared to the end of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24-25)
    - c. the land would be uninhabitable
    - d. verse 11
      - i. "famish all the gods of the earth" has reference to the heathen belief that their gods fed on the sacrifices they offered them
      - ii. no more would sacrifices be given to these false gods, hence, they would "famish"
  3. verse 12 - the Egyptians
    - a. Egypt called Ethiopia, either because of the close ties of these two nations or because of Egypt's longtime subjection to the Ethiopian dynasties
    - b. this prophecy fulfilled in 568 BC when Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt
  4. verses 13-15 - Assyria
    - a. "flocks shall lie down in the midst of her" shows that the destruction would be so great, sheep would have room to wander about and lie down in what had at one time been the cities
    - b. birds would sing in the remains of the houses (an indication that there would be no inhabitants left in these houses)
    - c. the pride of the Assyrians seen in their statement, "I am and there is none beside me")

- G. 3:1-8
  - 1. judgment against Jerusalem detailed
  - 2. verses 1-5
    - a. the sins of the people of Jerusalem
    - b. filthy and polluted with their idolatry
    - c. "oppressing city" - mean and unfair in their treatment of others
    - d. disobeyed God and refused to be corrected
    - e. corruption among the rulers and judges
    - f. the prophets are light (not serious, flippant toward their responsibilities) and treacherous (evil)
    - g. the priests have abused the law, changing it, especially to suit themselves
    - h. even though God was in their midst, treating them well and caring for them, the inhabitants knew no shame
  - 3. verse 6 - refers to the action God would take against the nations surrounding Judah
  - 4. verse 7
    - a. Judah should have learned from the punishments meted out against the surrounding nations
    - b. instead, they continued in their corrupt ways
  
- IV. Second Section (3:9-20) - This section has to do with the return of Judah from captivity
  - A. Verse 10 - God would instruct them in the way of righteousness
  - B. Verse 11 - the prideful will be gone
  - C. Verse 13 - the righteous will inhabit the land
  - D. All of these promises are cause for the righteous to rejoice
  - E. Note: It was the righteous who would enjoy these blessings (indicates that they continued to be conditional promises)