

Zephaniah

August 27, 2023

Introduction:

Zephaniah clearly identifies the time of his writing: "in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah" (1:1).

It was a dark day for the nation. According to the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures, Zephaniah was the last of the prophets before the Captivity. He was contemporary with Jeremiah, and he is credited with giving impetus to the revival during the reign of Josiah.

Zephaniah traces his ancestry back four generations.

He was the son of Cushi, the grandson of Gedaliah, the great-grandson of Amariah, and the great-great-grandson of Hezekiah.

Both Zephaniah the prophet and Josiah the King were great, great grandsons of Hezekiah (1:1). Thus Zephaniah was a prince of the royal House of David.

Zephaniah may be the only Old Testament prophet who had royal blood in his veins.

But his kinship with King Josiah didn't prevent his preaching a message of judgment at a time when the king was leading the nation in a religious reformation (2Ki 22 - 23).

Both Jeremiah and Zephaniah saw that the "reform" was not true revival, for it never got to the hearts of the people. It was only a surface change because the king promoted it and the people went along with whatever was popular.

Theme:

The Day of the Lord (Yahweh)

Zephaniah's emphasis is on "the day of the LORD," a phrase used also in Joel and Amos. He has much to say about the Day of the Lord (1:7-8, 10, 12, 14, 18; 2:2; 3:8, 11, 16, 20).

Like Joel, the major theme of Zephaniah is the Day of the LORD (Yahweh). The Hebrew word for "day" occurs 20 times in this short book.

However, while Joel never mentions the sins of the nation, Zephaniah dramatically exposes the iniquities of Judah, accusing the nation of idolatry and moral corruption.

In this respect, Zephaniah, resembles his contemporary, Jeremiah.

The ministries of Zephaniah and Jeremiah parallel those of Isaiah and Micah from a century earlier.

"The day of the LORD," message elaborated on the judgment that would take place as well as the purifying and redeeming effect the Day of the Lord would have on the righteous remnant (1:4; 2:7, 9; 3:9, 12-13, 19-20).

"The day of the LORD" applies historically to the invasion of Babylon in 606 B.C.

But prophetically and ultimately, this prophecy points to a future day of wrath in the end times with the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the preservation of the Church.

Like the Gospel of John, Zephaniah has an emphasis on the love of God.

Jn 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

Zep 3:17 "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

Outline: Like Habakkuk, Zephaniah saw both the wrath and the mercy of God.
Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem; Chapter 1

Judgment of all the Gentile Nations; Chapters 2:1 - 3:8

Judgment removed; God would be merciful to a remnant. Chapter 3:9-20
In wrath, He would remember mercy (Hab. 3:2).

Christ is seen:

As a jealous God in relation to His people (Zep 1:18; 3:8; 2Cor 11:2).

Jealousy is a strong feeling of possessiveness, often caused by the possibility that something which belongs, or ought to belong, to one is about to be taken away. The word is used in a positive sense (e.g., the jealousy of God), meaning a passionate commitment to something which rightly belongs to one. [from Dictionary of Bible Themes]

Zep 1:18 ... 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.

Zep 3:8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD, "For the day when I rise up as a witness. Indeed, My decision is to gather nations, To assemble kingdoms, To pour out on them My indignation, All My burning anger; For all the earth will be devoured By the fire of My zeal.

2Cor 11:2 For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, so that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.

[from Dictionary of Bible Themes]

God's jealousy demands an exclusive response from his people (Ex 20:4-6; Ex 34:14; Dt 32:16)

God pictured as a jealous husband with an unfaithful wife (Ezk 16:1-63)

God is jealously protective of his people (Joel 2:18; Isa 26:11; Zec 1:14-15; 8:2)

As the Executor of God's judgement (Jn 5:27) in the day of wrath (Rm 2:5,6).

Jn 5:27 and He gave Him authority to execute judgment, because He is the Son of Man (Jn 9:39).

Ac 10:42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead. (Ac 17:31)

As the King of Israel (3:15)

Promises fulfilled in Christ:

Zep 3:14-20 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has taken away His judgments against you, He has cleared away your enemies. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You will fear disaster no more. 16 In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: "Do not be afraid, O Zion; Do not let your hands fall limp. 17 "The LORD your God is in your midst, A victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy. 18 "I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts— They came from you, O Zion; The reproach of exile is a burden on them. 19 "Behold, I am going to deal at that time With all your oppressors, I will save the lame And gather the outcast, And I will turn their shame into praise and renown In all the earth. 20 "At that time I will bring you in, Even at the time when I gather you together; Indeed, I will give you renown and praise Among all the peoples of the earth, When I restore your fortunes before your eyes," Says the LORD.

The LORD has taken away His judgments against you (v. 15)

Rom 8:32-34 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? 33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; 34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

He has cleared away your enemies; He is a victorious warrior (vs. 15, 17)

Col 2:13-15 When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, 14 having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

The LORD, is in your midst (v. 17)

Heb 10:22 let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience (Heb 4:16; 19, 25; 10:1)

He will exult over you with joy, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

Isa 62:4-5 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," And your land, "Married"; For the LORD delights in you, And to Him your land will be married. 5 For as a young man marries a virgin, So your sons will marry you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.

He will be quiet (rest) in His love,

Jn 3:16-17 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 "For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.

I will turn their shame into praise and renown

Isa 54:4 "Fear not, for you will not be put to shame; And do not feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced; But you will forget the shame of your youth, And the reproach of your widowhood you will remember no more.

When I restore your fortunes before your eyes

2Cor 1:20 For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us.

Col 1:27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Until that time of restoration, Zephaniah gave several explicit commands to the remnant

Zep 1:7 Be silent before the Lord GOD!

Zep 2:1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather,

Zep 2:3 Seek the LORD; Seek righteousness, seek humility.

Zep 3:8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares the LORD,

Zep 3:14 Shout for joy, Shout in triumph, Rejoice and exult with all your heart,