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Zephaniah 1

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Zephaniah 1.

Topics.

- The word of the LORD comes to Zephaniah.
- I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth, declares the LORD.
- God's people pray on their roof tops to the LORD and to pagan god's.
- God will punish the violent and fraudulent on the day of the LORD.
- On that day the traders and all who weigh out silver will be no more.
- God will punish those who say, the LORD will not do good.
- The great day of the LORD is near; the day of the LORD wrath.
- The LORD will make an end of all the inhabitants of the earth.

INTRODUCTION: Zephaniah prophesied during the reforms of King Josiah (640–609 B.C.), who brought spiritual revival to Judah after the long and disastrous reign of Manasseh. Zephaniah pronounced God's judgment on corruption and wickedness, but also his plan to restore Judah. He spoke of the coming "Day of the LORD," when sin would be punished, justice would prevail, and a "remnant" of the faithful would be saved. The term "Day of the LORD" occurs throughout the Bible referring both to impending historical judgments from God and to his final judgment at the end of time. Though Zephaniah does not give details about this day, he speaks of its worldwide consequences (Zeph. 1:18) and calls people to seek the Lord (Zeph. 2:3).

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FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

ZEPHANIAH 1:1

The Word of the LORD comes to Zephaniah.

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

The focus is the people of Jerusalem and of Judah.

- Zephaniah means, hidden of Jehovah; he fearlessly denounced the evils of his time and was the last prophet before Judah's seventy-year captivity to Babylon.
- Cushi was the father of the Prophet Zephaniah.
- Gedaliah was a Grandfather of the prophet Zephaniah.
- Amariah was the son of Hezekiah and great-grandfather of Zephaniah.

Hezekiah: means, Jehovah has strengthened, he was a good king of Judah, he was 25 years old when he began his reign and was the king of Judah for 29 years. His father Ahaz followed the abominable rites of the Moabites by burning children in the fire. One of the first acts of Hezekiah was to destroy the idolatrous altars and high places and cleanse the Temple. The Assyrian king Sargon finally destroyed Samaria (the ten tribes) and deported the people to Assyria, later Sennacherib king of

Assyria invaded the land of Judah (the two tribes) and by military conquest forced the nation into submission to Assyria. Assyria compelled Judah to pay heavy tribute and later decided to destroy Jerusalem, but God saved the city by sending a sudden plague which in one night killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. After Hezekiah's death, his son Manasseh succeeded him.

Josiah: means Jehovah supports him he was the son of Amon and the grandson of Manasseh. Josiah reigned for 31 years. His religious leadership ranks him with Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah as an outstanding religious ruler. Josiah's reign was the last surge of political independence and religious revival before the disintegration of the Southern Kingdom (the two tribes of Judah) which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 B.C.

Amon: was the successor and son of King Manasseh and the father of the illustrious (extremely distinguished and deservedly famous) king Josiah. Amon was an evil king and after two years of reign was slain by officials of his household.

Judah: (means praised) Judah is the name of the Hebrew tribe descended from the man Judah and King David was a member of the tribe of Judah. Both David and Solomon succeeded in unifying the Hebrew tribes, but when Solomon died, all of this came to an end. Ten tribes broke away from the Kingdom and became known as the Northern Kingdom called Israel while two tribes known as the Southern Kingdom called Judah remained at Jerusalem. It is difficult to isolate Judah and Israel because the accounts of Israel and Judah are intertwined with Israel (the ten tribes) predominating.

ZEPHANIAH 1:2-4

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I will Cut off Mankind from the Face of the Earth.

- **Zephaniah 1:2-4:** "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. ³"I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. ⁴"I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.

When the LORD is saying that He will utterly sweep everything away from off the earth and cut Mankind off the face of the earth He is not referring to the entire planet, the focus in this chapter is all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah (Zeph1:4). Zephaniah is using biblical lofty language to highlight the enormous doom and destruction that is about to come on God's people.

For further information concerning lofty language see the title: Lofty Language and Figurative Language of the Bible, in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

Sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem:

following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. The following sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under

shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

ZEPHANIAH 1:5-6

God's people Pray on Roof Tops to the LORD and to Pagan god's.

- **Zephaniah 1:5-6:** those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom, ⁶those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.

Milcom: means the reigning one and refers at this time to Molech who was a god that was worshipped by gruesome orgies in which little children were sacrificed. In some places the arms of the image of the god had been heated and the children that had been slain were placed in them and would then slide into the fiery mouth of the very huge idol. The principal place of the worship of Molech in and after Manasseh was in the valley of the son of Hinnon. For further information see the title: "Molech" in, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

ZEPHANIAH 1:7-9

God will Punish the Violent and Fraudulent on the Day of the LORD.

- **Zephaniah 1:7-9:** Be silent before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is near; the LORD has prepared a sacrifice and consecrated his guests. ⁸And on the day of the LORD'S sacrifice—"I will punish the officials and the king's sons and all who array themselves in foreign attire. ⁹On that day I will punish everyone who leaps over the threshold, and those who fill their master's house with violence and fraud.

Notice how fearlessly Zephaniah proclaims the LORD'S message. His ministry was probably aided by his social positions, simply because he was most likely related to the kings of the day which meant he would have been in a familiar relationship with their sons and the officials.

The day of the LORD'S sacrifice: refers to the day the LORD destroys Jerusalem, its inhabitants and all the people of Judah. These foreboding words of Zephaniah were fulfilled through Babylon. The fierce armies of Babylon invaded the land of Judah, laid their farm land waste, attacked Jerusalem and pillaged the temple and took the inhabitants of Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) into captivity later Babylon conquered Assyria who had previously taken Israel (the ten tribes in the land of Samaria) captive. Israel and Judah were under Babylonian rule for seventy years. They went into captivity to Babylon as two rebellious nations who had turned from God to idols and who were even sacrificing their own children to pagan gods. Archaeologists have found that all of the cities of Judah

were completely destroyed at this time, thus ended the glorious kingdom of David and Solomon. Observers would have said that the Hebrew nation was annihilated, and indeed, the other nations conquered by the Assyrians and Babylonians did cease to exist. But the prophets proclaimed a better hope for the chosen people. "A remnant shall return" Isaiah had said, and in time this remnant, purged and returned, became the basis on which a new Israel would be built.

Now here is the good news: while in captivity God moulded them like a master potter moulds a beautiful clay jar, Israel and Judah went into Babylon as two unfaithful nations that had turned away from the LORD to idols and other gods. Seventy years later, Cyrus (King of Persia) who the LORD called His anointed shepherd and took by His right hand to conquer the Empire of Babylon (Isaiah 44:28) (Isaiah 45:1) gave written permission for Israel to return to Jerusalem. Under Ezra and Nehemiah God brought Israel and Judah back to their beloved city Jerusalem as one united nation faithful to only one God, the LORD their God, the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob (Israel never turned to idols or pagan gods again). Multitudes of Jewish families who had been scattered throughout the nations returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel with triumphant joy and rejoicing. When the temple of God was completed their faith was once again established and a time of prosperity and peace followed. Sadly, Israel as a nation never recognised their Messiah the Christ when he came, but even this was in the LORD'S sovereign will. The prophet Zechariah tells us when, the Lord returns in glory:

- God will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn (Zech. 12:10-14).

ZEPHANIAH 1:10-11

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On that Day the Traders and all who Weigh Silver will be No More.

- **Zephaniah 1:10-11:** "On that day declares the LORD, "a cry will be heard from the Fish Gate, a wail from the Second Quarter, a loud crash from the hills. ¹¹Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar! For all the traders are no more; all who weigh out silver are cut off.

On that day: refers to the day the LORD punishes the officials, the king's sons and those who have turned from God (v8). When the LORD punishes, all Israel's wealth, riches and trade will be taken, enormous wailing will be heard within Jerusalem's walls and throughout their surrounding land.

O inhabitants of the mortar: refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but by extension it can refer to mankind made of the clay of the earth symbolising their mortality.

ZEPHANIAH 1:12-13

God will Punish those who Say, the LORD will Not do Good.

- **Zephaniah 1:12-13:** At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are complacent, those who say in their hearts, 'The LORD will not do good, nor will he do ill.' ¹³Their goods shall be plundered, and their houses laid waste. Though they build houses, they shall not inhabit them; though they plant vineyards, they shall not drink wine from them."

The LORD will search Jerusalem with lamps: means He will thoroughly search out everything evil in the city of Jerusalem, no-one will escape. Zephaniah tells those who believe the LORD will neither do-good or harm and are so self-satisfied that they are totally unaware of the looming doom that is about to come upon them are in for a shock, because

they will be removed from their homes and their farms will be destroyed. When the armies of Babylon invaded Jerusalem and took the people of Judah into captivity for seventy years, strangers and foreigners took possession of their houses and their farmlands.

ZEPHANIAH 1:14-16

The Great Day of the LORD is Near, the Day of the LORDS Wrath.

- **Zephaniah 1:14-16:** The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. ¹⁵A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, ¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the lofty battlements.

The day of the LORD: in this context is a day of terror, destruction and enormous sorrow. Jerusalem was destroyed, the LORD'S Temple pillaged, farms were ruined, many of the people's houses were burned and the people themselves became servants to Babylon while others were killed or scattered to live among foreign nations.

ZEPHANIAH 1:17-18

The LORD will make an End of all the Inhabitants of the Earth.

- **Zephaniah 1:17-18:** I will bring distress on mankind, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the LORD; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. ¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the LORD. In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full and sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Walk like the blind: means in spiritual darkness and in confusion and without wisdom.

NOTICE: no matter how strong the governments of the nations or world is or how secure their banks, riches and wealth was, nothing would deliver or save the people, on the day of the LORD'S wrath. The only way Jerusalem and the people of Judah could have escaped the terror and sorrow of the day of the LORD was to repent from their indifference toward God, forsake their idols and pagan gods and turn from their violence and acts of injustice and their grossly wicked ways.

THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Though the focus of Zephaniah's prophetic message is a warning of impending doom coming upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem (v4) because of their gross sin against the LORD the following verses show that Zephaniah's warning of God's judgment can also transcend time and history to arrive upon another great day of the LORD when He will judge all mankind.

- I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declares the LORD. (v2).
- The LORD will sweep away man and beast; the birds and the fish of the sea with the wicked. (v3).
- I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD. (v3).
- I will bring distress on mankind, because they have sinned against the LORD. (v17).
- In the fire of the LORD'S jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed. (v18).
- The LORD will make a full and sudden end of all the inhabitants of the earth. (v18).

The expression, "All mankind shall be cut off from the face of the earth," (v3) does not mean that the entire face of the earth will be devoid of any human life, it carries the idea that all the wicked will be cut off from the earth. This of course will happen when Christ returns in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. The dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth.

Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce. All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

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- Christ was slain, and by his blood he redeemed a people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation and made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Revelation 5:9-10).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory.

For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.
