



## “Universal judgment, Universal hope” (Zephaniah)

Danny Hodges- OT2386

v.1 Zephaniah is unique in that he records for us his ancestry back four generations, no doubt to let us know that he is a descendant of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah was one of the few good kings of Judah. Another good king was reigning during Zephaniah's prophetic ministry, King Josiah. Unfortunately between these two good kings reigned two very wicked kings, Manasseh & Amon (see II Kings 21). Summarize events leading up to Josiah's reign...

vv.2-3 How's that for an opening line? Right away we know that Zephaniah's prophecy goes beyond the land of Israel, even beyond the entire Middle East. God reminds us several times throughout Scripture that the entire world will one day face the wrath of Almighty God (verses?). Animal rights activists do not like prophecies like this! What terrible consequences sin has!

vv.4-6 These are people who knew better. It was not that they were ignorant of truth. They willingly ignored the truth. And included are those who had begun to follow the Lord and yet turned back...

- \* Parable of seed and sower

- \* Hebrews on perseverance

- \* Matt.24:36-51

v.7a This is a call to allow the Lord to search our hearts

- \* Psalm 4: 4 In your anger do not sin; when you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent. Selah

v.8b This refers to Judah's royalty wearing the latest fashions from Nineveh and Babylon. They were imitating the nations around them.

- \* Deut.18: 9 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.

v.9a See I Sam.5:5

v.10 The Fish Gate was located in the northern part of Jerusalem, is the gate through which Nebuchadnezzar entered the city. It was named because of its proximity to the fish market. The New Quarter was northwest of the temple area.

v.12 Wine left to ferment too long forms a hard crust and the liquid becomes syrupy & bitter. These people had become hardened, and they had convinced themselves that the Lord would never judge them, at least not any time soon.

\* See II Peter 3:3-10

v.14a Hebrew scholars tell us that grammatically, this verse stresses the word "near," which in the Hebrew is the first word in the text. Zephaniah wrote this shortly after 622 B.C., and 17 years later, Judah became a vassal of Babylon and many of her best men were deported. And then in 597 the city was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and another 10,000 people deported. The siege lasted a long time, and in the end Jerusalem was destroyed.

v.16 Corner towers were typically key strongholds of defense.

v.18 See Ezekiel 7:19 (context); His jealousy = His consuming passion that people follow Him and not false gods, because the ultimate end of following false gods is judgment.

2:1-2 This is a call to assemble, and repent. When God speaks so clearly of coming judgment it is not because it is His desire to judge. On the contrary, God does not want anyone to perish (II Peter 3:9). Matthew Henry says that it was not God's intention to frighten them out of their wits, but to frighten them out of their sins."

2:3 This is a call for those who have repented to continue to live righteously, remain humble, and trust in the Lord to shelter you when He pours out His wrath. And this is where the author's name has meaning. Zephaniah means "The Lord hides."

2:4-15 Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, & Ekron were four of Philistia's major cities. Moab & Ammon are descendants descending from the incestuous relationships between Lot & his daughters (Gen.19). They became enemies of their brothers. It was the king of Moab that hired Balaam to put a curse on Israel (Num.22). In the era of the Judges Moab and Ammon made repeated attempts to conquer Israel (Judges 3, 10, &11). And Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & Amos record how they violated Judah's borders and ridiculed the people of Israel. The Cushites include southern Egypt, Sudan, and northern Ethiopia. Nineveh, for about 200 years, was superior in strength than any other city of her time (study of Nahum).

\* I Peter 4: 17 For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18 And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?" 19 So then, those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

3:3-4 See Micah 3:9-12

3:5b They are hardened in their sin

3:9-21 This is a wonderful picture of what follows universal judgment...

Zephaniah is yet another prophetic voice reminding us that judgment is coming, and judgment that touches every part of the world. See Isa.24:1-3, 6; Jer.25:30-33; Ezekiel 38:20; 39:21; Joel 3:1-2a; ; Micah 1:2-4; 7:13; Malachi 4:1; Heb.12:26-27; II Peter 3:10.

## II. LESSONS

### A. Wake Up

\* See Rom.13:11-14; Eph.5:8-14; Rev.3:1-3

### B. Watch

\* Matthew 24: 42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

\* See II Peter 3:11-18

### C. Warn

\* In light of the certainty of coming judgment, I am to warn everyone I can.

\* See Ezekiel 3:17-19; 33:7-9

\* Acts 24: 25 As Paul discoursed on righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you."

\* Acts 2: 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." (Note: He's talking to religious people at a religious gathering).

\* Why do we sometimes not warn people?

- Hosea 9: 7 The days of punishment are coming, the days of reckoning are at hand. Let Israel know this. Because your sins are so many and your hostility so great, the prophet is considered a fool, the inspired man a maniac.

- Gen.19: 14 So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, "Hurry and get out of this place, because the LORD is about to destroy the city!" But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

### D. Worship

\* See Hebrews 12:25-29

## CONCLUSION

\* Even if we believe that the judgment of the world is years away, we should still be concerned now. Why? Hebrews 9: 27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment...10: 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

