

Minor Prophets
Zephaniah
Lesson 1 (introduction)

I. Title,

A. Zephaniah,

i. The Author,

- a) the name Zephaniah means “Yahweh Hides” (God Protects)
 - or Jah has Secreted,
 - Jah is the sacred name of God, the one that a Jew would not speak.
 - As opposed to El- which is to be interpreted as Mighty, strength,, creator, but all referring to God.
- b) Tsaphhan-Yay
 - the first part literally means hidden of covered, to hoard, or reserve.
 - The second, Yah, “the self existent” the proper name of God.
 - Actually the name of God is Jehovah, but because of the reverence, they shortened it down to Jah, in order not to speak the name of God
- c) Some commentators suggest the name “God hides” speaks of the fact that God will hide Hid faithful during the days of judgment.
 - **Chapter 2, Vs.3** “Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be **ye shall be hid** in the day of the Lord's anger.”
 - the word there is to conceal, to keep, or to close.

ii. His Linage,

- a) In **vs.1:1**, it mentions Hezekiah, most commentators believe this is referring to King Hezekiah which reigned from 715-686 B.C.
 - And if this is the case, then he would be the Great-Great-Grandson,
 - this only really matters because it does give him a different prospective on the political and the spiritual aspects of what the prophecies he gives concerns.
 - We see the same thing in our world today, simply because someone is of the right lineage, then they are give a little more creditability in their family business.
- b) Hezekiah was considered a godly king,
 - He was one of the most prominent kings of Judah mentioned in the Old Testament,
 - He was also one of the kings mentioned in the lineage of Jesus recorder on Matthew,
 - **Matthew 1:9&10** Some versions translate it “Ezekias”
 - An interesting thing about the lineage,
 - Zephaniah was the great great grand son of Hezekiah, so was Jechonias
 - or Jeconaih, this is the king that the prophecy said his seed would not be king, or rule over Israel.
 - So Zephaniah and Jechonias were of the same generation,
 - it is amazing how one can follow the Lords will while another is so far from it.

II. History

A. The time of the writing,

i. “In the days of Josiah”

- a) Josiah was basically the last godly king Judah had,
 - He was also the one we spoke of in the intro to Habakkuk, that went up against the Pharaoh of Egypt, Necho,
 - as a result he was hit by an arrow and killed (**II Kings 23:29 & II Chronicles 35:20-24**)
- b) But before all of that, Josiah tried to do good,
- c) He was only 8 when he took the throne, after the assassination of his father.
- d) in his 18th year of his 31 years on the throne he ordered the high priest Hilkiel to take the tax money they have collected to renovate the temple,
 - First, I must say, this was a unusual time of Israel,
 - to the east the Assyrian empire was starting to crumble, but the Babylonian empire hadn't hit it's stride yet
 - to the west, Egypt was trying to recover from the Assyrian rule.
 - This left Judah to be at relative peace for a time, and allowed Josiah to reign as he pleased.
 - So he ordered the restoration of the temple,
 - during this renovation, the high priest found a book called the book of the law of God, some scholars believe this to be the book of Deuteronomy.
 - When the priest gave it to him, and he read through it, he discovered that God had warned the people if they did not obey His law, there would be consequences.
 - So Josiah began a revival of sorts,
 - (now we know morality cannot be legislated, but Josiah was going to try)
 - He called for an assembly of elders and rulers, and encouraged them to renew the covenant with God
 - He set out to destroy all the idols and pagan temples in the land,
 - even to the point where he ordered the execution of the pagan priest,
 - not only that, but he ordered the bones of the dead priest to be relocated.
 - And the graves burned out.
 - This was in fulfillment of a prophecy that had went out nearly 300 years earlier,
 - **I Kings 13:1-3** “And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Beth-el: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2 And he cried against the altar in the word of the Lord, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the Lord; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. 3 And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the Lord hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out.”
 - This was the fulfillment of these prophecies,
 - He even went to other territories and tried to rid them of the pagan influence,
 - and it was Josiah that returned the Ark of the Covenant to the temple.

ii. Wonder Why God didn't stop the coming destruction?

- a) We need to ask the question, if he was a good king, and he lead, or tried to lead Israel to repentance, why wouldn't God stop the judgment from coming.
 - After all, we read in the book of Jonah how Nineveh repented and the destruction was put off. It wasn't until years latter after a new king rose, and the city sunk back into sin.

- **II Kings 22:16-17&19&20** “Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: 17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched..... 19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. 20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place.”
 - So because of the sin of the Nation, this judgment would come, but Josiah wouldn't see it.
 - **See Also II Chronicles 34**
 - Josiah would be killed by an arrow in battle against the Egyptian Pharaoh Necho.
- Also remember it is his grandchild that is the one that is evil in the sight of the Lord, and God tells his seed he will not rule in Israel.
- It was just 20 years before Babylon would start their destructive march through Israel also.
 - So even tho, it was a good time in Israel, the people were still proud, they were still rebellious, and God was still allowing the Babylonian army to build in power, and take over Israel.
 - Judgment was at hand, that is “the day of the Lord” was approaching.

III. Theme, The Day of the Lord,

A. Prophecies of Contrast,

i. The Day of the Lord,

- a) the period of judgment that was coming was referred to as the day of the Lord,
 - Zephaniah was not the only writer to use this phrase,
 - **See Isaiah 13:9; Joel 1:15, 2:28-32; Amos 5:18**
 - for Zephaniah this phrase meant that Jerusalem would be destroyed, and the monarchy of Judah would cease to exist.

ii. Prophecies of Dark times,

- a) Zephaniah is said to paint a darker picture of the judgments of God than any other prophet,
 - In the book he will pronounce judgment on:
 - Nations,
 - Israel,
 - back to Nation,
 - and back to Israel again.

iii. Prophecies of Light times,

- a) Zephaniah also paints a bright picture of Israel's future,
 - the last 11 verses of chapter 3 focus on the future of Israel,
 - thus once again ending the book of prophecy not with destruction and judgment, but with hope and a promise.