

Minor Prophets: Past, Present & Future

Zephaniah: Prophet of the Lord Who Protects

Key Verses: *1:12 And at that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who settle down comfortably, who say to themselves: The Lord will not do good or evil. 2:3 Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth, who carry out what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be concealed on the day of the Lord's anger.*

Can a person hide from God's judgment on the Day of the Lord? The great Day of the Lord has not arrived yet, but it is coming. There will be no hiding or escape. Be ready!

Like Isaiah, Zephaniah, whose name means "The Lord Hides," was from the royal line of David. He was the great-great-great grandson of Hezekiah and prophesied during the reign of King Josiah (641-609 BC 2 Kings 22-23 & 2 Chron. 34-35), which would have made him a contemporary of Nahum and Jeremiah. He was a relative of the king with a message.

The Day of the Lord and the Jews 1:1-2:3

Cf. 2 Kings 23:25-27 - Josiah who started his reign at age eight, led a great celebration of the Passover, and other reforms. But it was not enough to undo the great evil of Manasseh, the most wicked king in Judah's history. He placed idols of other gods in the temple in Jerusalem, including Asherah, the goddess of fertility worshipped through sex acts and included child sacrifice to gods like Molech. He made Jerusalem a city filled with bloodshed. Cf. 2 Kings 21:2-16

1:12 God's search will be thorough. 2 K 21:13 *I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.* There is no escape for the complacent who believe God will do nothing about their lifestyles. Cf. Obadiah 1:4 "no hiding". A remnant is mentioned three times and out of them God will build a nation 1:12; 3:8,20.

1:18 There is no buying your way out with material wealth. A message to the elite rich of the world. Also a message that projects forward to the future when all the earth will be consumed, Cf. 2 Peter 3:10. From world destruction will come a day of world adoration. Cf. note on 2:10 below

2:3 There is mention of a hope is for a remnant of the humble who seek the Lord, obey and are righteous. "Perhaps" they will be sheltered. Did the "perhaps" get the attention of the complacent. God's "Maybe" had requirements. He would not have said it if He didn't want to do it. Would they listen?

Doing does not save us but shows that we have faith. We don't just slide through but live a life worthy of God. 2 Tim. 2:21 *..be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.* Jesus said in Matthew 24 that the end times will include much deception, 24:13 *But he who endures to the end will be saved.* It is a wake up call to not be complacent, not give in nor give up. *We are not those who draw back and are destroyed, but those who have faith and are saved* Heb. 10:39.

Jesus fed and was followed by thousands, yet there were only 11 apostles and 109 other disciples = 120 total in the upper room Acts 1:15. 1 Cor. 15:6 mentions 500+ that Jesus appeared to post resurrection prior to his ascension. Yet, the numbers reflect a remnant that

God would use to evangelize the world. God is patiently waiting for people to turn to Him in faith. Rom. 11:25-26; 2 Peter 3:11. The day is coming! Are you ready?

Consider the contrast from the promise of a future day of the Lord spoken of in 1 Thes. 4:13-18. On that Day of the Lord his faithful will be taken above the carnage.

The Day of the Lord and the Nations 2:4-15

The surrounding nations and Assyria will fall under judgment for their actions. (The 3rd prophet to mention Nineveh - 2:13)

2:10 As in Obadiah 1:11, mocking and insulting God's people has a penalty. Gen. 12:1-3 mentions blessings and curses based on treatment of Israel.

Jesus summed it up in the Golden Rule, Matthew 7:20 "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.*" The people of God act differently than the world. God will avenge His people. 2 Peter 2:9; 1 Thes. 1:6-8; Rom. 12:17-21. God, who is love avenges as we cannot due to our limited perspective. God also extends His love in mercy and grace, teaching us to go beyond our standards to His. God will judge the nations of the world. Rev. 19:19-21 God's preference however is Rev. 7:9-10.

The Day of the Lord and the Kingdom 3:1-20

As the nations are told they will get their due, Jerusalem comes into focus and Jerusalem is far from innocent.

3:1 Rebellious; 3:2 Disobedient 3:3-4 Civil & religious leaders corrupt

3:5 Yet, God is faithful Cf. 2 Tim. 2:13 *..if we are **faithless**, He remains faithful, for He cannot disown his own.*

3:8-9 God's call to wait. Words of hope for the faithful. We are to wait, not just patiently, but faithfully. Zech. 8:18-23 They will be a sought out people. A day of restoration is coming when all nations will call upon the Lord from cleansed lips (Isaiah 6:1-8), speaking a "pure speech" without false claims nor coming from empty hearts, but everyone glorifying God. A day of "one accord." What a day!

3:12-13 A meek and humble people, a righteous remnant, who speak without deceit, and lie down in peace without fear.

3:14 It is time to sing of God's coming deliverance!

3:17 Who will restore Jerusalem to a place of glory? *The Lord God is among you, a Warrior who saves.* *Rev. 19:15 Paul uses similar language of the church in Col. 2:13-15. Triumph by the cross over all rulers and authorities. In Eph. 1:20-23. Jesus is raised above by resurrection *"far above every ruler and authority, power and dominion.; He has subjected everything under His feet"*

Jesus and all Israel/Church, made up of Jew and Gentile (Gal 3:28), are victors. Let's live, love and minister like it until, *"we have fought the good fight, finished the race and kept the faith."* 2 Tim. 4:8