

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah who also prophesied during the reign of Josiah (who reigned 31 years in Judah--c. 640-609 B.C.).

The account of Josiah's reign is given in 2 Kings 22:1-23:28. He was one of the best kings Judah had. He is known as The Reformer since he did many things to bring the people back to the Lord and to purify their worship which had been corrupted through the idolatry of Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh.

Zephaniah's genealogy is traced back ~~three~~^{four} generations--to Hezekiah, who was also the father of Manasseh.

It is impossible to put an exact date on Zephaniah's prophecy, but most writers place it before the time of Josiah's reform (which came in his 18th year). Therefore, it would seem that the years, 626, or 625 B.C., would probably be good dates to assign to this prophecy.

Zephaniah seems to avoid all historical references, and possibly the reason for this is stated in 2 Kings 23:25-27. (Read.) At this point in Judah's history their defeat at the hands of the Babylonians was certain because of their sins. Therefore, Zephaniah writes to warn of judgment, projecting himself to THE DAY OF THE LORD, which is HIS THEME.

Zephaniah's chief place among the prophets seems to be that of A CONFIRMER OF THE MESSAGES GIVEN BY PROPHETS WHO PRECEDED HIM--MESSAGES WHICH FORETOLD THE DAY OF THE LORD. This included:

- 1) Isaiah (2:11, 12).
- 2) Jeremiah (30:7, 8), Zephaniah's contemporary.
- 3) Hosea (2:16, 18).
- 4) Joel (1:15; 2:1). He, like Zephaniah, has this as his theme.
- 5) Amos (5:18).
- 6) Obadiah (v. 15).
- 7) Micah (4:6, 7).
- 8) Habakkuk (3:16).

Note: This includes all of the pre-exilic prophets except Jonah and Nahum who were primarily concerned with Nineveh and Assyria.

It would be difficult to establish any event with greater certainty in view of the many times it is mentioned by the prophets.

What is THE DAY OF THE LORD?

The prophets picture it as a day of judgment and also a day of blessing--the judgment always coming first. It will be climaxed by the coming of the Messiah who introduces the time of blessing. Therefore, the Day of the Lord includes the Tribulation Period and the Millennial Reign of Christ--both periods which are yet future.

- Outline:
- I. Introduction (1:1).
 - II. The Prophecy of the Day of the Lord--with special emphasis upon what it will mean to Judah and Jerusalem (1:2-18).
 - III. An Appeal to Judah for Repentance before the Day of the Lord (2:1-3).
 - IV. The Prophecy of Judgment on the Nations Around Judah (3:1-15).
 - V. God's Denunciation of Judah (3:1-7).
 - VI. The Prophecy of Blessing in the Day of the Lord (3:8-20).
This will include:
 - A. Judgment upon the nations (3:8).
 - B. The cleansing of Judah and all Israel (3:9-13).
 - C. The rejoicing of Israel under the blessing of God (3:14-20).

What are the special lessons of the book?

- 1) God will eventually bring judgment upon the earth because men have sinned against Him and have not sought Him. This has special reference to those who have had an opportunity to hear and know the Word of God. Zephaniah's place among the prophets also confirms this.
- 2) Ch. 2, vv. 1-3, indicates that God gives men adequate time and opportunity for repentance. His grace is most amazing!
- 3) The Lord has a special place in His heart for the people of Israel. His purposes for the earth are centered in what the Lord will do through them. Cf. v. 8 in ch. 2: "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the revilings of the children of Ammon, whereby they have reproached my people . . ."

Also 2:10:

"This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts."

- 4) God does not overlook sins that His people commit. Cf. 3:1-7.
- 5) Again--the amazing grace of God from 3:8 to the end of the book. Also we see the ultimate fulfillment of every purpose of God with respect to the earth.

Note: In noting that the speaker in 3:8 is the Lord, it would seem that this must be the Lord Jesus Christ when we read Matt. 25:31-46.