

Minor Prophets #9 ZEPHANIAH

HOSEA took a faithless wife And spoke of judgement, love and life
JOEL told of locust plagues The Spirit and the end of the age
AMOS left his flocks and trees To call the nation to its knees
OBADIAH prophesied of Edom and its foolish pride
JONAH tried to run away, but lived to preach another day
MICAH spoke of God's great plan to change the world by changing man.
NAHUM showed that God is great And prophesied Assyria's fate
HABAKKUK thought the Lord unfair But found the truth through faith and prayer
ZEPHANIAH made it clear The great day of the Lord was near.

Read: Zephaniah 1:14-17; 3:16-17, 20

Zephaniah and King Josiah

- Zephaniah was Hezekiah's great-great-grandson
- Zephaniah prophesied in the days of Josiah (2 Chron 34 and 35)
- Josiah's grandfather Manasseh and his father Amon promoted idolatry and wickedness in the land
- Josiah became king at age eight
- At 16 he began to seek the Lord
- At 20 he banished idolatry (as a result of Zephaniah's prophecy?)
- At 26 he restored the worship of the Lord

The day of the Lord

- 'The day of the Lord' is a dominant theme
- See 1:7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 18; 2:2, 3; 3:8, 11, 16, 19, 20.
- In the OT this normally means a day of judgement
- See Isaiah 2; Amos 5:18; Joel 1:15

Zephaniah pronounced judgement on—

- The whole earth (1:1-30)
- Judah (1:4-2:3)
- Philistia – west (2:4-7)
- Moab – east (2:8-11)
- Cush – south (2:12)
- Assyria – north (2:13-15)
- Jerusalem (3:1-7)

See map.

The day of the Lord

- OT prophets usually saw beyond their own time...
- The day of the Lord also describes the end of the age
- Read 1 Thessalonians 5:4; 2 Thess 1:10; Heb 10:25

Reasons for judgement

- Idolatry (1:4-9)
- Materialism (1:10-13)
- Disobedience (3:1-2)
- Unbelief (3:2-3)
- Corruption (3:3)
- Sacrilege (3:4)
- Arrogance (3:5)
- Many of these apply to us today!

The day of the Lord

Read Zeph. 1:14-15

It was to be a day of...

- Discipline (1:7-9)
- Despair (1:10)
- Destruction (1:11-13)
- Distress (1:14-15)
- Darkness (1:15)
- Disaster (1:16-18)

What if the age-ending day of the Lord were to occur right now? Would we be ready?

The words of this 18th century Methodist hymn are very clear on this matter—

*Lo! he comes, with clouds descending,
once for our salvation slain;
thousand thousand saints attending
swell the triumph of his train:
Alleluia! alleluia!
Christ the Lord returns to reign.*

*Every eye shall now behold him,
robed in dreadful majesty;
those who set at nought and sold him,
pierced, and nailed him to the tree,
deeply wailing, deeply wailing
shall the true Messiah see.*

*Now redemption, long expected,
see in solemn pomp appear;
all his saints, by man rejected,
now shall meet him in the air:
Alleluia! alleluia!
See the day of God appear!*

*Yea, amen! let all adore thee,
high on thine eternal throne;
Saviour, take the power and glory;
claim the kingdom for thine own:
Alleluia! alleluia!
Thou shalt reign, and thou alone.
(John Cennic, revised by Charles Wesley)*

A paraphrase of the last four lines –

*Saviour, take the power and glory; claim MY kingdom for thine own: Alleluia! alleluia!
Thou shalt reign in me alone.*

A day of blessing

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 (ESV)

The day of the Lord is not only a day of judgement, it is also a day of blessing

Future blessing

- Holiness (3:9) – ‘pure speech’
- Humility (3:12) – ‘a people humble and lowly’
- Honesty (3:13) – ‘no lies’
- Happiness (3:14-16) – ‘rejoice and exult’
- Help (3:16-17) – ‘he will save’
- Healing (3:18-19) – ‘save the lame’
- Honour (3:19) – ‘shame to praise’
- Home (3:20) – ‘gather you together’

God’s promises

Through Zephaniah, God gave some wonderful promises. See 3:15-17.

- The Lord is with you
- There is nothing to fear
- No reason to give up
- He is mighty to save
- He will rejoice over you
- He will quiet you
- He will exult over you with singing

Minor Prophets - Zephaniah

It is astonishing to think of God rejoicing over us with song. Let's give God something to sing about! My prayer is that I will live in such a way that God will rejoice, not grieve, over me.

What shall we do?

Our responsibility...

- Be silent (1:7)
- Seek righteousness (2:3)
- Seek humility (2:3)
- Wait for the Lord (3:8)
- Sing, shout and rejoice! (3:14)

First we are quiet before the Lord. Then we humbly seek him and patiently wait for him. Then we, too, sing, shout and rejoice!

SOMETHING TO THINK OR TALK ABOUTBiblical

1. King Manasseh encouraged idolatry as did his son Amon. How did Amon's son Josiah respond to Zephaniah's message? (Zeph 1:1-6; 2 Chron 34:3-7).
2. What can you find out about the gods named in 1:4-5?
3. When the Assyrians left Judah, local leaders took over. What were they doing wrong? (1:8-11). Note: Different translations might help you here.
4. What are the main lessons to be found in 1:14-18?
5. Compare 1:14-18 with Rev 6:12-17. What similarities are there?
6. Name the people denounced in 3:1-4, together with the primary sin of each.

Personal and practical

7. What do 2:3 and 3:12 mean for you personally?
8. To what extent is what 3:13 says about 'the remnant of Israel' true for you?
9. How can we put 3:14 into practice today (a) individually on our own and (b) corporately as a church?
10. What God does (3:15) is the reason for what we do (3:14). What has the Lord done for you that gives you cause to rejoice?
11. If 3:19 was about you, what would it say?
12. How and why does 3:17 encourage you personally?

Memorise 3:17

About Dr Barry Chant

Barry Chant is Senior Pastor of the Wesley International Congregation in Sydney, Australia. He is a regular speaker at church services, seminars, conferences and conventions. Hundreds of thousands of his books have been sold around the world. He has degrees in arts, theology and ministry, a diploma in education and a PhD in history. He was the initiator and former president of Tabor College, Australia.

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