



Zephaniah



THRU the BIBLE

NOTES & OUTLINES WITH

J. Vernon McGee

MINOR PROPHETS



Zephaniah

WRITER: Zephaniah identified himself better than any of the other minor prophets. As Habakkuk concealed himself in silence, Zephaniah went to the opposite extreme more than is ordinary. He traced his lineage back to his great-great-grandfather, who was Hizkiah, whom we know as Hezekiah, king of Judah. Zephaniah was of the royal line (Zephaniah 1:1).

TIME: He located the time of his writing just as clearly as he did his identification—“In the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah” (Zephaniah 1:1). According to the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures, Zephaniah was the last of the prophets before the captivity. He was contemporary with Jeremiah and probably with Micah. His was the swan song of the Davidic kingdom. He is credited with giving impetus to the revival during the reign of Josiah.

THEME: The dark side of love. Sweetness and light are associated with love on every level, and rightly so, but this aspect does not exhaust the full import of love. Love expresses itself always for the good of the one who is loved. This is the reason that it is difficult to associate love with the judgment of God. The popular notion of God is that He is a super Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One nature of His is expressed by love, and the other nature is expressed in

wrath by judgment. These two attributes appear to contradict one another to the extent that they seem to be describing two different gods. Zephaniah is filled with the wrath and judgment of God (Zephaniah 1:15; 3:8), but there is the undertone of the love of God (Zephaniah 3:17). It is love that prompts a parent to take the child out of the home to a hospital and to deliver him to the surgeon who endangers the life by pressing a scalpel into the vitals. This act is as much an expression of love as are the candies that are brought to the bedside the next week.

TWO THOUGHTS: Two thoughts stand out in this brief book:

- 1 “The day of the LORD” occurs seven times. Obadiah and Joel, the first of the writing prophets, were the first to use this expression; Zephaniah, the last, brings it to our attention again. This has particular application to the Great Tribulation, which precedes the kingdom and is included in the day of the Lord. It is a time of wrath.
- 2 “Jealousy” occurs twice. It is not on the same level as human jealousy, but reveals the love of God for His people who have failed.

OUTLINE:

- I. **Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 1**
- II. **Judgment of the earth and of all nations, Chapters 2:1–3:8**
- III. **Judgments removed; kingdom established, Chapter 3:9-20**

COMMENT:

I. Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 1

V. 1—Zephaniah completely identifies himself and his time (see WRITER and TIME).

V. 2—Worldwide devastation is predicted. The book of the Revelation confirms this and places the time as the Great Tribulation.

V. 3—All living creatures are included in the judgment.

V. 4—Judah and Jerusalem are singled out for judgment.

V. 5—The reason for the judgment is idolatry—three types of idolatry are mentioned.

V. 6—Also they have turned completely from God. Two classes are mentioned: backsliders and those who were never saved.

V. 7—“The day of the LORD” is judgment (see TWO THOUGHTS, also notes on Joel 1:15). Here the coming of Nebuchadnezzar is treated as a picture of the day of the LORD.

“Hold thy peace” means to hush; to keep still.

V. 8—The “sacrifice” is the judgment of Judah.

V. 10—“That day” is the day of the LORD.

V. 12—Evidently this is one of the first groups that said that God was dead. They were the self-sufficient of an affluent society.

V. 13—This marks the end of prosperity and the beginning of a depression.

W. 14, 15—This is a doleful, dreary, and dreadful picture of the Great Tribulation.

V. 16—It is a day of fear.

V. 17—Sin of man brings the judgment.

V. 18—There will be no deliverance. Silver and gold are their gods, and they are powerless to save.

II. Judgment of the earth and of all nations, Chapters 2:1–3:8

CHAPTER 2

V. 1—A call to Israel to come together to plead for deliverance from the wrath of the day of the LORD.

“Not desired” means that they were insensible to the shame of their sinful condition.

V. 2—This is a brief but vivid description of the day of the LORD.

V. 3—The call is extended to the inhabitants of the earth who in meekness seek the Lord.

W. 4-11—This is judgment upon surrounding enemy nations and their idols.

V. 12—Judgment on Ethiopia.

W. 13-15—Judgment on Assyria (literally fulfilled).

CHAPTER 3

W. 1-5—Judgment on Jerusalem. Judgment is in ratio to her privilege.

W. 6-8—Judgment on all nations—this is Armageddon, which ends with the return of Christ to the earth.

III. Judgments removed; kingdom established, Chapter 3:9-20

V. 9—This does not mean there will be one language for the entire world, although there may be only one language—perhaps the language on the other side of the Tower of Babel. The thought here is “pure” in the sense of the removal of the filthy, profane, and nasty language. The “four letter words” will disappear.

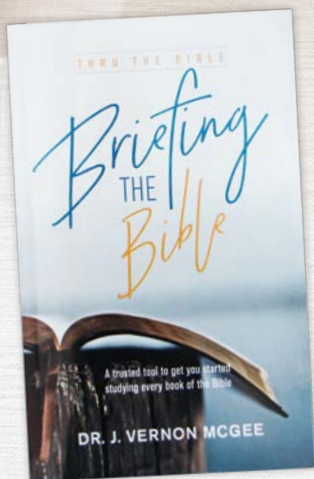
W. 10-12—These are kingdom conditions.

W. 13-16—The remnant of Israel enters the kingdom. Their attitude and speech are changed. Fear is removed. The Lord Jesus Christ reigns over them personally. This refers to the second coming of Christ.

V. 17—This verse is the key of the book. This is the white light in a black background. The purpose of judgment is not vindictive, but to cleanse and purify in order that blessing and goodness might ensue from the ordeal. (See author’s message, “The Dark Side of Love.”)

W. 18-20—This describes kingdom conditions.

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