

### NAME

Mitchell:

The word "Zephaniah" literally means, "Jehovah hides" or "hid of the Lord." If God's people will heed the words of the prophet they will be safe.

### AUTHOR

Mitchell:

We are given a very full pedigree of Zephaniah. His genealogy is recorded back to the fourth generation (1:1), and is of royal descent being the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah. He prophesied during the reign of Josiah (640-609) and was probably God's instrument for the revival of those days (2 Kings 22:23). He is contemporary with Nahum (650) and Jeremiah (626-585), and could possibly have known Daniel (605-530) and Ezekiel (593-571). Nebuchadnezzar had not come down yet, but he soon would.

### DATE

This prophecy probably comes just prior to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Halley (page 435):

Molech (or Moloch): Molech (1:5) is the god especially of the Ammonites. To please some of his wives, Solomon introduced Molech worship in Israel (1 Kings 11:7). The worship of Molech involved child sacrifices. During and after the time of King Manasseh, the main place for the worship of Molech was the Valley of Ben Hinnom (2 Chronicles 33:6), whose Hebrew name (gehinnom) later was used as a Greek name for hell (gehenna) because of the evil committed there.

Halley (page 436):

Cush was south of Egypt and north of Ethiopia; at the time of Zephaniah, a Cushite dynasty ruled Egypt. Within 20 years all these lands - Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush, and Assyria, the terror of the world, with its proud capital Nineveh - would lay desolate under the heel of Babylon.

### THEME

Halley (page 44): *"Coming of a pure language"*

Mitchell: *"God's love expressed by wrath"*

Carl: *"The 11th hour prophet"*

Mitchell:

Approximately 100 years have passed since the fall of the northern kingdom and conditions in Judah were pretty much like the conditions which had prevailed in Israel just before their captivity. Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon were striving for supremacy. Some of Judah's leaders felt that there should be an alliance with one of these powers, while others insisted upon a policy of strict isolationism.

As Zephaniah looked around at the religious life of the people he found foreign priests and altars

to Baal springing up all over the land. Even the short revival under Josiah could not halt the impending judgment. The day of God's wrath was imminent (c.f. Obadiah and Joel).

The intent of the author was to announce to Judah God's approaching judgment.

Mitchell:

The prophecy is almost entirely occupied with the subject of wrath. The term "Day of the Lord" occurs no less than seven times. Zephaniah uses it more than any other prophet. The day of the Lord will be a time of over-whelming terror in which the wrath of God will consume the whole earth. Yet, also in connection with this day, the prophet sees Israel restored in the kingdom.

Zephaniah makes clear that God will yet be merciful toward His people. Like many of the other prophets he ends his pronouncements of doom on the positive note of Judah's restoration. Chapter 3 ends with songs instead of sorrow.

Mitchell:

Hence the judgment is not regarded as an end in itself, but rather as a means of purifying His people and ushering them into His kingdom.

Halley comments on 3:9-20 (page 436):

Three times the prophet speaks of a remnant being saved (2:3,7; 3:12,13), and twice he mentions their return from captivity (2:7; 3:20). Then the Lord will "*purify the lips of the peoples*" so that they may all, near and far, worship God. Pure lips are lips that speak truth and worship in truth (Jesus said similar to the Samaritan woman - John 4:21-24). This is the prediction of a complete and perfect revelation of God. As a result of this revelation, convert from among all nations will be brought to God, joyful with glad songs of redemption, so that all the earth will resound with praise of God's people.

These passages seem to predict the millennial reign of Christ (Revelation 20:4-6) on earth that will follow the tribulation (this BTW is a stretch precipitated by a pre-millennial view of future history). God's final judgment of Satan and the inhabitants of the earth follows this period of peace. Then God's grand finale presents us with a new heaven and a new earth that is pure and where God lives with His people (Revelation 21-22).

Key Word (Nelson's): The Day of the Lord - God is holy and must vindicate His righteousness by calling all the nations of the world into account before Him. The sovereign God will judge not only His own people but also the whole world. Wrath and mercy, severity and kindness, cannot be separated in the character of God.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness"* (Zephaniah 1:14,15).

*"Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do His just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord"* (Zephaniah 2:3).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 3 - The last chapter of Zephaniah records the two distinct parts of the day of the Lord: judgment and restoration. Following the conversion of the nation, Israel finally is fully restored. Under the righteous rule of God, Israel fully inherits the blessing contained in the biblical covenants.

Outline:

- I. God's Wrath on Judah 1:1-2:3
  - A. The great day of God's wrath 1:1-18
  - B. The call to repentance 2:1-3
- II. God's Wrath on The Nations 2:4-3:8
  - A. Heathen nations condemned 2:4-15
  - B. Rebellious Jerusalem condemned 3:1-8
- III. God's Restoration of All Kingdom blessing 3:9-20

**RECIPIENTS**

Judah just prior to the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem and exile. And us...

**CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

The character of God's judgment

Some lessons about love...

*"A parent loves a child when he takes him kicking and screaming to the hospital to have his tonsils ripped out."*

*"Love is a kick in the pants."*

If God didn't love us He wouldn't chasten us:

*"My son, do not reject the discipline of the Lord or loathe His reproof, for whom the Lord loves He reproves, even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights." (Proverbs 3:11,12)*

**RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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