

Zephaniah

"Shelter During Judgment"

Background Information

Three other people in the Old Testament share the name Zephaniah, and it seems that the name means "the Lord hides."

So far as we know, Zephaniah is the only prophet who could trace his family tree back to royalty, as, four generations earlier, his ancestor was Hezekiah

Time Covered and Outline

Due to his royal ancestry, Zephaniah probably was able to gain him an audience with the king of his time, Josiah. Likely, the book contains his work prior to Josiah making his amazing reforms, which occurred in 622 BC. Most scholars put this book before, but near to, that event (possibly within the decade prior). As with most books of prophecy, no real "time" passes, since the book contains visions and speeches.

After a superscription (1:1), the book falls into two major divisions:

- I. The Lord's Judgment (1:2-3:8)
 - A. Upon the whole earth (1:2-3)
 - B. Upon Judah (1:4-2:3)
 - C. Upon surrounding nations (2:4-15)
 - D. Upon Jerusalem (3:1-7)
 - E. Upon all nations (3:8)
- II. The Lord's Blessing (3:9-20)
 - A. For all nations (3:9-10)
 - B. For Judah (3:11-20)

Major Themes

"The Day of the Lord"

Judgment

God's grace (in the midst of judgment)

The remnant

God's sovereignty

God's Character in Zephaniah

Judgment (1:2-3)

Just (3:5)

Loving (3:17)

Wrath (1:14-18)

Jesus in Zephaniah

Jesus is the "Mighty One" who will ultimately bring salvation to all the earth (3:17).

Jesus made at least two allusions to the book of Zephaniah (1:3, see Matthew 13:41; 1:15, see Matthew 24:29).

Key Words in Zephaniah

Meek (Hebrew *'anav*); "to be bowed down." 2:3

Elsewhere in the World...

The Vedas, which continue to be used in the nation of India as a sacred text of philosophy and religion, are completed.

Elsewhere in Scripture...

Zephaniah likely did his work during the earlier years of Josiah's reign, which would put the book in the context of 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34.