

ZEPHANIAH

STUDY GUIDE

AUTHOR & DATE

Unlike most other prophets, **Zephaniah** provides a detailed family tree, identifying his relation to Hezekiah. There is debate as to whether or not the Hezekiah mentioned is the past king of Judah, but if it is, a few interesting inferences may be made.

1. Zephaniah connects himself with godliness since Hezekiah and Josiah are both named as kings.
2. He identifies himself as a Judean and not Ethiopian, since that was a common name.
3. He relates himself to the same royal family he criticizes.

Continuing with the assumption that Zephaniah is royal blood, his name translated “Yahweh has hidden” may bear additional impact based on the fact that he likely was born during the reign of King Manasseh, one of Judah’s most evil kings. Because of the content of Zephaniah’s message, it is clear that he is speaking against the evils occurring during Manasseh’s reign. Yet because he specifically mentions King Josiah in the opening verse, many assume Zephaniah is preaching prior to Josiah’s national reforms in 622 B.C. An additional prophecy describing the fall of Nineveh helps us date the book to somewhere **between 650-620 B.C.**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As mentioned earlier, King Manasseh had a terrible influence on Judah, reversing nearly everything his father, Hezekiah, had accomplished. Despite this, there was an interesting turn at the end of Manasseh’s life. **Take a moment to read about King Manasseh and his successor, Amon, paying special attention to what they did,** as they will reappear in Zephaniah’s words.

- **2 Kings 21:1-26**

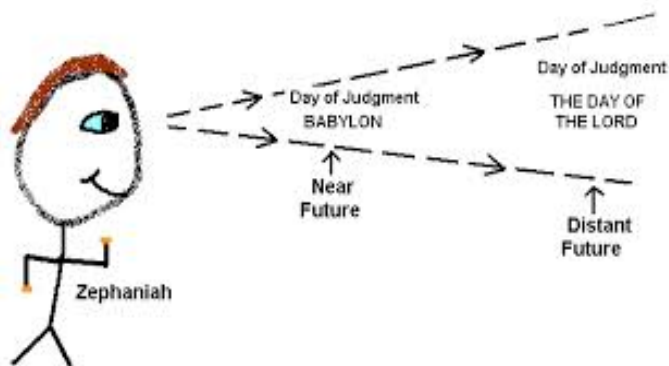
- **2 Chronicles 33:1-25**

Following Manasseh and Amon was King Josiah, who around age 16 began seeking the Lord. Under the godly influence of the high priest Hilkiah, and possibly Zephaniah, Josiah institutes national reforms and sets about to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. It is possible that Zephaniah's words helped pave the way for Josiah's actions, a reformation similar to the ancestor Hezekiah.

Clearly Zephaniah's role under God was to reapply earlier truths sadly forgotten by his own generation. Zephaniah was able to foresee God's judgment of Judah and the world. But he also proclaimed permanent truths concerning the nature of God and his providential relationship to the world and concerning the responsibilities of the people of God.

-- *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*

THE DAY OF THE LORD



This book has as its central message the coming "day of the Lord," with judgment upon Judah and foreign nations, but also with promises of salvation. Of note is Zephaniah's message of judgment begins with Judah, the remaining ones of God's chosen people in the Promised Land, expanding outward to others and ends with the promising hope of salvation and restoration of God's people. As you read, consider Zephaniah's words in light of a soon-coming judgment and a

distant future judgement regarding the Lord's return.

Also remember God's purposes in judgment. This book has concise descriptions of both, so pay attention to how each is described:

1. Purification of His people
2. Punishment of His enemies

LITERARY STRUCTURE

Chapter 1	Habakkuk's Questions
Chapter 2	God's Response
Chapter 3	Habakkuk's Prayer

OBSERVATION WORDS

- God / Lord / His
- Jesus
- Holy Spirit
- "I will..."
- Day of the Lord (judgment)
- Remnant
- "that day" (restoration)

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What is something the Lord taught you through this book? How will you apply this to your life?
- List all the various characteristics of God described in this book. What characteristic of God do you need to focus on in your life and why?
- How do you see Jesus represented in this book? The Holy Spirit?
- What are some of the "I will..." statements? What do you learn from them?

- List the characteristics of the “day of the Lord.” What do you learn?

- Describe the “remnant.”

- In your opinion, does the Lord seem more upset with Judah or the unbelieving nations? Why? What does this teach you?

- Zephaniah 3:9-13 describes benefits awaiting the faithful remnant after His purifying flame of judgment. These verses are also an invitation to evaluate our own lives and determine how the Lord is applying His purifying flame to us now for our personal and spiritual growth. In the table below, write how you can cooperate further with the Lord in each area.

Benefit	How I Can Grow More
Pure language	
Offerings	
Humility	
Trust & Freedom from shame	
Righteousness	
Truth	

- Hebrews 11:31 says, “It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” What does this mean to you in light of what Zephaniah says? How does this compare with the picture he paints at the end of the book?

KEY WORD:

KEY VERSE:

KEY CHAPTER: