

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 38

Zephaniah

In this lesson we continue our survey of the Old Testament, and we continue our survey of the Minor Prophets. Our study will again continue the survey of the remaining prophets of Judah: Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. We will focus on the book written by Zephaniah today.

An important part of Zephaniah's message concerned the protection of Judah from harm in the day of God's judgment. In Zephaniah 2:3, the prophet writes "Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger."

Just prior to the reign of the boy king Josiah, who took the throne at the tender age of eight years old, Judah was living in great sin. Idol worship and other pagan practices were in evident practice and being led by the kings themselves. During Josiah's reign, he attempted to rid the country of these practices, but to no avail as evidenced in Jeremiah's and Zephaniah's writings. In our study, we will be critically examining the moral condition of Judah leading up to the time of Josiah's reign and what God prophesied as a result, through Zephaniah.

For this lesson, read the book of Zephaniah and consider the following questions:

1. What is the central theme of the book written by Zephaniah? (see Zeph. 1:7a)
2. Manasseh as King introduced many pagan and wicked practices to Judah. Read the following references and identify what they were:
 - a. 2 Kings 21:4-5
 - b. 2 Kings 21:6 and 23:10-11
 - c. 2 Kings 21:7
3. Amon, the son of Manasseh, succeeded him as king. How old was Amon when he became king and what did he do about his father's idolatrous practices? (see 2 Kings 21:19-22)
4. How long did Amon reign, and how did it end? (see 2 Kings 21:19,23)
5. Who replaced Amon on the throne? What relationship did the new king have to Amon and Manasseh? (see 2 Kings 21:24)

6. Even after the attempts by Josiah the King to purge the idol worship from Jerusalem and Judah, it still persisted; and Judah continued to sin against God. Zephaniah's prophecy regarding the coming judgment was both a warning to them and an assurance. Compare Genesis 12:1-3 with Zephaniah 3:8-20. What do you observe?

7. Read Romans 11:25-28. How does it relate to Zephaniah's prophecy?

This lesson's message shows us that nothing has really changed within man's heart. It is still naturally inclined to idol worship and doing evil and wicked things against God, perverting the temple, perverting worship, and twisting into evil a relationship that God intended to be holy.

It is also illuminating to see the influence that evil rulers have, not only on their subjects, but also on their children. And yet, Josiah found and followed God. And finally, as we have noted in prior lessons, God is in control. He is not mocked by man's disregard and disrespect of Him, and judgment is as sure today as it was then.

We should be comforted again this week by Zephaniah's assurance that God will protect his chosen elect from judgment; but He will surely bring judgment on the evil of this world.

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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