

Zephaniah

Synthetic reading 2008281630

The people of Jerusalem and of Judah were guilty of idolatry, pride, oppression, & injustice. That's why the prophet **Zephaniah** prophesied that God would *throw hands* and sweep away all those who turned from God or who did not seek God. This was not just about temple worship. This turning away from God was evidenced by worship centers for idol gods, by leaders engaged in corruption and oppression, and by economic practices like predatory lending and crooked trading. It was evident that the people turned from God because of how they turned on each other. The evidence of idolatry is injustice.

Zephaniah prophesied about the day of the Lord. This would be a day when God shows up to set everything right! This was to be a day of anticipation and celebration. Here was their problem – God is no respecter of persons. God deals in equity and justice. God was not coming to choose who's right, but to reward people who did what's right! Because they had turned from The Lord, the Day of judgement would be an unpleasant experience for them. Zephaniah invited them to turn back to the Lord before that fatal day, before it was too late.

God's judgement through the hands of Babylon wouldn't stop at the borders of Judah but would also extend to several surrounding nations who also were guilty of idolatry, oppression, arrogance, & injustice. Regrettably, so many were so intoxicated with evil and inebriated with injustice that they failed to respond to the prophetic invitation to correction even when threatened with discipline. Since the people didn't change their ways voluntarily, God would bring about change violently through an exhibition of God's authority, power, & presence.

**Rev. White's reading notes
based on synthetic reading of the book**

God declared in chapter 3 something quite remarkable! God's great indignation, burning anger, and fiery jealousy would consume all the earth not with the intention of charring the people but with the effect of changing the people! This would result in people having changed tongues and converted hearts! This hopeful promise was not just for the people of Judah, but for all the nations!

The prophecy declared that people from beyond the riverbanks of Cush in Africa would participate in worshipping God! These Africans wouldn't get this God-hearted worship from oppressive, colonial slave ships. They also wouldn't be treated as an under-caste or 2nd class citizens. All these peoples from all these nations would come to worship and experience God together as one equitable people!

So God operates in justice to judge the unjust and to expunge the world of violence and evil so that everyone can live safely and can be fruitful peacefully in a world where even God sings and rejoices over the entire assembly! What a picture of hope, of justice, and of love!

1:1 – 2:3

- 1-6 Judgement for Idolatry & indifference
- 7-18 The Day of the Lord
- 2:1-3 Seek the Lord before it's too late

2:4 – 3:8

- 2:4-15 Demise of Idols/Idolaters
- 3:1-8 Judgement for OPPRESSORS

3:9 - 20

- 9-10 Message of Hope
- 11-20 All Together Now