

Lesson #29

PREPARATION FOR LESSON: read the book of Zephaniah

BACKGROUND

Author: Zephaniah, *hidden/protected by God*; contemporary of Nahum.

He was related to the royal family in Judah 1:1; he was the 2nd cousin of Josiah.

He was born and raised during the time of king Manasseh when believing Jews were hidden.

If he had not been hidden and protected by God, he also would have been killed.

By the time he is 20, the believing Jews are free to live openly thruout the nation of Judah.

Date and Place of Ministry: He taught some 20 years in Jerusalem from c. 640 – 620 BC.

He wrote his book c. 630 BC.

Theme: The justice of God when people abuse His mercy and love.

Purposes: To explain why God's judgment will be so extreme.

To give assurance that God's people, the Jews, will still have a future.

Scripture background: 2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34-35.

OUTLINE

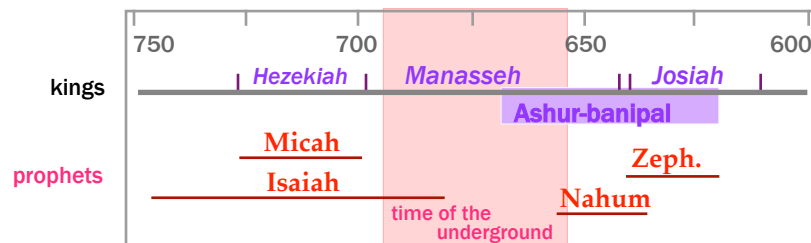
I. God's Justice in the Present 1:1 – 3:8

II. God's Mercy in the Future 3:9-20

HISTORICAL SETTING IN JUDAH

Politically c. 630 BC

- 18 years earlier, in 648 BC, Nahum said Assyria would be destroyed; Judah would gain independence.
- Assyria continues to be the world power of the Middle East; but for the last 10 years Judah has been independent.
- Manasseh died; his son came to power but was so evil, he was killed after 2 years. (640 BC)
- His 8 year old son Josiah is named king - palace leaders rule the first 11 years.



Spiritually There is a minority of believing Jews; Josiah at 16, begins to seek God.

The majority in Judah are ungrateful and have deliberately, willfully rebelled against God.

DEFINITIONS

God's Jealousy means He is committed to what is right and fair.

God's vengeance means His justice.

God's anger and wrath means His judgment; His response to injustice, disobedience and evil.

The Jews prayed, *Because You are a jealous God, pour out Your vengeance, wrath and anger over that nation, leader or people.*

We pray, *Because You are a God who is fair and good, intervene to stop the evil and injustice of that nation, leader or people.*

Day of the Lord means an extended period of time when God responds to injustice and evil. It is not a literal 24-hour day.

The **immediate** meaning for the people in Zephaniah's day is the Babylonian exile that will happen in 44 years.

The **future** meaning is Satan's 7-year kingdom, commonly known the *Tribulation*.

Day of the Lord's wrath means Day (Time) of the Lord's justice

DEVELOPED OUTLINE

God's Justice in the Present 1:1 - 3:8

- On the **nation of Judah** - written c. 630 BC. 1:1 - 2:3

The reason is her idolatry, materialism, arrogance and ungratefulness.

The majority of the people, as well as the priests and leaders are guilty.

The judgment will come quickly; it will be terrible and complete. It will be called the *Day of the Lord*.

The Jews will see their nation (world) consumed, with the land desolate so even the animals are affected.



DEVELOPED OUTLINE

God's Justice in the Present 1:1 - 3:8 continued

- On their **enemy nations** 2:4-15 They are beyond repentance and will be judged
Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, Cushites. They all ceased to exist by the 500's BC as peoples and nations.
At the time of God's Kingdom, their land will be given to the Jews.
Assyria / Nineveh will be utterly desolate, dry as a desert 2:13; no descendants to bear her name. Nahum 1:14
- On the **city of Jerusalem**. Because she is rebellious and full of sin, she will be destroyed by fire. 3:1-8
The majority of Jews refuse to listen to the message of God thru the prophets.
Those who should be the examples – the officials, judges, prophets and priests are the most rebellious.
The majority have not learned from the example of the northern nation of Israel.
Judah is beyond repentance. Only **nations** can come to a point of being beyond repentance.
With **individuals**, as long as there is life, it is never too late to repent.

God's Mercy in the Future 3:9 - 20

The Jews as a people will survive and return from Babylonian exile; they and the nations around them will change.

FUTURE MEANING of individual verses within the chapters.

In the future, before God sets up His Kingdom, He will send world-wide judgment to bring an end to injustice and evil.
He will do it by letting Satan have his kingdom.

2:3 is about the Jewish remnant during Satan's kingdom.

During the last half of Satan's 7-year kingdom, Satan's man will try to kill all the Jews. God will warn the Jewish remnant who believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - the God of their fathers. He will provide a place for them where they can be hidden and protected. Because of this, they will survive.

1:2-3, 15, 18; 3:8 are about the showdown of Satan and his people against Jesus.

The verses are a description of what Jesus will do to Satan and those who chose to follow him.

3:9-20 are about Jesus in His kingdom.

All of God's promises to the Jews will be fulfilled. It will be a time of blessing and joy when the Jews return to Israel.

Verse 9 - The Jews will delight in worshipping and serving God.

Verse 13 - They will be holy and will live in the land without fear of harm.

Verse 20 - They will be given praise, fame and honor as God intended for them. cf. Dt. 26:18

Verse 17 - Jesus will live in their midst as their King.

His joy in seeing this accomplished will be so great that at times He will break into singing.

He will be filled with love and delight for His people the Jews.

The New Testament tells us that we also will be a part of that Kingdom and share in these joys and blessings.

APPLICATION

- ♦ The Old Testament prophets teach us so much about God.
He is in control. No country and no person can rise or fall unless God allows it.
When there are no choices **we** can make, God cares and has the power to either change our situation or take us thru it.
He is our refuge when life becomes overwhelming.
He can turn our darkness into light.
- ♦ Like the Jews in Zephaniah's day, we are facing national crisis and rejection of God.
But as the believing remnant, we can still delight in worshipping and serving God.
We can choose to be holy because Jesus is in our midst. He lives within us by means of the Holy Spirit.
When Jesus sees our lives committed to Him, He is filled with love **for** us and delight **in** us.
He sings joyfully over us.
Jesus gives **us** joy and blessing, and our lives can also bring joy to Him!

