

Zephaniah

Summary

The book of Zephaniah is a prophetic book, classified as one of the twelve Minor Prophets. The superscription at the beginning of the book places Zephaniah as a prophet under Josiah, one of Judah's great kings known for instigating religious reform in the wake of a series of bad kings and declining obedience to God's laws. Zephaniah's prophecy warns of impending judgment on Judah and the world, yet ends on a hopeful note of redemption and restoration of the scattered remnants of true God-fearers.

Author

Zephaniah is named as the author/prophet in the book's first verse (Zephaniah 1:1). The prophet was evidently of considerable social standing due to being a descendant of Hezekiah, an important king of Judah from 715 to 686 B.C.

Date

Zephaniah prophesied during the time of King Josiah, who ruled Judah from 640-609 B.C. It is likely the book was written in the early years of Josiah's reign before the reforms he instigated took place.

Primary Characters

Zephaniah (Zephaniah 1-3)

King Josiah (Zephaniah 1)

Historical Moments

The Superscription References the Reign of King Josiah in Judah (Zephaniah 1)

Nations/Cities/Empires Listed as a Part of God's Judgment (Zephaniah 2-3)

Major Theological Themes

God Is Just - God is a God of perfect justice, even when justice calls for punishment. This makes the sacrifice of Jesus particularly powerful in the light of what punishment we undoubtedly deserve. God went to great lengths to save us through His Son. However, it was not His staying hand, but rather the intervention of Jesus taking the wrath upon Himself that served as God's judgment in the end.

God Redeems His People - After His judgment upon the world, God will gather together and redeem His people. He promises to take away our punishment (Zephaniah 3:15), rejoice over us (Zephaniah 3:17), rescue us, gather us together (Zephaniah 3:19), and bring us home (Zephaniah 3:20). This is a great cause for joy for believers, who have security and hope despite the weariness and hardships our current circumstances may bring us.

Lessons Learned from Zephaniah

Our Actions Have Consequences - Justice is often lauded only when it is applied in our favor. This is an imperfect sense of justice, which is incompatible with the perfect justice of God. By nature, God cannot ignore injustice, however big or small. All things will be judged in the end, and we must not take the mercy we have through Jesus for granted and live unintentional and reckless lives.

God Calls Us to Persevere - God promises to gather and redeem His exiled and scattered people, which serves as a reminder that they are not forgotten. All believers should take this as great hope that our toil here on earth ends in eternal joy with God. We must press on and seek God's will that He has laid out for us with this end in mind.