

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Zephaniah

Book 36

Basic Questions behind the book:

A mixture of punishment and hope in this book. What is our hope in God?

Summary of book:

The book of Zephaniah is a book of prophecy. Zephaniah is another of the Almost Anonymous Bible writers. He was a member of the royal family in the days of King Josiah. Zephaniah seeks to turn the people from idol worship and warns of the coming 'Day of the Lord', which means that Judah will also be judged. Zephaniah predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and looked forward to the restoration of Jerusalem after its destruction by the Babylonians, which happened in 687 BC.

The first chapter is filled with terror. We can sense the oppression and depression his listeners must have felt. They were judged guilty, and they were doomed. But in the midst of this terrible pronouncement there is hope. In chapter two, a whispered promise appears. The people of Judah will be restored. And finally in chapter three, the quiet refrain grows to a crescendo as God's salvation and deliverance is declared.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To turn people away from the wicked ways and to prophecy of the coming 'Day of the Lord'.

Author: Zephaniah.

Recipients: Judah and all nations.

Dating: Probably near the end of Zephaniah's ministry (640 - 621 BC), when King Josiah's great reforms began.

Setting: King Josiah of Judah is attempting to reverse the evil trends of the two previous kings of Judah. Zephaniah's prophecy may have been the motivating factor in his reform.

Links to Jesus:

Christ also predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, or at least of its temple.

Key verses:

"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." (2:3)

"At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honour in every land where they were put to shame." (3:19)