

Sermon, October 30, 2011
“The Remnant”, Zephaniah 3:12-17
Pastor Thomas P. Bellhy

The Books of Prophecy

- Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel
- Minor Prophets: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, **Zephaniah**, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi

Overview of Zephaniah¹:

- The prophet Zephaniah is the likely author, “the LORD hides/protects”
- The time of the writings is around 630 BC.
- Politically, the imminent transfer of Assyrian world power to the Babylonians weakened Nineveh’s hold on Judah, bringing an element of independence to Judah for the first time in 50 years.
- King Josiah’s desire to retain this newfound freedom from taxation and subservience undoubtedly led him to interfere later with Egypt’s attempt to interdict the fleeing king of Nineveh in 609 BC. (2 Chr.35:20–27).
- Spiritually, the reigns of Hezekiah’s son Manasseh (ca. 695–642 B.C.), extending over 4 decades, and his grandson Amon (ca. 642–640 B.C.), lasting only two years, were marked by wickedness and apostasy (2 Kin. 21; 2 Chr. 33).
- The early years of Josiah’s reign were also characterized by the evil from his fathers (2 Kin. 23:4). In 622 B.C., however, while repairing the house of the Lord, Hilkiah the High-Priest found the Book of the Law (2 Kin. 22:8). Upon reading it, Josiah initiated extensive reforms (2 Kin. 23).
- It was during the early years of Josiah’s reign, prior to the great revival, that this 11th hour prophet, Zephaniah, prophesied and no doubt had an influence on the sweeping reforms Josiah brought to the nation. But the evil kings before Josiah (55 years) had had such an effect on Judah that it never recovered. Josiah’s reforms were too late and didn’t outlast his life.
- **Overall Outline of Zephaniah:**
 - I. Introduction (1:1-3)
 - II. The “Day of the LORD” coming on Judah and nations (1:4-18)
 - III. God’s judgment on the nations (2:1-3:8)
 - IV. Redemption of the Remnant (3:9-20)

Major Themes of Zephaniah:

- The “Day of the Lord” was imminent for Judah, but also the last judgment would come at the end of time.
- God is sovereign ruler over all the universe.
- In the midst of judgment God will be faithful to His remnant.

The message of Zephaniah is a message of hope; God will exercise judgment, but His plan of salvation will not be unfulfilled; there will be a remnant true to Him.

1. Judgment shall come to pass

- **Zephaniah 1:17-18** ¹⁷ *I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the LORD; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung.* ¹⁸ *Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the LORD’S wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.*
- The “Day of the LORD” is mentioned more often by Zephaniah than any other old testament author.
- The day of the Lord is the day of judgment (1) upon Jerusalem/Judah, which will come shortly when the Jews are led into exile to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar’s army; (2) that will come upon nations throughout history (Egypt, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, ...); (3) that will come to all who have ever lived on the last day.
- It is difficult to escape the judgment of man...
- How much more impossible to escape the judgment of one who sees all.

¹MacArthur, John Jr: *The MacArthur Study Bible*. electronic ed. Nashville : Word Pub., 1997, c1997, Zeph 1:1

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2. Yet God makes a way of salvation

- **Zephaniah 2:3** ³ *Seek the LORD, All you humble of the earth Who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden In the day of the LORD'S anger.*
- God wants His people to pursue Him, seek His face, turn to Him, be lovingly obedient to His ways, know Him as a child of God.
- God desires reconciled relationship with His children.
- He is always calling us to turn away from sinful behavior to follow Him.

3. In the midst of judgment a remnant will emerge.

Zephaniah 3:12-13

- ¹² *For I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly. They shall seek refuge in the name of the LORD--* ¹³ *the remnant of Israel; they shall do no wrong and utter no lies, nor shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths. Then they will pasture and lie down, and no one shall make them afraid.*
- Zephaniah prophesies of a people who will emerge out of the desolation and destruction of the judgment of God.
- Those who seek refuge in the name of the Lord.
- Those who enter His house, humble yourself to the host's graciousness to take care of you, obey the commands of the house, learn from the owner...relationship!
- **Romans 9:6-8** ⁶ *But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel;* ⁷ *nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED."* ⁸ *That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.*
- The remnant of Israel are those who believe

4. There is cause for rejoicing.

Zephaniah 3:14-16

- ¹⁴ *Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; shout, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!* ¹⁵ *The LORD has taken away the judgments against you, he has turned away your enemies. The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; you shall fear disaster no more.* ¹⁶ *On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands grow weak.*
- The peace of God that surpasses all understanding has come upon you (Phil 4:7).
- Sing, shout, rejoice, exult! Eternal judgment has passed (John 3:16).
- There is nothing to fear so don't grow weak even in stormy trials (Romans 5:3-5).
- The remnant has peace with God, in relationship with God, rejoicing over God's work for our reconciliation.

5. God is with you and rejoices over you

Zephaniah 3:17

- ¹⁷ *The LORD, your God, is in your midst, a warrior who gives victory (mighty to save); he will rejoice over you with gladness, he will renew you in his love; he will exult over you with loud singing ...*
- There is a great message of hope in Zephaniah.
- The remnant is in the presence of God alone who is mighty to save you;
- The remnant is in the presence of the one who rejoices over you and will renew you in a loving relationship with Him as He exults over YOU.

Conclusion:

- Just as those in the days of reformation called the church back to the word of God, the church in our culture is in need of a second reformation; The call for the remnant to emerge.
- By the Word of God alone, for the Glory of God alone, by Christ's work alone we are saved, by grace alone, through faith alone.
- The message of Zephaniah is a message of hope; God will exercise judgment, but His plan of salvation will not be unfulfilled; there will be a remnant true to Him.