

"On the Way" 365 Bible Reading Plan

ZEPHANIAH 3

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The prophet Zephaniah is probably the prophet that most people are the least familiar with among the prophets. Yet, Zephaniah is a contemporary of Jeremiah and Huldah, the prophetess. If you read 2 Chronicles 34:14-33, you will readily see the times in which Zephaniah lived and prophesied. It had been a century since the fall of the northern kingdom. The sons of Hezekiah, especially Manasseh, had brought about the most sinful administration the kingdom of Judah had experienced. God, in His mercy, forgave Manasseh because of his repentance, but the damage was done, and judgment was coming. In the process of cleaning and cleansing the temple, a copy of the Torah was found and brought to King Josiah. Josiah and Hilkiah called the nation to repentance and to keep the Passover as prescribed by the Torah.

Never since the time of the prophet Samuel had there been such a Passover. None of the kings of Israel had ever kept a Passover as Josiah did, involving all the priests and Levites, all the people of Jerusalem, and people from all over Judah and Israel. (2 Chronicles 35:18-19) The prophet Zephaniah's name means "Hidden/protected by YHVH," and indeed, God hid the prophet in the hollow of His hand, as all His servants until the days and mission are accomplished. The

prophet opens his message with a pronouncement of judgment that was coming to Jerusalem for the sins of the people. The revival that took place during the days of godly King Josiah only postponed the judgment of God; it did not negate it. God will judge any nation that does not acknowledge Him as the true and living God. The more light and greater knowledge a nation and people have the greater the responsibility and accountability. Judah bore a harsh judgment, more than the nations around them, because they had greater light. **"...to whom much is given, much shall be required."** The coastal cities of Gaza, Ashdod, and Ashkelon were prophesied against, as well as the surrounding nations of Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria, along with its capital, Nineveh. Then the prophet turns both barrels of judgment against Jerusalem, the city of God. Yet in wrath and judgment, the prophet gives hope to the faithful remnant and the promise that God would not forget His covenant that He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God is faithful.

Prayer and Action Steps

It is not enough to begin well. God wants all His children to finish well. Jesus finished the assignment from the Father. If we are to be like Jesus our LORD, we must finish well too.

Date _____ Scripture _____

- Read the chapter. If you have time, read it again.
- Highlight, underline or circle the Key Verse or Verses of the chapter.
- Ask yourself these questions as you read through the chapter.

Is this historical narrative, analogy, metaphor, allegory, or some other element of speech or communicating truth?

What is the Context? Old Testament? New Testament? What is the writer speaking or writing about? To whom is he writing?

Is this a clear passage of Scripture (can only be interpreted one way)? Or could the passage be interpreted legitimately, in two or more ways, according to grammar and context?

Does the passage teach a Biblical Precept; that is, tells you something to be, do or act? _____

Are there principles in this chapter that if followed, would require me to change my attitudes or actions? _____

Does the passage give a Biblical Pattern that is followed here and other places in the Bible? _____
