

ZEPHANIAH

During the reigns of Manasseh (695 - 642 BC) and Amon (642 - 640 BC) the southern kingdom of Judah sank to astounding moral and spiritual depths. These two kings remained loyal vassals to Assyria, and sought to undo all the good that King Hezekiah had accomplished. However, in the year 640 BC --- at the age of only 24 --- King Amon was assassinated by his servants (II Kings 21:23; II Chron. 33:24), and his 8 year old son, Josiah, was made king (II Kings 21:24 - 22:2; II Chron. 33:25 - 34:2). Josiah was the last good king to reign over Judah. When he died in 609 BC --- at the age of only 39 --- Judah would have only 23 years left before her destruction and Babylonian Captivity (586 BC). (From *The Outlined Bible* by Steve Flatt which is available on the BibleWay website.)

Judah and outlying nations around Judah were depleted spiritually as evidenced by idol worship. Zephaniah began his prophesying by addressing all these nations, beginning with Judah.

To Judah

“I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all who live in Jerusalem. I will cut off from this place every remnant of Baal, the names of the pagan and the idolatrous priests— those who turn back from following the Lord and neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him. ... I will punish the princes and the king's sons and all those clad in foreign clothes. On that day I will punish all who avoid stepping on the threshold, who fill the temple of their gods with violence and deceit.” (Zeph 1:4; 6; 8-9)

“Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and against the corner towers. I will bring distress on the people and they will walk like blind men because they have sinned against the Lord.” (Zeph 1:14-17)

To the Philistines

“Woe to you who live by the sea, O Kerethite people; the word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines. ‘I will destroy you, and none will be left.’ ... It will belong to the remnant of the house of Judah; there they will find pasture.” (Zeph 2:5; 7)

To the Moab

“I have heard the insults of Moab and the taunts of the Ammonites, who insulted my people and made threats against their land. ... surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah.” (Zeph 2:8; 9)

To the Cushites

“You too, O Cushites, will be slain by my sword.” (Zeph 2:12)

To the Assyria

“He will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, leaving Nineveh utterly desolate and dry as the desert.” (Zeph 2:13)

To those in Jerusalem

“Woe to the city of oppressors, rebellious and defiled! She obeys no one, she accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord, she does not draw near to her God.” (Zeph 3:1-2)

“I said to the city, ‘Surely you will fear me and accept correction!’ Then her dwelling would not be cut off, nor all my punishments come upon her. But they were still eager to act corruptly in all they did.” (Zeph 3:7)

“I will remove from this city those who rejoice in their pride. Never again will you be haughty on my holy hill. But I will leave within you the meek and humble, who trust in the name of the Lord.” (Zeph 3:11-12)

Key Point from Zephaniah

- When people cease being faithful to God and His commands, only eternal destruction awaits, unless they become aware of their spiritual condition and repent, return, plead for forgiveness and mercy and begin living righteously.