



Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and effective and sharper than any double-edged sword, penetrating as far as the separation of soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It is able to judge the ideas and thoughts of the heart."

Course Text: Zephaniah

We know more about Zephaniah than many of the prophets, certainly a lot more than his two contemporaries, Nahum and Habakkuk, about which we almost know nothing. We have a list of Zephaniah's ancestors to the 4th generation that indicates he is the descendent of King Hezekiah. (Zeph 1:1) We also know that he prophesied during the reign of Josiah in about 625 B.C. This book has very strong words from God to nations of sinful people. There is a great judgment for the tremendous sins of the prophet's day, yet it is also a book of hope. The book announces a great deliverance for the few faithful who will eventually return to bring the Messiah to the world.

Suggested methodology:

1. Let the students have a copy of the lesson well before the class meets. (Perhaps the previous meeting)
2. The students read the Bible book and answer the questions in this lesson before the group meets.
3. At the class meeting allow time for greetings and fellowship. (Save most of this for the end)
4. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst.)
5. Pray (The idea here is to leave our troubles with God so we can give His word our attention with a clear mind.)
6. Discuss the questions on page 5. Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers, when provided, are just one opinion; you may have a better answer. It might be good to establish the norm that only those who have actually read the book should discuss it aloud.
7. Discuss whatever other questions people have on their mind about the Zephaniah.
8. Close in prayer (It is best to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission ahead of time.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, this class is expected to take about one hour.



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Zephaniah Chapters 1 to 3

Zephaniah Chapter 1

In the 1st chapter we notice that this is not something that the prophet decided to do but rather that the prophet received a word from the Lord. This chapter reminds us of the time of the flood and Noah being chosen to build the ark and save a remnant. The problem is the same, but the solution is different. The Lord declares that He will simply sweep away the peoples of the earth. There is not one nation that has satisfied him, and all are to be destroyed one way or another. Please read Zephaniah chapter 1 and answer the following questions:

[1A] How many things will God remove from the face of the earth? _____

[1B] What is near or soon? _____

[1C] How will God search Jerusalem? _____

[1D] Why is God bringing distress on men? _____

[1E] What will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy? _____

Zephaniah Chapter 2

Chapters 2 and 3 speak of the great judgment of Jerusalem and Judah as this people have not worshiped faithfully. They have worshiped at altars to Baal, and have even put idols in the Temple of Jehovah. The Lord says that their blood will be poured out like dust. In the 2nd chapter the Lord speaks about a judgment to come on all the nations around Judah. Each nation is listed by name and the judgment of that nation is given. Please read Zephaniah chapter 2 and answer the following questions:

[2A] Those who have obeyed His commands and who seek what and what might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger? Those who seek _____

[2B] Who will be driven out at noon? _____

[2C] Who will restore the fortune of the remnant of Judah? _____

[2D] Why will Moab and Ammon be plundered and become a desolation forever?

[2E] What will the Lord do to all the gods of the earth? _____

Zephaniah Chapter 3

If it were not for the last part of the 3rd chapter this would be a most discouraging book. In the 9th verse of chapter 3 the text turns to a people to be purified and returned to Judah, a people for the Lord are to be saved. The text speaks of a new humility and a return of the Love of the Lord. It speaks of the Lord again bringing his blessings to a remnant of this nation who has returned to His ways. Please read Zephaniah chapter 3 and answer the following questions:

[3A] Who will do no injustice? _____

[3B] What will be devoured by the fire of the Lord's zeal? _____

[3C] For what will they feel no shame? _____

[3D] Who is the King of Israel? _____

[3E] What will happen before their eyes? _____

----- ANSWERS -----

- [1A] How many things will God remove from the face of the earth? All Zp 1:2
[1B] What is near or soon? The day of the Lord Zp 1:7
[1C] How will God search Jerusalem? With lamps Zp 1:12
[1D] Why is God bringing distress on men? Because they have sinned against the Lord Zp 1:17
[1E] What will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy? All the earth Zp 1:18



- [2A] Those who have obeyed His commands and who seek what and what might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger? Those who seek Righteousness and Humility Zp 2:3
[2B] Who will be driven out at noon? Ashdod Zp 2:4
[2C] Who will restore the fortune of the remnant of Judah? The Lord their God Zp 2:7
[2D] Why will Moab and Ammon be plundered and become a desolation forever? Because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the Lord of hosts. Zp 2:9-10
[2E] What will the Lord do to all the gods of the earth? Starve them Zp 2:11

[3A] Who will do no injustice? The Lord Zp 3:5
[3B] What will be devoured by the fire of the Lord's zeal? All the earth Zp 3:8
[3C] For what will they feel no shame? Their rebellious deeds Zp 3:11
[3D] Who is the King of Israel? The Lord Zp 3:15
[3E] What will happen before their eyes? God will restore their fortunes Zp 3:20

(1) Compare Zephaniah 1:9 to 1 Samuel 5:1-5. Some theologians teach that 1 Sam 5:5 explains the meaning of "leap on the temple threshold" in Zephaniah 1:9. They say Zephaniah means that God will punish those who worship Dagon, the god of the Philistines. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____

(2) Compare Zephaniah 2:3 with Matthew 5:3 and 5:6. How are they the same? How are they different?

Think & Pray _____

(3) Zephaniah 3:13-15 seems to imply that the reason people lie is fear; that people lie because they fear what might happen if they reveal the truth. Is this true of you? Do you ever lie for any other reason?

Think & Pray _____

(4) If someone asked you what Zephaniah was about what would you say?

Think & Pray _____

(5) How can the lessons of Zephaniah be applied to our own life?

Think & Pray _____

(6) Which verse or passage would you select to memorize from Zephaniah? Why?

Think & Pray _____

If you have any questions about Zephaniah, now is the time to discuss them with your classmates.

----- ANSWERS -----

(1) **ZEPHANIAH & 1st SAMUEL:** [SAY SOMETHING ENCOURAGING THAT PROVES YOU READ WHAT HE WROTE BY EITHER QUOTING PART OF IT OR PARAPHRASING PART OF IT, THEN EDIT OR REPLACE THE FOLLOWING] I'm not sure if Zeph 1:9 is referring to the same thing as 1 Sam 5:1-5 or not, but it is clear that God hates idol worship, violence and deceit.

(2) **ZEPHANIAH & MATTHEW:** [LET HIM KNOW HE HAS BEEN HEARD AND EDIT/REPLACE THE FOLLOWING] Zeph 2:3 and Matt 5:3 both suggest it is good to be humble. Zeph 2:3 and Matt 5:6 both talk about seeking righteousness. They are different in that Zephaniah only hints at the possibility of blessings for being humble and righteous, but Matthew quotes Jesus as making promises to the humble and righteous.

(3) **FEARFUL LIES:** [LET HIM KNOW HE HAS BEEN HEARD AND EDIT/REPLACE THE FOLLOWING] Certainly fear of consequences is one of the main reasons people lie, but there other reasons. I have lied sometimes just out of laziness. Sometimes a simple lie seems easier and less time consuming than a complicated truth. I've known people to lie because they think it is fun to fool other or to slander people they hate. I'm sure there are many other reasons, all founded on sinfulness.



(4) **TOPIC OF BOOK:** [LET STUDENT KNOW HE HAS BEEN HEARD AND EDIT OR REPLACE THE FOLLOWING] This book has very strong words from God to nations of sinful people. There is a great judgment for the tremendous sins of the prophet's day, yet it is also a book of hope. The book announces a great deliverance for the few faithful who will eventually return to bring the Messiah to the world.

(5) **LIFE APPLICATION:** [LET STUDENT KNOW HE HAS BEEN HEARD AND EDIT OR REPLACE THE FOLLOWING] For me Zephaniah is a reminder to wait patiently for the Lord to act.

(6) **KEY VERSE:** I like Zeph 1:14 "Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; ..." because it sounds so hopeful and promising.

I also like:

Zephaniah 3:17 "The LORD your God is in your midst,
A victorious warrior
He will exult over you with joy,
He will be quiet in His love,
He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy."