

ZEPHANIAH

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INTRODUCTION

A. THE MAN:

1. Name– Zephaniah means “Jehovah hides,” or “Jehovah has hidden”.
2. Ancestry – The prophet traces his ancestry back four generations to Hezekiah. This would make the prophet of royal blood.
3. Occupation and Home.-- Nothing is known of the prophets occupation, nor where he lived. Indication is Jerusalem.

B. DATE:

1. It would be safe to suggest 630 to 625 B.C.
 2. Internal evidence would suggest he began to write as the rise of the Chaldean power began.
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BACKGROUND

A. POLITICAL, in Judah.

1. Hezekiah was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a lad of twelve years.
2. Doubtful that at any period of its history Judah had a more wicked ruler than Manasseh.
3. Ammon succeeded Manasseh, was also wicked.
4. Josiah, came to the throne at the age of eight, and was the last good king to reign over Judah. Brought about many reforms, yet it is in his life that the prophet writes.
5. In the process of cleansing the temple a copy of the law was found and read before the young king. Alarmed at what he heard, he sent to a prophet, Huldah, for a word from God concerning what he had learned. Caused it to be read before the people.

B. POLITICAL, in the East.

1. War clouds, dark and foreboding, were hovering over the horizon to the North.
2. In 625 B.C. Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, declared the independence of Chaldea from her Assyrian lords.
3. Led to war between Chaldea and Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar was general.
4. Pharaoh-necho of Egypt determined to help Assyria.
5. Josiah attempted to stop him at Megiddo by throwing his forces in the path of Necho. He succeeded but was killed in the battle.
6. For four years Egypt dominated Judah, but in 605 Necho was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar. (Here is enacted one of the ironies of history. Judah led by Josiah, had attempted to aid Chaldea by fighting against Egypt at Megiddo. And now became a vassal of the nation it had attempted to help

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C. RELIGIOUS AND MORAL:

1. Sweeping reforms had been undertaken by Josiah.
2. The people appear at this time to be nervous, cruel, and corrupt.

D. TEACHING AND LESSONS:

1. The Day of Jehovah. (At hand; "near" etc. 1:7, 14,15,16,17)
2. "No hotter book lies in all of the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke and darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, salt pits, and owls and ravens looking from the windows of desolate palaces" (The book of the Twelve Prophets, vo II, p. 48).

MESSAGE

A. ZEPHANIAH WARNS THE NATIONS OF THEIR IMPENDING DOOM

1. Jerusalem and Judah are first denounced (1:2-6).
2. Certain classes are definitely pointed out, and condemned (1:8-13).
 - a. The nobility
 - b. The royalty
 - c. The tradesmen
 - d. The Indifferent
 - e. The Obstinate
3. Swift and certain doom is soon to be visited upon Jerusalem (1:14-18)
4. The prophet pleads for repentance (2:1-3).
5. The surrounding nations are specifically denounced (2:1-15).

B. THE PROPHET FORETELLS THE CAPTIVITY AND DELIVERANCE OF JERUSALEM (Chap. 3).

1. The obstinacy of Jerusalem is deplored (3:1-7).
2. The prophet pleads with the people (3:8).
3. Purification and deliverance will finally come (3:9-11) read Psa. 137:1-4.
4. A few of the very poor were left in the land to till the soil (3:12,13).
5. God's blessings are to come upon His restored people (3:14-20).

Book Preserved Because

A. DAY OF THE LORD IS COMING: (Zeph. 1; II Peter 3; Matt. 25).

1. It's universality (Zeph. 1:2; John 5:28-29).
2. The Door of Hope is left open (Zeph. 2, 3; Matt. 11:28).

B. God's Blessings are to come upon His people (Zeph. 3; Revelations 21 and 22).

1. This has been God's message from the beginning.
 2. This message is given to us in a very vivid way through the words of the Prophets.
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