

A Survey of the Old Testament
Prophetic Books
by Pastor Richard H. Jones

#3 "Zephaniah"

I. THE PROPHET

Zephaniah means "hidden or guarded of Jehovah". According to 1:1 Zephaniah was the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah of Judah. He was probably in close relationship with the King's court because of this descendency. His message, directed to those in authority, seems to support this inference (1:8). Zephaniah's contemporaries were Nahum and Jeremiah and he prophesied in the days of King Josiah (1:1). He was a prophet of Judah and probably lived in the southern Kingdom.

II. THE PROPHECY

Zephaniah's prophecy deals with the fall of Jerusalem which would be a figure of the coming day of the Lord. Chapter one is an announcement of judgment upon the whole world and Judah in particular for their iniquities which he describes.

A call for repentance is issued in 2:1-3:8 that they might have protection in the coming time of distress.

Then, a third portion prophesies Israel's return from captivity, restoration over the nations, and dwelling in safety under God's care (3:9-20).

III. THE PERIOD

Josiah was a grandson of Judah's most wicked King-Mannasseh. Amon, his son, followed in the sins of his father for two years and was killed by his servants. Josiah came to the throne at eight years old and by the age of sixteen his heart was turned to the Lord (II Chron. 34:3). Zephaniah (3:1-7) no doubt describes the religious state of affairs in the early reign of Josiah. Compare also Jer. 1-12 with II Kings 21-23. During temple repairs, a copy of the book of the law was found when Josiah was 16. This led to religious reforms. When Necho of Egypt came up to Palestine to aid the Assyrians against the Babylonians, Josiah was fatally wounded in 609 B.C. Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.

IV. NOTABLE THINGS

A. Note the land of 1:2,3 refers to the whole earth.

- B. Note the way Zephaniah describes the day of the Lord (1:14-16).
- C. Note the reason for judgment upon Moab (2:8,9).
- D. Note the reference to "pure language" (3:9) speaks of purity of speech to call upon God.
- E. Note how Judah could escape the Lord's anger (2:3).

V. PERSONAL LESSONS

- A. No one who denies the Lord will escape in the Day of the Lord (1:12,13).
- B. There is only one way to escape the Lord's anger - through repentance.

OUTLINE

I. RETRIBUTION UPON JUDAH (1)

II. RETRIBUTION UPON THE NATIONS (2)

III. RETRIBUTION AGAINST JERUSALEM (3:1-7)

IV. REGATHERING OF ISRAEL (3:8-20)