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The Chapters of Zephaniah

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Zephaniah

SECTION OUTLINE ONE (ZEPHANIAH 1-3)

Zephaniah describes three special "days," two of which are grievous, while the third is glorious.

I. THE GRIEVOUS DAYS (1:1-3:8): Zephaniah pronounces judgment.

A. The first grievous day (1:1-13; 2:1-15; 3:1-5): Historical in scope, it includes Judah and her surrounding neighbors and is fulfilled by the king of Babylon.

1. Judah (1:1-13; 2:1-3; 3:1-5)

a. Zephaniah's condemnation (1:1-13; 3:1-5)

(1) Her sins (1:4-6, 8-9, 11-12; 3:1-5)

(a) Idolatry (1:4-6)

(b) Greed (1:11)

(c) Utter indifference to God (1:12; 3:2)

(d) Rebellion, violence, and crime (3:1)

(e) Leaders who follow pagan customs (1:8-9)

(f) Judges who are like ravenous wolves that leave no trace of their prey (3:3)

(g) Godless prophets and priests (3:4-5)

(2) Her sentence (1:1-3, 7, 10, 13)

(a) Cries of anguish will be heard throughout the land (1:10).

(b) The land will be reduced to rubble (1:1-3, 7).

(c) The people's wealth will be plundered and their homes demolished (1:13).

b. Zephaniah's invitation (2:1-3): He tells Judah to repent and escape God's wrath.

2. The Gentiles (2:4-15)

a. The Philistine cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron (2:4-7): Israel's western enemies

b. Moab and Ammon (2:8-11): Israel's eastern enemies

c. Ethiopia (2:12): Israel's southern enemy

d. Assyria and its capital, Nineveh (2:13-15): Israel's northern enemy

B. The second grievous day (1:14-18; 3:6-8): Prophetic in scope, it will include all nations and is yet to be fulfilled by the King of heaven.

1. The designation (1:14): Zephaniah calls it the "day of the LORD," a probable reference to the coming Great Tribulation.

2. The devastation (1:15-18; 3:6-8)

a. Earth's citizens will stumble as blind men (1:15-17a).

b. Their blood will be poured out into the dust (1:17b).

c. Wealth will become absolutely useless (1:18).

d. Few survivors will be left (3:6-7).

e. The entire earth will be devoured by the fire of divine wrath (3:8).

II. THE GLORIOUS DAY (3:9-20): Zephaniah proclaims justice.

A. To the Gentiles (3:9): Their many languages will be unified and purified, thus allowing all people to worship God together.

B. To the Jews (3:10-20)

1. Their regathering (3:10, 19-20a)

2. Their restoring (3:20b)

3. Their refining (3:11-13)

4. Their rejoicing (3:14-18): God himself will join in their happy song.