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Article 36: Zephaniah at a Glance

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ZEPHANIAH AT A GLANCE

This book records the prophet's sober description of the "Day of the Lord," which oft-repeated phrase was in reference to the impending destruction of Jerusalem and the future great tribulation when God would punish all nations. Zephaniah closes his book with a glowing prediction of Israel's eventual cleansing and restoration.

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

THE PROPHECY OF A PURE LANGUAGE

"For then will I turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent" (3:9).

This is the good news of Zephaniah, after the book predicts the bad news – Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Babylonians. Zephaniah was one of two prophets of royal descent. Isaiah was the other.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Zephaniah.** He was the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah (Zeph. 1:1). He predicts two glorious facts concerning the Millennium not mentioned by any other prophet:
 - a. That God would *"turn to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent"* (Zeph. 3:9)
 - b. That God Himself would rejoice over His people *"with singing!"* (Zeph. 3:17)
2. What? The **Book of Zephaniah.**
3. When and where? 640 B.C., from Jerusalem.
4. Why? To predict the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians and subsequent salvation by the Messiah.
5. To whom? The Southern Kingdom of Israel.

KEY EVENTS

1. Glorious prophecy of Israel's cleansing and restoration

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Zephaniah:** Old Testament prophet who referred to the coming Great Tribulation as "the Day of the Lord" more times than any other biblical writer and the only Old Testament prophet to call God "the King of Israel"

KEY PLACES

1. **Judah and Jerusalem:** Southern Kingdom and its capital, to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
2. **Gaza, Ekron, Ashkelon, and Ashdod:** four Philistine cities, to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar
3. **Moab, Ammon, and Ethiopia:** three pagan nations to be destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Zephaniah's ancestry is traced back four generations, which is unique among the prophets.
2. As in the case of Nineveh (Jonah 1, 3), God here through Zephaniah pleads for the Philistines to seek Him and be saved (2:1-3).
3. The phrase, "the day of the Lord," a reference to the coming great tribulation, is found more times in Zephaniah than in any other book.
4. Zephaniah 3:8 is the only Old Testament verse that includes every one of the 22 Hebrew alphabet letters.
5. Zephaniah predicts God will some day "rest" again after completing his great work in redemption as he once did after finishing his work in creation (compare Zeph. 3:17 with Gen. 2:2-3).
6. The title "King of Israel," in referring to God, is found but twice in the Bible – once in the Old and once in the New Testament. Zephaniah uses it (3:15) as did Nathanael, the disciple of Christ, centuries later (Jn. 1:49).
7. Zephaniah is the only Old Testament biblical book that records God singing (3:17). Compare with Hab. 2:11, 12.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Genesis:

- Both speak of God's cutting off humankind from the face of the earth (1:3; Gen. 6:7).
- Genesis recorded the beginning of Moab and Ammon (Gen. 19:36-38; Zephaniah foretold their end (2:8-11). The fathers of these two nations were born to Lot through incest soon after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Zephaniah compared that event to the impending destruction of Moab and Ammon.

Nahum, Isaiah, and Ezekiel:

- Nahum provides the most graphic account of Nineveh's destruction.
- Isaiah provides the most graphic account of Egypt's destruction (19, 20).
- Zephaniah provides the most graphic account of Judah's destruction
- Ezekiel provides the most graphic description of Gog and Magog's destruction

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. The Lord of Hosts (2:9a)
2. The God of Israel (2:9b)
3. The Just Lord (3:5)
4. The King of Israel (3:15)