

discussion guide

Zephaniah 1

the day of the Lord

In these studies we see that God holds the nation of Israel, and the whole world, accountable for their apostasy and brings judgement upon them, but the day will come when God will gather his people and restore his glorious nation.

Opening: Have you ever experienced complacency in your life? What did it look like?

Read Zephaniah 1:1 – 1:18

King Josiah brought about religious reform to Judah (Cf. 2 Kings 23:24-25), cleansing the temple of foreign gods, idols and priests. But the reforms could only go so far. In the vicious cycle of the history of Israel, God's people became complacent and sinned against Him. Zephaniah probably began his ministry just after the reforms of King Josiah. In this passage, Zephaniah presents three graphic pictures of the day of the Lord.

On all the Earth (1:2-3)

- God is angry at His creation and vows to bring total destruction. What do you notice about the order of destruction and what does this remind you of? (Cf. Genesis 1:1-2, 3-31)

On Judah (1:4-13)

- Why was God's wrath coming to the people of Judah at Jerusalem? (1:4-6)
- Discuss the actions of Israel's leaders. Why did their actions incur judgement from God?
 - (v.8) Those who wore foreign garments expressed love, support and trust for foreign powers.
 - (v.9) The priests of Judah "leap[ing] over thresholds" meant they went into homes to deceive and plunder from their own people, to enrich their own wealth and fill the temple.
 - (v.11-12) Who is being complacent?
- As Christians, how are we complacent to sin in our culture?

The Day of the Lord (1:14-18)

- How does Zephaniah describe "the day of the Lord"?
- What do the people of Judah place their faith in, despite judgement (v.14, 17-18)?
- What significance does "the day of the Lord" have for us?
- If you had been living in the time of Zephaniah and received this message, how would you have reacted to it? Why?

Apply and Pray: Are there any areas of your life that you feel complacent in and need to address with God? What steps are you willing to take?

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Zephaniah 2.1-3.8

Judgement day

Opening: Do you ever think about the judgment that your unsaved friends and relatives will endure?

Read Zephaniah 2:1 – 3:8

Seek the Lord (2:1-3)

• What did Zephaniah tell the people to do in order to avoid God's anger (vv. 1-3)?
Judgement Day: the nations (2:4-15)

• What was the judgement on Judah's neighbouring nations and how did God punish these nations?

- Philistia (2:4-7)
- Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
- Assyria (2:13-15)

Judgement Day: Jerusalem (3:1-7)

• What judgement was coming against Jerusalem? (3:1-4)

• What hope did Zephaniah have offer God's people in the midst of judgement?
(3:6-7)

• What do the nations learn about God?

• How is our nation in danger of God's judgement?

Application: What opportunities do you have to tell others about God or even warn others of judgement?

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Zephaniah 3:9-20

better days ahead

Opening: What future event are you either dreading or anticipating?

Read Zephaniah 3:9 – 3:20

Restoration of the Gentiles (3:9 – 10)

- How would the nations be renewed?

Restoration of Israel's remnant (3:11-20)

- How does God restore His own people?
- What future blessings for God's people did Zephaniah describe?
- How would God remove sorrow from His people? (3:18-20)
- What do you learn about God from this chapter?

Application

- Which promise are you looking forward to the most? Why?
- How can you remind yourself or others this week of the future hope that God has planned for His people?