

ZEPHANIAH

ZEPHANIAH — DIVINE DEVASTATION AND PROMISE

Little is known of the personal history of Zephaniah beyond the two facts in the first verse of his prophecy, the first bearing on his ancestry and the second on the period of his ministry. About fifty years have elapsed since Nahum, and Hezekiah has been succeeded by three of his descendants (see ~~2~~ 2 Kings 20-21). Manasseh and Amon were idolatrous and wicked, but Josiah now upon the throne, is righteous and God-fearing. The story of his reign is in the succeeding chapters of 2 Kings and should be read preparatory to Zephaniah, who prophesied in the earlier part of his reign and assisted him in his efforts to restore the worship of the true God.

The first chapter contains a denunciation of vengeance against Judah and those who practiced idolatrous rites; Baal, his black-robed priests (Chemarims), and Malcham (Moloch), being condemned (1-2:3). The second chapter predicts the judgments about to fall on the Philistines, those especially of the sea-coasts (Cherethites), the Moabites, Ammonites, and Ethiopians, and describes the desolation of Nineveh.

In the third chapter, the prophet arraigns Jerusalem, but concludes with promises of her restoration in the latter day (3:1-7, 8-20).

Coincidence of expression between Isaiah and Zephaniah are frequent, and still more between Zephaniah and Jeremiah. It may be added that the predictions of Jeremiah complete the view here given of the devastations to be effected by Chaldea in Philistia and Judah.

In verse 8, observe the agreement with Joel concerning the gathering of the Gentile nations to judgment at the end of the present age. In verse 9, we see these nations, or the spared and sifted remnant of them, converted to God and serving Him with a ready will. In verse 10 they are bringing the sons of Israel back to their own land, the second gathering of them as explained in Israel. In verses 11-18, the cleansed, rejoicing, nation of Israel appears, dwelling in their own land. In verses 19-20 we find the restored

people a blessing in the whole earth as foretold in the original promise to Abraham, and in the millennial psalms. Verse 17 repays careful meditation. The old marriage covenant between Jehovah and Israel is there depicted as gloriously restored (~~2615~~ Isaiah 62:5; ~~2619~~ Hosea 2:19); the husband is rejoicing in His wife, resting in His love and joying over her with singing. "Rest" is translated in the margin "be silent," and this silence of Jehovah towards His people is no longer the silence arising from forbearance in order to punish at last (~~1812~~ Psalm 50:21), but because He has nothing more to reprehend.

QUESTIONS

1. Have you reviewed ~~1206~~ 2 Kings 20 and 21?
2. In whose reign did this prophet prophesy?
3. Name the nations denounced in chapters 2-3.
4. How would you interpret 3:8-20 in detail?
5. How would you interpret 3:17 especially?