

AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE PROPHECY OF

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah excites to repentance, foretells the destruction of the enemies of the Jews, and comforts the pious among them with promises of future blessings, the restoration of their nation, and the prosperity of the church in the latter days.

CHAPTER 1

Threatenings against sinners. (1-6) More threatenings. (7-13)

Distress from the approaching judgments. (14-18)

Zephaniah 1:1

Vs. 1-6: Ruin is coming, utter ruin; destruction from the Almighty. The servants of God all proclaim, There is no peace for the wicked. The expressions are figurative, speaking every where desolation; the land shall be left without inhabitants. The sinners to be consumed are, the professed idolaters, and those that worship Jehovah and idols, or swear to the Lord, and to Malcham. Those that think to divide their affection and worship between God and idols, will come short of acceptance with God; for what communion can there be between light and darkness? If Satan have half, he will have all; if the Lord have but half, he will have none. Neglect of God shows impiety and contempt. May none of us be among those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Zephaniah 1:7

Vs. 7-13: God's day is at hand; the punishment of presumptuous sinners is a sacrifice to the justice of God. The Jewish royal family shall be reckoned with for their pride and vanity; and those that leap on the

threshold, invading their neighbors' rights, and seizing their possessions. The trading people and the rich merchants are called to account. Secure and careless people are reckoned with. They are secure and easy; they say in their heart, the Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil; that is, they deny his dispensing rewards and punishments. But in the day of the Lord's judgment, it will clearly appear that those who perish, fall a sacrifice to Divine justice for breaking God's law, and because they have no interest by faith in the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice.

Zephaniah 1:14

Vs. 14-18: This warning of approaching destruction, is enough to make the sinners in Zion tremble; it refers to the great day of the Lord, the day in which he will show himself by taking vengeance on them. This day of the Lord is very near; it is a day of God's wrath, wrath to the utmost. It will be a day of trouble and distress to sinners. Let them not be laid asleep by the patience of God. What is a man profited if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? And what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Let us flee from the wrath to come, and choose the good part that shall never be taken from us; then we shall be prepared for every event; nothing shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHAPTER 2

An exhortation to repentance. (1-3) Judgments upon other nations. (4-15)

Zephaniah 2:1

Vs. 1-3: The prophet calls to national repentance, as the only way to prevent national ruin. A nation not desiring, that has not desires toward God, is not desirous of his favor and grace, has no mind to repent and reform. Or, not desirable, not having any thing to recommend them to God; to whom God might justly say, Depart from me; but he says, Gather together to me that you may seek my face. We know what God's decree will bring against impenitent sinners, therefore it highly concerns all to repent in the accepted time. How careful should we all be to seek peace with God, before the Holy Spirit withdraws from us, or ceases to strive with us; before the day of grace is over, or the day of life; before our everlasting state is determined! Let the poor, despised, and afflicted, seek the Lord, and seek to understand and keep his commandments better, that they may be more humbled for their sins. The chief hope of deliverance from national judgments rests upon prayer.

Zephaniah 2:4

Vs. 4-15: Those are really in a woeful condition who have the word of the Lord against them, for no word of his shall fall to the ground. God will restore his people to their rights, though long kept from them. It has been the common lot of God's people, in all ages, to be reproached and reviled. God shall be worshipped, not only by all Israel, and the strangers who join them, but by the heathen. Remote nations must be reckoned with for the wrongs done to God's people. The sufferings of the insolent and haughty in prosperity, are unpitied and unlamented. But all the desolations of flourishing nations will make way for the overturning Satan's kingdom. Let us improve our advantages, and expect the performance of every promise, praying that our Father's name may be hallowed every where, over all the earth.

CHAPTER 3

Further reproofs for sin. (1-7) Encouragement to look for mercy. (8-13) Promises of future favor and prosperity. (14-20)

Zephaniah 3:1

Vs. 1-7: The holy God hates sin most in those nearest to him. A sinful state is, and will be, a woeful state. Yet they had the tokens of God's presence, and all the advantages of knowing his will, with the strongest reasons to do it; still they persisted in disobedience. Alas, that men often are more active in doing wickedness than believers are in doing good.

Zephaniah 3:8

Vs. 8-13: The preaching of the gospel is predicted, when vengeance would be executed on the Jewish nation. The purifying doctrines of the gospel, or the pure language of the grace of the Lord, would teach men to use the language of humility, repentance, and faith. Purity and piety in common conversation is good. The pure and happy state of the church in the latter days seems intended. The Lord will shut out boasting, and leave men nothing to glory in, save the Lord Jesus, as made of God to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Humiliation for sin, and obligations to the Redeemer, will make true believers upright and sincere, whatever may be the case among mere professors.

Zephaniah 3:14

Vs. 14-20: After the promises of taking away sin, follow promises of taking away trouble. When the cause is removed, the effect will cease. What makes a people holy, will make them happy. The precious promises made to the purified people, were to have full accomplishment in the gospel. These verses appear chiefly to relate to the future conversion and restoration of Israel, and the glorious times which are to follow. They show the abundant peace, comfort, and prosperity of the church, in the happy times yet to come. He will save; he will be Jesus; he will answer the name, for he will save his people from their sins. Before the glorious times foretold, believers would be sorrowful, and objects of reproach. But the

Lord will save the weakest believer, and cause true Christians to be greatly honored where they had been treated with contempt. One act of mercy and grace shall serve, both to gather Israel out of their dispersions and to lead them to their own land. Then will God's Israel be made a name and a praise to eternity. The events alone can fully answer the language of this prophecy. Many are the troubles of the righteous, but they may rejoice in God's love. Surely our hearts should honor the Lord, and rejoice in him, when we hear such words of condescension and grace. If now kept from his ordinances, it is our trial and grief; but in due time we shall be gathered into his temple above. The glory and happiness of the believer will be perfect, unchangeable, and eternal, when he is freed from earthly sorrows, and brought to heavenly bliss.