

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 38 w/Answers

Zephaniah

In this lesson we continue our survey of the Old Testament, and we continue our survey of the Minor Prophets. Our study will again continue the survey of the remaining prophets of Judah: Zephaniah, and Habakkuk. We will focus on the book written by Zephaniah today.

An important part of Zephaniah's message concerned the protection of Judah from harm in the day of God's judgment. In Zephaniah 2:3, the prophet writes "Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the LORD's anger."

Just prior to the reign of the boy king Josiah, who took the throne at the tender age of eight years old, Judah was living in great sin. Idol worship and other pagan practices were in evident practice and being led by the kings themselves. During Josiah's reign, he attempted to rid the country of these practices, but to no avail as evidenced in Jeremiah's and Zephaniah's writings. In our study, we will be critically examining the moral condition of Judah leading up to the time of Josiah's reign and what God prophesied as a result, through Zephaniah.

For this lesson, read the book of Zephaniah and consider the following questions:

1. What is the central theme of the book written by Zephaniah? (see Zeph. 1:7a)
 - a. ANSWER: Zephaniah is focused on "the day of the Lord", which refers to the impending judgment of God on Judah for its disobedience. This theme is captured in the verse "Be silent before the Sovereign LORD, for the day of the LORD is near."
2. Manasseh as King introduced many pagan and wicked practices to Judah. Read the following references and identify what they were:
 - a. 2 Kings 21:4-5
 - i. ANSWER: He built altars to Baal and worshiped the sun, moon and stars. He built altars to these stellar objects and placed them in the temple courts.
 - b. 2 Kings 21:6 and 23:10-11
 - i. ANSWER: He practiced child sacrifice and astrology.
 - c. 2 Kings 21:7
 - i. ANSWER: He made a carved Asherah pole (an image of the goddess Asherah) and placed it in the temple.
3. Amon, the son of Manasseh, succeeded him as king. How old was Amon when he became king and what did he do about his father's idolatrous practices? (see 2 Kings 21:19-22)
 - a. ANSWER: He was twenty two years old when he became king and he continued his father's evil ways, much like we've seen other world rulers of this age do. They influence their children to continue their evil ways, so that evil continues to spawn evil; and the death of an evil king does not mean an end to the evil.
4. How long did Amon reign, and how did it end? (see 2 Kings 21:19,23)
 - a. ANSWER: Amon reigned for two years and was assassinated by his own officials, his cabinet if you will.
5. Who replaced Amon on the throne? What relationship did the new king have to Amon and Manasseh? (see 2 Kings 21:24)
 - a. ANSWER: Josiah, the boy king, took the throne at the age of eight. Interestingly he was the son of Amon, and Manasseh was his grandfather; however, Josiah's heart would turn toward the God of David. He took the throne in 640 BC at the age of eight, and in 632 BC at the age of sixteen Josiah began actively seeking God. In 628 BC, Josiah started a reform movement that would attempt to purge much of Jerusalem's and Judah's idolatry, but not all.

6. Even after the attempts by Josiah the King to purge the idol worship from Jerusalem and Judah, it still persisted; and Judah continued to sin against God. Zephaniah's prophecy regarding the coming judgment was both a warning to them and an assurance. Compare Genesis 12:1-3 with Zephaniah 3:8-20. What do you observe?
 - a. ANSWER: God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled in Zephaniah's prophecy. God, through Zephaniah, tells the people of Judah that He will fulfill His promises to Abraham.
 7. Read Romans 11:25-28. How does it relate to Zephaniah's prophecy?
 - a. ANSWER: Paul again confirms God's promise to redeem the Jews, His chosen people. God confirms that He will take away their sins and restore them; He will fulfill all that He promised Abraham, in spite of their sin.
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This lesson's message shows us that nothing has really changed within man's heart. It is still naturally inclined to idol worship and doing evil and wicked things against God, perverting the temple, perverting worship, and twisting into evil a relationship that God intended to be holy.

It is also illuminating to see the influence that evil rulers have, not only on their subjects, but also on their children. And yet, Josiah found and followed God. And finally, as we have noted in prior lessons, God is in control. He is not mocked by man's disregard and disrespect of Him, and judgment is as sure today as it was then.

We should be comforted again this week by Zephaniah's assurance that God will protect his chosen elect from judgment; but He will surely bring judgment on the evil of this world.

Have a great week everyone, and thanks for studying with us.

In Christ,

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