

STUDY GUIDE FOR BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH—SURVEY OF MINOR PROPHETS

I. INTRODUCTION.

- a. Author—Zephaniah—“He whom Jehovah has hidden”.
- b. Date—during reign of Josiah, King of Judah (Zeph. 1:1) 639—609 BC. Possibly a contemporary of Jeremiah but preceded Nahum & Habakkuk.

II. BACKGROUND.

- a. Political—Israel had fallen to Assyria; Babylon comes to power & defeats Assyria.
 - i. Likely, Zephaniah wrote after religious reforms of Josiah though some disagree and problems covered seem to suggest reform needed.
- b. Religious and Moral.
 - i. Josiah @ age 8—became king; at age 16—“sought the Lord”; at age 18, found copy of the law, began “reform”; at age 26—“reform” completed.
 - ii. “Reform” much about restoring rituals—not much change “in heart”.
 - iii. Social injustice/moral corruption widespread.

III. BRIEF OUTLINE OF BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH.

- a. God threatens to sweep the earth clean. (1:1-13)
- b. The Day of the Lord. (1:14-18)
- c. God’s mercy should lead to repentance. (2:1-3)
- d. Prophecies against heathen nations. (2:4-15)
- e. Sin of Jerusalem and future salvation. (3:1-20)

IV. THE SINS OF JUDAH.

- a. Religious syncretism—worship of many gods. (1:4,5 and Deut. 4:19)
- b. Wearing of foreign apparel (symptom?). (1:8)
- c. Burglary, thievery. (1:9)
- d. Fraud & violence. (1:9)
- e. Leadership was violent, unfit to lead. (3:3-4)
- f. Indifference. (1:12, also Jeremiah 48:11-12)
- g. Refused correction. (3:2,7)

V. TEACHINGS OF THE BOOK.

- a. The “Day of the Lord”. (1:7;1:14,15 & 16;1:2,3;2:1-15; & 3:8)
- b. Need for Moral “Sifting”. (3:7-13)

VI. PRACTICAL LESSONS OF PERMANENT VALUE.

- a. Our belief about God largely determines our conduct.
- b. We become like the God that we worship.
- c. Earnest warning sometimes needed to draw us back to the presence of God.
- d. God’s people should put strong emphasis on the spiritual nature of God’s kingdom.
- e. God gives assurance that humble, obedient seekers will be safe in the Day of Judgment.