



Bible Books Chapter by Chapter Series

ZEPHANIAH

Zephaniah 1:14 "Near is the great day of the LORD, near and coming very quickly; ..."

Course Text: Zephaniah

This book has very strong words from God to nations of sinful people. There is a great judgment for the tremendous sins of the prophet's day, yet it is also a book of hope. The book announces a great deliverance for the few faithful who will eventually return to bring the Messiah to the world. For me Zephaniah is a reminder to wait patiently for the Lord to act.

Suggested methodology for each lesson:

1. Fellowship (Save most of this for the end of class)
2. Take prayer requests (Try to keep it from becoming a competition to see who has the most or the worst)
3. Pray (The idea is to leave our troubles with God so we can give Him our full attention.)
4. Read the lesson's chapter aloud from the Bible (or a few verses at a time as you answer the questions.)
5. Answer and *briefly* discuss the "fill in the blank" questions. (Let those who prefer to listen, listen. My answers on the next page are just one opinion; you may have a better answer if it is Scripture based.)
6. On the final "Think & Pray" question everyone should take a few minutes to pray over it and jot down their own thoughts before the discussion. **This will give the Holy Spirit a time to speak.**
7. Discuss your Think & Pray answers. (Never force anyone to share theirs. As with the other questions, my answer is just one more opinion; you may have a better answer.)
8. Close in prayer (It is good to call on others to pray, but try to get their permission first.)
9. Fellowship (Leave this as open ended as possible for the time and place you meet.)

Depending on the number of people, each lesson is expected to take about one hour. Steps 4 thru 7 are about half of that. If you take longer, let each lesson take more than one meeting. If you take less time, extra questions are provided for discussion called "For Further Thought"



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Zephaniah Chapter 1

In the 1st chapter we notice that this is not something that the prophet decided to do but rather that the prophet received a word from the Lord. This chapter reminds us of the time of the flood and Noah being chosen to build the ark and save a remnant. The problem is the same, but the solution is different. The Lord declares that He will simply sweep away the peoples of the earth. There is not one nation that has satisfied him, and all are to be destroyed one way or another.

Please read Zephaniah chapter 1 and answer the following questions:

[1A] Zephaniah 1:1 Who was King of Judah? _____

[1B] Zephaniah 1:2 How many things will God remove from the face of the earth? _____

[1C] Zephaniah 1:3-4 What city will He stretch out his hand against? _____

[1D] Zephaniah 1:5-6 God will stretch out His hand against those who bow down to the host of heaven and those that bow down to the Lord and yet swear by who? _____

[1E] Zephaniah 1:7 What is near or soon? _____

[1F] Zephaniah 1:8 Whose who clothe themselves in what will be punished? _____

[1G] Zephaniah 1:9 He will punish those who fill the house of their lord with what? _____

[1H] Zephaniah 1:10 From where will a loud crash be heard? _____

[1I] Zephaniah 1:11-12 How will God search Jerusalem? _____

[1J] Zephaniah 1:13-14 Who weeps bitterly on the day of the Lord? _____

[1K] Zephaniah 1:15-16 Will fortified cities and high towers be safe from the coming calamity? _____

[1L] Zephaniah 1:17 Why is God bringing distress on men? _____

[1M] Zephaniah 1:18 What will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy? _____

[1N] Compare Zephaniah 1:9 to 1 Samuel 5:1-5. Some theologians teach that 1 Sam 5:5 explains the meaning of "leap on the temple threshold" in Zephaniah 1:9. They say Zephaniah means that God will punish those who worship Dagon, the god of the Philistines. Do you agree? Why or why not?

Think & Pray _____



----- ANSWERS -----

Zephaniah Chapter 1

- [1A] Zephaniah 1:1 Who was King of Judah? Josiah Zephaniah was a descendant of King Hezekiah, who led Judah to repentance, keeping them from being carried off in captivity the century before.
- [1B] Zephaniah 1:2 How many things will God remove from the face of the earth? All
- [1C] Zephaniah 1:3-4 What city will He stretch out his hand against? Jerusalem Baal was a false Canaanite god worshipped by the idolatrous priests
- [1D] Zephaniah 1:5-6 God will stretch out His hand against those who bow down to the host of heaven and those that bow down to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom. the the national god of the Ammonites, children were sacrificed by fire to this idol
- [1E] Zephaniah 1:7 What is near or soon? The day of the Lord
- [1F] Zephaniah 1:8 Whose who clothe themselves in what will be punished? Foreign garments
- [1G] Zephaniah 1:9 He will punish those who fill the house of their lord with what? Violence and deceit
- [1H] Zephaniah 1:10 From where will a loud crash be heard? The hills The Fish Gate was on the Southeast wall of Jerusalem. Second Quarter was a neighborhood within Jerusalem
- [1I] Zephaniah 1:11-12 How will God search Jerusalem? With lamps Mortar was a neighborhood of Jerusalem. Canaan was the name of the land of Israel before Joshua conquered it.
- [1J] Zephaniah 1:13-14 Who weeps bitterly on the day of the Lord? The warrior
- [1K] Zephaniah 1:15-16 Will fortified cities and high towers be safe from the coming calamity? No
- [1L] Zephaniah 1:17 Why is God bringing distress on men? Because they have sinned against the Lord
- [1M] Zephaniah 1:18 What will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy? All the earth

[1N] **ZEPHANIAH & 1st SAMUEL:** I'm not sure if Zephaniah 1:9 is referring to the same thing as 1st Samuel 5:1-5 or not, but it is clear that God hates idol worship, violence and deceit.

For further thought:

- (1o) In Zephaniah 1:2-3 & 18 it mentions the earth being destroyed. However, the Hebrew word used there does not necessarily mean the entire globe, although it could mean that. Like earth in English it could also mean "dirt" or "soil." In addition, in Hebrew, it could also mean the land where a nation lived or even land in general, like a farm or prairie. The King James translates in as "land," which makes the prophecy much more local. From the context which do you think us the better translation and why?
- (1p) Compare Zephaniah 1:5 with James 3:9-12. What did you learn?
- (1q) Thinking about Zephaniah 1:5. Children were sacrificed by fire to Milcom the the national god of the Ammonites. How is that different than abortions performed for the sake of convenience? Do you think it was intentional irony that Zephaniah 1:18 has the perpetrators of this idolatrous outrage consumed by fire?
- (1r) How can you be sure Zephaniah 1:6 is not referring to you?
- (1s) If someone asked you what Zephaniah chapter 1 was about what would you tell them?
- (1t) What did you learn about Zephaniah chapter 1 that you would like to remember?
- (1u) What verse or passage from Zephaniah chapter 1 would be best to memorize? Why?

Zephaniah Chapter 2

Chapters 2 and 3 speak of the great judgment of Jerusalem and Judah as this people have not worshiped faithfully. They have worshiped at altars to Baal, and have even put idols in the Temple of Jehovah. The Lord says that their blood will be poured out like dust. In the 2nd chapter the Lord speaks about a judgment to come on all the nations around Judah. Each nation is listed by name and the judgment of that nation is given. Please read Zephaniah chapter 2 and answer the following questions:

[2A] Zephaniah 2:1 They were to gather themselves together without what? _____

[2B] Zephaniah 2:2 They were to gather before what day? _____

[2C] Zephaniah 2:3 Those who have obeyed His commands and who seek what and what might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger? _____

[2D] Zephaniah 2:4 Who will be driven out at noon? _____

[2E] Zephaniah 2:5 Woe to the inhabitants of where? _____

[2F] Zephaniah 2:6 What will replace what was there? _____

[2G] Zephaniah 2:7 Who will restore the fortune of the remnant of Judah? _____

[2H] Zephaniah 2:8-10 Why will Moab and Ammon be plundered and become a desolation forever?

[2I] Zephaniah 2:11 What will the Lord do to all the gods of the earth? _____

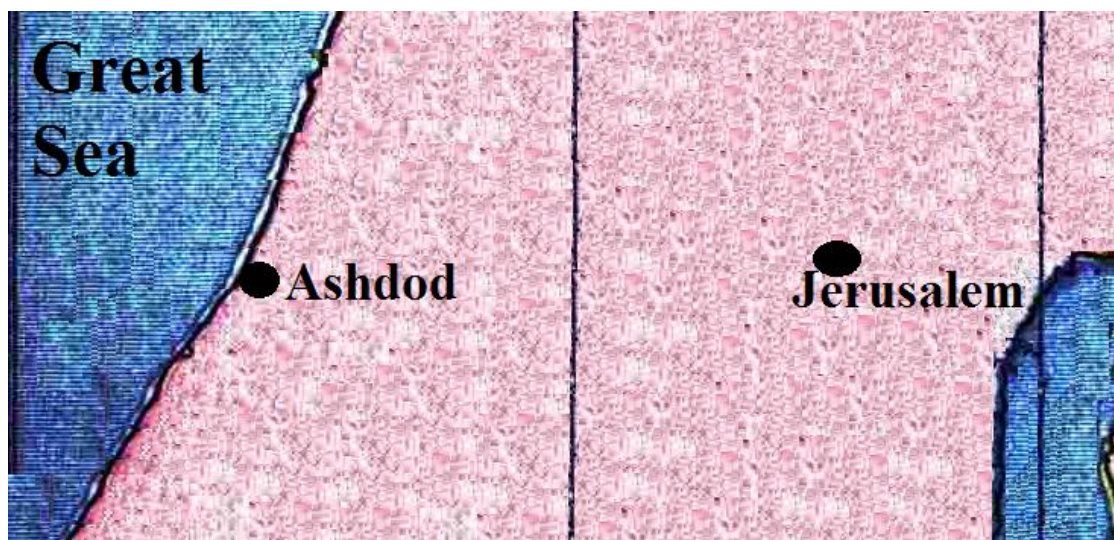
[2J] Zephaniah 2:12 How will the Ethiopians be slain? _____

[2K] Zephaniah 2:13 What city will become a desolation? _____

[2L] Zephaniah 2:14-15 Instead of people what will dwell there? _____

[2M] Compare Zephaniah 2:3 with Matthew 5:3 and 5:6. How are they the same? How are they different?

Think & Pray _____



----- ANSWERS -----

Zephaniah Chapter 2

- [2A] Zephaniah 2:1 They were to gather themselves together without what? Shame
- [2B] Zephaniah 2:2 They were to gather before what day? The day of the Lord's anger
- [2C] Zephaniah 2:3 Those who have obeyed His commands and who seek what and what might be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger? Those who seek Righteousness and Humility
- [2D] Zephaniah 2:4 Who will be driven out at noon? Ashdod which was the main port of Philistia. Ashdod, -Ekron and Gaza were three of the five co-equal capitals of Philistia. Ekron was the northernmost and Gaza the southernmost. It was a way of describing the totality of which parts would be included, like saying everything from New York to Miami to Los Angeles, in the USA.
- [2E] Zephaniah 2:5 Woe to the inhabitants of where? The seacoast is where the Philistine nation was. Cherethites are a tribe of Philistines thought to have been associated with Crete. Philistia was a colony of the Phoenicians which was a maritime empire around the Mediterranean.
- [2F] Zephaniah 2:6 What will replace what was there? Pasture land
- [2G] Zephaniah 2:7 Who will restore the fortune of the remnant of Judah? The Lord their God
- [2H] Zephaniah 2:8-10 Why will Moab and Ammon be plundered and become a desolation forever? Because they have taunted and become arrogant against the people of the Lord of hosts. Moab and Ammon were the two nations which descended from Lot's union with his two daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Gen 19:30-38.
- [2I] Zephaniah 2:11 What will the Lord do to all the gods of the earth? Starve them
- [2J] Zephaniah 2:12 How will the Ethiopians be slain? By His sword Then, as now, Ethiopia was a nation south of Egypt
- [2K] Zephaniah 2:13 What city will become a desolation? Nineveh, the capital of Assyria. Assyria was in Mesopotamia, modern day Iraq.
- [2L] Zephaniah 2:14-15 Instead of people what will dwell there? Wild animals
- [2M] ZEPHANIAH & MATTHEW:** Zeph 2:3 and Matt 5:3 both suggest it is good to be humble. Zeph 2:3 and Matt 5:6 both talk about seeking righteousness. They are different in that Zephaniah only hints at the possibility of blessings for being humble and righteous, but Matthew quotes Jesus as making promises to the humble and righteous.

For further thought:

- (2n) Thinking about Zephaniah 2:1 – Clearly Zephaniah wanted Judah to repent before the coming calamity. However, what does the phrase "without shame" mean?
- (2o) Comparing Genesis 19:23-38 with Zephaniah 2:8-10 I came to the conclusion that the irony of Moab and Ammon ending like Sodom and Gomorrah was intentional. What is your opinion?
- (2p) Thinking about Zephaniah 2:13 – It says God will stretch his hand to the north and destroy Assyria. Assyria is east of Israel/Judah. I've heard two ways of resolving this apparent conflict. One says that the road to Assyria went North before cutting over to Assyria to avoid the wastelands and that it just meant that people thought of it as going North. The other says that the prophesy is meant to go in all four directions and just does not name a nation to the north. North to unspecified, East to Assyria, West to Crete (Cherethites) and Philistia, and South to Ethiopia. Which of these explanations seems more reasonable to you? Why?
- (2q) If someone asked you what Zephaniah chapter 2 was about what would you tell them?
- (2r) What did you learn about Zephaniah chapter 2 that you would like to remember?
- (2s) What verse or passage from Zephaniah chapter 2 would be best to memorize? Why?

Zephaniah Chapter 3

If it were not for the last part of the 3rd chapter this would be a most discouraging book. In the 9th verse of chapter 3 the text turns to a people to be purified and returned to Judah, a people for the Lord are to be saved. The text speaks of a new humility and a return of the Love of the Lord. It speaks of the Lord again bringing his blessings to a remnant of this nation who has returned to His ways.

Please read Zephaniah chapter 3 and answer the following questions:

[3A] Zephaniah 3:1-2 Who was not trusted? _____

[3B] Zephaniah 3:3-4 Who are reckless and treacherous men? _____

[3C] Zephaniah 3:5-6 Who will do no injustice? _____

[3D] Zephaniah 3:7 What were they eager to do? _____

[3E] Zephaniah 3:8 What will be devoured by the fire of the Lord's zeal? _____

[3F] Zephaniah 3:9-10 What kind of lips will He give them? _____

[3G] Zephaniah 3:11 For what will they feel no shame? _____

[3H] Zephaniah 3:12 What kind of people will be left in the land? _____

[3I] Zephaniah 3:13 Who will tell no lies? _____

[3J] Zephaniah 3:14-15 Who is the King of Israel? _____

[3K] Zephaniah 3:16-17 What will be noisy and what will be quiet? _____

[3L] Zephaniah 3:18 He will gather who? _____

[3M] Zephaniah 3:19-20 What will happen before their eyes? _____

[3N] Zephaniah 3:13-15 seems to imply that the reason people lie is fear; that people lie because they fear what might happen if they reveal the truth. Is this true of you? Do you ever lie for any other reason?

Think & Pray _____



Zephaniah Chapter 3

- [3A] Zephaniah 3:1-2 Who was not trusted? The Lord
- [3B] Zephaniah 3:3-4 Who are reckless and treacherous men? The prophets
- [3C] Zephaniah 3:5-6 Who will do no injustice? The Lord
- [3D] Zephaniah 3:7 What were they eager to do? Corrupt all their deeds
- [3E] Zephaniah 3:8 What will be devoured by the fire of the Lord's zeal? All the earth
- [3F] Zephaniah 3:9-10 What kind of lips will He give them? Purified lips
- [3G] Zephaniah 3:11 For what will they feel no shame? Their rebellious deeds
- [3H] Zephaniah 3:12 What kind of people will be left in the land? Humble and lowly people
- [3I] Zephaniah 3:13 Who will tell no lies? The remnant of Israel
- [3J] Zephaniah 3:14-15 Who is the King of Israel? The Lord
- [3K] Zephaniah 3:16-17 What will be noisy and what will be quiet?
Joy will be noisy, love will be quiet
- [3L] Zephaniah 3:18 He will gather who? Those who grieve about the appointed feasts
- [3M] Zephaniah 3:19-20 What will happen before their eyes? God will restore their fortunes
- [3N]

[3N] FEARFUL LIES: Certainly fear of consequences is one of the main reasons people lie, but there other reasons. I have lied sometimes just out of laziness. Sometimes a simple lie seems easier and less time consuming than a complicated truth. I've known people to lie because they think it is fun to fool other or to slander people they hate. I'm sure there are many other reasons, all founded on sinfulness.

For further thought:

- (3o) Compare Zephaniah 3:12 with Matthew 5:5. What did you learn?
- (3p) Thinking about Zephaniah 3:7 – What are you eager to do? Is your thought life thankful and prayerful or full of fantasies of a "better life" for yourself?
- (3q) Thinking about Zephaniah 3:14 – Other than when your team won the big game, have you ever shouted for joy? Why or why not?
- (3r) If someone asked you what Zephaniah chapter 3 was about what would you tell them?
- (3s) What did you learn about Zephaniah chapter 3 that you would like to remember?
- (3t) What verse or passage from Zephaniah chapter 3 would be best to memorize? Why?
- (3u) If someone asked you what Zephaniah was about what would you tell them?
- (3v) What did you learn about Zephaniah that you would like to remember?
- (3w) What verse or passage from Zephaniah would be best to memorize? Why?