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## Lessons from the Book of Zephaniah

By Ken Raggio

### **Zephaniah - The Clarion Call**

Zephaniah was a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah of Judah, who lived in the days of King Josiah, the last righteous king of Judah. Doomsday prophecies were at fever pitch. Jonah, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah had already prophesied and died. Zephaniah witnessed the nauseating corruption of Manasseh, and knew that godly Josiah was having limited success at turning the people back to righteousness. Zephaniah's prophecies were quick, and to the point.

Zephaniah 1:1-2 - "The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah ...I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD."

### **The LORD Will Cleanse The Land By Consumption**

This major prophecy is rooted in Leviticus 26:15 and Deuteronomy 28. Isaiah and Daniel declared it. God will cleanse the land by consumption at Armageddon. Will there be a nuclear holocaust?

Zephaniah 1:2-6 - "I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. ...man and beast; ...fowls ...fishes ...stumblingblocks ...the wicked; ...I will cut off man from off the land, ...Judah, ...inhabitants of Jerusalem; ...remnant of Baal ...them that worship the host of heaven ...that ...swear by the LORD ...that swear by Malcham; ...that are turned back from the LORD; ...that have not sought the LORD."

### **God Sacrifices The Wicked For The Righteous**

God must and will destroy the wicked for the sake of the righteous.  
Righteousness will be universal.

Zephaniah 1:7-8,15-16 - "The day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests. ...in the day of the LORD'S sacrifice, that I will punish... That day is a day of wrath, ...trouble and distress, ...wasteness and desolation, ...darkness and gloominess, ...clouds and thick darkness, ...trumpet and alarm. ...the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them."

### **Under Terrifying Prophecies, Seek The LORD**

The prophet Zephaniah ministered in the days of King Josiah - last righteous king of Judah. His prophecies were as harsh and terrifying as any of the prophets'. He declared "the day of the LORD," when everything evil would be utterly consumed (the battle of Armageddon). But, as is consistent with all the prophets, Zephaniah nevertheless pleaded with the people to seek the LORD.

Zephaniah 2:3 - "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger."

### **The Land Will Be Desolate - No Inhabitant**

Zephaniah prophesied that Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron will be forsaken, emptied and desolate. All of Canaan (the Holy Land) will be uninhabited. Moab and Ammon (modern Jordan) will be as Sodom and Gomorrah (v9). All this sounds like a nuclear holocaust may occur at Armageddon, clearing the land for Messiah's resurrected, immortal ones.

Zephaniah 2:4-5 - "Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up. ...the word of the LORD is against you; O Canaan, ...I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant."

### **Desolation**

Desolation is an oft-repeated term describing the future of God's enemies. God promised Abraham that He would bless those who blessed him, and curse those who cursed him. The nations of the world choose to forget that covenant, ignore it, disbelieve it, or defy it. But that sacred covenant will forever stand and God and Israel's enemies will utterly come to naught.

Zephaniah 2:9-11 - "...a perpetual desolation: ...This shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the LORD of hosts. The LORD will be terrible unto them."

### **He Shall Famish All The Gods Of The Earth**

Most Bible commentators ascribe the second chapter of Zephaniah to ancient events against Assyria and Nineveh, which could only be partially true. Several of these cities have never been totally destroyed, so the prophecies must be fulfilled in future events. Zephaniah also clearly said that the LORD would famish ALL the gods of the earth, and men would worship HIM. That is an ultimatum of great finality - a powerful Messianic prophecy about His millennial kingdom.

Zephaniah 2:11 - "...for he will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, ...even all the isles of the heathen."

### **Assyria And Nineveh At Armageddon**

The Antichrist will come to rule Palestine from Assyria (most likely Turkey, but possibly Syria, Iran or Iraq). I expect European powers and the Roman Catholic Church (beast and false prophet of Revelation 13) to install an Assyrian Muslim in Jerusalem, who will crush Israel until Jesus comes at Armageddon. Jesus will destroy Assyria and Nineveh. Mosul, in the province of Ninewah, Iraq has recently been a Sunni Islamic - Al Qaeda stronghold dedicated to the destruction of Israel.

Zephaniah 2:13 - "He [God] will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation."

### **The Fire Of My Jealousy**

Zephaniah denounced Jerusalem, the "filthy and polluted ...[and] oppressing city" that disobeyed and trusted not God. He denounced their princes, judges and prophets for pathetic sins. God cut off nations and made them desolate, trying to persuade Israel to fear Him. Despite it all, they persisted in their sins. Consequently, God has determined to purge the earth with fire.

Zephaniah 3:8 - "My determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy."

### **A Pure Language: Hebrew?**

What language will be spoken in Israel during the millennium? Is there any doubt that it will be Hebrew? The Old Testament is written in "classical" Hebrew. Jesus spoke to the Apostle Paul from heaven, speaking in Hebrew. Nearly extinct for 2000 years, conversational Hebrew, "The Holy Tongue," is now spoken by about 7 million people. Does this prophecy indicate that it will become a universal language in the millennium?

Zephaniah 3:9 - "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."

### **The LORD Thy God In The Midst Of Thee Is Mighty**

All kings, nations and men are pawns in the hands of the only Sovereign God. "I will take away ...them that rejoice in thy pride, ...I will ...leave ...an afflicted and poor people, ...I will gather them that are sorrowful, ...I will undo all that afflict thee: ...I will save her that halteth, ...I will get them praise and fame ...[I] will bring you again, ...I will make you a name and a praise among all people."

Zephaniah 3:17 - "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy."

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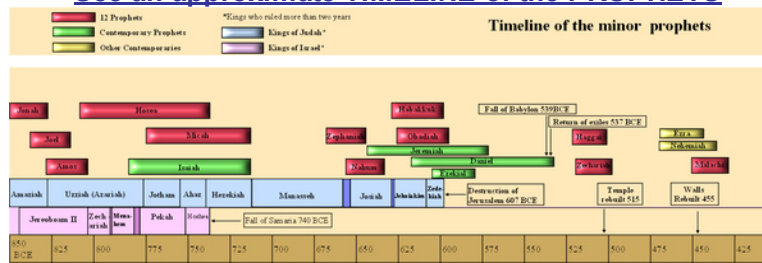
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