

**Divided Kingdom Period:  
The Prophets to Judah: Zephaniah 1:1-3:20**

Zephaniah, "*Jehovah hides*," was the great great grandson of Hezekiah, King of Judah. **1:1** The times of his writing were just prior to the captivity of Judah. He was a contemporary of Jeremiah, Naham, and Habakkuk. Zephaniah is a book of judgment against Judah and the nations of the earth. As with many of the Prophets, the subject is judgment (**1:1-3:7**) and the promise of restoration. (**3:8-20**)

Allow me to offer this outline for our Walk in Zephaniah.

**I- Judgment of Judah. Zeph 1:1-18**

**II- Judgment of the Nations. Zeph 2:1-3:7**

**III- Wait on the Restoration. Zeph 3:8-20**

**I- Judgment of Judah. Zeph 1:1-18**

The prophet begins with the promise of doom. **1:2-3** gives a prophecy to the whole earth.

Zephaniah's life was during what has been called the "*dark ages*" of Judah. I refer us now to **STEP 14** where we saw that his great great grand father Hezekiah was the last good king. Manasseh had been wicked and so had Amon. Allow me to offer us an extensive quote from *Bible Textbook Series*, Minor Prophets II to show the environment of Zephaniah time that he prophesied in.

"Following the death of the good king Hezekiah, his son Manasseh set about to throw the nation into complete idolatry. It became a crime to preach the God known to Isaiah and Micah. The high places of Baal, destroyed by Hezekiah, were

rebuilt. Altars to the unholy trinity of the sun cult were erected everywhere in the names of Ashroreth, Chemosh, Milcom and the other local title for Baal.

The temple itself was desecrated by heathen altars, and to Baal worship was added the abominable Assyrian worship of the planets, the sun and moon. Witchcraft ran rampant through Judah and sacred prostitutes was the order of the day. Even the sacrificing of babies to Baal was revived." (p. 202-3)

Baal worship was rooted in the false worship that dated back to the tower of Babel and Nimrod. As a matter of fact most false religions today have roots there. Baal worship took on local flavors and Baal was called many names in different places. This adds some insight into **Zeph 1:4-5**.

**1:8-13** tells us the extent of the judgment. All of Jerusalem, which represents all of Judah, would be searched out even in the dark corners. **1:12**.

**II- Judgment of the Nations. Zeph 2:1- 3:7**

Much like many of the other prophets, Zephaniah prophesied about the surrounding nations. He told about the destruction of these nations from all four directions. To the west was Philistia (**2:4-7**) and to the east was Moab and Ammon (**2:8-11**). On the south was Egypt (**2:12**) with Assyria to the north (**2:13-15**). The destruction of Assyria was an important event. As you will

recall Assyria had been used by God to take the Northern Kingdom into captivity. Babylon will be used by God to take the Southern into captivity. Assyria was the power of the day when Zephaniah prophesied their demise.

Zephaniah again restated the judgment upon Judah in **3:1-7**.

### **III- Wait on the Restoration. Zeph 3:8-20**

In Zephaniah, as we have seen so many times, there is a promise of restoration to the nation of Israel.

Please notice immediately the promise in **3:8**. ***"Wait ye upon me, saith the Lord...."*** Even though destruction was coming they were to wait upon the Lord God of Israel for the restoration. Remember Isaiah told us, ***"they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings of eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint."*** *Is 40:31*.

At the chance of being repetitive the reason we can declare the restoration of Israel is because it is wrapped up in the faithfulness of God to perform. This section is seen as the millennial glory of Israel. I remind us that God has always had a remnant (**3:13**).

Here simply the remnant will become the majority and not the minority.

Not to be lost in this is the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's plan found in **3:9-10**.

**Zephaniah 3:17** has been called the "John 3:16" of the Old Testament. This is the only time since the fall of man that it is said of God in any way that He rested.

#### **Application to Life's Steps:**

- 1- Idolatry has taken many forms but the root of all is found in rebellion against God.
- 2- They that wait upon the Lord will not be disappointed.
- 3- God had included in the scope of His grace both Jews and Gentiles.
- 4- His knowledge of the whole earth will never allow any escape.

#### **Review of Session:**

- 1- The name Zephaniah means?  
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- 2- What was Baal worship? \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 3- Who will bring about the restoration of Israel? \_\_\_\_\_  
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### **Divided Kingdom Period: The Prophets to Judah: Habakkuk 1:1-3:19**

Some date the prophecy of Habakkuk, *"To Embrace,"* as the last written before the captivity of Judah by Babylon. We know nothing what so ever about the man himself. He is not mentioned anywhere else in scripture.

Although he prophecies about the coming into power of the Babylonians (**1:5-11**) and the ultimate captivity of Judah by them, this is not the focus of the prophet.

Habakkuk is one of the most contemporary prophets in the word of

God. He is contemporary because he asks the great social questions that all of mankind seems to ask. How can God allow, or how long will God allow evil and violence to go unpunished and unchecked? The second question he asks was, how can a just God use wicked men to punish those less wicked.

Many today ask how can a God of love, if He exists, allow economic and social injustices. How can He allow the crippling and killing of innocent people in war? The liberals and the ACLU would have hired this prophet if they could have. Habakkuk is a book of great doubt of God and His character.

We might ask how can a prophet of God bring such question to God. I remind us that we serve a Great God who can handle questions that trouble our mind. God wants us to be honest with Him. Habakkuk is also a book that answers these great questions.

I will outline the book as follows:

**I- Question one. *Hab 1:2-4***

**II- Answer one. *Hab 1:5-11***

**III- Question two. *Hab 1:12-17***

**IV- Answer two. *Hab 2:1-20***

**V- The Prophets Vision. *Hab 3:1-19***

**I- Question one. *Hab 1:2-4***

How long will Judah's sin go unpunished? The prophet cries out and accuses God of not listening to his cry. He felt that God was not punishing Judah for her sins fast enough. He saw bribery and oppression. **1:3** The courts were also corrupt. **"Law is slack and judgment never goes forth."** **1: 4**

The social question was how could God allow the ungodly to prosper at the expense of the godly. The book Job had raised this question also. The Psalmist had raised it also. (**Ps 37, 49, 73**). God

will give him His answer but it will raise a greater question.

**II- Answer one. *Hab 1:5-11***

God said to Habakkuk that He was preparing to judge the injustices of Judah by a nation He was raising up. **1:5-11** tells us that He was raising up the Chaldeans to do this. This is Babylon my friends. They will be a **"terrible and dreadful people."** Their horses would be swift and their warriors were compared to wolves at dusk. **1:8.**

We also see the prophecy of Nebuchadnezzar's, the king of Babylon, conversion in **1:11.** (See **Daniel 4** for this mind change.)

**III- Question two. *Hab 1:12-17***

This brings up a greater question to the prophet. How can God use this ungodly nation to punish Judah? Though Judah was not perfect they certainly were more righteous than Babylon. He asks if God would judge Babylon also.

**IV- Answer two. *Hab 2:1-20***

Habakkuk said he is going to wait on the answer. Before we are to hard on Habakkuk lets remember that he brought his doubts to God. He came to the only source of answers. He waits upon the Lord's vision to answer his question. **2:1-3** God tells him that He would punish Babylon but not until the appointed time.

The prophet gives us what some have seen as the two streams of mankind in **2:4.** Some are flowing to destruction and others are flowing to rejoicing by faith. This verse is quoted in **Heb 10:38; Rom 1:17** and **Gal 3:11.** **"The just shall live by faith"** is one of

the greatest theological statements found in God's word.

To answer question number two God gives the prophet five woes concerning Babylon.

a- Woe one- **2:6b-8** The nations that Babylon had destroyed would rise against them.

b- Woe two. **2:9-11**. The nation of Babylon would ultimately be destroyed by her own greed.

c- Woe three **2:12-14** This woe concerns the extreme cruelty of Babylon. They built their cities with the blood of others.

d- Woe four **2:15-17** This has to do with the drunkenness of Babylon.

e- Woe five **2:18-20**. Their trust placed in man made gods would lead to destruction.

**V- The Prophets Vision. Hab 3:1-19**

The doubts of the prophet are reassured here. **3:1-2**. He prayed and asked God, who he had accused of doing nothing, to have mercy. Habakkuk saw God moving in His majesty across the earth. **3:3-16**

He make a great statement of faith in **3:17-18**. Remember Job said, **"thought he might slay me yet will I trust him."** Habakkuk said thought he might not see the physical evidence of God's love and mercy he knew it was there and he chose to praise Him.

**Application to Life's Steps:**

- 1- God wants us to be honest with Him about our deepest doubts and fears.
- 2- God is at work in the world even though we fail to see Him working because of our small time frame of reasoning.
- 3- God will punish the wicked in His time and in His way.
- 4- We should choose to praise God for who He is not simply what He does for us.
- 5- Is there a doubt or fear that you need to bring to God in honesty?
- 6- Are you willing to receive His answer?

**Review of Session:**

- 1- The name Habakkuk means?  
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- 2- What are the two questions asked by Habakkuk and answered by God in this book?  
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- 3- What is the great theological statement found in Habakkuk? Quote it here: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 4- When did the prophet decide he would praise God? \_\_\_\_\_  
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