

1. Zephaniah prophesied concerning the Day of the Lord and the impending judgment of the people of Judah.
2. Zephaniah also believed in the sovereignty of God to preserve his remnant.
3. Zephaniah delivered his message in the dark days before Josiah's reform became evident. His message reminds us that God desires humble submission unto Him.
4. For three-fourths of the seventh century B.C. the southern kingdom of Judah was in a deep religious and political recession.
5. Manasseh led the people to do more evil than Ahab during his reign - or during the time when the Canaanites ruled the land. (2 Kings 21:9)
6. Manasseh burned his own son as an offering to the Assyrian gods. The two-year reign of his son Amon was no better religiously or politically. (2 Kings 21:6)
7. Manasseh ruled Judah for fifty-five years. These were long years of rebellion against the God and years of turning toward Assyrian gods.
8. It was during the reign of Manasseh that Zephaniah was born. The brief reign of Ammon and the opening years of the young king Josiah brought little improvement.
9. While Judah was asserting its independence and purifying its religion, Babylon and Assyria were changing positions of authority in world politics.
10. Again and again God announced judgment on a people who had turned away from Him and turned toward all kinds of vile practices.
11. The title verse to Zephaniah's prophecy describes the prophet's message as the word of the Lord that came to Zephaniah in the days of Josiah, king of Judah 639-609 B.C...
12. Only the Book of Zephaniah - among the prophetic books - traces the genealogy of the prophet to the fourth generation.
13. Outline of the book:
  - A. God's great day of judgment. (1:2-2:3)
    1. Judgment upon the earth (1:1-3)
    2. Judgment against Judah (1:4-13)
    3. Judgment at the Great Day of the Lord (1:14-2:3)
  - B. Judgment against the Nations. (2:4-15)
  - C. The Future of Jerusalem. (3:1-20)
14. Zephaniah bridged the years between the prophets of the past and the hope of the future age.
15. Zephaniah carefully moves from judgment against all the earth (1:1-3) to his message of judgment against Judah (1:3).

16. From verse 4 of chapter 1 to verse 3 of chapter 2:3 we see that Judah's wicked people would be destroyed at the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
17. Then the question becomes - how could Zephaniah at the same time write about universal judgment? (1:2-3)
18. How could he turn so quickly from Judah's destruction in 586 to speak of the "day of the LORD" (v. 14), a yet-future event separated from that devastation in 586 by many centuries?
19. When Babylon conquered Judah, judgment was not universal; so how could the two be related?
20. Zephaniah saw Judah's destruction and universal judgment as two parts of one grand event, "the great day of the LORD." (1:14)
21. The destruction of the prophet's own people would be so terrible that it was envisioned as ushering in God's day of wrath (v. 15; 2:2) on all the world's wicked.
22. In chapter 2 verse 1-3 Zephaniah urged those who already know the Lord to continue steadfast in their walk with Him.
23. If the remnant would seek the Lord, then they would be sheltered from the impending doom of God's anger.
24. Even though many died in the Babylonian invasions, others were spared and some were exiled to Babylon (2 Kings 24:14-16). God sheltered or protected His remnant.
25. Zephaniah turned from warning Judah to prophesy similar wrath on their equally idolatrous neighbors.
26. God is the God of all the nations, and those nations that led Judah to stumble would not escape the fury of His wrath. Since He would punish Judah, He surely would not overlook the sins of others.
27. Zephaniah began with the nation to Judah's west, Philistia (vv. 4-7), then moved east to Moab and Ammon (vv. 8-11), then south to Ethiopia (v. 12), and north to Assyria (vv. 13-15).
28. The word "then" in chapter 3 verse 9 signifies a major pivot in the prophet's message both in tone and in content; he shifted from frightful predictions of destruction to prophecies of blessing and peace.
29. After destroying the nations' armies, God will restore the nations to His favor. Instead of horrifying threats, here are comforting promises of love, mercy, and restoration.
30. These promises look forward to the Millennium when Christ will rule as King on the earth.