

Zephaniah's Monologue

My name, Zephaniah, means "the Lord hides," or "the Lord protects." I am a fourth generation descendant of King Hezekiah of Judah. I prophesied in Judah between 630 and 621 B.C. during the reign of King Josiah.

The theme of my prophecy? "The Day of the Lord." By that I mean the day when God's wrath and judgment are poured out upon people. God said through me that He was going to "sweep away everything from the face of the earth." People, animals, birds, fish.

I wanted to make it clear to Judah that God's judgment was approaching. Not just for the surrounding nations, but for Judah as well.

But I also held out hope for Judah, promising that God would be merciful toward His people and someday restore the nation.

You, as the church, are God's people today. Maybe it would be of value to you to find out why God was bringing judgment upon His people of Judah. Is it possible that you are offending God now in the same way that Judah did then?



Faith at Home

Lead your family to discuss this: Worship isn't worship unless it is total, exclusive, and unreserved. What does that mean? Is it true?

Teacher's Toolbox

*Getting your class into God's Word
and God's Word into your class*

ExcitingBibleStudy.com

Bible Series

Zephaniah 1-2

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HOW TO USE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX: Make a four-page folded teacher's leaflet from the first two sheets by printing two-sided (or by putting the blank sides together). The other two sheets are for duplicating, displaying, distributing, or otherwise using as called for in the lesson plan.



Faith at Home – A specific application of today's Bible passage to family life, to be used for individual reflection, family discussion, or class activity.



Getting Started

Synonyms and definitions

- Write the word "Worship" on the chalkboard. Ask members to suggest synonyms and definitions for the word.
- Write the word "Pure" in front of or above the word "Worship." Ask members to distinguish between "worship" and "pure worship."
- **The prophet Zephaniah blasted the people of his day for impure worship. They mixed worship of the true God with the worship of Baal and other false gods. Worship is more than going through a prescribed religious ritual. Worship is offering ourselves totally to God because of His worthiness. It must be pure and sincere, or it is not worship at all.**
- Call on someone to lead the class in prayer, asking God to teach them today about worshiping Him with pure worship.

Exploring God's Word

Monologue

● Enlist someone to prepare and present the Zephaniah monologue on page 4. Give them a copy of the page for preparation. If necessary, have someone read it aloud unrehearsed.

Getting the background

● Call attention to Zephaniah 1:1. Write Zephaniah's "family tree" on the marker board: Hezekiah ▣ Amariah ▣ Gedaliah ▣ Zephaniah

● **Hezekiah was king of Judah 715-686 B.C. He was Zephaniah's great grandfather.**

● Have someone read aloud 2 Kings 18:1-16.

● **Despite Zephaniah's "pay-off," Sennacherib of Assyria continued to threaten Jerusalem. It looked pretty bleak until the prophet Isaiah assured Hezekiah that the Lord would deliver them from the Assyrians.**

● Have someone read aloud 2 Kings 19:32-36.

● **Afterwards, Hezekiah became terminally ill, but the Lord granted his request for healing and added 15 years to his life. Unfortunately, it was during that "extension" that Hezekiah showed all of his wealth to some envoys from Babylon, an action which Isaiah told him would re-**

sult in all of that wealth being taken by the Babylonians, not during his lifetime, but later. Isaiah's prophecy was eventually fulfilled.

● **After Hezekiah finally died, he was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a great uncle of Zephaniah.**

● Have someone read aloud a summary of Manasseh's "accomplishments" in 2 Kings 21:1-18.

● **Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, an uncle of Zephaniah. He had a short (two-year) wicked reign.**

● Have someone read aloud 2 Kings 21:19-25.

● **The next king of Judah was Josiah, a cousin of Zephaniah. During Josiah's reign the Book of the Law was found during a renovation of the temple and Josiah led the people to renew their covenant with the Lord. Josiah was a good king, but God's wrath had already been kindled by the wicked reigns of Manasseh and Amon.**

● Have someone read aloud 2 Kings 23:19-27.

● **Perhaps Zephaniah's prophecies positively influenced Josiah's reign.**

Study guide

● Give each person a pencil and a copy of the following study guide (duplicate Item 1). Have members

work in two's or three's to study the entire Book of Zephaniah and complete the study guide. Allow 15-20 minutes for work, then lead the class to share their findings.

Study Guide

1. Read in Zephaniah 1:1-13 about the destruction that was about to sweep the land. Zephaniah begins his messages to the nations with Judah, the land in which he prophesied. List some things God said He would do.

2. "The day of the Lord" refers to the day in which God brings His wrath and judgment upon people. Read Zephaniah 1:14—2:3 and jot down some facts about that great day.

3. Read in Zephaniah 2:4-15 the prophet's predictions regarding surrounding nations. Summarize them here:

Philistia: _____

Moab/Ammon: _____

Cush: _____

Assyria: _____

4. Read Zephaniah 3:1-4 and list some of the sins of Jerusalem.

Making It Personal

Finding oneself

● Give each person a pencil and a copy of the following (duplicate

Item 2). Ask them to consider whether they might fall into one or more of the categories of people who were facing God's judgment because of their impure worship of Him.

Does that look like me?

Read through these categories of people in Jerusalem who displeased God, based on Zephaniah 1:4-18 and 3:1-5. Do any of them remind you of yourself? What steps could you take to give pure worship to the Lord?

- worshipping false gods
- worshipping the starry host
- worshipping the Lord and something else, too
- turning back from following the Lord
- not seeking the Lord or asking Him for guidance
- carrying out violence or deceit against other people
- being complacent, not passionate about the Lord, taking Him for granted, not expecting Him to do anything whether good or bad
- sinning against the Lord
- oppressing others
- being rebellious against God
- being disobedient
- not trusting the Lord or drawing near to Him
- being arrogant

Wrapping It Up

● **God expects and deserves our pure worship, undefiled, unmixed, undiluted.** Call on someone to lead in prayer.

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