



Mighty Warrior

# THE DAY OF THE LORD

Zephaniah 1-3

The Daily Word from Laura Martin

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The prophet Zephaniah proclaimed that judgment would come for Jerusalem, for Judah, for all the nation, and even for the whole earth. Zephaniah proclaimed the Day of the Lord for his current time, but ultimately, for the end. And yet *Zephaniah also declared that God would gather a remnant* in His amazing grace, offsetting His jealous anger against those seeking evil. God is a warrior. He is mighty to save. The Lord will rejoice over His people with gladness and delight in them with shouts of joy. He is in their midst and will save.

Oh, friend, the Lord will bring you quietness in the midst of destruction and despair. Imagine the picture of a battle . . . *As you look out over the horizon, you see a warrior standing out among the others, victoriously riding toward you. As you watch this warrior, you know he is coming to rescue you. As he arrives to you, he celebrates with a cheer of joy. He cares for your safety and saves you.* This is a picture of the love of your heavenly Father. Look up from the battle. Look up and seek the Lord alone. *He is in your midst.* He fights for you and will rescue you. He delights over you with shouts of joy. He rejoices over you with gladness. Do not fear. The Lord is near.

*“On that day it will be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear; Zion, do not let your hands grow weak. Yahweh your God is among you, a warrior who saves. He will rejoice over you with gladness. He will bring you quietness with His love. He will delight in you with shouts of joy.’”*

— Zephaniah 3:16–17

## FURTHER SCRIPTURE

- *Deuteronomy 7:21* — “Don’t be terrified of them, for the LORD your God, a great and awesome God, is among you.”
- *Psalms 9:10* — “Those who know Your name trust in You because You have not abandoned those who seek You, Yahweh.”
- *Zephaniah 2:3* — “Seek the LORD, all you humble of the earth, who carry out what He commands. Seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be concealed on the day of the LORD’s anger.”



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Teaching Notes

## INTRO

We are starting a new book today! It's not very big. In fact, some people have a hard time finding it. These small books are called Minor Prophets because they are so short. Size is really the only difference between the Major and Minor Prophets. It's important to remember that during the time of Zephaniah, the kingdom was split. Zephaniah served and prophesied in the Southern Kingdom.

With each of the 12 minor prophets, the book of prophecy bears the name of the its author. Little is known about Zephaniah. His name means, "the Lord hides." MacArthur states, "The prophet himself dates his message during the reign of Josiah (630–609 BC). The moral and spiritual conditions detailed in the book (Zephaniah 1:4–6; 3:1–7) seem to place the prophecy prior to Josiah's reform, when Judah was still functioning in idolatry and wickedness."<sup>1</sup> In 2 Chronicles, Josiah tore down the alters, burned the bones of false prophets, and broke the carved idols (around 628 BC). Wiersbe points out this led many to believe that Zephaniah prophesied from 635–625 BC, around the same time as Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup> The dates are important because we know that during this point in time the Israelites had no hope.

During this time politically, the world power had gone from the Assyrians to the Babylonians. According to MacArthur, Judah benefited from the changing politics in the region as Assyria began to lose power and Babylon began to grow stronger. In fact, Babylon's impending threat over Assyria actually caused Assyria to loosen its grip on Judah, "bringing an element of independence to Judah for the first time in 50 years. Spiritually, the reigns of Hezekiah's son Manasseh, extended over four decades, and his grandson Amon, lasting only two [years], were marked by wickedness and apostasy (2 Kings 21; 2 Chronicles 33)."<sup>3</sup> Before Josiah's reform, the land was characterized by wickedness. After the discovery of the book of the Law, Josiah started reform and led the people to once again worship and seek the Lord.

Zephaniah's message came during a time of evil and hopelessness, before Josiah's reform. The message of Zephaniah really focused on the Day of the Lord. The final days for the Israelites were near. Their judgment was coming at the hands of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (605–586 BC). MacArthur explains that Zephaniah's message "looks beyond to the far fulfillment in the judgment of Daniel's seventieth week (Zephaniah 1:18; 3:8)."<sup>4</sup> The message was, yes, dark times are coming, but seek the Lord during these times. Our phrase for where Jesus is seen in Zephaniah is *Mighty Warrior*.

## TEACHING

Zephaniah 1:1-6: Zephaniah traced his genealogy back through four generations, all the way back to King Hezekiah. He was the only prophet to come from royal blood (v. 1). Zephaniah wrote there would be judgment on the entire earth. The world would be swept away (vv. 2–3), a clear comparison to the Genesis flood (Genesis 6:9; 7:23). Remember, God promised worldwide destruction would not happen again until the end of days. God will continue to remove earthly living things until He will judge all of humankind. Starting in verse four, Zephaniah spelled out the judgment on Judah. Wiersbe states Zephaniah "relates the Day of the Lord to both the Jews and the Gentiles."<sup>5</sup>

Zephaniah 1:7: In verse 7, Zephaniah talked about Judah becoming God's sacrifice. God's judgment was the sacrifice of Judah, and the guest who was coming to deliver God's judgment was the Babylonian army. The Day of the Lord refers to the time after the seven years of tribulation, spelled out by John in Revelation. The Israelites didn't have the picture of the Day of Lord like we do today.

Zephaniah 1:8-10: The statement, "all who are dressed in foreign clothing," referred to those who had been focusing on the wrong gods and the wrong things. They had dressed in fakeness, pretending in ways in which they should not have been living.

<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), p. 1036.

<sup>2</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Isaiah-Malachi* (Colorado Spring: David C. Cook, 2002), p. 425.

<sup>3</sup> MacArthur, p. 1036.

<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, p. 1036-1037.

<sup>5</sup> Wiersbe, p. 42.



*Mighty Warrior*

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Teaching Notes

Zephaniah 1:11: Wiersbe states, “Zephaniah must have been a resident of Jerusalem, for he knew the layout of the city.”<sup>6</sup> He went into really specific details about the city. On Zephaniah’s mention of merchants, MacArthur wrote, “Merchants made wealthy from dishonest gain were singled out to depict the anguish of the coming judgment.”<sup>7</sup>

Zephaniah 1:12: This is a very interesting posture. If you were going to apply the description of “men who settled down” to today, it would be a complacent believer.

Zephaniah 1:14–18: Zephaniah described the Day of the Lord for Judah, but also, the great tribulation at the end of the seven years. The Day of the Lord was coming for the Israelites, but it is also coming for us. McGee describes the Day of the Lord as “A day of fear.”<sup>8</sup> I don’t want us to miss that this seems like a great time to hide. No matter where you are, you are not going to be able to escape or hide. Not just Judah, but everyone would experience a horrifying end.

Zephaniah 2: Zephaniah urged the Israelites to pray for deliverance. He also encouraged them to seek the Lord, to seek righteousness, and to seek humility. Maybe the Lord will hide you. We are all in need of the Lord’s protection from the Day of the Lord. It will be hell on earth. Zephaniah shifted from judgment on Judah to the entire nation. Then judgment would come on Ethiopia, and then Assyria. The people of Judah had become comfortable, believing God would do neither good nor bad. When we see that posture of complacency, then we will see God bring about destruction. We must not be complacent. We need to be ready for the return of Jesus at any given time.

Zephaniah 3: Zephaniah discussed the coming judgment that Jerusalem deserved. You could see so many cities in the world deserving similar judgement. Again, we see the Armageddon mentality. McGee writes, “This is Armageddon, which ends with the return of Christ to the earth.”<sup>9</sup> God’s love is so strong for His people, His jealousy is so strong for His people, and His anger so strong against the other nations that He goes before them in battle.

## CLOSING

The battle of Armageddon is when God will wipe out all the other nations. The phrase in Zephaniah is the *Mighty Warrior*, which points to Jesus. Jesus is the one coming back to save His people. He’s going to fight for us, and He is also going to love us.

<sup>6</sup> Wiersbe, p. 427.

<sup>7</sup> MacArthur, p. 1038.

<sup>8</sup> J. Vernon McGee, “Notes for Zephaniah”; available at [https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mcgee\\_j\\_vernon/notes-outlines/zephaniah/zephaniah-outline.cfm](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/mcgee_j_vernon/notes-outlines/zephaniah/zephaniah-outline.cfm).

<sup>9</sup> McGee.



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Reading Guide Questions

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1. Why do you think Zephaniah traced his lineage in such specific detail in Zephaniah 1:1?
2. Was Zephaniah referring to the past or the future in Zephaniah 1:14–18?
3. What do you think the “Fish Gate” and “Second Quarter,” from Zephaniah 1:10 were?
4. According to Zephaniah and other Old Testament prophets, how does God discipline His own people differently from those who bring anything against them? How is this like the way we discipline our own children when compared to how we feel when someone else tries to discipline, hurt, or attack them?
5. Why do you think the people of Israel would not receive instruction from the Lord after hearing the warnings from the prophets (Zephaniah 3:7)? How are we like them today?
6. What did the Holy Spirit highlight to you in Zephaniah 1—3 through the reading or the teachings?



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