

## ZEPHANIAH: GOD'S JUDGMENT AND RESTORATION

### III: The Great Human Suffering Of God's Judgment

(Zephaniah 1:14-18)

#### I. Introduction

- A. Unlike the other Old Testament prophets, Zephaniah had a genealogy of four generations, so he was a man "of prominence and even of royalty." (B. K. C., O. T., p. 1523) He offered the prophetic view of the upper class.
- B. However, upper and lower class prophets **both** wrote of judgment and blessing for God's people in "the day of the Lord," a phrase Zephaniah used more often than any other prophet. (Ibid., p. 1524)
- C. Zephaniah 1:14-18 predicts the great human suffering that is involved in God's judgment, what we do well to consider as motivation to avoid sinning ourselves (as follows):

#### II. The Great Human Suffering Of God's Judgment, Zephaniah 1:14-18.

- A. The people of Judah were complacent about their sinful condition (Zephaniah 1:12), so God's prophet returned to his warning about the nearness of the day of the Lord's judgment, Zephaniah 1:14a.
- B. That judgment would be a horrifying experience for the people of Judah as described in Zephaniah 1:14b-18a:
  - 1. Even the mighty Hebrew warrior would "retreat in fear and horror," Zephaniah 1:14b; Ibid., p. 1528.
  - 2. Zephaniah described that day of judgment as one of "distress . . . anguish . . . trouble . . . ruin . . . darkness . . . gloom . . . clouds, and blackness," Zephaniah 1:15 NIV; Ibid. In history, when the Babylonian soldiers actually charged into Jerusalem, the city's people "were distressed and in anguish; their houses were ruined, and the sky was dark from the smoke of the buildings set on fire," Ibid.
  - 3. "As the Babylonian hordes rushed to conquer, kill and ravish, they sounded the trumpet and shouted in battle in their moves against not only Jerusalem but also other fortified cities in Judah. Soldiers at the corner towers, normally strongholds of defense against attacking enemies, were defenseless," Ibid.; v. 16.
  - 4. The distress the people would experience would be so great that they would "wander about like helplessly blind people" in figurative fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28:28-29 as they would be "unable to find any safe quarter" because of "their having sinned against the Lord," Ibid.; Zephaniah 1:17a.
  - 5. So much blood of the people of Jerusalem would be shed that "their blood would be . . . like dust on the streets. And their bodies would be cruelly ravished, with their innards piled up like the filth of dung piles," Ibid.; Zephaniah 1:17b.
  - 6. There would be no hope of deliverance, for their wealth in silver and gold would not be sufficient to buy off the attackers as they were instruments of God's wrath against the sinners of Judah, Zeph. 1:18a; Ibid.
- C. At Zephaniah 1:18b, God's prophet suddenly shifted from predicting Judah's near-term punishment to the Lord's punishment of the entire world in the future Great Tribulation, Ibid. He predicted that the whole world would be destroyed and all its inhabitants would quickly be subjected to God's wrath, Ibid.
- D. This worldwide judgment would occur because of God's jealousy, "His consuming passion and concern that His own people follow Him, not false gods," Ibid.; Zephaniah 1:18c.

***Lesson:*** (1) *Because of the spiritual complacency of Judah's sinful people, Zephaniah returned to predicting the alarming day of the Lord's judgment. (2) That judgment would bring terror for Judah's people who would experience distress and anguish as enemy soldiers rushed into the city, ruining their houses, darkening the sky with the smoke of their burning, killing, ravishing, shouting, destroying Jerusalem's fortifications so that the people would wander about in shock like helpless blind folk, and their blood would be so greatly shed that it would be as common as the dust of the streets and their bodies would be mutilated and treated as dung piles. That day would be a time of hopelessness for Jerusalem's people as the invaders would be instruments of God's great wrath. (3) This judgment on Judah acts as a foretaste of the coming devastating, horrifying judgment of God on the entire world in the Great Tribulation Period, a judgment primarily on man's idolatrous rebellion against the Lord.*

***Application:*** (1) *May we never become complacent about sin like Judah did, for God's punishment is very severe and unalterable when it falls, leaving its recipients in utter shock. (2) Since complacency about sin is the product of a lack of holiness, that is, a lack of separation from evil, and thus a lack of an intolerance for evil, may we never let ourselves accept the great evils we see around us as if we should view it as the "norm," for evil is NOT "normal" with the Lord. Rather, though we are called of God to be gracious in how we relate to sinners, may we remain totally intolerant of their sin! (3) If we face an unusually painful trial or series of trials, may we examine ourselves to see if we have sinned and consequently that God is disciplining us, and confess our sin as needed!*