

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/5/08 Wednesday evening

Old Testament Survey—Zephaniah

The prophets in Israel were men who spoke for God and delivered God's message to His people. They were different, yet similar.

Discuss: Their differences? Their similarities?

The Seventh Century Prophets

Who? Nahum, Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah

What major world powers? Assyria (in decline), Egypt, Babylonians (on the rise)

Note: We see "progressive revelation" in the Bible. What does that mean? God did not tell the world all at once everything He wanted people to know. He revealed truth progressively over time. New revelation never contradicted, and always built upon previous revelation.

For instance, did Abraham (in 2000 B.C.) know as much about God and God's plan as did David (1000 B.C.)? No. Did David know as much as Jeremiah (6th century B.C.)? No. Did Jeremiah know as much as Paul?

Before we look at another 7th century prophet, let's try to sum up the theological contribution of the prophets prior to the 7th century B.C. If you had lived in 700 B.C. in Judah, what would you have known about the following? (see class notes, Leon Rowland, p. 17)

The Messiah

- He would be a king, from the Davidic line.
- He would reunite Israel and Judah.
- He would be the God-man (Isa 9:6).
- He would be The Servant who would suffer for His people (Isa 53).
- He would inaugurate a time of Shalom for His people, including Gentiles.

Day of the LORD

- It would be a time of judgment and purification.
- It would affect Israel (those in the land, and in deportation) and other nations.
- It would be a time of restoration.

Salvation

- It focuses on the internal.
- It affects the ethical (social expression).
- It's based on the vicarious work of another (the Suffering Servant).
- It affects the individual and the corporate.

The Remnant

- It includes Gentiles as well as Jews.
- It is the ultimate people of God.

The Eschaton (the Eternal State)

- It will be preceded by judgment.
- It will be characterized by Shalom (agricultural, zoological, etc).
- God will be exalted, man humbled.
- Jerusalem will be central.
- It will include Jews and Gentiles.
- The curse on the animal kingdom will be removed.

Note: The other prophets don't add much new revelation. They fill in some of the gaps.

Who wrote the book?

--Zephaniah

--the great-grandson of Hezekiah (1:1); lived in Jerusalem; came from the royal family; he prophesied to the royal leaders (possibly he is ministering to his relatives--3:4-5).

His Significance: Zephaniah broke the half century of prophetic silence in Judah. He reshaped the major themes of the great 8th century prophets, and applied them to the turbulent international scene of the late 7th century. He and Jeremiah helped spark Josiah's reforms (L.H.B. 431).

When was the book written?

--7th century B.C.

--Prior to 621 which was the reform of Josiah (Wood, p. 320)

--He ministered as a contemporary of Nahum

--He was a prophet during the days of Josiah (1:1), probably early, just after the wicked leadership of Manasseh and Amon.

Discuss: What type of king had Manasseh been? Not only bad, but *anti-Yahweh*; he promoted witchcraft, divination, killed his own sons, and destroyed the Law scrolls (2 Chron 33)

Note: Jeremiah said that Judah passed the point of no return under Manasseh (15:4), and God said that even if Moses and Samuel prayed, it would make no difference!

The time frame: Manasseh--55 years; Amon--2 years; Josiah--31 years (640 B.C.)

Why was the book written?

Zephaniah elaborates on the Day of the LORD.

A. We learn the extent of the Day of the Lord.

Q: Who will it start with?

1. That Day will start with Israel (1:4).

Q: Who else will that Day affect, acc. to ch 2?

2. Zephaniah extends it to the ends of the earth (ch 2).

The nations: Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Cush

B. We learn what the Day of the Lord will be like (1:14-16).

Q: What words does Zephaniah use to describe that Day? Bitter, wrath, trouble...

C. We learn the purpose of the Day of the Lord.

1. It will be to purify Israel.

2. Ultimately, it will be to purify the world.

3. There will be a reversal of Babel (3:9).

Q: What happened at the tower of Babel? The world united as one to build a tower to God. They worked together in a humanist task, with a "we-don't-need-God" attitude. And what did God do in response? He confused them, divided them with different languages.

Q: According to 3:9, what's going to be the outcome of the Day of the Lord? God will purify the lips of people so that they will call on Him and serve Him together. There's coming a Day when all people will worship the Lord together.

Discuss: Why does God want us to know this?

Note: The OT runs together future events, whereas the NT delineates them.

What is the outline of the book?

- I. The Coming Day of the LORD (ch 1)
- II. The Effect of the Day of the LORD on the Nations (2:1 - 3:7)
 - A. A Call for Repentance (2:1-3)
 - B. A Listing of Nations to be Judged (2:4 - 3:8)
- III. The Establishment of the Future Kingdom (3:8-20)

What is the message of the book in one sentence?

Zephaniah reminds us that the Lord will have His Day.

What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?

1. *Zephaniah teaches us we need to live in light of what is going to happen in the future.*

To do: Go through the book, and circle the number of references to "The Day of the LORD," "That Day," "The Day of the LORD's anger."

How many times?

What kind of impact does this repetition have on you? A vivid reminder that there's more to life than meets the eye! A day of judgment is coming, followed by restoration and reward.

2. *Zephaniah teaches us what God is like.*

Scan the book, looking for...

- a. What God disapproves

--people who seek false gods, 1:4-5

--people who refuse to seek the Lord, 1:6

--violence and deceit, 1:9

--the complacent, 1:12

--the proud, 2:10

--people who refuse correction, 3:2

b. What God approves and desires

--see 2:3

--for a description of God's character, see 3:17