

I. Zephaniah

a. Purpose: We will look at the authorship, purpose and other aspects of the book of Zephaniah so we would be more familiar with this part of the Bible and yearn to study it for ourselves

b. Authorship

i. Reasons why it is written by Zephaniah: It was to Zephaniah that the word of the Lord came to in this book: *“The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:”* (**Zephaniah 1:1**)

ii. About Zephaniah

1. The name Zephaniah means “Yahweh has treasured,” or “Yahweh has hidden.”¹
2. Three other individuals also have the same name in the Old Testament.²
3. The name might be significant since it points to God’s protection of His people during difficulties Zephaniah’s day and also for the future.³
4. We can learn a little more about Zephaniah from the subscript: *“The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:”* (**Zephaniah 1:1**)
 - a. Normally an introduction of a person designate the person’s father’s name; see **Isaiah 1:1, Jeremiah 1:1, Ezekiel 1:3; Hosea 1:1 and Joel 1:1.**⁴
 - b. But here we see the introduction to Zephaniah going back five (four stated) generations.⁵
 - c. We learn here that Zephaniah was the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah and thus Zephaniah was of royal lineage.
5. Being from the royal lineage of the king of Judah we can also deduce that he ministered to Judah which is also hinted at with his discussion about Judah and Jerusalem.
6. Scholars disagree when exactly Zephaniah ministered whether after Josiah’s revival around 622 BC (see **2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34**)⁶ or before the revival, with his ministry making an impact with the revival and reformation itself.⁷

c. Purpose

¹ John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

² John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

³ John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

⁴ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16552-16553.

⁵ Walter Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 192.

⁶ John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

⁷ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16557-16558.

- i. According to Richard Mayhue the book is about “Future Global Judgment.”⁸
 - ii. According to John Walton: “The purpose of the prophecies of Zephaniah was to initiate change in Judah by pronouncing God’s judgment on wickedness. Coupled with God’s intention to punish came the proclamation of his intention to restore Judah.”⁹
 - iii. According to Mark Rooker: “The visitation of the sins of Judah as well as the nation's deliverance are two aspects of the coming Day of the Lord, the central organizing principle of the book.”¹⁰
 - d. Structure
 - i. Shorter outline¹¹
 1. Prophecies of Judgment (on Judah and the surrounding nations) (1-2)
 2. Prophecies of Future Blessing (on Israel) (3)
 - ii. Longer outline¹²
 1. Superscription (1:1)
 2. Prophecy against Judah (1:2-2:3)
 3. Prophecy against Foreign Nations (2:4– 3:7)
 - a. Against Philistia (2:4-7)
 - b. Against Moab and Ammon (2:8-11)
 - c. Against Ethiopia (2:12)
 - d. Against Assyria (2:13-15)
 - e. Against Jerusalem and Judah (3:1-7)
 4. Prophecy of Salvation (3:8-20)
 - e. Closer look at Zephaniah
 - i. Situation and background
 1. Politically Israel was left alone at this time with the Assyrian empire crumbling and Assyria’s warfare with the Babylonians and Medes who broke away and rebelled against the Assyrians.¹³
 2. This allow Judah to be relatively free and also prosperous.¹⁴
 3. Yet during this time Judah was not doing well spiritually such as during the long reign of King Manasseh from 695-642 BC who “*did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel.*” (2 Kings 21:2). The following sins occurring in Israel during his reign:

⁸ Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 88.

⁹John Walton, “Zephaniah” in *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 669.

¹⁰ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16591-16592.

¹¹ Richard Mayhue, *Ordination Practicum Syllabus* (Sun Valley, California: Self-Published for The Master’s Seminary), 88.

¹² Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16598-16605.

¹³ John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

¹⁴ John D. Hannah, “Zephaniah” in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1523.

- a. Idol worship: **2 Kings 21:4-5**
 - b. Placing carved image of goddess Asherah in the Temple: **2 Kings 21:7.**
 - c. Children sacrifice: **2 Kings 21:6, 23:10-11.**
 4. Following King Manasseh is King Amon who continued his father's sin and had a short reign (**2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-25.**¹⁵)
 5. After Amon was King Josiah whom God used to bring about reform and purging of idolatry(see **2 Kings 22-23; 2 Chronicles 34**).
- ii. Theme: Day of the Lord
 1. The book mentioned "*The Day of the Lord*" in **1:7, 14.**
 2. The Day of the Lord is also mentioned frequently in more than one way.¹⁶
 - a. "*Day of wrath*" **1:15, 1:18.**
 - b. "*On that day:*" **1:8- 10, 1:15, 3:11, 3:16.**
 - c. "*A day of....:*" **1:14-15.**
 - d. "*Day of wrath*" **1:15, 1:18.**
 - e. "*at that time:*" **1:12, 3:19-20.**
- iii. Brief word about **Zephaniah 1:2-2:3** on "Prophecy against Judah"
 1. In **Zephaniah 1:2-3** God promise to remove all things.
 2. Then in **Zephaniah 1:4-6** it shifts to a description to God punishing Judah and Jerusalem for pagan practices.
 3. From **Zephaniah 1:7-1:18** Zephaniah describes to us the coming Day of the Lord.
 4. This section ends with **Zephaniah 2:1-2:3** with an exhortation to turn back to God.¹⁷
- iv. Brief word about **Zephaniah 2:4-3:7** on "Prophecy against Foreign Nations"
 1. This section begins with Israel's neighbors (Philistines in **2:4-7**, Moab and Ammon in **2:8-11**).
 2. Then Zephaniah prophecied against further nations: Ethiopia (**2:12**) and Assyria (**2:13-15**).
 3. It then turn back to pronounce judgment against Jerusalem and Judah (**3:1-7**).
- v. Brief word about **Zephaniah 3:8-20** on "Prophecy of Salvation"
 1. This section begin with a call to wait upon the Lord (**3:8**).
 2. In **Zephaniah 3:8** we see that God those who are faithful to wait.
 3. In **Zephaniah 3:13** we see that there will be a godly remnant among the Jews and God speaks favorably to them in this closing section.
- f. Place of this book in the Canon

¹⁵ John D. Hannah, "Zephaniah" in *Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Victor), 1524.

¹⁶ Mark Rooker, "The Book of Zephaniah" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16581-16583.

¹⁷ Mark Rooker, "The Book of Zephaniah" in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16581-16583.

- i. Zephaniah uses Genesis to teach us about the devastating nature of God’s judgment.
 1. In **Zephaniah 1:2-3** God promise to remove all things: “*“I will completely remove all things From the face of the earth,” declares the Lord. 3 “I will remove man and beast; I will remove the birds of the sky And the fish of the sea, And the ruins along with the wicked; And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,” declares the Lord.*”
 - a. This passage uses language similar to that found in the flood account in **Genesis 6:7**: “*The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the [a]sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.”*”→Thus it is trying to tell us that God’s future Day of the Lord will be as catastrophic as the Flood.
 - b. The order of the creatures listed in **Zephaniah 1:3** of man, beasts, birds, and fish, is actually in reverse order to their creation in **Genesis 1:20–26** and emphasize that the Day of the Lord is the opposite of creation.¹⁸
 2. In **Zephaniah 2:8-11** God prophesied against Moab and Ammon
 - a. Moab and Ammon’s punishment is compared to the destruction suffered by Sodom and Gomorrah in **v.9**.
 - b. Moab and Ammon came from the incestuous relationship between Lot and his daughters after they left Sodom and Gomorrah according to **Genesis 19:36-38**. So it would have been rather a devastating blow to reference Sodom and Gomorrah.¹⁹
- ii. Contribution to the New Testament
 1. There are no explicit quote from this book in the New Testament.
 2. Yet it does contribute to what later follow in the New Testament with its teaching on what is the Day of the Lord that the New Testament and other Scripture would build upon.
 3. Yet this book also anticipate the church age and beyond with Gentiles coming to know and serve God in **Zephaniah 3:9-13**.

¹⁸ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16581-16583.

¹⁹ Mark Rooker, “The Book of Zephaniah” in *The World and the Word: An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, B&H Publishing), Kindle Locations 16626-16627.