

# ZEPHANIAH

Goals of the lesson:

1. Understand the political atmosphere during Zephaniah's prophecy.
2. Be able to recognize true repentance.
3. See the images of the coming Messiah.

*Introduction:* King Josiah reigned from approximately 640-608 B.C. and was the last good king of Judah. Josiah came to the throne at the age of eight and by age sixteen he was attempting to purge Judah of its idolatry. Josiah's reforms were among the most sweeping of any that were attempted by the kings who reigned in the southern kingdom. Also during this time Assyria was beginning to lose its power in the east. In 625 B.C. Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, declared the independence of Chaldea from Assyria. By 612 B.C. Babylon had fully conquered the Assyrians. It is during these political changes that Zephaniah prophesies.

We know little about Zephaniah aside from the first verse of his book. Scholars estimate that Zephaniah prophesied approximately 625 B.C. The prophet traces his ancestry back four generations to Hezekiah. Therefore, he was of royal blood and very familiar with the court of Judah.

*The Survey Chart:*

Take your Bible and skim through the book of Zephaniah, looking at the subheadings of each paragraph in each chapter. Record a few main events from each chapter on the diagonal lines of the survey chart.

1. As you fill out your survey chart, what themes do you see in the book?

**1:1-18 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.**

2. List the four types of idolaters mentioned in 1:5-6.

3. Who is being referred to in the phrase found in 1:7 "the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has consecrated His guests?" (NRSV)

4. Notice 1:8 carefully.  
a. Who are the people “dressed in foreign attire” and why will God punish them? (NRSV)

Life Application:

- b. Are we at times “dressed in foreign attire?” Explain.

5. Explain the phrase, “at that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps” in 1:12. (NRSV)

**2:1-15 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.**

Life Application:

6. Noticing 2:1-3, what does the Lord require in repentance?

7. List the sins and judgments upon each of the nations below:  
Philistia (2:4-7):

Moab and Ammon (2:8-11):

Ethiopia (2:12):

Assyria (2:13-15):

8. What similarities and differences did you find between the sins and judgments of the nations above?

**3:1-20 In the space below and left, write your own thoughts about what you found interesting and questions you have. Be prepared to share your findings in class.**

9. Consider the statement, "it doesn't make any difference what one believes, so long as he or she is sincere." Does 3:1-8 and Zephaniah's other pronouncement of judgment shows this statement to be true? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. According to 3:2, what four failures have brought about Jerusalem's demise? Is there application to our country today?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Zephaniah condemns four classes of leaders in 3:3-4. Explain who is condemned and why they are condemned.

**MAIN POINTS TO REMEMBER FROM THIS LESSON:**

1. Severe judgment is coming upon Judah if it does not repent.
2. Though severe punishment is coming, there is hope of a restoration of the nation.