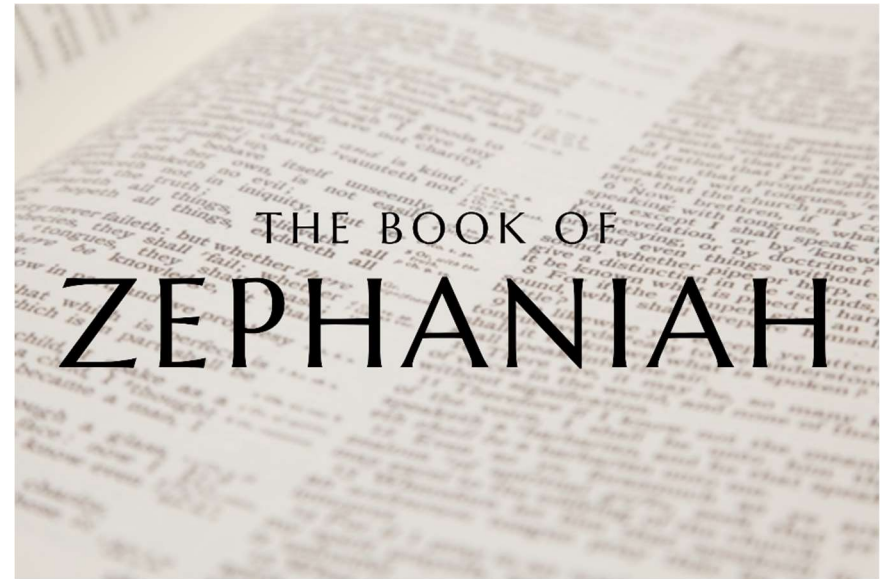


FAMILY WORSHIP BOOKLET



God tells us that Ezra read from the book of the Law,
day after day, and that the people of God
were filled with joy!

Friday - Zephaniah 2:8-11 - Judgement to the East

If there is one judgement that we in the western world should take comfort in it is this one here. God turns to the eastern nations of Moab and Ammon and declares their end. Their particular sin is in their taunting and reviling of God's people. How wonderful to know that Almighty God does not just stand back when we are mocked for our faith, He hears and has compassion on us. In this case, the mocking of the church is done by her cousins. Moab and Ammon descend from Lot through his incestuous relationship with his daughters in Genesis 19:30-38. They are ethically related to the people of God, but mock them for their faith. This is like our own situation in the western world where the Gospel once flourished and Christianity was respected. Now our nation has turned her back on Christ and now mocks the church in both the media and society. Like Moab and Ammon, our nation is judged by God for her mocking. We often look upon our nation with tears and think how can it get any worse, but there is hope as a better day is coming.

God has promised by His own name 'Therefore, as I live', that he will judge those who mock us and they will fall in their pride. There is a time coming where He 'will be awesome against them; for he will famish all the gods of the earth.' Their idols will be destroyed as Christ's enemies are made His footstool and by His power and might they 'shall bow down, each in its place, all the lands of the nations.' It is difficult living in the secular west, this should bring us to our knees to pray for Christ's kingdom and cause us to spread the Gospel with hearts full of faith. Dear Christian, do not lose heart, keep fighting the good faith and know that God is in control and His kingdom is being built.

Questions

1. What was Moab & Ammon's particular sin?
2. How were Moab & Ammon related to Israel?
3. What has God promised to do?
4. What should be our response to this promise?

*The notes on Zephaniah by Rev. Craig Scott (RPCNA)
have been slightly modified, with questions added.*
Produced by Ottawa RPC to help you in your family worship.

Thursday - Zephaniah 2:1-7 - Judgement to the West

The Lord God continues the theme of repentance in chapter 2, but in a way one would not expect. In verses 4-15 Zephaniah prophesies of what will come upon the nations surrounding Israel. As the nations are lined up, the judgement given, the pattern should bring to remembrance the solemnity of God's awesome power. Seeing that there is nowhere to escape, the church is to turn away from her sin and trust alone in God Almighty.

In verses 4-7 Judgement comes to the west of Israel. All the cities mentioned make up the 'land of the Philistines.' The Philistines were an ancient sea people along the Mediterranean coast who attacked God's people throughout the Old Testament. It is important to note that when God's enemies attack His people, He is not a spectator who sits on the side-lines of history anxiously observing the world, unable to do anything. In fact, it is the opposite, because His laws are just as relevant to the Gentiles as they are to His people, He will judge all the earth. Here, it is the Philistines who are judged as God declares: 'I will destroy you until no inhabitant is left.'

All is not lost, however, as there is hope. For the Gospel will flourish and referring to the church Zephaniah proclaims: the 'Lord their God will be mindful of them and restore their fortunes.' The pagan people of Philistine will be judged, but the land 'shall be pastures, with meadows for shepherds and folds for flocks.' This means that God will save a people for Himself and they will be well fed. In the Old Testament this is seen in the return from exile as the Israelites repopulate the western coast, but ultimately it looks forward to the worldwide prosperity of the Gospel in the golden age to come. There is joy and fulfilment to be had in Christ, but it only comes through repentance and faith. May we all, individual and nation alike, turn from our sin and rest in the Lord.

Questions:

1. Can we escape God's judgement?
2. What nation is to the west of Israel?
3. Why is God judging this nation?
4. What hope is offered?

Monday – Zephaniah 1:17-18 Judgement on Mankind

It is not only the church who will be judged, but all of humanity. Today unbelievers often mock Christians and God by saying such things as: 'If God is real where is He now?' or 'I fear no God for if He's real why doesn't He punish sin?' These people continue in their sin and believe God is powerless to stop them. The truth, however, is the opposite. He is currently pouring His wrath upon sinful mankind (Rom. 1:18) as He declares 'I will bring distress on mankind.'

We often think that God's wrath is some form of visual judgement like an earthquake or natural disaster. This often is true (Isaiah 45:7), but He also pours out His wrath by leaving man to his own devices and lets them panic in the midst of their own sinful actions. We see this in the western world where people know and see sin all around them. Read the newspaper or watch the news and what do we see? Nothing but chaos: violence, greed, selfishness, theft, and lawlessness. People see all this and become distressed but God pours out His wrath by withholding His truth from them. In the midst of tribulation, sinners perish without counsel or help. They seek a way out of trouble, but never find it. There is only restlessness, anxiety, and no peace as God's wrath is upon the spiritually blind. Sinners do not see this and think God is silent, but as we look at society we see an active God pouring out His wrath on a society full of anxious and distressed people.

The reason why mankind is judged is 'because they have sinned against the Lord.' They now bear His judgement, and they cannot pay the infinite debt of sin. 'Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them'; it is Christ alone who can save us. The ultimate judgement will be 'In the fire of his jealousy, all the earth shall be consumed.' Let us see judgement to come, see its destructive power and flee to Christ. How this ought to stir us to pray for the lost who will be consumed lest they repent and believe in the Gospel.

Questions

1. How does God judge the unbeliever in this life?
2. Why does God judge the world?
3. What should our response be to the judgement we see around us?

Tuesday - Zephaniah 2:1-2 – Repentance

What are men and women to do when faced with the awful prospect of an abyss such as that which has been described in Zephaniah 1? What can any of us do, confronted as we are with the twin realities of our own sinfulness and the inevitability of God's judgement? We are to 'Gather together, yes, gather.' Zephaniah is preaching the doctrine of repentance; we are to turn away from our sins and trust in the Lord. How glorious is this? God who judges sinners gives the hope of salvation to those who would repent and gather again under His wings. Here there is grace for a backslidden and cold church. This reviving grace will only come if we, by God's grace, repent and turn from our worldliness and coldness and seek the Lord. But see the urgency here, we cannot wait, we are to see the state of things now and quickly gather again to God.

- 1) There is little time; we are to turn now 'before the decree takes effect.' We do not know when we will die, and we do not know when Christ will return. Today is the day of salvation, let us turn today before it is too late.
- 2) There is fierce wrath to come so turn 'before there comes upon you the burning anger of the Lord.' We cannot take God lightly for we are all 'sinners in the hands of an angry God' who will consume us in the hot fire of His wrath lest we turn from our sin.
- 3) There is endless wrath to come as we are warned to repent 'before there comes upon you the day of the anger of the Lord.' If we are found guilty on the day of Judgement there will be no second chances and the sentence will be eternal.

God offers us the grace of salvation, but only if we turn from our wicked ways. We must think upon these solemn truths and strike while the iron is hot. Do not wait; repent from your worldliness and sin. If you do, you will find grace and love in the Lord.

Questions:

1. What should our response be when confronted with God's judgement?
2. When should we respond?
3. What hope does God offer to us?

Wednesday - Zephaniah 2:1-3 - Seek the Lord

What would you do if you were diagnosed with a terminal illness and there was only one cure? No doubt you would put everything aside and seek the cure. It is the very same in the spiritual realm, we have the disease of sin and the only cure is the Lord. All we need to do to receive salvation is 'seek the Lord.' Here is the free offer of the Gospel, simply seek the Lord and you will be saved. But how do you know that you truly seek the Lord? Here Zephaniah explains the heart of a true seeker of the Lord.

- 1) Humility. One who truly seeks the Lord is humble; he or she knows there is no good thing in them. The Christian confesses he is a sinner and wretched, he totally relies upon God for all things including salvation.
- 2) Righteousness. To stand before a holy God we need to live a perfectly good life. The Christian knows he is not good and therefore seeks the Lord for righteousness. It is only in Jesus Christ can we receive righteousness for our righteousness is as 'filthy rags' (Isaiah 64:6).
- 3) Obedience. One who is humble and trusting in Christ for righteousness is one who also seeks to obey God and keep 'his just commands.' When we are born again, we receive new hearts that seek to please God and heed the words of Christ 'if you love me keep my commandments' (John 14:15).

When we truly seek God, we know that we are His children and receive the joy of salvation. However, it does not necessarily mean we will not suffer on earth. This is why the last sentence says 'perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the Lord.' God will judge the nations (vv. 4-15), and often when nations suffer so too do Christians. This is because we live in the same society and communities, when society collapses, we bear the consequences too. This should cause us to pray for our rulers and the salvation of our neighbours.

Questions:

1. What must we do to be saved?
2. What are the three characteristics of a true seeker of the Lord?
3. What do we receive from God when we seek him?
4. Does this guarantee a life free from suffering?