

# Zephaniah

## Original Historical Setting

**Author:** Zephaniah

**Written:** Perhaps around 628 B.C.

**Audience:** People of Judah who lived some forty years before the Babylonian captivity

**Occasion:** We don't know what prompted Habakkuk to write this book, but it seems to have preceded the revival Josiah instituted that marked a genuine return to worship of the LORD.

### **Timeline:**

- 640 BC – King Josiah begins his reign
- 612 BC – Nineveh falls to Medes and Persians
- 605 BC – Beginning of King Nebuchadnezzar's reign
- 605 BC – Babylon invades Judah and takes captives
- 586 BC – Jerusalem falls to Babylon

## World Events that occur simultaneously

- 660 B.C. –Legend has it that Japan was founded
- 630 B.C. –Assyria crumbles at death of King Ashurbanipal
- 624 B.C. –Horse racing becomes Olympic event

## Features and Structure

The book of Zephaniah contains only 53 verses and is organized into 3 sections:

### **OUTLINE**

- 1:1-2:3** A look *within* at the coming Day of the LORD
- 2:4-3:8** A look *without* at the judgment on other nations
- 3:9-3:20** A look *beyond* to restoration and blessing

## Genre/Literary style

Prophecies all written in Hebrew poetry

## Key text(s)

**1:3** – I will cut off man from the face of the earth

**1:18** – Neither silver or gold will be able to save them

**2:3** – Seek the LORD all you humble of the land

**3:17** – God will rejoice over you with gladness

## What to look for

- Notice that God declares judgment upon Judah as well as the surrounding countries: Philistia (to the west), Assyria (to the north), Moab and Ammon (to the east) and Ethiopia (to the south).
- The Day of the LORD (brought on by sin) seems to engulf the whole planet and everything on it. Look at the first chapter and notice how it appears as almost a reversal of the Creation story in Genesis.
- Note how Zephaniah pointed out God's coming pleasure in the ingathering of His people. Just as these people are urged to "sing" and "shout" to God when they are restored (3:14), so God Himself tells them He will "rejoice over you with gladness" and "rejoice over you with singing."

## Interesting facts

- From our memory verse it appears that God may sing. It may be the author's way of just saying that God is joyful. But it doesn't seem too far-fetched to believe that the God Who created the ability to worship Him in song might also sing as well.
- Zephaniah was probably a prince. He traces his ancestry back four generations to Hezekiah, most likely Judah's famous king.
- This is Zephaniah written in barcode



**Memory Verse: Zephaniah 3:17**