

ZEPHANIAH - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What would be missing from your picture of God if Zephaniah were dropped from the Bible? Why do you think the Jews included it? Was it because it was written by a prince, a great grandson of Hezekiah? Is there anything that really distinguishes Zephaniah from his contemporary writers—Nahum and Habakkuk?
2. How do you think the Israelis today feel about Zephaniah 2:9? Is this a good enough reason for them to think that eventually much of the Middle East will belong to the Jews?
3. How could the children of Israel say, after all that the Lord had done for their ancestors down through the years, “The Lord will do nothing, either good or bad?” (Zephaniah 1:12; Compare 2 Peter 3:3,4) Was this wishful thinking on their part? Were they aware of their evil condition and hoping God would just leave them alone, or did they really think God was powerless?
4. What do you think Zephaniah had in mind when he repeatedly referred to “the day of the Lord?” (Zephaniah 1:2-18; 2:1-4; 3:16-20; Compare Joel 1:15; 2:1,2,11,31; 3:14) Was his strong language appropriate?
5. When the Ninevites repented, God waited over 100 years to bring destruction on them, but finally He had to do something. What could God do at such a point? Think of all the prophets God sent through the years, even His own Son and think of the parables that Jesus gave and how they mocked and scoffed, and how they treated Him. Imagine God’s people claiming that His Son’s picture of God was Satanic! How much further could God’s people go in rejecting Him? At such a point what else could God do but let them go? Is this the same message that needs to be given to our generation?
6. Aren’t Seventh-day Adventists Christians who have also accepted the “third angel’s message?” (Revelation 14:9-11) Can we give this message in such a way as to be useful and meaningful to the world at this point in time? How many people in our world are worried about what is described in the third angel’s message? Do you see people being very concerned about this message? Or are we like the people in Zephaniah 1:12?
7. What does God ultimately want here? Isn’t it that He be able to speak to us very plainly, yet quietly, without a great display of “human emotion”, and yet have us take what He says very respectfully and reverently? How can God accomplish this balance? [See Study Guide for Jonah #8]
8. Were you sorry when you had to raise your voice to your children? How much nicer would the Bible read, if all the way through, people had been eager to listen quietly and reverently to what God had said? Even if He had to give some very serious messages, He could do so quietly and plainly and people would realize the import of those messages. Could God have made the gospel as clear to such a group of people long ago as we understand it now? Could they have come to know God as we describe Him today?
9. Amidst all the woes declared on different peoples notice that God still asks His people to turn and seek Him (Zephaniah 2:3). Isn’t this what God has always wanted?

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