

Zephaniah

The Day of the LORD:
Purge & Purify

Introduction

- Zephaniah: “YHWH hides, lies in wait”
- Date: 7th c. B.C. (1) during Josiah’s reign (640-609)
(2) pre-reform (622) (3) pre-fall of Nineveh (612)
- Theme: the day of the LORD: purge & purify
- Message: *The day of the LORD will purge all evil and purify all peoples to worship & rejoice in Him alone!*

Basic Outline

○ Purge

- Cycle #1: World (1:2-3), Jerusalem (1:4-13)
- Cycle #2: World (1:14-18), Jerusalem (2:1-3)
- Cycle #3: World (2:4-15), Jerusalem (3:1-8)

○ Purify

- World (3:9-10)
- Jerusalem (3:11-20)

“I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth, declares YHWH.”

Is the subsequent list poetic repetition or a reference to something else?

#1: Chaos for Complacent (1:2-13)

- Reversal (2-3): ‘I will utterly sweep away . . .’
 - *Uncreation*: man, beast, birds, fish (Gen. 1:22f, 6:7)
- Rejection (4-13): ‘those who have turned back’
 - *Unique* (4-6): purity not syncretism! (cf. Deut. 30:20)
God desires exclusive worship, not one of many!
 - *Unfaithful* (7-9): silence (*day of the Lord*, Amos 5:18),
sacrifice (*irony, influence, idolatry?, injustice*)
 - *Unconcerned* (10-13): destroy stagnant (Deut. 28:30)

#2: Turn or Burn (1:14-2:3)

- Reckon (14-18): ‘they’ve sinned against YHWH’
 - *Hell*: imminent, intense, and inescapable!
[trust targeted: fortified cities . . . silver and gold!]
- Repent (1-3): ‘seek YHWH . . . seek righteousness’
 - *Huddle*: gather yourselves like straw for the fire!
 - *Humility*: ‘before’ (3x), ‘seek’ (3x) O, you humble
 - *Hidden*: *perhaps* you’ll be hidden from God’s anger!
“*Perhaps* reminds us that the godly, even if spared from the full wrath of God, do experience the effects of judgment because they live in a community of sinners.” (Chisholm)

#3: Opposition Opposed (2:4-3:8)

- Enemies Eliminated (2:4-15): Y' is *against* them
- *Philistia (W):* ruined, resisted, restored (*remnant*)
[*minus Gath, overtaken by Sargon II, 711 B.C., cf. Isa. 20*]
- *Ammon & Moab (E):* pride (*Lot*), plunder, petrify!
- *Cush (S):* 'slain of the sword *are they*' (663 B.C.)
- *Assyria (NE):* desolate and deposed ('I am and there is no one else,' cf. Isa. 47:8, 10; 45:5, 14, 21)

Pride is challenging God for ultimate supremacy - a recipe for sure disaster. God resists the proud (James 4:6). We may not say 'I am and there is no other,' but how is pride exhibited in your life? How can we fight it?

“According to Scripture, God deliberately designed the gospel in such a way so as to strip me of pride and leave me without any grounds for boasting in myself whatsoever (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). This is actually a wonderful mercy from God, for pride is at the root of all my sin. Pride produced the first sin in the Garden, and pride always precedes every sinful stumbling in my life. Therefore, if I am to experience deliverance from sin, I must be delivered from the pride that produces it. Thankfully, the gospel is engineered to accomplish such deliverance.

“Preaching the gospel to myself each day mounts a powerful assault against my pride and serves to establish humility in its place. Nothing suffocates my pride more than daily reminders regarding the glory of my God, the gravity of my sins, and the crucifixion of God’s own Son in my place. Also, the gracious love of God, lavished on my because of Christ’s death, is always humbling to remember, especially when viewed against the backdrop of the Hell I deserve.

“Pride wilts in the atmosphere of the gospel; and the more pride is mortified within me, the less frequent are my moments of sinful contention with God and others. Conversely, humility grows lushly in the atmosphere of the gospel, and the more humility flourishes within me, the more I experience God’s grace along with the strengthening His grace provides. Additionally, such humility intensifies my passion for God and causes my heart to increasingly to thrill whenever He is praised.”

Vincent, A Gospel Primer, 27-28.

#3: Opposition Opposed (2:4-3:8)

- Cry to Corrupt (3:1-8): 'Accepts no correction'
 - *Independent*: woe (וֵי) to her, no trust in YHWH
 - *Injustice*: rulers (exploit), prophets (deceit), priests (profane), contrast YHWH's justice *each morning!*
 - *Ignorant*: YHWH's defeat of nations a correction? No, the corruption continued all the more!
[1 Cor. 10:11: We can also learn from Israel's example!]
 - *Indignation*: 'Wait for me' (to the faithful, cf. Isa. 64:4), I will gather nations, all the earth consumed, vs. 8

Purify the Peoples (3:9-20)

- Nations (3:9-10): ‘I’ll make the nations pure . . .’
 - *Conversion*: universal (*Babel*), unique (1:4f), unity
- Israel (3:11-20): ‘I will remove from your midst’
 - *Clean* (11-13): remove, refuge, righteous
 - *Chiasm* (14-17): (a) sing & be glad, (b) deliverance
(c) YHWH w/ you, (d) no fear
 - *Change* (18-20): reproach removed (cf. *gather*, 2:1),
reversal (*shame-praise*), restore

Summary

Zephaniah warned the people of Judah that the day of the LORD was coming. In contrast to their expectation, *all* evil will be purged, among the nations and in Judah. God will purify *all* peoples, creating a remnant of followers who worship, serve, and rejoice in Him alone!