

**November 25**

**Scriptures:** Read Zephaniah 2

**Key Verse:** "...Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger." (Zephaniah 2:3)

## **Overview**

After detailing the devastation that the coming judgment of God would bring, Zephaniah's heart went out to the lost and dying people of Judah. He knew that their only hope was to come to a national repentance and call upon God for mercy. He called for the "undesirable nation" (because of their sin) to assemble themselves together and submit to God in repentance before it was too late. The corrupt society, however, had gone too far to be repentant, and the Lord had determined to punish them.

Zephaniah then turns to the few people who still had hope. They are the "meek" — the ones who recognized the Lord's supremacy and still upheld His standards of justice. Zephaniah exhorts them to humble themselves before God and seek after His righteousness, for in so doing they would turn the Lord's wrath away from them. Although they may suffer at the hands of the Babylonians, they could still find refuge and a hiding place for their souls with the Lord, who would be present with them. According to the Lord's purpose and providence, some of the faithful, such as Jeremiah and the Ethiopian Ebed-Melech, were indeed "hidden" and protected by God at the time of the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 39:11-12, 15-18).

When God brought judgment upon the people of Judah, His wrath would spill over upon other nations as well. God is no respecter of persons when it comes time for either judgment or salvation (note that the Ethiopian Ebed-Melech was saved by the Lord, but the majority of Jews either perished or were taken captive). The invading Babylonian army would also be no respecter of persons; they were out to defeat and subject any and every nation. Therefore, when they came against Judah, they also came against the Philistines, Judah's neighbours to the west. The Philistines were also known as the "Cherethites", indicating that they came originally from Crete. When the Israelites first entered Canaan, they were supposed to drive out all the heathen from the Promised Land so they might fully occupy it, but they never fulfilled this requirement. Therefore, the Lord Himself would see it accomplished. In the midst of this pronouncement of judgment, Zephaniah gives some words of hope. He tells the people that God would intervene for the sake of the righteous remnant and that He would restore them and give them the land once occupied by the Philistines (2:7).

God wanted all the idolatrous influences removed from His people who would later return after the seventy-year captivity in Babylon. Therefore, some of the surrounding heathen countries would also fall at the hands of the Babylonians. The countries to the east, Moab and Ammon (descendants of Lot; Gen. 19:30-38), would be made perpetually desolate, and their land would also be possessed by the Lord's people. Zephaniah's prophecy seems to look beyond the return of the remnant from Babylon to a time when the true Israel, all God's people, would go to possess their inheritance in the new Israel. The arrogant nations of Edom and Ammon are representative of all the wicked who oppose the Lord and His people. These wicked ones will be

conquered by the Lord Himself and He will also “reduce to nothing” all their worthless idolatry (anything which profanes and debases the Lord). At that time, all the world will fall on their knees and worship God, who shall reign from His land which only then can be called truly holy (2:11).

As well as conquering the west and the east, the Lord would conquer the south, represented by Ethiopia, and the north, represented by Assyria. In the immediate fulfillment of this prophecy, the Babylonians were to be used by God to defeat Ethiopia and all the surrounding areas, including Egypt. They would also defeat Assyria and lay waste her capital of Nineveh, as Nahum had prophesied. Zephaniah cites a major reason for God’s judgment upon them: their pride, independence, and strength had caused them to worship themselves and ignore the only true and living God who had made them.

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord, we turn from our feelings of self-sufficiency and pride, for truly we know that without You we can do nothing. Enable us to keep a humble attitude and be ever grateful to You.