



## Summary of the Book of Zephaniah

### Introduction

Zephaniah was of royal descent, tracing his line back to the pious, reforming King Hezekiah. However, he grew up in an idolatrous nation under the stewardship of the wicked kings Manasseh and Amon. However, he remained faithful to God and prophesied in the time of the godly King Josiah.

The twelve Minor Prophets are divided into two groups: pre-exilic and post-exilic. The first nine are pre-exilic, writing before the Babylonians conquered and exiled Judah. The last three are post-exilic, writing during and after the return of Israel from Babylon to the Promised Land. Zephaniah is the last of the pre-exilic prophets, and can be said to “sum up” the messages of the previous eight. This is why Zephaniah seems unoriginal to some scholars, because he quotes the words and ideas of many previous prophets.

A major theme of Zephaniah was the approaching Day of the Lord, a day of dark judgement upon Judah, who would be taken into exile for their failure to be true to the God who had been so merciful to them for so many generations.

### Chapter One

Zephaniah introduces his role and pedigree as a prophet of God and indicates the time period for his prophecy. In the prophecy God first directs his attention against all living beings (vv.2-3), then more specifically against his own people, Judah, represented by their capital, Jerusalem (vv.4-6).

After an announcement of the Day of the Lord (v.7), practitioners of specific evil deeds are warned about the consequences of their deeds (vv.8-9). A litany of punishments is then levelled against Jerusalem and its inhabitants (vv.10-16) and against all humanity (vv.17-18).

## Chapter Two

The first three verses are a brief reminder of Judah's duty to return to the Lord or face his wrath. As in Amos' prophecy (Amos 1:3-2:3), the judgement prophecy focuses on Israel's neighbours and enemies (vv.4-15), whom Judah would have heartily joined in condemning. Only then will the people of Judah feel the focus turning on themselves once again (Zephaniah 3:1-7), being just as sinful as the nations before the same just God.

## Chapter Three

On the Day of the Lord, God's righteous judgement will fall on the people of Jerusalem. If they are found to be against God and still living with unrepented sin then they will face his wrath.

God the judge is also God the gracious. He intends that the nations should turn to him as well as his own people. This will cause rejoicing, not least because God alone has accomplished salvation.