

ZEPHANIAH

AN INTRODUCTION TO ZEPHANIAH

"Among the minor prophets [Zephaniah] makes the clearest prophecies about the Kingdom of Christ." — Martin Luther

*"If anyone wishes all the secret oracles of the prophets to be given in a brief compendium, let him read through the brief Zephaniah."
— sixteenth-century writer*

Zephaniah in the Hebrew Bible.

- The prophet's name means, "Yahweh hides."
- The Hebrew canon includes twenty-four books (versus 39 in the English Bible). Every book in our English Bibles is part of the Hebrew canon. The difference in number is due to many books being combined into one, as the chart below demonstrates. The minor prophets were originally known as The Twelve and close the middle section of the Hebrew Bible.

1

Law	Former & Latter Prophets		Former & Latter Writings	
Genesis	Joshua	Jeremiah	Ruth	Daniel
Exodus	Judges	Ezekiel	Psalms	Esther
Leviticus	1–2 Samuel	Isaiah	Job	Ezra-Nehemiah
Numbers	1–2 Kings	The Twelve	Proverbs	1–2 Chronicles
Deuteronomy			Ecclesiastes	
			Song of Songs	
			Lamentations	
Narrative	Narrative	Commentary	Commentary	Narrative

Timing.

- Written during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.; cf. Zeph. 1:1), before Judah was removed from the land (c. 586 B.C.).
- Probably written prior to Josiah's reforms (2Kgs. 23) since no mention is made about those comprehensive changes in the nation.
- Perhaps ministered from 635-625 B.C.²

¹ Jason S. DeRouchie, *How to Understand and Apply the Old Testament: Twelve Steps from Exegesis to Theology* (Philipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing Company, 2017), 25.

² John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 753.

Zephaniah's message summarized. Zephaniah prophesied that only a humble, faithful remnant would escape the universal destruction of the Day of the LORD and experience its unparalleled blessing.

Zephaniah's message outlined.

- Superscription (1:1)
- The Introduction of the Day of the LORD: Universal Destruction (1:2-18)
 - Against the world, generally (1:2-3, 14-18; 2:8b)
 - Against Judah/Jerusalem, particularly (1:4-13)
- The Escape (2:1-3)
 - Duties (2:1-3; 3:8)
 - Gather! (2:1-2)
 - Seek! (2:3)
 - Yahweh
 - Righteousness
 - Humility
 - Wait! (3:8)
- Motivations (2:4-3:7)
 - God's curse on Judah's enemies (2:4-15)
 - to the west (2:4-7)
 - to the east (2:8-10)
 - to the south (2:12)
 - to the north (2:13-15)
 - God's curse on Judah/Jerusalem (3:1-7)
- The Conclusion of the Day of the LORD: Unparalleled Blessing (3:9-20)
 - For the world, generally (3:9-10)
 - For Israel/Jerusalem, particularly (3:11-20; 2:6-7, 9b)

Zephaniah's impact on Grace Bible Church (Lord willing!).

1. Clarify our understanding of the future.
2. Produce a greater holiness of life.
3. Increase our zeal for evangelism.
4. Inspire awe at the majesty of God.
5. Strengthen our ability to read God's word.
6. Grow our love for the Old Testament, especially the Twelve.