

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Zephaniah 1:4-6, 14-16 & 2:3

King James Version

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, June 5, 2016

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, June 5, 2016**, is from **Zephaniah 1:4-6, 14-16 & 2:3**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** discusses *Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further* to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. If you are a Bible student or teacher, you can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

International Bible Lesson Commentary

Zephaniah 1:4-6, 14-16 & 2:3

(Zephaniah 1:4) I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of

Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

The name Zephaniah means “whom the LORD hid” or “whom the LORD sheltered.” He was probably a descendent of King Hezekiah as was King Josiah in whose reign Zephaniah preached (640-609 BC). Because of the sins of the political and religious leaders and people, God was against or opposed to the nation and its capital city. God could not support the kingdom and its behavior because of its rebellion against God. Furthermore, God would destroy all idols, idol worship, and idolatrous priests, which would eventually save the nation after its destruction in 586 BC and its return from exile.

(Zephaniah 1:5) And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; [also Molech]

Zephaniah described the sin of going up on a flat roof to worship the stars, moon, and constellations at night. Today, one might think of those who follow the guidance and make decisions by reading horoscopes instead of following Jesus according to the Bible and praying for God’s guidance. The other sin is worshiping and making promises by both the LORD and the idol Molech (who demanded child sacrifices). God deserves and demands our exclusive worship. We cannot worship God and

money, or God and powers that promise success if we follow them too.

(Zephaniah 1:6) And them that are turned back from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him.

The LORD also declared through Zephaniah that He would stretch out His hand against those who ceased to follow Him, ceased to seek Him, and ceased to seek His guidance and holy way of living. Turning from God to include following idolatrous ways and teachings will lead to the exclusion of God and all His teachings from one's life. Those who have turned from God will eventually live completely apart from God (though they may continue some religious practices, as did the false priests and prophets who heard Zephaniah preach), and they will experience the consequences of God justly being and working against them.

(Zephaniah 1:14) The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.

Through Zephaniah, God emphasized the coming great day of the LORD when God would demonstrate publicly for all to see that He is a just and righteous God. Individuals and people will experience God against them if they live against God, and this may lead some of them to repent of their sins and turn back to God. Through

Zephaniah, God warned those who persisted in living against and apart from Him that they would suffer in a mighty way when God justly judged and punished a nation by sending an enemy against them (in this case by war and war's aftermath).

(Zephaniah 1:15) That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

God foretold what this day would be like so some might be motivated to repent and return to faith in God. Their return to faith in God should lead them to obey the LORD exclusively and turn from all idols; if not, they would suffer a day and time when God would be exclusively apart from them and bring suffering upon them as He described. Those who truly turned and trusted God would be protected spiritually, and perhaps also be shown a way to escape from that dark day of distress.

(Zephaniah 1:16) A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

The day of the LORD was experienced by the nation of Israel (the northern kingdom) in 722 BC, but the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) continued down its idolatrous path and ignored the true prophets and their lessons from history until God destroyed the kingdom in 587 BC. Once again, the Day of the LORD came again

upon Jerusalem in 70 AD, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, but those who followed Jesus' warning escaped physically and spiritually. The Book of Revelation describes the final Great Day of the Lord when God makes all things new and separates the righteous from the unrighteous forever.

(Zephaniah 2:3) Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD'S anger.

God issued a universal call to repentance and faith and included a promise for all times and places. When God judges a nation and people, those who have trusted and obeyed Him may be protected physically as well as spiritually. If not, they will inherit eternal life because of their faith in Jesus (see John 3:16). The promise in Zephaniah points to the results of faith in Jesus Christ, and the life of a follower of Jesus. Christians live humbly, they obey their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they seek righteousness (see the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7). They will be sheltered by God throughout eternity, even though they may suffer a little while when living within disobedient nations and among disobedient people.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Do you think God still stretches out His hand against evil or disobedient nations today? Give a reason for your answer.

2. What are some of the events in the life of a nation or people that might indicate God's hand is against them?
3. What are some contemporary idols that some who practice going to church might serve?
4. What are some ways Christians can truly "seek the Lord and inquire of Him"?
5. What are some of the efforts God made (and makes) before the Day of the Lord to help people avoid the horrible judgment that He brought (and will bring) that Day?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly
International Bible Lesson.

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