



**Mustard Seed Lesson Summary for Sunday, 8 July 2007
Released on Wednesday, July 4, 2007**

Zephaniah Announced God's Justice (God Will Judge)

GOLDEN TEXT:

"My determination is to gather the nations...to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger" (Zephaniah 3:8).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT: Zephaniah 3:1-9

- 1** Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city!
- 2** She obeyed not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in the LORD; she drew not near to her God.
- 3** Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves; they gnaw not the bones till the morrow.
- 4** Her prophets are light and treacherous persons: her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the law.
- 5** The just LORD is in the midst thereof; he will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not; but the unjust knoweth no shame.
- 6** I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.
- 7** I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.
- 8** Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.
- 9** For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

THE OBJECT IN VIEW:

Help the class understand the difference between hearing (knowing) what God commands and listening to (obeying) those commands.

TRUTHS TO STRESS:

1. The Lord wants us to listen to what He says by way of obedience.
2. God warns that just knowing what He wants but not doing what pleases Him brings us trouble.

PLANNING VISUAL AIDS:

For the "Helping to Remember" section, for each child, you will need safety scissors, a new pencil, crayons, gummed stars, and a 3-by-6 inch triangular pennant drawn on construction paper. You will also need transparent tape.

LESSON BACKGROUND:

During the reign of King Josiah (640 to 609 B.C.), Zephaniah was God's voice to Judah. King Josiah was the last righteous king to rule in Jerusalem before its destruction. But before Josiah, his father and grandfather had ruled the country for more than fifty years, and their leadership was considered to be the most evil in the country's history (2 Kings 21:9, 16; 24:3). When Josiah became king, he tried to bring reform to the country and to return the country to the worship of God (2 Kings 23:24).

In this week's lesson, the prophet Zephaniah pleads for the people to change or face God's judgment.

TEACHER'S NOTES / TELLING THE LESSON:

1. What do we know about the Prophet Zephaniah?

Zephaniah was a person of considerable social standing who was related to the royal family (Zephaniah 1:1). The prophet traced his lineage back four generations to King Hezekiah. He lived about the same time as Jeremiah and Nahum and prophesied during the reign of King Josiah.

Zephaniah was one of the great prophets of the last days of Jerusalem and preached the coming judgment of Judah because of its deep sin. Although Zephaniah prophesied at the time of Josiah's godly reign, he saw Judah reject Josiah's reforms. The purpose of Zephaniah's ministry was to announce God's impending judgment on Jerusalem and Judah.

2. What charges did Zephaniah bring against the city of Jerusalem?

In Zephaniah 3:2, the prophet outlines four charges against Jerusalem: (1) disobedience; (2) refused correction; (3) did not trust in the Lord; (4) and lacked a relationship with God.

The people of God had ignored the warnings of the prophets and had ignored the calls to repentance and refused the pleas for change and reform. They flouted the Lord, rejected all forms of divine correction, refused to trust in Him, and did not draw near to Him. The gap between the Lord and the people widened with each day, making judgment all the more certain.

3. What did Zephaniah mean when he said that they were "filthy and polluted"?

Zephaniah described the city as being oppressive and dirty. In chapter 3, the prophet zeroed in on Jerusalem itself. The leaders were greedy. They were oppressive. They refused to accept correction. They knew the law but would not obey the law. They disregarded the rights of the poor, orphans, widows and strangers. In addition to neglecting the weak, the rebellious city badly defiled itself through years of idol worship. The priests themselves had defiled God's sanctuary.

4. Why did Zephaniah call the leaders "roaring lions" and "evening wolves"?

Zephaniah also cited God's case against the leadership in Jerusalem. King Josiah was a godly leader and tried to return the people to obeying God, but the other leaders did not share Josiah's vision. Jerusalem's princes and judges had behaved like predatory animals, not God's shepherds. Rather than act in fairness, they had devoured the people they were called to serve.

Zephaniah describes them as "roaring lions" which gives us the picture of wild animals hunting for prey to be eaten. He also called them "evening wolves" which indicates wild animals after the kill – eating everything, - leaving nothing.

5. Why would the Lord pour out His judgment on the nations?

The Lord assured those who remained true to Him that a time was coming when He would judge all those who were evil, whether in Jerusalem or elsewhere. In that day, God will rise up against His enemies. God is a righteous judge and cannot allow evil to continue. He will assemble the world's nations and kingdoms and unleash on them His righteous indignation.

In addition to this judgment on the nations, God offered hope to His people. He will also purify the lips of all people. God will enable His people to offer Him righteous praise. They will call upon Him for deliverance, and a family of nations will serve Him with united hearts.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

Are you just a hearer of God's Word, or are you a listener too?

It is a good thing to hear. It is good to know what the Bible says. But remember that Jesus wants more than hearing and knowing. What pleases Him is to see you doing what He tells you to do.

HELPING TO REMEMBER:

Let the student cut out their pennants. On one side they will print "I will hear" and on the other side "I will listen." They can decorate the pennants with crayons and gummed stars. Help them tape the pennants to their pencils. Ask for volunteers to share ways to "hear" and "listen" to God.

Distribute copies of the activities at the end of the lesson to further enhance learning.

EXPLAINING THE GOLDEN TEXT:

"My determination is to gather the nations...to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger" (Zephaniah 3:8).

When people and cities and whole countries will not listen to God, he cannot just forget about it. That would not be right, and God always does what is right. So He sends them trouble, because that is the right thing to do.

PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, forgive us for not always obeying your Word. We trust You and know that You will judge all people someday. Help us to hear and to do the things that please You. In Jesus' name, amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "Habakkuk Announced the Doom of the Unrighteous (A Reason to Hope)" from Habakkuk 2:6-14.

Lesson Summarized By: Renee Little

Jesus Is All Ministries

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WORD JUMBLE: Zephaniah 3:1-9

Zephaniah Announced God's Justice

Unscramble each of the words (the verses are noted).
Copy the letters from the numbered boxes to answer the question.

PULDEOLT (vs. 1)

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2 6

RESTUTD (vs. 2)

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3

NIORMNG (vs. 5)

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4

DJTUENMG (vs. 5)

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7

HETRAG (vs. 8)

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10

NSDKGOIM (vs. 8)

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1 9

GANGELAU (vs. 9)

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5 8

REESV (vs. 9)

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11

What happens when people and cities and whole countries will not listen to God?

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1 2 3

W			
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4 5 6

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7 8 9 10 11

WORD SEARCH: Zephaniah 3:1-9
Zephaniah Announced God's Justice

Find each of the following words.

LANGUAGE
LIONS
SANCTUARY
CORRECTION

INIQUITY
JUDGMENT
DETERMINATION
SERVE

PEOPLE
WOLVES
UNJUST
TRUSTED

ANGER
FILTHY
OBEYED

U G G T U E N T A T R U R E H A N T E E E A E
M O E L P O E P T S L A I N L G N E D P A T E
C O R R E C T I O N R Y L U I A O G T E U T M
O S T N S L R I T L S A O D O Y I N E Y E G L
N E O E R E I O M M N O O O N H T S N R A T A
O R V I C D G F E G D I I I S T A E T N I U F
E E N R T A T A U T R E A L G L N V S S S I I
G O L E E U E A E N I U T Y H I I L R J J N L
N O R P I S G J I T I U L S N F M O M M O T T
C R Q E S E I N I Q U I T Y U D R W G V L U O
R Y R A U T C N A S T U D S S R E U R P N I Y
U E E G V E L A E E T U M R L O T T M J O B T
L U N Y S U W N D C I L L Y A S E R U S E R N
U G T O B E Y E D N E E H E E T D S C T T C J
U O N I R J U D G M E N T T N L T G I L B Y Y
T N J S L I O E M G I T N E Y S C J N E D B T

ANSWER KEYS: Zephaniah 3:1-9

Zephaniah Announced God's Justice

(God Will Judge)

WORD JUMBLE:

POLLUTED, TRUSTED, MORNING, JUDGMENT

GATHER, KINGDOMS, LANGUAGE, SERVE

What happens when people and cities and whole countries will not listen to God?

GOD WILL JUDGE

WORD SEARCH:

A
E L P O E P L N
C O R R E C T I O N L I O G
A O Y I E
E N N H T S R
V G D S T A E
R U E L N V
E A T I I L
S G S F M O
E I N I Q U I T Y U R W U
Y R A U T C N A S R E N
T J
E U
O B E Y E D D S
J U D G M E N T T