

Purpose

To shake the people of Judah out of their complacency and urge them to return to God

Meaning of Name

"Jehovah conceals" or "Jehovah treasures"

Date Written

Probably near the end of Zephaniah's ministry (640-621 BC), when King Josiah's reforms began

Setting

King Josiah of Judah was attempting to reverse the evil trends set by the two previous kings of Judah — Manasseh and Amon. Josiah was able to extend his influence because there wasn't a strong superpower dominating the world at that time. Zephaniah's prophecy may have been the motivating factor in Josiah's reform. Zephaniah was a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Key Verse

"Beg the Lord to save you — all you who are humble, all you who uphold justice. Walk humbly and do what is right. Even yet the Lord will protect you on that day of destruction."

Zephaniah 2:3

An Overview (3 Chapters)

- The Day of Judgment (1:1-3:8)
- The Day of Hope (3:9-20)

Major Themes

- *Day of Judgment:* To escape God's judgment, we must listen to Him, accept His correction, trust Him, and seek His guidance. If we accept Him as our Lord, then we can escape His condemnation.
- *Indifference to God:* Although there had been occasional attempts at renewal, Judah had no sorrow for its sins. The people were prosperous, and they no longer cared about God. God's demands for righteous living seemed irrelevant to the people, whose security and wealth made them complacent.
- *Day of Cheer:* When people are purged of sin, there is great relief and hope. No matter how difficult our experience now, we can look forward to the day of celebration when God will completely restore us. It will truly be a day to rejoice!