

# Everyone Accountable | Zephaniah 1-2:3 |

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- The book of Zephaniah
  - The book of Zephaniah was named after the prophet who wrote the book, Zephaniah.
  - However lets be clear that while man physically wrote it God provided the content.
    - As we see in the first verse “The Word of the LORD that came to Zephaniah”.
    - This was not Zephaniah’s thoughts or conclusions they were God’s. Which makes what is written truly holy.
  - Zephaniah based on his given genealogy he likely descended from royal blood as he came from the line of King Hezekiah.
  - So while not inline for the throne he was related.
- Background and Setting
  - The time period for this book was during the reign of Josiah who was the King of Judah (southern kingdom) from 640-609 B.C.
  - Zephaniah’s prophecy likely took place somewhere between 635-625 B.C. based on what else we know about what happened during the reign of Josiah.
  - His prophecy goes right along with 2 Kings 22-23. Kings gives us the historical account and Zephaniah was the prophet that served God during this time.
  - When Josiah inherited his kingdom (at 8 years of age) he received a kingdom that was lost in sin and disobedience to God.
    - They had given themselves over to idols ad had committed spiritual compromise.
    - These evil things were done by each of the previous rulers.
      - 2 King 21:1-2
      - 2 Kings 21:19-22
    - But this was not going to be the legacy of King Josiah
      - 2 Kings 22:1-2
    - During his reign around 628 B.C. King Josiah returned the kingdom back to God and destroyed all of the idols.
      - 2 Kings 23:4
    - The influence of Zephaniah bringing God’s Word to the King and the people likely had great influence upon him.
    - To get rid of the all of the idols and completely remove them from the kingdom.
  - However even with the actions of Josiah ultimately God still held them accountable for their actions.
- Purpose
  - The book of Zephaniah brings the Word of God telling the Israelites (and the world) of their coming judgment, that they will be held accountable for their actions.
  - It also however brings a call for repentance, for them to turn from their evil ways.
    - Even though as we will see that while God still held them accountable for their actions that didn’t mean that everything was hopeless and that God was turning His back on them.
    - But that they still needed to turn from their evil and follow God. While discipline was still going to follow they still needed to embrace God and strive to be His obedient children.

- This is true for a parent that determines that discipline is necessary for their child, while their repentance may deter punishment, it can certainly make it less severe.
    - Great things come from the child who repents and strives to be obedient. Likewise great things are in store for the Christian who repents and is obedient to God.
  - The prophecy of Zephaniah also promises restoration
    - God also made a promise that there would be restoration. Even though they would be held accountable for their actions and their punishment would be severe.
    - That in the end God would restore His people and remove his punishment.
    - God also alludes to a coming time when the Gentiles (that's us) would come to know the LORD and call upon Him.
- **Read Zephaniah 1:1-11**
- Accountability for the Israelites and the world
  - The Israelite people had come to a point to where they were going to be held accountable for their actions.
  - Instead of worshiping only the one true God Yahweh, they had a period of time (55 years) where they were under kings who had done evil in the eyes of God.
    - Their sins primarily consisted of idolatry, syncretism and religious indifference.
      - Idolatry – Worship of other gods.
      - Syncretism – The worship of Yahweh AND other gods.
      - Indifference – One who knows the truth but doesn't care.
  - Their time had come for them to be held accountable for their actions.
    - What is interesting is that it really should not have been any surprise to them because God had made it clear that punishment would follow for those who disobeyed God.
    - **However they like people today sometimes think we ride above accountability.**
    - That we can do as we please and that we will never be held accountable for our actions.
      - People become complacent with their sin and disobedience.
    - **In fact the Israelites had assumed that God's divine punishment would be directed at their enemies,** they didn't think that God would hold them accountable for their actions.
  - Christians must not think that we will never be held accountable for our actions.
    - We may think that because we are Christians that we are not held accountable for our sins, that it's the lost and evil world that is held accountable.
      - That somehow we get a free pass. That however couldn't be farther from the truth.
    - However that is not true as God will chastise His beloved children, He will hold them accountable for their actions.
      - Hebrews 10:30
        - “For we know the One who has said, Vengeance belongs to Me, I will repay, and again, **The Lord will judge His people.**”
  - **Do you think Christians sometimes think that they will never be held accountable for their actions? That since they are saved they have a free pass?**
- The time of God being patient has come to an end and the “Day of the Lord” is drawing near.
  - Throughout Scripture the text “Day of the Lord” is used several times.
    - Zephaniah 1:7, Obadiah 15, Malachi 4:5...etc.,

- It does not describe a specific date in time and it is used for times past, present and future.
  - There is not a single “Day of the LORD”
- One might think initially that “The Day of the Lord” sounds like a happy time.
- However its use throughout the Bible is more commonly associated with retribution and punishment.
- By definition the Day of the Lord (according to the HCSB Bible dictionary) is:
  - A time when God reveals His sovereignty over human powers and human existence.
  - A point in time in which God displays His sovereign initiative to reveal His control of history, of time, of His people, and of all people.
- The Day of the Lord has been a time for God’s punishment on the deserving, not necessarily a time of joy. Although it can be when this is a time when God punishes the enemies of His children.
  - Amos 5:18-20
  - This description isn’t exactly “uplifting” is it?
  - No one enjoys to be punished. We never look forward to it. However it is God’s holy right to enact His justice when He sees the necessity.
- “The Day of the LORD” for the world. | Zephaniah 1:2-3
  - In the opening verses of Zephaniah God gives us two instances where we will have the “Day of the LORD”.
  - The first is directed at the world.
  - **Read Zephaniah 1:2-3**
  - God is making it clear that God will hold the world accountable for its actions for its sins.
    - Matthew 13:40-43
    - 2 Peter 3:3-7
  - There will be a Day of the LORD that the world will experience. The lost sinners of the world will perish and live an eternity in Hell.
  - However those in Christ Jesus will be glorified.
    - Matthew 14:43a
      - “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in their Father’s kingdom...”
  - **The world will be held accountable for its actions.**
- “The Day of the LORD” for Judah
  - God now turns His attention to Judah and makes it clear that He will punish the people of Judah on the Day of the Lord.
    - This being a different day than the end times.
  - God depicts this as a sacrifice | Zephaniah 1:7-9
    - **Read Zephaniah 1:7-9**
    - Judah will be sacrificed and the guests (Babylonians) will conquer them.
    - God will punish all of those who have disobeyed God with their worship of Baal and other rituals used to false gods.
  - This day would take place soon when Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and the temple of God.
    - 2 Kings 25:8-10
  - Christians may think, “Why would God allow this?” Why would He allow His temple to be destroyed?
    - **This is because God is holding His people, His children accountable for their actions**

- Their sins had caught up with them and divine punishment and retribution was coming.
- Even though Josiah had a right relationship with God it was not enough to deter the punishment that was coming.
  - As we have read scripture regarding the Israelites we see how they would be obedient to God only to turn away and then when things were really bad they would turn back to God and would once again be restored.
  - However we have here a time where even though the king was right with God and he had attempted to cleanse the temple of all of the idol worship that God was going to hold them accountable for their previous actions.
  - In the end King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon would destroy Jerusalem and the temple of God.
    - 2 Kings 23:26-27
  - **We must not confuse this with abandonment**, because God never left His people. Instead this is divine punishment against the evil that His children had committed.
  - **We are all held accountable.**
- “The Day of the LORD” for the Christian
  - Scripture makes it clear that even Christians are held accountable for their actions.
  - That while we are saved God will never abandon us and we can never lose our Salvation.
  - We can and will be held accountable for our actions and the sins that we commit.
  - **What do you think it looks like when a Christian is held accountable?**
- The dangers of spiritual compromise
  - God speaks directly to the sins that Judah is being held accountable for.
  - These sins are not something that God had never told them was wrong, but instead sins that God had repeatedly told them were in direct disobedience to His commands.
  - These all affected the spiritual lives of the Israelite people and they still do today for the Christian.
  - Idolatry – Worship of other gods. | Zephaniah 1:5a
    - The people of Judah had been disobeying God and worshipping the god Baal and also other celestial gods like the sun and moon.
      - Zephaniah 1:5a
        - “those who bow in worship on the rooftops to the heavenly host;...”
    - This of course was in direct opposition to the Ten Commandments.
      - Deuteronomy 5:7-8
        - “Do not have other gods besides Me. Do not make an idol for yourself in the shape of anything in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the waters under the earth.”
    - Christian idolatry
      - While we may not have a problem with worshipping the sun or the moon we do have other idols in our lives.
      - Christians idolize money, people and possessions.
  - Syncretism – The worship of Yahweh AND other gods | Zephaniah 1:5b
    - Syncretism in Judah consisted of them on one hand they were worshipping Yahweh the one true God. But on the other they were ALSO worshipping the false gods.
      - Zephaniah 1:5b
        - “...those who bow and pledge loyalty to the LORD but also pledge loyalty to Milcom,...”
      - 2 Kings 17:32

- “They feared the LORD, but they also appointed from their number priests to serve them in the shrines of the high place. They feared the LORD, but they also worshiped their own gods according to the custom of the nations where they had been deported from.
    - So apparently they thought that hey I bet we could get by with our whole idol worship if we do it in addition to God.
      - That somehow God would think that’s its OK to worship other things as long as He is being worshiped as well.
    - But God has made this very clear that this is NOT acceptable
      - 2 Kings 17:35
        - “The LORD made a covenant with them and commanded them, “Do not fear other gods; do not bow down to them; do not serve them; do not sacrifice to them.”
    - Christian syncretism
      - Christians can be guilty of this sin as well.
      - We give God our praise and glory yet we still want to intentionally live in our sins of idolization as if it’s OK.
      - We desire to have both our sin AND God with no intentions of giving the sin up.
  - Indifference – One who knows the truth but doesn’t care | Zephaniah 1:6
    - The people of Judah were also guilty of spiritual indifference.
    - They had at one point desired to obey and follow God but they had fallen away and not longer desired to even follow God.
    - They were likely only worshiping their false god having completely turned their backs on the one true God.
    - Christian Indifference
      - Likewise Christians can find themselves in a position where they no longer have that close and personal relationship with God.
      - They let their sins rule them, they do not allow themselves to be filled with Holy Spirit.
      - If this happens it is usually a slow process and not something that happens all at once.
  - **What types of spiritual compromise do Christians make today? How does that affect their relationship with God?**
- A call to repentance | Zephaniah 2:1-3
  - While the Israelites were still going to be held accountable for their actions, God still desired their repentance.
  - ***Read Zephaniah 2:1-3***
  - Just because punishment was coming it didn’t mean that they needed to run farther away from God. NO they needed to run CLOSER.
  - God loves His children and He desires more then anything for their repentance and to restore a broken relationship.
  - Deuteronomy 30:1-3
  - Christians must come to our senses
    - As Christians we must come to our senses and realize that we are accountable to God for our actions.
    - That we do not have a free pass on life to sin as we please.
    - We must acknowledge our sins, our wrongdoing and desire to live an obedient life in Christ.