



Key Passage: Zephaniah 2:3; Haggai 1:8

Key Thought: Coming Judgment and the Priority of God.¹

The Gospel in Zephaniah.

1. Do you look forward to the Lord's return, or do you fear it? What might be causing this fear?
2. What is the source of your confidence on the day of Judgment? How is your relationship with Christ?

Collection of poetry

Backstory: Final decades of the southern kingdom, under the reign of Josiah seeking reforms. But Israel was too far gone. Even a good king can let pride get the best of him, and he leads Judah on a collision course with Babylon.

¹ This lesson summarizes or quotes Michael Williams, *How to Read the Bible through the Jesus Lens*, pp. 125-28, 133-36. These notes are compiled from 4 principal sources. In addition to Michael Williams book, notes are also derived from Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Old Testament in Seven Sentences*, Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, and H. H. Drake Williams, *Making Sense of the Bible*.

3 parts:

Part 1: (1:1-2:3) Judgement on Jerusalem

Doesn't say who! (Babylon) Focus on God's role

So ends with hope: those who seek the lord might be spared (2:1-3)

Part 2: (2:4-3:8) Judgment on the nations and Jerusalem again

Chap 2: Says nations (philistines, Moabites) are corrupt and arrogant

Chap 3: Includes Jerusalem! Does God even recognize them as his people? Thus burning fire of wrath (3:8)

Part 3: (3:9-20) Hope for the nations & Jerusalem

Goal of fire is to purify (3:9)

God transforms nations into a unified family (3:9-10). Fulfills Gen 12:15-17: bless the nations!

3:11-20: God restores Jerusalem as the center of the nations

Sing and rejoice. God is a poet who wants to sing also!

God gathers up the outcast, poor, broken, and exalts them to a place of honor.

Goal:

Negative: judgment will come even to those who found value in ancestry, inheritance, religion, position, titles, etc. Only a relationship with God himself can bypass the judgment. Brings judgment. Focus on Justice.

Positive: Judgment on Jerusalem is also judgment on the nations; so restoration of Jerusalem (Zeph 3:14-17) has universal connotation for the nations (Zeph 3:9). Passion to rescue his world from evil and violence. Judgment to restore and create a world where love can flourish.

The Gospel in Haggai:

1. If you had only one day left to live, what would you do? Your answer tells you where your priorities lie. Do you think that real fulfillment in life comes from doing what God wants you to do or what you want to do?
2. How would someone else see that God is the first priority in your life? If someone followed you around all day, would your actions make it clear to that person that you placed priority on honoring God? Or would your life, actions, and values show no difference from that of an unbeliever?
3. What specific changes could you make in your life so that you could be actively engaged in building the Lord's house?

Backstory: Exile in Babylon in 587. Nearly 70 years later (520), Haggai. World now ruled by Persians. Jerusalem people allowed to go back through high priest Joshua and Zerubbabel (from the line of David). Return and begin to rebuild. But not a good future.

4 sections: (4 months)

1. 1:1-15 accusation (rebuilding own fancy houses rather than the temple that stayed in ruins for the past 7 years. Says all the trouble comes from this neglect. People respond.
2. 2:1-9 (1 month later) addressed shattered expectations. Unimpressive remodel. Says future kingdom will be great. Speaks of new Jerusalem where all nations will join in God's kingdom. Temple is key role. Calls for people to work in hope.
3. 2:10-19 (2 months later) Call to covenant faithfulness. Speaks of ritual impurity and makes a parable: current generation has to turn from injustice and apathy or what they build with their hands will be impure too. True repentance and covenant faithfulness brings blessing. God is waiting for his people to be faithful. Like Moses: obedience will lead to blessings.
4. 2:20-23 Future hope of God's kingdom. Will make Temple and Jerusalem the center. Establish a messianic king. Will Haggai's generation experience the fulfillment? Will Zerubbabel be the Messiah?

Our choices matter.

Obedience of God's people is part of how God works in the world.

Should motivate humility and action.

Goal: to find meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in being used by God to build up his spiritual house. Then we can say "From this day on I will bless you" (2:19)

Haggai sees the day when all the wealth of the nations will return to its rightful owner—God himself—in the temple (2:6-9). Fulfilled in Rev 21:21-24