

119

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Minor Prophets, Major Messages | Zephaniah: Wrath and Mercy

Use with the full teaching and a Bible. Read or watch first, complete the questions, then discuss and apply. For family study, an adult can select suitable portions and accept spoken answers.

Test the teaching's explanations against the cited passages. Keep the answer key and facilitator notes separate when distributing learner pages.

[Open the full teaching](#)

Teaching summary

This teaching examines how Zephaniah holds God's wrath against evil together with his mercy and promise of restoration. Zephaniah prophesied during Josiah's reign, when idolatry and neglect of God's ways required reform. His opening message announces judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem. Those who worship other gods, divide their allegiance, or stop seeking YHWH face the consequences of their unfaithfulness.

The Day of YHWH exposes even the complacent who assume God will do neither good nor harm. Zephaniah pictures YHWH searching Jerusalem with lamps and announces distress, loss, and destruction. Judgment also reaches surrounding nations because of their pride and mistreatment of God's people. Yet Zephaniah 2:3 offers hope within the warning: those who seek YHWH, righteousness, and humility may be hidden in the day of his anger.

Jerusalem's leaders are also condemned. Officials prey upon the vulnerable, prophets act treacherously, and priests profane holy things and do violence to the law. The announced judgment includes Jerusalem as well as the nations. The book then turns toward salvation for a remnant. God promises to purify the peoples' speech so that they call upon him and serve together. Jerusalem is invited to rejoice because judgment is removed, enemies are cleared away, and YHWH is present to save, gather, and restore his people.

This movement from wrath to restoration reveals YHWH's desire for repentance and life. The teaching connects Zephaniah with Ezekiel's declaration that he takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Zephaniah 3:9 promises purified speech so that the peoples call on YHWH and serve him together. The teaching highlights the Hebrew verb *hapak* to emphasize this change and compares it with Jeremiah's promise of forgiveness and the Torah written on the heart. Mercy includes transformation toward faithful service.

Paul's teaching in Romans follows a comparable pattern. God judges unrighteousness, and condemning others does not protect someone who practices the same sins. His patience and kindness are meant to lead to repentance. Since all have sinned, all need mercy; Romans 5:9 locates rescue from wrath in the Messiah's blood. The teaching therefore presents wrath and mercy as consistent themes across Scripture, rather than opposing descriptions of God.

Yeshua echoes Zephaniah's call to humility through his teaching on service, childlike humility, and the humbling of those who exalt themselves. God's saving love is fulfilled through his Son, sent so

that people may live. Zephaniah's restored Jerusalem also points toward the final hope of Revelation 21:1-4: God dwelling with his people, with death, pain, and mourning removed. The response is to turn humbly to YHWH, receive his mercy, and live in hope of lasting restoration.

Summary points

- Zephaniah announces judgment on idolatry, divided loyalty, and complacency.
- God's judgment includes Judah as well as the surrounding nations.
- Corrupt leaders bear responsibility for oppression and the misuse of God's instruction.
- Seeking YHWH, righteousness, and humility offers hope amid judgment.
- God promises to transform the peoples so they call upon him and serve together.
- The book ends with salvation, restoration, and joy in God's presence.
- God desires repentance and life rather than the destruction of the wicked.
- Romans likewise joins the warning of wrath with mercy through the Messiah.
- Yeshua teaches the humility and service emphasized by Zephaniah.
- The New Jerusalem fulfills the hope of God dwelling with his people in lasting peace.

Fill in the blank

Use the teaching and the cited Bible passages. Equivalent wording is welcome when it expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. Zephaniah calls the people to seek righteousness and _____.
2. Those who assumed YHWH would do neither good nor harm were _____.
3. God's judgment reaches Judah and the surrounding _____.
4. God changes the peoples' speech so they serve him with one _____.
5. God desires that the wicked turn from their ways and _____.
6. The final hope includes God dwelling with his people in the New _____.

Challenging

1. Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of King _____.
2. YHWH searches Jerusalem with _____ in Zephaniah 1:12.
3. Zephaniah 3:4 says the priests do violence to the _____.
4. The Hebrew verb highlighted by the teaching in its discussion of changed speech is _____.
5. Jeremiah 31 connects forgiveness with God writing his law on the people's _____.
6. Romans 5:9 says believers are justified by the Messiah's _____.

Group discussion

Discuss respectfully and support answers from the passages. Use these lines for brief notes or a notebook for longer responses.

1. Why is complacency about God's involvement dangerous in Zephaniah's message?

2. What do the warnings against Judah and the nations reveal about accountability before God?

3. How does the promise of transformed speech deepen the message beyond escape from punishment?

4. How do Zephaniah and Romans connect God's patience with the need for repentance?

5. Why does humility matter in both Zephaniah's call and Yeshua's teaching?

6. How can the promise of God's presence and final restoration shape the way your group responds to his correction today?

Answer key

For the leader or parent. Answers follow the teaching and the passages. Accept equivalent wording that expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. humility

Zephaniah 2:3

2. complacent (also: apathetic, indifferent)

Zephaniah 1:12

3. nations

Zephaniah 1:4; 2:4-15; 3:8

4. accord (also: purpose)

Zephaniah 3:9 in the teaching's quotation

5. live

Ezekiel 18:23, 32

6. Jerusalem

Revelation 21:1-4

Challenging

1. Josiah

Zephaniah 1:1

2. lamps (also: lights)

Zephaniah 1:12

3. law (also: Torah)

Zephaniah 3:4

4. hapak (also: haphak, hāpak)

Teaching major message: hapak

5. hearts (also: heart)

Jeremiah 31:33

6. blood

Romans 5:9

Facilitator notes

These responses give direction for discussion. They are not a test of identical wording. Invite participants to explain the passages and consider a faithful practical response.

1. The complacent assume YHWH will not act, making their conduct seem unimportant. His search with lamps exposes that false security. The warning calls us to seek him and take injustice seriously, rather than treat his patience as indifference.

Zephaniah 1:12-18; 2:3

2. Judah's covenant identity does not excuse idolatry or oppression, and neighboring nations are also accountable for pride and harm. YHWH's justice is not limited to outsiders. We should examine our own conduct before using these warnings only against other people.

Zephaniah 1:4-6; 2:4-15; 3:1-5

3. YHWH promises purified speech so the peoples call on him and serve together. The goal includes changed allegiance and a truthful, humble community, not merely escape from consequences. The teaching compares this with Jeremiah's promise of forgiveness and inward Torah.

Zephaniah 3:9-13; Jeremiah 31:33-34

4. Zephaniah warns that refusal of correction brings judgment while still calling people to seek YHWH. Romans explicitly says God's kindness is intended to lead to repentance. Since everyone needs mercy, the response is humble return and trust in Messiah rather than condemning others while persisting in the same wrong.

Zephaniah 2:3; 3:2, 7; Romans 2:2-9; 3:23; 5:9

5. Humility recognizes dependence on YHWH and leaves prideful self-exaltation behind. Zephaniah calls for it amid judgment; Yeshua illustrates it through childlike humility and service. We practice it by receiving correction, listening, and helping others rather than competing for status.

Zephaniah 2:3; Matthew 18:1-4; 20:26-28; 23:12

6. The promise of YHWH's presence gives us reason to accept correction without despair. We can turn from known wrong, make appropriate repair, and encourage faithful service. The teaching connects Zephaniah's restored community with Revelation's final hope, while leaving the timing of fulfillment unspecified.

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Revelation 21:1-4

Facilitator reminders

Pure speech in this discussion concerns transformed allegiance and common service. Do not turn the passage into a test of whether someone uses a particular modern pronunciation of the divine name.

The quoted translation uses one accord. If learners use another translation, accept an explanation such as united service or shoulder to shoulder rather than marking the idea wrong.

Put it into practice

Choose one response to the passages. What will we do, and when will we revisit it? Share only what you are comfortable sharing.