

"THE ARISTOCRATIC PROPHET"
(ZEPHANIAH)

As one watches God's dealings with mankind, he sees God's nature in contrasting ways. Sometimes God is severe and sometimes He is tender.

I. THE BACKGROUND:

1. Zephaniah lived in an hour of decay and dissolution.
2. One world empire would die and another would come to life.
3. Under Manasseh's reign, Judah had gone into heathenism and pagan practices with the day of pure worship of God ended.
4. The leaders of Judah had become so corrupt that justice was impossible.
5. No prophets for two generations had been allowed to speak the deep things of God.

II. THE MAN:

1. With justifiable pride Zephaniah traced his lineage back to Hezekiah.
2. In all probability, he was the same age of King Josiah and Jeremiah.
3. Zephaniah seemed to be obsessed with a terrible conception that doom was coming for all the wicked world around him.
4. He was not a poet but a flaming evangelist who spoke with fury.
5. Being so violently opposed to the world conditions, he left the impression that he was pitiless, harsh, and unsympathetic.

III. THE BOOK:

1. Zephaniah's book is made up of several brief oracles.
2. Probably the book was preached and written during the early days of Josiah's attempts to bring Judah back to God.
3. CHAPTER 1: Doom pronounced on idol worshippers. Rulers are denounced; God's wrath will be a dread day when it comes.
4. CHAPTER 2: An urgent call to repentance. Nothing can avert the doom of the nation; threats of destruction to the heathen nations.
5. CHAPTER 3: Zephaniah sets out Judah's sins before God's righteousness. He assures Judah that a remnant will survive; the remnant will return and enjoy God's blessings.

6. OUTLINE: 1:1-18 : A Declaration of Retribution
2:1-3:8 : An Exhortation to Repentance
3:3:8-20: A Promise of Redemption

IV. LESSONS OF VALUE:

1. What one believes about God determines his conduct.
2. One tends to become like the God he worships.
3. Living is serious business and ought to call out the best in a person.
4. The wrath of God is a terrible thing when turned on man.
5. A Day of Judgement is inevitable for every man.
6. God gives assurance that those who seek Him will find safety.
7. God promises that joy will replace mourning and peace will follow the storm.
8. God had rather cleanse, refine, and save than to send vengeance.