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Zephaniah 1:1-6
The word of Jehovah which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. (2) I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. (3) I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. (4) And I will stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarim with the priests; (5) and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam; (6) and them that are turned back from following Jehovah; and those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him.

Zephaniah is an Old Testament prophet who prophesied during the reign of Josiah in the 7th century BC (639-608 BC). Like many prophets his prophecies have multiple fulfillments –an immediate on in the time of the prophet or soon after – and a distant one fulfilled in Christ and / or the Second Coming. As we study this short series in Zephaniah we will mainly focus on the fulfillment in the Second Coming and issues of general theological application to readers today.

In Zephaniah we see God acting to finally break the power of evil - and then to renew Creation and the people of God. Buddhists, Hindus and Christian Scientists and others claim that evil is not real and is fact an illusion. However Christianity states that it is real, but it is temporary. God took evil seriously and planned the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection to deal with it. This age is “the present evil age” and it will end with the return of the Lord when a new age called “the renewal of all things” will begin. Evil will pass away, it will not last, there will be a final day of reckoning when evil will cease for all eternity and never recur - so that only a world that is only good and loving and true will remain.

But evil will not just vanish, evil is violent by nature and puts up a fight –and it will be a big fight, one that will lead to the end of the world. Zephaniah looks ahead to this day, the “Day of the Lord” and paints the picture for us. “I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah. (3) I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the face of the ground, saith Jehovah.“

God’s anger will be principled focused on:
Idolators and fertility worshippers: “I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place”
False Ascetics: “and the name of the Chemarim (idolatrous ascetic priests) with the priests;”

,Astrologers: “and them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops;”
Double-minded - mixing Yahweh worship with pagan worship: “and them that worship, that swear to Jehovah and swear by Malcam;”
Apostates: “and them that are turned back from following Jehovah”
Unbelievers: “and those that have not sought Jehovah, nor inquired after him.”

Everyone will be required to worship the True God – Yahweh, the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

A very similar message is found in the proclamation of one of the three messenger angels in Revelation: Revelation 14:6-11 And I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those dwelling on the earth, even to every nation and kindred and tongue and people, (7) saying with a great voice, Fear God and give glory to Him! For the hour of His judgment has come. And worship Him who made the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The “Everlasting Gospel” which goes out to all nations is about appropriate reverence to the one God who created all things. I find that the more I look at Creation the more I get to understand and appreciate God. Creation is so good, so fertile, so wise and balanced and beautiful and intricate and gentle that the One who made such things so must be very good Himself. This is the God that made the world and can end the world and which has the lives of all things in His hand.

Zephaniah tells us that this God does not tolerate the worship of “other gods” or the worship of the stars, or who defile His worship or turn from Him as apostates or stubbornly refuse to seek Him or fear Him. (Zephaniah 1:1-6 above) Zephaniah does not allow us to have our own made-up religion. This prophet is not at all a secularist or tolerant of other faiths, rather he insists that we believe, and that we keep on believing, and that we believe in the true Creator God and in no other.

Zephaniah calls us back to this God – the Universal God, the Creator, who is the very ground of our existence. This God is not a mere religious concept – He is real and powerful has the ability to destroy the earth that He created. He is a God to be reckoned with and a God to be obeyed.

And this is not just the “Old Testament God” - for even in Hebrews, in the New Testament we still find this great God, the Creator, who should be served with reverence and awe: Hebrews 12:25-29 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape, those who refused him that spoke on earth, much more we shall not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from Heaven, (26) whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will not only shake the earth, but also the heavens." (27) And this word, "Yet once more," signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. (28) Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, (29) for also, "Our God is a consuming fire."

Blessings,

John Edmiston johned@aibi.ph

[Special Project – Translation of Harvestime Church-Planting Courses into Tagalog]

We wish to employ a team of four Filipino translators for one year to translate the 21 Harvestime modules into Tagalog (the language of the Philippines). This will cost about $800 a month and we still have to raise $600 a month of this. We would like 30 people to donate $20 a month to make this happen (starting April). [To see the Harvestime courses go to: http://www.aibi.ph/harvest/]

If this interests you send a cheque to John Edmiston 21744 Grace Ave. Carson CA 90745 and include a note saying “For Tagalog Translation Project”. (The AIBI does not yet have a US bank account but we are working on it.) Or use our online donation process and send an email to me saying “For Tagalog Translation Project” and tell me about the donation so I know how to designate the funds. To donate online go to: http://www.aibi.ph/aibi/donate.htm

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