

on Zephaniah in your church, I will be surprised. But the author is Zephaniah with a lengthy genealogy given in 1:1 suggesting that he was a descendent of Hezekiah, king of Judah and therefore some sort of cousin to king Josiah. Considering the sins committed in Judah (1:4) it would seem to be written before the Josiah reform although the language is somewhat similar to Jeremiah and it could refer to events at the end of Josiah's reign..see 1:8 as a possible indication of this. It is certainly written before the fall of Ninevah (2:13) but perhaps in the expectation that the Assyrian Empire would soon crumble. The writer anticipates a number of national threats for Judah and to this end calls for repentance while also promising the coming of an age of blessing. Zephaniah is beautifully poetical and while some have looked for indications of later notes in it, Harrison says it well, I think, in stating..."there is no sufficient reason for attributing to anyone other than Zephaniah himself any particular section of the prophecy." (INTRODUCTION, p. 942) The overall theme is certainly that of judgment for idolatry and spiritual apostasy although the prophecy contains many encouraging notes as well.

In outlining Zephaniah, Harrison's outline is hard to by-pass:

- I. The Day of the Lord 1:1-2:3
- II. Judgments against aggressors 2:4-15
- III. Woes and blessings for God's people 3:1-20

In noticing these it will be seen that the Day of the Lord is still the time when God brings particular judgment to a land or a nation (1:14-16, 18). The special subjects of his wrath are the pretenders and idolatrous (1:4-6) as well as the avaricious (1:9) and complacent (1:12). As in other such times no human means is sufficient for deliverance (1:18). His advice is constant..."seek the Lord.."(2:3).

In the plan of redemption, as it unfolds for us in the Old Testament, Zephaniah continues to look to the covenanted mercies and the fulfillment of the promises of God. God knows the sin of His people and knows how they have been treated as well. But He, the Just Lord, (3:5) is in the midst of His people and will not fail in His purposes. Therefore those who will listen are instructed to "wait for him" (3:8) for both his wrath on the foe and His blessing on His own. Some messages must be heard many times for our personal belief and this is one of them. God will, in His providence, gather the lame and afflicted and return their captivity. The promise gives us assurance for what we are to do in the knowledge of what God is doing. No matter how difficult a situation appears, God is working and His work will make practical deliverance realistic.

Questions in Zephaniah are mostly academic but include queries regarding the nature of the offenses and planned aggressions of the nations mentioned in chapter 2, the significance of the apocalyptic as in 3:8, and the emphasis on "princes" rather than kings or rulers in 1:8, etc.

Archaeologically and historically we learn of the reality of the nations about the Jews and of the Scythian difficulties that seemed to menace Judah at this time. I am not aware of any specific archaeological data however, beyond the general circumstance.

To better understand Zephaniah, review the Josian history in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings; study the concept of the "Day of the Lord" and see why the coming punishment is called that. Notice also 3:17 and see how this helps understand the total content of the book.