

Zephaniah 1

Verse 1

The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:

Zephaniah was a prophet of the Lord during the time of King Josiah (640 to 609 BC).

See chart 105

Reigns of the Southern Kings				
	King	Good kings	Began	Ended
10	Jotham	Like Uzziah but better	740	731
11	Ahaz		731	715
12	Hezekiah	Like David	715	686
13	Manasseh		686	642
14	Amon		642	640
15	Josiah	Like David	640	609
16	Jehoahaz		609	609
17	Jehoiakim		609	598
18	Jehoiachin		598	597
19	Zedekiah		597	586

Verses 2 - 3

² "I will completely remove all things
From the face of the earth," declares the Lord.

³ "I will remove **human and animal life**;

I will remove **the birds of the sky**

And **the fish of the sea,**

And **the ruins along with the wicked;**

And I will eliminate mankind from the face of the earth," declares the Lord.

This is a prophetic proclamation of the final destruction of everything when Christ returns. This cannot be a prediction of the coming doom when Babylon destroys the Assyrian Empire or any of the subsequent world powers that will follow. This is worse than the global flood of Noah's day because there is no mention that God will rescue any portion of the animal kingdom, be it birds of the sky or fishes of the sea.

Verse 4

4 "So I will stretch out My hand against Judah
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And I will eliminate the remnant of Baal from this place,
***And* the names of the idolatrous priests along with the *other* priests.**

After the prediction of the end time Zephaniah announces that God is about to use Babylon to destroy all of the Assyrian empire.

See map 110



This destruction of Judah and Jerusalem by Babylon should be seen as an example of how God will one day judge the entire human race for their sin. The nation that had made a covenant promise with God had forsaken that agreement by committing idolatry with many different gods. However, Baal is mentioned here because he was the chief god that so many in Israel had bowed down to.

Verse 5

⁵ **And those who bow down on the housetops to the heavenly lights,**
And those who bow down and swear to the Lord, but also swear by Milcom,

King Ahaz "made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem" to worship the host of heaven and his grandson, King Manasseh, expanded upon these practices by erecting altars to the sun, moon, and stars in the courtyards of the Temple in Jerusalem.

See 2 kings 21:3 – 5

³ **For he rebuilt the high places which his father Hezekiah had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, just as Ahab king of Israel had done, and he worshiped all the heavenly lights and served them.** ⁴ **And he built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name."** ⁵ **He built altars for all the heavenly lights in the two courtyards of the house of the Lord.**

See chart 115

Reigns of the Southern Kings				
	King	Good kings	Began	Ended
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The Jews did worship the one true God, but in the same breath they honored and served Milcom (Molech), and other pagan deities. Molech was a pagan deity honored by the sacrifices of children. This kind of “worship” was anathema to the One True God because it was idolatry and murder.

Jeremiah responded to this kind of evil by asking the following question.

See Jeremiah 7:8 – 10

⁸ “Behold, you are trusting in deceptive words to no avail. ⁹ Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, offer sacrifices to Baal, and follow other gods that you have not known, ¹⁰ then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are saved!’—so that you may do all these abominations? ¹¹ Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your sight? Behold, I myself have seen *it*,” declares the Lord.

Verses 6 - 7

**⁶ And those who have turned back from following the Lord,
And those who have not sought the Lord nor inquired of Him.”**

⁷ Be silent before the Lord God!

For the day of the Lord is near,

Because the Lord has prepared a sacrifice,

He has consecrated His guests.

In the case of Judah, their day of the Lord was about 10 to 30 years away. The reason for the 20 year difference is based on the 3 different deportations to Babylon.

See chart 120

Deportations to Babylon		
Events		Year
Deportation to Babylon	1st	605
Deportation to Babylon	2nd	597
Deportation to Babylon	Final	586

The sacrifice that the Lord had prepared was Judah and the guests that had been consecrated were the men of the Babylonian army. Every nation has their “day of the Lord” because all nations follow the same path that Israel and Judah took. And this happened despite the fact they were given the Law, the tabernacle, the judges and the Prophets.

Verses 8

**⁸ “Then it will come about on the day of the Lord’s sacrifice
That I will punish the princes, the king’s sons,
And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.**

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was carried away to Babylon and saw his sons put to death before his eyes, and then he himself was blinded by Nebuchadnezzar.

See 2 Kings 25:6 - 7

⁶ Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. ⁷ And they slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out Zedekiah’s eyes and bound him with bronze shackles, and brought him to Babylon.

Verse 9

**⁹ And on that day I will punish all who leap on the *temple* threshold,
Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.**

The following verses are crucial in understanding the first half of this verse.

See 1 Samuel 5:1 – 5.

Now the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Ebenezer to Ashdod. ² Then the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it into the house of Dagon, and placed it beside Dagon. ³ When the Ashdodites got up early the next day, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and set him back in his place. ⁴ But when they got up early the next morning, behold, Dagon had fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the head of Dagon and both palms of his hands were cut off on the threshold; only the torso of Dagon was left. ⁵ For that reason neither the priests of Dagon nor any who enter Dagon’s house step on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod to this day.

The Jewish scholar **Rashi**, (an acronym for **Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki**) was an 11th-century French scholar (1040–1105), and he explained the "leaping over the threshold" as a direct imitation of Philistine idolatry. He connects this verse to 1 Samuel 5:5, which describes the priests of the Philistine god Dagon refusing to step on the threshold of their temple. Therefore the prophet Zephaniah is rebuking the Jewish people for adopting this foreign superstition and incorporating it into their own worship.

The second half of the verse ("Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit") is viewed as a condemnation of corrupt government officials, judges, and royal servants. These individuals abused their positions of power to rob the poor and then used these ill-gotten gains to enrich the households of their corrupt leaders.

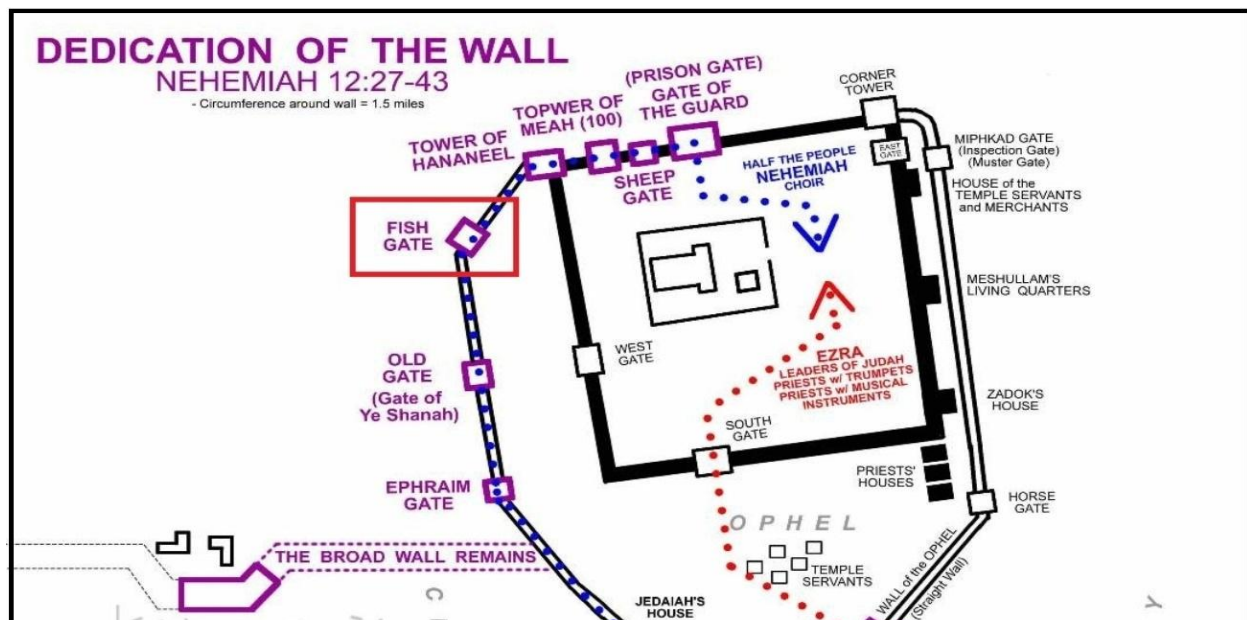
Verses 10 - 11

¹⁰ **And on that day," declares the Lord,**
"There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,
Wailing from the Second Quarter,
And a loud crash from the hills.

¹¹ **Wail, you inhabitants of the Mortar,**
Because all the people of Canaan will be destroyed;
All who weigh out silver will be eliminated.

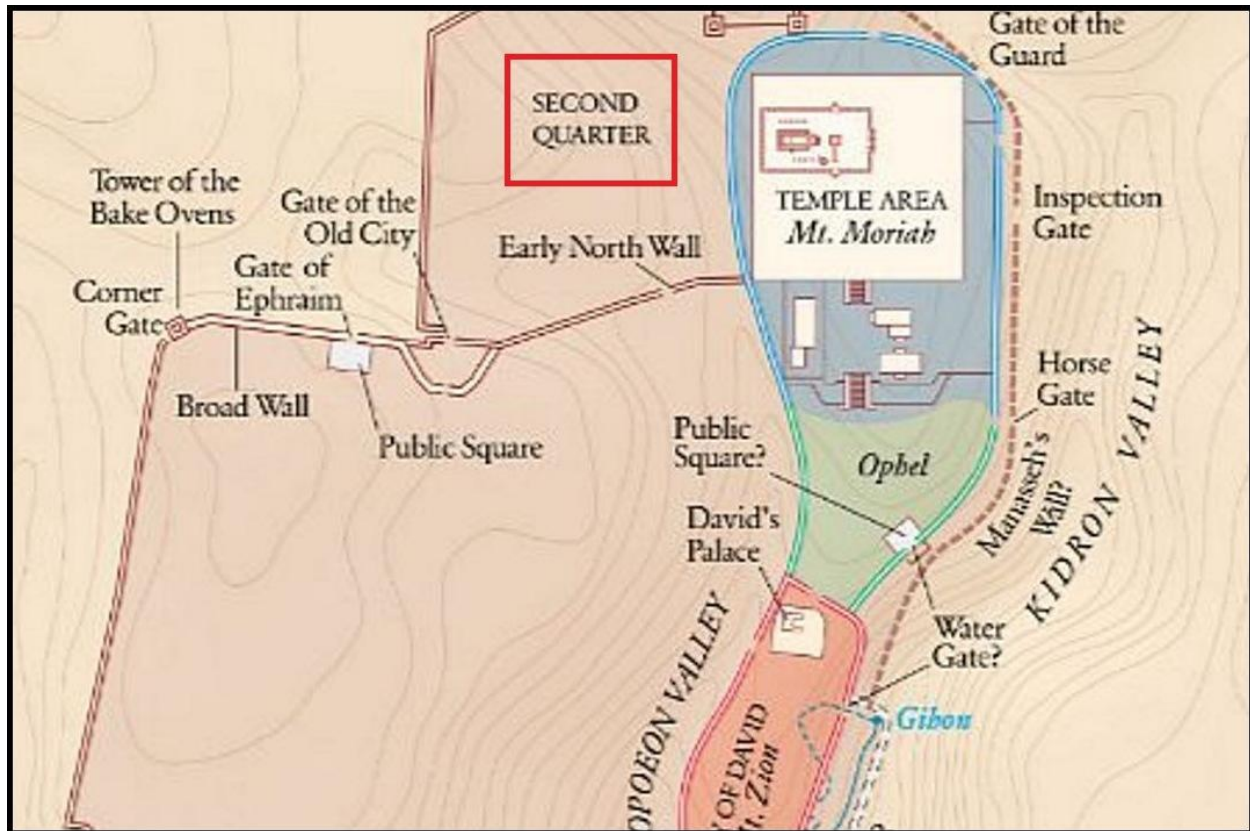
"The fish gate" This was one of the north entrances to the temple in Jerusalem.

See pic 125



The Second Quarter was also in the Northern part of the city.

See map 130



The second quarter was where Huldah the prophetess lived.

See 2 Kings 22:14

¹⁴ So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (and she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her.

Mortar got its name because it was situated in a deep, hollow depression in the city, giving it the shape of a mortar (or bowl). It was once the bustling commercial heart of the city but it is now filled with centuries of debris.

All of these places were in the north sector of the city, indicating that the invasion would come from the north.

It was the wickedness of the original Canaanites that caused God to remove them from the land and give it to Israel but over time Israel had become just as corrupt as the Canaanites and therefore God would do the same to Israel.

Verse 12

**¹² And it will come about at that time
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
And I will punish the people
Who are stagnant in spirit,
Who say in their hearts,
'The Lord will not do good nor harm!'**

This verse is the reason why mediaeval artists depicted Zephaniah as the man with a lamp or candle searching the city for sinners; however, it was not Zephaniah but the Lord Himself who would search Jerusalem in order to punish those who had forsaken Him.

God will punish those who are indifferent to Him; people who claim to believe in God but don't believe He will bless the righteous or punish the wicked.

Verse 13

**¹³ Their wealth will become plunder,
And their houses desolate;
Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit *them*,
And plant vineyards but not drink their wine."**

There is a coming to Judah a disaster that will take away the wealth of the rich and leave houses empty because many people will be put to death or lead into captivity. The very poor will be left to take care of the land but they will not prosper. A few of the faithful however will become leaders in the administration of the Babylon government.

Verse 14

**¹⁴ The great day of the Lord is near,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the Lord!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.**

In this case the "day of the Lord" will come very soon because Babylon will invade Judah 3 times with the final conflict taking place in 586 BC. But history has taught us that there will be the rise and fall of numerous kingdoms that will experience the same fate. Many nations have seen their "day of the Lord", but a final day is coming when all nations will face the judgment of God when Christ returns.

Verses 15 - 16

¹⁵ That day is a day of anger,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
¹⁶ A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.

For the nation that is being judged it is a day of great pain and humiliation, a day when the power to rule belongs to another nation that does not care about those who rule the nation that they are going to conquer. There are no deals or compromises to be made, only death or servitude await them.

Verses 17

¹⁷ I will bring distress on mankind
So that they will walk like those who are blind,
Because they have sinned against the Lord;
And their blood will be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like dung.
¹⁸ Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to save them
On the day of the Lord's anger;
And all the earth will be devoured
By the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a horrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The final day of the Lord will be a day of great despair to all of those who have mocked or ignored the Creator of the Universe. Zephaniah reveals that God will bring this disaster upon mankind (unbelievers) because they have sinned against Him. It is true that every man has sinned, so the only difference between unbelievers and believers is that the later have repented of their sin and been baptized into Christ.

See acts 2:38 – 39

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

Zephaniah explains that all of the earth will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. Peter gives some addition insight into what will happen in the end time.

See 2 Peter 3:10 - 13

¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be discovered. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

Everything in the physical universe will be burned up with intense heat. Then after all of mankind has been judged, God will create a new heavens and a new earth. For those who have acknowledged God and serve Him, it will be a day of amazing liberation for they will no longer have to fight against the desires of the flesh or answer to a world that is under the control of Satan. For unbelievers they will be thrown into the lake of fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels.