

August 12, 2018

Zephaniah 1

## God Will Judge

It has been said that swift and certain punishment is the best deterrence to crime. That makes sense, doesn't it? If you as a child knew for certain that your parent would punish you for a given offense, you probably avoided that offense.

Do you think punishment is a deterrent to crime today? Probably not much, because the court system is so slow and many criminals escape punishment through legal technicalities. Unfortunately, you could commit a cold-blooded murder today, captured on video showing exactly what you did and then confess to the crime, but not come to trial for years. If you were convicted and sentenced to death, your execution would be delayed 20-30 years through multiple appeals. Does that really deter anyone from killing?

God doesn't always judge at the moment a sin is committed. This makes people think He won't ever judge them. The message of this first chapter of Zephaniah is simply that **God will judge**.

**Zeph. 1:1** Zephaniah was a great-grandson of King Hezekiah. He wrote this message from the Lord in 630 B.C.

**Zeph. 1:2** What did the LORD say He would do?

**Zeph. 1:3** Who will He destroy?

**Zeph. 1:4** Where will He send judgment?

What will He destroy?

**Zeph. 1:5** Who did He vow to destroy?

In these opening verses **God promised to judge idol worshipers**. Some in Judah worshiped Baal, the Canaanite fertility god. Others worshiped the sun, moon, and stars. Ancient idol worship often involved "sacred" prostitution and child sacrifice. God hates idolatry and He **will** judge those who practice it.

**Zeph. 1:6** Who else will He judge?

This is speaking of those who just don't care about the Lord. **God promised to judge those who ignore Him**. Many people today simply ignore God. They don't care anything about Him.

**Zeph. 1:7** Zephaniah told everyone to be silent. What did he say was at hand?

The Day of the LORD is a time of future catastrophic judgment. The "sacrifice" would be the sinners of Judah and the guests were the Babylonians and Chaldeans God summoned to destroy them.

- Zeph. 1:8** Who did God vow to punish?
- Zeph. 1:9** Sinners eagerly ran to steal from others.
- Zeph. 1:10** Ancient gates were places of commerce.
- Zeph. 1:11** Who are cut down and cut off?

**God promised to judge those who seek wealth through deceit.**

- Zeph. 1:12** Who will God search for and punish?

**God promised to judge the unconcerned.** They were lazy and didn't think God would do anything good or bad.

- Zeph. 1:13** What will happen to those people?
- Zeph. 1:14** "The great day of the LORD is \_\_\_\_\_." How will people react to it?
- Zeph. 1:15** "That day is a day of \_\_\_\_\_." What else does this verse say about it?
- Zeph. 1:16** There will be battle trumpets and alarms.
- Zeph. 1:17** How will people walk?
- Why?
- What will happen to them?
- Zeph. 1:18** Will their money protect them?
- The land will be "devoured by the \_\_\_\_\_ of His \_\_\_\_\_. For He shall make even a \_\_\_\_\_ of all them that dwell in the land."

**Concluding Thoughts:** God will judge those who sin against Him. Punishment might not come instantly, but it will come **certainly**. In this chapter the Lord promised to judge four types of sinners:

- **Idol worshipers.**
- **Those who ignore Him.**
- **Those who seek wealth through deceit.**
- **The unconcerned.**

Punishment through our modern legal system may be uncertain and slow, but God will judge and punish those who reject Him and sin against Him. You can count on that – it is certain.

How does this lesson apply to you? You may not worship an idol, but do you ignore God? Are you seeking financial gain through deceit? Or how about the last one – are you unconcerned? Those who are unconcerned don't think God will act at all. They are complacent and don't bother God, hoping He won't bother them.

God will judge sin. Confess and turn from your sins right now.

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**Project:** Memorize **1 Peter 4:17**. Keep your heart right with God. It takes every day effort. Read your Bible and pray daily.