

QT Questions—for Zephaniah

(Here's a short introduction to the book of Zephaniah from my Study Bibles.)

- This book contains the prophecies that came to Zephaniah during a time of renewed devotion to God. The king was purging Judah of idols and improper worship practices, but the people's hearts also needed correcting. Zephaniah's message is that anyone combines worship of God with other gods—and who exercises deceit, violence and complacency—will be destroyed on the coming Day of the Lord. However, people who are righteous and humble will be gathered together in peace. When evil is all around us, how do we guard our hearts so that we can live a holy life? Zephaniah's message assures us that in His time, God will make all things right.
- In the midst of judgment, God will remain faithful. He will destroy evil, but He will advance His work among His people, setting apart a group of people for His purposes. This is the same message of redemption at the heart of the gospel of Christ—in the midst of a world still suffering from the effects of sin, we hold onto hope in God's faithfulness and His continual work among His people. God prompts us to change our ways—away from false religion and toward true faithfulness. God calls us to humbly love others and to live transparently as one people of God (2:3; 3:12-13).

Zeph 1 (5/31/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. What does God say He will do on that day and why would that be; will there be anything that can save the people, why or why not; what do you learn?

- God says in v. 12, "At that time I will search in Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The Lord will do nothing, either good or bad.'" Sadly, this is not only the mindset of the people back then, and not only of the people of the world today, but this mindset is very real and present in the lives of many Christians today, perhaps even ourselves. Surely, we speak of God's coming judgment, and believe, one day God will judge. But that one day seems so far away, it's almost as if it did not apply to us. We may know how to verbalize our doctrine, but our lives do not often reflect what we say we believe. And to us who are living carelessly and mindlessly, God teaches us today, that He will search His people with lamps. He will see our lives brightly and carefully. We must know, God hates complacency; He hates when His people doubt that He will be present and active in the lives of His children. Just as we always see a loving parent get involved in the lives of their children, our Father cares for us too greatly, that He will run where we run to, He will find us when we hide, He will watch over us anywhere and everywhere we go, for He is Immanuel, our God who lovingly stays with us always, no matter how great of a mess we made of our lives. Our sins do not frighten Him away. He will never leave us or forsake us. His character is faithfulness, so unlike us, who can instantly become faithless, that is not Him. He will never betray His character. He will always and perfectly see us, pray for us, and treat us, not as we deserve, but according to His character, faithful and loving and sacrificial. Our God is the true and eternal God. Let's pray that we will really see Him as He truly is, and taste His goodness, and may His ways overflow in us to the people around us.

Zeph 2 (6/2/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. What does God say His people should do and why (vv. 1-3); what does God say will happen to the surrounding nations, and yet, what will happen to His people; what do you learn?
- This chapter begins by God calling His people, “you shameful nation” (v. 1). And in that shame, God wants His people to repent before Him, and to change from their evil ways. He closes His words to His people with, “perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger” (v. 3). God is guaranteeing nothing to them, no promises, but He leaves them with a “perhaps you will be sheltered...” Yet, when God speaks to the surrounding nations, God speaks about the restoration of His people with certainty, “He will restore their fortunes” (v. 7), “the remnant of My people will plunder them; the survivors of My nation will inherit their land” (v. 9). As certain as God’s proclamation to the nations is of His people, yet, when He speaks to His children, He wants us to learn to change more into His ways, and thus, instead of guaranteeing, He is wooing and persuading us to willingly submit, even as we saw Jesus choose to submit to the Father’s will and not into His (Lk 22:42).

Zeph 3 (6/3/25)

(*Please answer the questions as best as you can.)

1. How were the people acting; yet, how will God act towards them and why; what do you learn?
- Despite all the wrongs the people did, v. 9 reads, “Then I will purify the lips of the peoples, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve Him shoulder to shoulder.” The change in the people came when God purified their lips; they called on the name of the Lord after the Lord purified them. In our world and in our minds, we often believe that God will bless us after we call Him, after we have done good, God rewards us for our good. But, that is not right. The order is wrong. Santa gives gifts to those who have been good, but our God gives gifts to those who have been bad sinners. And the amazing transformation in us comes because we have received God’s goodness, though we did not deserve such goodness. Paul taught us, “that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance” (Rom 2:4). In other words, we are able to repent because God’s kindness first came to us. This principle is always the same. We can persevere because God preserved us. We can love because He first loved us. We can forgive because He has first forgiven us, thus we forgive as we have been forgiven. We serve because He first served us. So, please understand and learn God’s ways rightly. We don’t do good in order to receive God’s rewards. It was God who first gave us His goodness, so that we are able to do good. It’s always receive from our God first, and from Him, we have the goodness to spread to others. And since that’s the case, we should never ever be proud or arrogant or boastful of the good things we do. We should say, God deserves the glory because it is from Him I have received all of my good things (Jam 1:17). But, let’s also understand, whatever good we have received from our God, God always intended for us to spread that goodness to those around us, which is why, we comfort others with the comfort we have first received from our God (2Cor 1:3). Our faith cannot be anything less than God’s centeredness. It is from Him we receive all good things. And whenever we desire to share the good things, whether be love or forgiveness or kindness or service, we should always look up to our God and receive, then spread to others what we have first received from our gracious God.