



Session

6

FOR THE  
LEADER

## ZEPHANIAH, PROPHET TO JUDAH

### Zephaniah

Like other minor prophets, very little is known of the man Zephaniah. The first verse of his book traces his lineage back four generations giving us some idea of who he was and when he lived. Whether the Hezekiah mentioned in this lineage is the king of Judah, cannot really be verified. Zephaniah would have been clearly identified as an Israelite. Zephaniah's prophecy is distinctive in that he shares some of the darkest prophetic language, but also offers some of the greatest hope for the future.

Shockingly, Zephaniah began his prophecy by announcing the day of the Lord, or, as he states, the total destruction of everything on the face of the earth—including Jerusalem. It is pretty dark! Because of sin, nothing would escape God's wrath. The rest of the book methodically laid out for the people the sin for which they would be condemned. The people had sinned and God was not pleased. Zephaniah's warning, while bleak, would encourage the residents of Judah to change their attitudes and begin to follow God with their whole hearts. As part of that encouragement, Zephaniah began to talk specifically to the people of Judah. God was announcing a cleansing of the nation from the idol worship prominent in their midst. Hope still existed for those who turned from their sin and followed God—a promise that still exists for us today.

Similar to Habakkuk, the prophet Zephaniah shared a series of woes against Judah's enemies. These woes shed light on the fact that God indeed is the one true God of all the earth, not just in Judah. Sin is terrible and our holy God cannot ignore sin, but He will forgive and restore us when we repent.

Though Zephaniah's prophecy was bleak in the beginning, the book ends with some of the greatest hope from any of the Minor Prophets. While God's judgment was sure, God would still maintain a remnant of people who would one day reinhabit Jerusalem. The new Jerusalem would be a place where followers of God did indeed follow God.