

Notes & Outlines

**ZEPHANIAH
HAGGAI**

J. Vernon McGee

ZEPHANIAH

WRITER: Zephaniah

Zephaniah identified himself better than any of the other minor prophets. As Habakkuk concealed himself in silence, Zephaniah went to the opposite extreme more than is ordinary. He traced his lineage back to his great-great-grandfather, who was Hizkiah, whom we know as Hezekiah, king of Judah. Zephaniah was of the royal line (Zephaniah 1:1).

TIME:

He located the time of his writing just as clearly as he did his identification — “In the days of Josiah, the son of Amon, king of Judah” (Zephaniah 1:1). According to the arrangement of the Hebrew Scriptures, Zephaniah was the last of the prophets before the captivity. He was contemporary with Jeremiah and probably with Micah. His was the swan song of the Davidic kingdom. He is credited with giving impetus to the revival during the reign of Josiah.

THEME: The dark side of love

Sweetness and light are associated with love on every level, and rightly so, but this aspect does not exhaust the full import of love. Love expresses itself always for the good of the one who is loved. This is the reason that it is difficult to associate love with the judgment of God. The popular notion of God is that He is a super Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. One nature of His is expressed by love, and the other nature is expressed in wrath by judgment. These two attributes appear to contradict one another to the extent that they seem to be describing two different gods. Zephaniah is filled with the wrath and judgment of God (Zephaniah 1:15; 3:8), but there is the undertone of the love of God (Zephaniah 3:17). It is love which prompts a parent to take the child out of the home to a hospital and to deliver him to the surgeon who endangers the life by pressing a scalpel into the vitals. This act is as much an expression of love as are the candies that are brought to the bedside the next week.

TWO THOUGHTS:

Two thoughts stand out in this brief book:

(1) “The day of the LORD” occurs seven times. Obadiah and Joel, the first of the writing prophets, were the first to use this expression; Zephaniah, the last, brings it to our attention again. This has particular application to the Great Tribulation, which precedes the kingdom and is included in the day of the Lord. It is a time of wrath.

(2) “Jealousy” occurs twice. It is not on the same level as human jealousy, but reveals the love of God for His people who have failed.

OUTLINE:

I. Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 1

II. Judgment of the earth and of all nations, Chapters 2:1 — 3:8

III. Judgments removed; kingdom established, Chapter 3:9-20

COMMENT:

I. Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, Chapter 1

v. 1 — Zephaniah completely identifies himself and his time (see WRITER and TIME).

v. 2 — Worldwide devastation is predicted. The Book of the Revelation confirms this and places the time as the Great Tribulation.

v. 3 — All living creatures are included in the judgment.

v. 4 — Judah and Jerusalem are singled out for judgment.

v. 5 — The reason for the judgment is idolatry — three types of idolatry are mentioned.

v. 6 — Also they have turned completely from God. Two classes are mentioned: backsliders and those who were never saved.

v. 7 — “The day of the LORD” is judgment (see TWO

THOUGHTS, also notes on Joel 1:15). Here the coming of Nebuchadnezzar is treated as a picture of the day of the LORD.

“Hold thy peace” means to hush; to keep still.

v. 8 — The “sacrifice” is the judgment of Judah.

v. 10 — “That day” is the day of the LORD.

v. 12 — Evidently this is one of the first groups that said that God was dead. They were the self-sufficient of an affluent society.

v. 13 — This marks the end of prosperity and the beginning of a depression.

vv. 14, 15 — This is a doleful, dreary, and dreadful picture of the Great Tribulation.

v. 16 — It is a day of fear.

v. 17 — Sin of man brings the judgment.

v. 18 — There will be no deliverance. Silver and gold are their gods, and they are powerless to save.

II. Judgment of the earth and of all nations, Chapters 2:1 — 3:8

Chapter 2

v. 1 — A call to Israel to come together to plead for deliverance from the wrath of the day of the LORD.

“Not desired” means that they were insensible to the shame of their sinful condition.

v. 2 — This is a brief but vivid description of the day of the LORD.

v. 3 — The call is extended to the inhabitants of the earth who in

meekness seek the Lord.

vv. 4-11 — This is judgment upon surrounding enemy nations and their idols.

v. 12 — Judgment on Ethiopia.

vv. 13-15 — Judgment on Assyria (literally fulfilled).

Chapter 3

vv. 1-5 — Judgment on Jerusalem. Judgment is in ratio to her privilege.

vv. 6-8 — Judgment on all nations — this is Armageddon, which ends with the return of Christ to the earth.

III. Judgments removed; kingdom established, Chapter 3:9-20

v. 9 — This does not mean there will be one language for the entire world, although there may be only one language — perhaps the language on the other side of the Tower of Babel. The thought here is “pure” in the sense of the removal of the filthy, profane, and nasty language. The “four letter words” will disappear.

vv. 10-12 — These are kingdom conditions.

vv. 13-16 — The remnant of Israel enters the kingdom. Their attitude and speech are changed. Fear is removed. The Lord Jesus Christ reigns over them personally. This refers to the second coming of Christ.

v. 17 — This verse is the key of the book. This is the white light in a black background. The purpose of judgment is not vindictive, but to cleanse and purify in order that blessing and goodness might ensue from the ordeal. (See author’s booklet, “The Dark Side of Love.”)

vv. 18-20 — This describes kingdom conditions.

HAGGAI

Prophets to the returned remnant were Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

WRITER: Haggai

Haggai is mentioned in Ezra 5:1, 2 and 6:14 as one of the two prophets who encouraged the remnant (that returned after the Babylonian captivity) to rebuild the temple in spite of the difficulties that beset them on every hand. From this and the brief references that he made to himself in his prophecy, four things become apparent: (1) he was self-effacing — he exalted the Lord; (2) he was God's messenger — "Thus saith the LORD"; (3) he not only rebuked, he cheered and encouraged; (4) he not only preached, he practiced.

TIME: 520 B.C.

"The second year of Darius" enables the historian to pinpoint the time of this prophet in profane history. Hystaspis (Darius mentioned here) began to reign in 521 B.C. At this same time in China, Confucius was living.

THEME: The temple

The reconstruction and refurbishing of the temple were the supreme passion of this prophet. He not only rebuked the people for their delay in rebuilding the temple, but he encouraged them and helped them in this enterprise.

MESSAGE:

Haggai constantly referred to the "word of the LORD" as the supreme authority. He willingly humbled himself that the Lord might be exalted. His message was practical. It was as simple and factual as $2 + 2 = 4$. The prophecy of Haggai and the epistle of James have much in common. Both put the emphasis upon the daily grind. Action is spiritual; a "do nothing" attitude is wicked. Both placed this yardstick down upon life. Work is the measure of life.

Haggai's contemporary, Zechariah, was visionary and had his head in the clouds, but pragmatic Haggai had both feet on the ground. The man of action and the dreamer need to walk together. First Corinthians 15:58 can appropriately be written over this book.

For the background of his message, read Ezra 3:8-13, also chapters 4 through 6.

KEY VERSES: Haggai 1:8, 14

THE CALENDAR:

The compass of this book is three months and twenty-four days, according to the calendar. There are five messages in the book, and each was given on a specific date. The calendar furnishes the clue for the contents.

OUTLINE:

- I. A challenge to the people, Chapter 1:1-11**
September 1, 520 B.C.
 - A. A charge of conflict of interest, vv. 1-4
 - B. A call to consider their ways, vv. 5-7
 - C. A command to construct the temple, vv. 8-11

- II. The response to the challenge, Chapter 1:12-15**
September 24, 520 B.C.
 - A. Construction of the temple; people obeyed, v. 12
 - B. Confirmation from God, vv. 13-15

- III. The discouragement of the people; the encouragement of the Lord, Chapter 2:1-9**
October 21, 520 B.C.
(The inferiority of the second temple to the first temple became a cause of discouragement, but God responded.)

- IV. An appeal to the Law; the explanation of the principle, Chapter 2:10-19**
December 24, 520 B.C.

- V. A revelation of God's program; an expectation for the future, Chapter 2:20-23**
December 24, 520 B.C.

COMMENT:

I. A challenge to the people, Chapter 1:1-11

A. A charge of conflict of interest, vv. 1-4

v. 1 — For “the second year of Darius” see TIME.

“The sixth month” is September.

“Haggai” means *my feast*.

“Zerubbabel” means *sown in Babylon*.

“Shealtiel” means *asking of God in prayer*.

“Joshua” — see Zechariah 3:1-5.

“Word of the LORD” — Haggai is the spokesman for God, and he speaks with authority (v. 3).

v. 2 — When the people first returned to the land after the Babylonian captivity, enthusiasm ran high. They met gigantic obstacles which required Herculean effort and hardships. They became discouraged when they began to build the temple. The difficulties seemed insurmountable. They rationalized that it was just not the time to build. This was their pseudo-consolation. They decided to maintain the status quo. The foundation of the temple was laid, but the opposition of the Samaritans was so intense that they simply stopped the building.

v. 3 — Again Haggai makes it clear that he is giving God’s Word. His is a “Thus saith the LORD” — thirteen times this phrase, or one that is similar, occurs that makes it clear Haggai is speaking God’s words. This is the authority that must be in an effective ministry today.

v. 4 — The difficulties did not prevent the people from building their own houses. It was high time for them to build houses — so they rationalized. Lovely homes and an unlovely, poor church building are as bad as poverty hovels and an ornate, rich church building.

B. A call to consider their ways, vv. 5-7

v. 5 — “Consider your ways” is *set your heart upon it*.

v. 6 — God had judged them in material things. There had been

crop failure, famine, no money to buy clothes, and no savings account.

v. 7 — They were asked to seek for the logical and true explanation. It was obvious that God was withholding blessing because of their lack of obedience.

C. A command to construct the temple, vv. 8-11

v. 8 — The solution was very simple:

1. “Go up to the mountain” (cut down trees);
2. “Bring wood” (make lumber);
3. “Build the house” (temple).

The results would be great:

1. God would be pleased;
2. God would be glorified.

v. 9 — He reviews their condition and clearly states the reason for it — they failed to build the temple.

vv. 10, 11 — Material blessings had been withheld.

II. The response to the challenge, Chapter 1:12-15

A. Construction of the temple; people obeyed, v. 12

They “obeyed the voice of the LORD, their God.”

B. Confirmation from God, vv. 13-15

v. 13 — “I am with you, saith the LORD.”

v. 14 — Leaders enter enthusiastically into the work:

1. Zerubbabel (governor),
2. Joshua (high priest),
3. Remnant of people.

III. The discouragement of the people; the encouragement of the Lord, Chapter 2:1-9

v. 1 — October 21, 520 B.C. is the date of the third message.

v. 2 — This message is directed to the same leaders and people as in 1:14.

v. 3 — This is the second hurdle that Haggai had to clear. Many of those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity remembered (even though they had been very young when taken captive) the beauty and richness of Solomon's temple. In comparison, this temple looked like a tenant farmer's barn in Georgia.

But many of the priests and Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, who were old men, who had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people; for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. (Ezra 3:12, 13)

This internal criticism was like a wet blanket on the celebration of the construction of the new temple. It dulled the edge of the zeal to rebuild the temple. It poured cold water on the enthusiasm generated by the prodding of Haggai.

v. 4 — God's challenge was twofold: (a) be strong; (b) "I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts," which was better than outward adornment. The Shekinah glory had departed from Solomon's temple; the presence of God far outshone the glory of Solomon's temple.

v. 5 — God gives a further challenge, "Fear not."

v. 6 — This looks forward to the final days — the millennial kingdom. They were to see the present temple with the perspective of the ultimate purpose of God.

v. 7 — “Desire of all nations” is not Christ. The proper word is *treasures* of all nations. There will be the outward adornment of the future temple, also the Shekinah glory will be present in the person of Christ.

v. 8 — “Silver...gold” makes it clear that he is speaking of material treasures.

v. 9 — “The glory of this latter house” should read, *The latter glory of this house*. God looks upon the series of temples as one house.

“Peace” is the final aim.

IV. An appeal to the Law; the explanation of the principle, Chapter 2:10-19

v. 10 — The date is December 24, 520 B.C.

v. 11 — “The” law should be *a* law. The Mosaic Law did not cover all the details of the life in Israel. When a matter arose that was not covered, they were to appeal to the priests (see Deuteronomy 17:8-11).

v. 12 — Is holiness communicated by contact? No. The holy cannot make the unholy holy by contact. Holiness is non-communicable.

v. 13 — Is unholiness communicated by contact? Yes. Uncleanliness is communicated to the clean by contact. When holy and unholy come in contact, both are unholy. In therapeutics, measles is communicated by contact. In the physical realm, dirty water will discolor clean water — not the opposite. In the moral realm, the evil heart of man cannot perform good deeds. In the religious realm, a ceremony cannot cleanse a sinner.

v. 14 — Haggai makes the application to Israel. Although they had returned to the land, performed the ritual and rebuilt the temple, their hearts were far from God.

vv. 15-17 — They wondered why God had not blessed them. He

had judged them because their hearts were not changed.

vv. 18, 19 — “Consider” — God would bless them now because they had obeyed. He would bless because of His grace.

V. A revelation of God’s program; an expectation for the future, Chapter 2:20-23

v. 20 — The date is December 24, 520 B.C., the same date as the former message.

v. 21 — The message is directed to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah.

v. 22 — This is the far-off and final purpose of God. Gentile power will come to an end, and all instruments of warfare will be destroyed.

v. 23 — “In that day” is the day of the LORD. God’s purpose will prevail. Zerubbabel is of the posterity of David, according to the historian Josephus. This was a promise that God’s purpose in the line of David would not be defeated.

Zerubbabel will be a “signet” — but the line of Jeconiah would be a signet plucked from the hand of God (see Jeremiah 22:24-30; Matthew 1:11).

This last message reveals the persistent purpose of God in bringing the Lord Jesus Christ to the throne of David.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS:

- Barker, Harold P. *Christ in the Minor Prophets*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.
- Coates, C. A. *An Outline of Some of the Minor Prophets*. Kingston-on-Thames, England: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.
- Feinberg, Charles L. *The Minor Prophets*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1976. (Excellent.)
- Gaebelein, Arno C. *Annotated Bible*. 1917. Reprint. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1971. (Excellent.)
- Gaebelein, Frank C. *Four Minor Prophets*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1970. (Haggai.)
- Ironside, H. A. *The Minor Prophets*. Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.
- Jensen, Irving L. *Minor Prophets*. 2 vols. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, n.d. (Self-study guide.)
- McGee, J. Vernon. *Zephaniah and Haggai*. Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991.
- Morgan, F. Crossley. *Haggai, A Prophet of Correction and Comfort*. London, England: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, Ltd., 1935.
- Wolff, Richard. *Haggai*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1967.

These notes, prepared by J. Vernon McGee, are for the purpose of giving assistance to the listeners of the THRU THE BIBLE RADIO program. They are to be used with the Bible and will be more meaningful as you look up all the Scripture references. Due to the necessary brevity of both notes and broadcasts, a list of recommended books is included for those wanting a more detailed study. These books may be obtained from a Christian library or bookstore or ordered from the publishers.



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