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God Is In Control

Introduction

At the time of Zephaniah the prophet, the nation of Israel was at a heart trembling crisis. There had been two very evil kings, Manasseh and Amon who, between them, ruled the nation for fifty-seven (57) years. The spiritual condition of the leadership was corrupt and the nation followed suit. When Amon died his son Josiah began to reign a boy of eight (8) years of age. In what direction what way would the nation go? Would he follow the footsteps of his evil father and grandfather or was it possible God would turn the heart of the young boy to restore the people to godliness?

- a) Josiah began his reign when he was eight (8) years of age (2 Kgs. 22:1). When he reigned for eight years and was sixteen he began to seek after God (2 Chron. 34:3). In his twelfth year when he was twenty he began to cleanse Jerusalem of the altars that his father and grandfather had set up (2 Chron. 34:3). In the eighteenth year of his reign, when cleansing the Temple the book of the law was found. He sent the priest and four others to the prophetess "Huldah" (2 Kgs. 22:14) to determine what to do. In that same year he kept the Passover and made a public vow to the Lord (2 Chron. 34:31).
- b) During Josiah's reign God raised up the prophets Jeremiah and Zephaniah. Jeremiah began his ministry in the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jer. 1:2). It is very possible, while preaching in the streets, his message coincided with the reforms of Josiah and helped bring about the Reformation.
- c) While both Jeremiah and Zephaniah present the spiritual condition in two ways, the message was the same. Judah had failed to learn the lesson of God's judgment on the house of Israel and were fast falling away from God. While Josiah, by God's grace and power, could remove the idols and all that was associated with them, nothing could change the deep spiritual condition of the people.
 - i) Jeremiah spoke of the lost awareness of God and careless attitude, "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13).
 - ii) Zephaniah presented God's attitude to their spiritual condition as seething. God speaks of the "Day of the Lord" and says it is a day of wrath (Zeph. 1:15) and the truth being presented is that the fury of the Lord is like a seething pot, as an intense anger about to reach boiling point.
 - iii) The scripture comes to mind, "For the time *is come* that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if *it first begin* at us, what shall the end *be* of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4:17). Since God's judgment on His people was inescapable and severe, what must the eternal damnation of the individual in Hell be like?

Today's world and the days of Zephaniah

In November last year (2020) the eyes of the world were on the USA with its upcoming election. It is, as all could see, a time of crisis when the country would either plunge under divine judgement and outright rejection of God and suffer the political, economic, and natural God sent catastrophes. Just as a pot is bubbling up so God is seething with the nations every now and again with that anger flowing over in earthquakes, volcanoes and pandemics. All these are minuscule foreshadows of things to come, not only on the USA but the nations which reject and despise God.

- a) If I could, as an outsider, look at the United States and its November election, I saw the nation at a crisis point. If it went towards the satanized evil with corruption having infested to the decomposition of one party, the country would very soon go under the fierceness of divine anger. Zephaniah speaks of a time of trouble on Israel. There is no way God will ignore the wickedness of a Gentile nation hell bent on resisting every atom of grace He offers for them. Aug. 3, 2020 there was a report of the head of a statue of the Lord beheaded.

What were the sins of Judah that demanded His judgment?

- a) Their attitude:
 - i) God does not see or hear.
 - ii) A horribly low comprehension of God.
 - iii) NO consequences for behaviour.

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- b) Their actions:
- i) They mocked the people of God (Zeph. 2:8)
 - ii) They were filled with pride (Zeph. 2:10)
 - iii) They refused the correction and warnings of God (Zeph. 3:2; 12)
 - iv) They had vain prophets, judgment will not fall (Zeph. 3:4)
 - v) They slay the innocents (Jer. 2:34; 19:4)
 - vi) Syncretism (Zeph. 1:4)

What can the saints do?

Like Nehemiah and Daniel in Chapter 9 of both their books, confess the sin of ourselves and nation, and turn depending and acknowledging that only the grace of God will hinder the development of evil.

. . . . *Rowan Jennings*