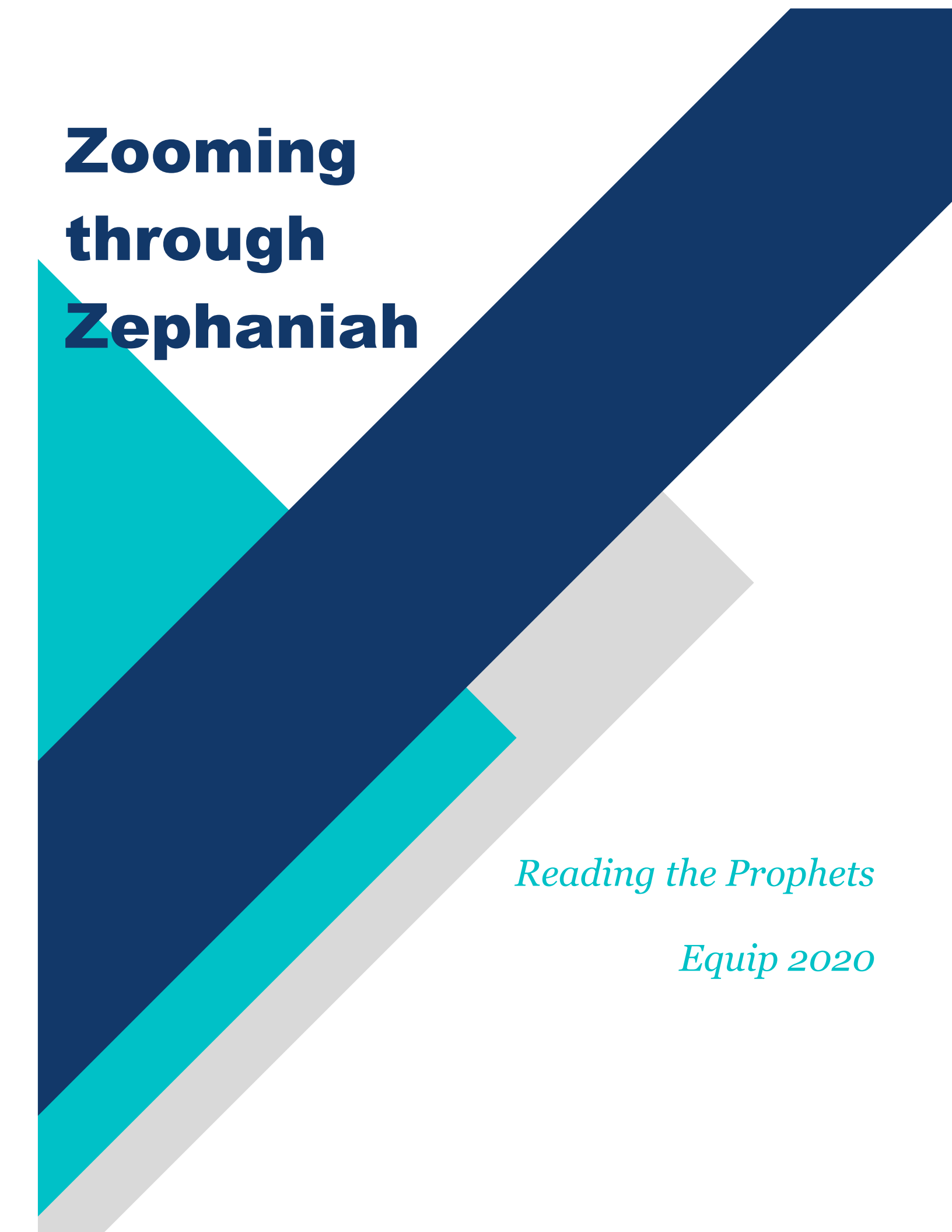




Zooming through Zephaniah

Reading the Prophets

Equip 2020

Welcome

Thank you for joining us for this short 3-part overview of the prophetic book Zephaniah.

This course has two components to it. The first component is about how we can read the prophetic books of the Bible. Each week we will consider something that will help us get more out of this section of the Bible—these bible reading tips aim to equip you to better read God’s Word for yourself.

The second component of the course is an overview of the short but powerful book of Zephaniah. This is where we will see how to use some of these tips to get more out of our Bible reading.

In this book, we come face-to-face with some of the most significant concepts in all of Scripture: the holy judgement of God, His global supremacy, and His amazing grace for sinners. In Zephaniah, we meet the Lord, who is described as the Mighty Warrior – a Warrior who has both a battle cry as well as a song of love. And we will reflect on the profound truth that this Mighty Warrior can turn hostile enemies into beloved friends.

As we read this remarkable book together, we will get to know this Mighty Warrior in all His holiness and grace.

Historical Context

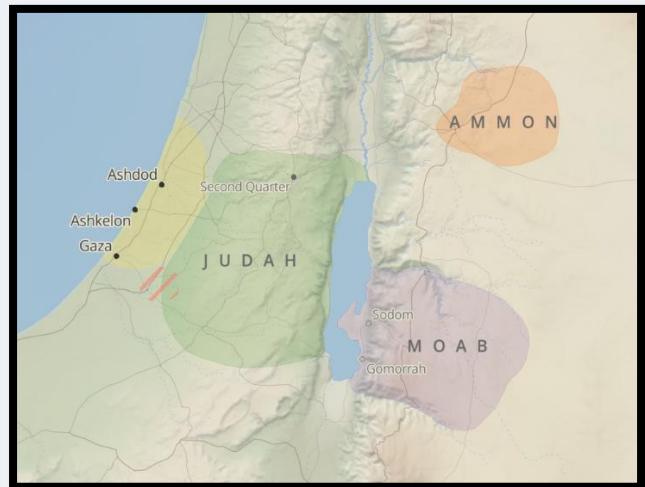
Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of Josiah, but probably before Josiah's reforms. This meant that Zephaniah lived during a time of great wickedness and idolatry.

Zephaniah was the “son of Cushi”(1:1) and therefore probably from the nation of Cush (today this area is Sudan).

Zephaniah prophesied about the great day of the Lord's judgement, a judgement that would consume the nations—the Philistine cities in the West, the Moabites in the East, the Cushites in the South, and even the great Assyrian nation to the North.

However, the real shock was that God was also going to judge His own people—all who lived in Jerusalem.

This message of judgement was, in other words, comprehensive: “I have decided to assemble the nations, to gather the kingdoms and to pour out my wrath on them— all my fierce anger. The whole world will be consumed by the fire of my jealous anger.” (Zep 3:8)



Reading the Prophets

When reading the prophets, there are three tips that are especially helpful to keep in mind. Each week, we will consider them in more detail. These three tips are:

Tip #1: Prophets are historical.

This first tip is about recognising the historical distance between us and the prophets.

Tip #2: Prophets are like lawyers

This second tip recognises that the prophets functioned as ‘covenant enforcement mediators’ – in today’s terms, they function like lawyers.

Tip #3: Prophets speak ‘telescopically’

This tip encourages us to reflect on the meaning of prophecy and the issue of ‘fulfillment.’ We will consider how the vision of a prophet is like the vision of a telescope.

Big idea

The Old Testament prophets seek to enforce the covenant which God made with Abraham, Israel, and David. But, while they are rooted in the past promises of God, they also look forward – they are given a picture of the future by the Lord. The details are often missing, but the big picture is clear—God will be faithful to His promises, through judgement and salvation.

When reading the Old Testament, always ask yourself three questions

What did the passage mean then?

How does the passage relate to the Gospel?

Why does it matter to us today?

Week One: Zephaniah 1 v 1 – 18

Bible Reading tip:

When reading the prophets, remember...the prophets are HISTORICAL SPOKEPERSONS

Bible Reading Exercise:

Read

Ask

- What does the passage mean?
 - What words are repeated?
 - What striking images are used?
 - What's the big idea?
- How does the passage relate to the Gospel?
 - What are the biblical themes?
 - Are there any typological connections?
- Why is this passage important for us today?
 - Similar sins?
 - Similar solutions?

Week Two: Zephaniah 2 v 1 – 3 v 8

Bible Reading tip:

When reading the prophets, remember...the prophets are COVENANT LAWYERS.

Bible Reading Exercise:

Read

Ask

- What does the passage mean?
 - What words are repeated?
 - What striking images are used?
 - What's the big idea?
- How does the passage relate to the Gospel?
 - What are the biblical themes?
 - Are there any typological connections?
- Why is this passage important for us today?
 - Similar sins?
 - Similar solutions?

Week Three: Zephaniah 3 v 9 – 20

Bible Reading tip:

When reading the prophets, remember...they speak 'TELESCOPICALLY.'

Bible Reading Exercise:

Read

Ask

- What does the passage mean?
 - What words are repeated?
 - What striking images are used?
 - What's the big idea?
- How does the passage relate to the Gospel?
 - What are the biblical themes?
 - Are there any typological connections?
- Why is this passage important for us today?
 - Similar sins?
 - Similar solutions?

What is typology?

A type is a prophetic picture of Christ's person and work. It is a real person, place, object, or event which God ordained to act as a predictive pattern or resemblance of Christ's person and work.

- David Murray

A type has four main characteristics:

1. The person, event, object, etc., is true, real, and/or factual.
2. Other texts identify it as a type.
3. The same truth is found in both the type and the antitype (the fulfillment of the type).
4. The same truth is heightened and clarified in the antitype.

How do biblical themes connect the Old Testament passage to Jesus?

The Bible tells the story of how God progressively saves His people, climaxing in Jesus Christ's death and resurrection. Within this story, there are themes of how God works which are used in different ways and which develop throughout the story (e.g., the themes of kingdom, covenant, temple, etc.). Legitimately connecting our text to the gospel often requires understanding the text's place in the historical trajectory of the Bible or its place in the development of a particular biblical theme.

How do I do this? Ask questions such as:

- Where is my text in the storyline of the Bible?
- How does my text contribute to the story of the Bible?
- Do I see any major biblical themes in my text that find fulfillment in Christ?

Strategies to use:

- read and reread the Bible.
- identify the major turning points in the story and how your text relates to them.
- identify concepts that are being developed thematically.

Questions?

Personal takeaway?
