

Fire and Brimstone

- Heard of fire and brimstone preachers?
 - maybe even know one? Listened to one?
 - I've heard at least one of the early Fintry ministers described as a **fire and brimstone preacher!** (no idea what was meant by that!)
- Implication is that such a preacher concentrates on a particular aspect of the gospel
 - and it follows that perhaps other preachers concentrate their attention elsewhere
 - do we have **God is love** preachers, and **take care of the poor** preachers and **tell the world about Jesus** preachers?
 - I suspect we possibly do, to an extent!
- We need to have biblical preachers!
 - and biblical preachers will preach the whole counsel of God
 - *Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15)*
 - all aspects of God's character, all dimensions of his revelation
 - rounded picture of God, of our faith!

Of Elephants...

- *Blind (folded) men describing an elephant by touch - like a rope, a snake, a wall, a tree....*
 - daren't only have part of the picture of who God is like, or we'll completely not recognise him!
- So, what does this passage tell us about God?

Current judgement (v.2-6)

- Idol worship still extant, despite Josiah's reforms:
 - Josiah's predecessor's were Manasseh and Amon - his grand-father and father - and evil
 - most recent "good" king was Hezekiah - so Zephaniah quite possibly some kind of distant cousin of the current king!
- God comes in **personal** judgement
 - destruction, cutting those who have sinned off from life itself
 - separation from relationship with God - **cut off**
 - because they have **rejected God**

Future judgement (v.7-18)

- Judgement in the current situation makes Zephaniah think about future judgement:
 - **the day of the Lord** is a term used throughout the OT to refer to God's coming in ultimate judgement
 - judgement for the whole earth on **"the day of the Lord"** (v.7, etc)
 - that day won't be pleasant - it will be bitter (v.14), filled with wrath, distress, anguish, gloom, darkness (v.15), humiliation (v.17)
- What will happen?
 - the picture here is of war, of battle - but that doesn't necessarily determine God's method!

We face same situation

- Current, specific judgement
 - sin has consequences - STDs, relationship breakdown from selfishness and lies, etc.
 - perhaps also we can sometimes interpret certain calamities as judgements from

God (though carefully, and only ever provisionally!)

- General, future judgement
 - we also operate within the same universe as Zephaniah did...
 - with judgement coming on all who are rebels against God, who choose to put themselves before him, who put any "idols" before God
 - idols of pleasure, of family, of success, of decency, of other religions before God
 - in other words, **all of us**

Why?

- Because God is **angry <black>, filled with wrath:**
 - his steady, implacable, unswerving hatred of all that is evil, all that is in defiance of good
 - he hates sin!
- Death and hell, dreadful, unending separation from God:
 - these are the clear consequences of continued defiance of God!

How can we escape? (2:1-3)

- **Repent!**
 - we'll explore how that can effect our escape in subsequent weeks - suffice it to say there is hope!
 - repent - turn from sin, hate it and ask for God's rescue!