

Who, what, when, why?

- First thing to say is it is **God's word** that comes:
 - not Zephaniah's!
 - "the Lord" in v.1 and through the passage is Yahweh, the covenant God of Israel
 - ie the one who has committed himself to his people, promised himself to them, made a covenant with them...
 - and it is Yahweh who brings what is substantially a word of judgement, partly against the surrounding nations, but largely against his own people
- **Zephaniah** is then God's mouthpiece, chosen servant to deliver his message to his people:
 - know a lot, compared with other prophets, about his family
 - in particular, he is descended from **Hezekiah**, who was the 14th king of the southern kingdom of Judah
 - probably recorded to connect the prophet with his righteous royal ancestor
 - especially so since there would be a natural connection between **Hezekiah** and **Josiah (2 Kings 22:1ff)** the current king, who were both faithful to God - in contrast with Josiah's father and predecessor, Amon and his grandfather, the long-reigning but committer of detestable sins, Manasseh ([details in 2 Kings 21](#))

Context

- Near the end of the long decline of God's people
 - Israel, northern kingdom, already taken into exile
 - some warnings have already come against Judah - and this book is another one, as we'll see
 - and there will only be four more kings after Josiah, reigning for less than 23 years in total, before Jerusalem falls and Nebuchadnezzar takes the nation into exile

Zooming in

- Everything (**v.2**)
 - **image: focusing pyramid, stage1**
 - this and next one are an un-doing of creation, symbolically
- Men/animals/birds (**v.3**), over whole earth
 - **image: focusing pyramid, stage2**
 - listed here in the opposite order from the creation in Genesis 1:20-28, definitely an un-doing
 - greater even than the judgement and destruction of the flood, since fish are also affected
 - (all creation suffers because of humanity's sin - mind-boggling thought!)
- And all of this is Yahweh's doing - his emphatic word (**v.1**) and repeated use of personal pronoun **I (4x in vs.2-3)**
- Judah and Jerusalem (**v.4**), whole place tinged with idolatrous worship
 - **image: focusing pyramid, stage3**
 - there is a singling out process going on - all will be affected, but particular place and people picked out
 - God's people (**Judah**), God's capital (**Jerusalem**)
 - God's covenant people, having entered into that relationship with him, willingly committed themselves to God, have a greater degree of responsibility
 - **from this place** either implies Jerusalem, or more specifically the Temple - in either case, the place of God's presence, the place identifying them as the covenant people - that is what they are being cut off from
- Idolaters themselves (**v.5**)
 - **image: focusing pyramid, stage4**
 - what in particular is in mind is the focus of worship

- like a marriage covenant, the covenant of God with his people is an **exclusive one**
- **who is number one in the affections of God's people?**
- In particular those who once worshipped the Lord but have turned back from him, or who seek to mix worshipping him with worshipping idols (v.5,6)
 - **image: focusing pyramid, stage5**
 - if we can push this one stage further, the critical, critical problem is the mixing of worship
 - in some ways, worshipping **other gods** is bad, but understandable, if you don't know better...
 - but trying to mix worshipping God with continuing to worship other Gods is utterly appalling, **an active rejection of God's care and love** rather than a **passive ignorance of it**

Who are we?

- **Image: who are we/crowd in foyer**
- Are we mixing anything else in with worshipping God?
 - scary warning from Hebrews 10:26-27 **"If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God."**
- **God does not want us complacent...**