

## Introduction

- *Image: of "Zephaniah"...*
- Brief recap by way of introduction
- *Images: then a slide with text for each heading below...*

## (v.7) The Day of the Lord

- Silent, or hush - not peace, but the respect demanded a court official when "silent in court" is called, or perhaps even better, "all rise" at the approach of the judge
  - picture is of approach of the judge of all the earth... he is drawing close... are all ready for his coming?
- **The Day of the Lord** was anticipated day when God would come and make everything right/good/fine, conquer Israel's enemies, etc
  - but the picture here is of the Lord himself (*again very personally*) preparing, like a priest, for a sacrifice
  - there's a possibly deliberate play on words, allowing the invited guests either being consecrated, made clean ready to be participants in the ceremony, to eat the sacrificial feast... or themselves to be the sacrifice!
  - the implication is that those who oppose Yahweh, the Lord, will be offered up to his judgement

## (v.8) Against the Royal House

- First punishment on this day of the Lord, this day of sacrifice, is the royal household
  - Josiah, the young king, is not directly mentioned... possibly this prophecy was early in his reign, before the scroll of the Law was discovered in the 18th year of his reign
  - and as he took the throne when he was only eight, over the first eight, ten, even 15 years of his reign officials would have held the reigns of power on his behalf
- But those with power and influence are called to account first:
  - "*all those clad in foreign clothes*" may have a couple of connotations
  - first, these may be the officials who hold power in the youth of the king
  - second, it may be an oblique reference to foreign - and perhaps particularly foreign religious - influence
  - these are senior officials and members of the wider royal family who are not loyal first to God as the identifying stamp of his people, but to other influences
  - (are we ever in church loyal first to power, influence, loyal to the good this institution can do, rather than loyal to God? Danger, especially for campaigning organisations...)

## (v.9) Against those who pervert true worship

- Jumping the threshold was a pagan, Philistine practise from their worship of Dagon:
  - (4) *But the following morning when they rose, there was Dagon, fallen on his face on the ground before the ark of the LORD! His head and hands had been broken off and were lying on the threshold; only his body remained. (5) That is why to this day neither the priests of Dagon nor any others who enter Dagon's temple at Ashdod step on the threshold.* (1 Samuel 5:4-5)
- Another possible interpretation of this somewhat obscure verse is that there are those (by context in leadership) whose priority is wealth, perhaps acquired through violence... and this is their worship
  - this is then akin to the worship of evil foreign God's like Dagon

## (v.10,11) Coming from the North

- North - route of trade routes and invading armies (gap in the hills):

- picture is of judgement falling here first
- the pursuit of wealth at the expense of all else, and the importation of foreign influence are in the line of fire here

### (v.12) Throughout Jerusalem

- Reads like a police search looking for signs of wrong doing!
  - sadly I like those police interceptor programmes - Helen was on the phone to her sister a couple of weeks back and I sat and vegged to the most mindless telly of police car chases and searches!
- Here is God casting his searchlight not just on obvious, public evil, but also on complacency, on lack of good...
  - as Martin Luther King put it, "We shall have to repent in this generation not so much for the evil deeds of the wicked people, but for the appalling silence of the good people"

### (v.13) Demolishing the pretension of wealth

- This day of the Lord, this judgement, will show the rich how misguided their pursuit of wealth is
  - connected to other Scripture passages, not least Jesus words in Mark 8:36: "What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"

### God is a holy God

- *Image: of "Zephaniah"...*
- *God is a holy God...*  
*We can't be friends because of our sin...*
- *Jesus died to wash us clean*  
*When we put our trust in Him*  
*God opens His arms and welcomes us in...*
- Daren't forget the reality of God's holiness, his fearsome justice, the awesome nature of his judgement
  - will we take lightly his holy wrath?
  - for if we do, we will not appreciate his saving grace
- And do not be taken in by the pursuit of wealth, as our world still is, despite the recession