

The Day of the Lord #1
The Great Purge

Word

Scripture Reference

Zephaniah 1:1-13

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think will the way you live your life right now affect your future? Share with the group.
2. Christian life should be lived in accordance with the right walk with God. What you know about the realities of the future changes your attitudes, your actions, and how you treat others in the present. Read Zephaniah 1:1-13. The Lord, through Zephaniah—a prophet during the reign of King Josiah in Judah—warned the people of the judgment if they did not turn from their sins. What is the universal judgment that God will carry out in verses 2-3? Discuss how sin affects you and other people.
3. The passage tells us that God will punish four groups of people in the future. His punishment will not come as a surprise, and so it should elicit self-examination to see if you are as guilty as these types of people, and change your ways (v. 4-13). The first group that God will purge are those who worship idols. What were the people of Judah guilty of? Whose remnants would God cut off in verse 4? What three levels of idolatry were mentioned in verses 5-6? How prevalent is idol worship in today's culture? Discuss how even Christians mix other religious beliefs or practices with the truth that they believe from the Word of God. How is being indifferent, which is another level of idolatry, described in verse 6? What is God's warning to these idolaters that should elicit real transformation (v. 7)?
4. The second group of people that God will certainly punish are the embracers of the world's culture (v. 8). What does "wearing foreign clothes" or showing a desire for foreign gods and foreign ways as described in the passage mean? How can embracing the world's culture lead to ignoring God's commands? What are some examples of how the world's culture has been infused in the lives of many Christians? How can it be remedied (1 John 2:15)? Our spiritual walk with God defines our sensitivity to the culture of the world.

Are you sensitive enough to distinguish what values of the world do not go together with your values as a Christian?

5. The third group of people that God will purge are those who plunder for their personal gain (v. 9-11). These are people who are thieves and robbers—line-jumpers who take advantage of the system for their own gain. Sadly, even Christians are guilty of this sin. Discuss what things could you be guilty of robbing from others, or what are some deceitful practices you use at home, in school, or at work to gain advantage. Do you think you can avoid the consequences? How can this sin rob you of good relationships with God and with other people?
6. The last group of people who will experience God's punishment are those who are indifferent to God (v. 12-13). These are the people who say, "Who cares about God?" In due time, God will show them that He is real. How does verse 13 describe the consequences of their indifference? What would life be like without God's blessings? As a Christian who walks right with God, how do you enjoy your life?

Walk

God is gracious and loving, but He is also just, and will certainly punish sins. He is an unchanging God, and the sins punished before are the sins He punishes now, and will punish in the future. He will purge the world from the idolaters, embracers of worldly culture, the plunderers, and those indifferent to Him. How does knowing this truth affect the way you live? Is there anything in your life that could be considered an "idol" that you need to give up? Are there worldly cultures that are prominent in your life and keep you from living out your faith? Do you struggle with a desire to take advantage of a system for personal gain and at the expense of others? Do you really care about God? Search your heart and ask Him to cleanse it if you are guilty of any of these sins.

Worship & Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I'm so thankful for your grace and mercy that allowed me to know what will happen to me in the future. As a sinner guilty of placing importance on things apart from You, of following the world instead of walking with You, of the selfish pursuit of what will be advantageous to me without regard for other people, and of taking You for granted, I know my future should be full of punishment. But because of Your Son Jesus Christ, my future is forgiveness and blessings. Thank You, Father. Enable me to live for You and give me strength to follow Your ways every day. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.