

# SMALL GROUP STUDY

## Through Judgment to Blessing

The people were mixing their service to the Lord with the pagan practices in the land. Zephaniah brings a message that God will pour out his wrath in the terrible day of the Lord. And yet, through the wrath God will preserve a remnant. They are encouraged to "Look within" -- there is a coming wrath on Judah; "Look around" -- there is a coming wrath on the nations; "Look beyond" -- there is a coming well-being--the Lord, the King will be in their midst.

After the exile, a remnant of God's people return to the land--only 50,000 people returned. Haggai lived in this time. The people were so excited about their return and they wanted to build God's temple. However, over time, they stopped building. Then in 520 BC they began building again due to four men; the governor of Jerusalem, the high priest and 2 prophets.

## Zephaniah - The prophet of the eleventh hour

Zephaniah, though a small and hard to find book, packs a punch and a powerful message because of the theme. It is a message of judgment. He talks about a God who loves His people enough that He allows them to be hurt in order to help them. He directs them to Look past the hurt to the healing. Then like a bridegroom, the Lord rejoices over His people.

### *Discussion Questions:*

- a. What does pre-exilic and post-exilic mean?
- b. What is the "Day of the Lord"?
- c. What does the name Zephaniah mean?
- d. What should you do that you may obtain mercy during the hour of trial?
- e. When was the Hebrew language recovered?

## Haggai - If you build it HE will come

The first post-exilic prophet. The people are back in the land from Babylon. They were so excited about rebuilding the temple of God. As time went on they stopped building and they left the work of God and turned to their own affairs. But Haggai inspires the people to come back to the rebuilding of the temple and to the Lord. This is a message from God that fell on good ears; The people heard God's word then they served God, and they got back to work.

### *Discussion Questions:*

- a. Why did the people give up on the work of the Lord (rebuilding the temple)?
- b. What 5 things/excuses kept the people from doing the work of God?
- c. What happens when you obey God?
- d. What re-energized the people to work on the house of the Lord of hosts, their God?
- e. How can we guard our hearts against defiling the work of God?
- f. What message did God have for Zerubbabel?
- g. Examine your heart: What work has God called you to do? Are you willing?