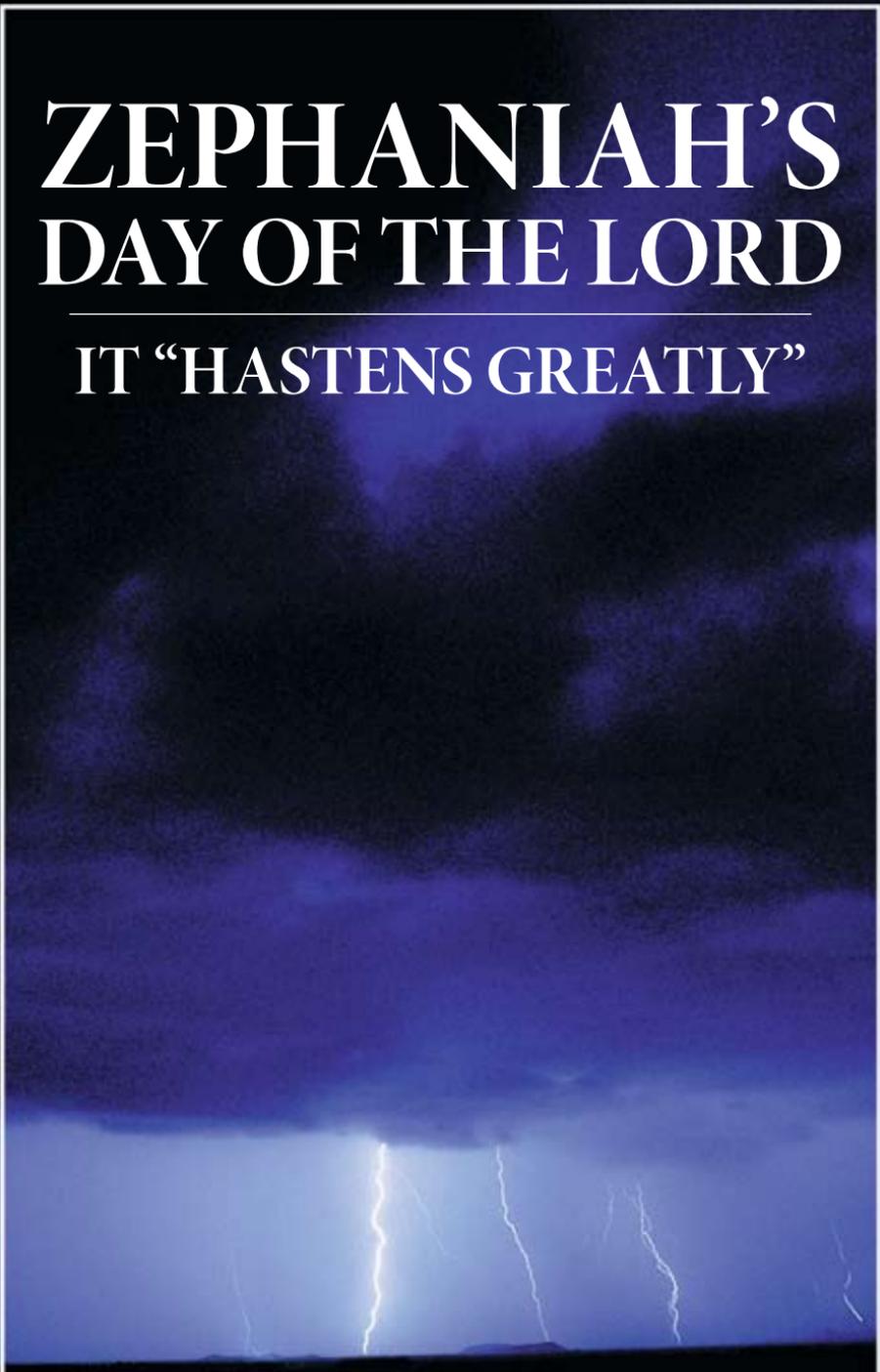


ZEPHANIAH'S DAY OF THE LORD

IT "HASTENS GREATLY"



BY GERALD FLURRY

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The Day of the Lord will be a time of God's great wrath upon rebellious mankind. It is now just ahead of us. The Prophet Zephaniah tells us approximately when the Day of the Lord will occur and how we can be protected from it.

BY GERALD FLURRY

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THE BOOK OF ZEPHANIAH DISCUSSES THE great and terrible Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord will be the worst time of suffering on this planet. It is almost here! How can we know when the Day of the Lord is near? The book of Zephaniah reveals the specific sign that indicates when the Day of the Lord is very close.

The name *Zephaniah* means *God hides* or *God protects*. That name carries important meaning. This world is quickly entering a time when the number-one concern will be a “place of safety.” People will need protection from some of the greatest horror this world has ever seen. God promises to protect or hide His loyal people during the Great Tribulation, which culminates with the Day of the Lord. This is very good news. God always provides good news that overshadows the bad news.

Zephaniah also has much to say about God’s own people—the Church. As God continues to reveal new truth from the prophets, we see that when the Church is mentioned, God is referring to His own end-time Laodiceans, or lukewarm Church, much of the time. In general, the worldly churches are lumped together with the nation of Israel. Zephaniah gives the Laodiceans grave warning concerning the Day of the Lord.

The theme for Zephaniah’s prophecy is the Day of the Lord and God’s people. Let’s now understand this critical prophecy.

MAN AND BEAST CONSUMED

God’s word came to Zephaniah, who then taught it to Judah. But God intended this prophecy to be understood by His end-time

Church. Zephaniah's message must also be delivered to Israel and the world. We are living in very critical times.

Notice how seriously this book opens. "The word of the LORD which came unto Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD. I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumblingblocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD" (Zephaniah 1:1-3). God makes a sober statement to Zephaniah. He is going to consume man and beast. He will destroy the birds of the air and the fish in the sea. God is speaking here of an unparalleled, world-wide cataclysm! Has this prophecy happened before? Of course not. It has not yet been fulfilled. Yet, there are those who insist the minor prophets contain only *history*.

It is hard for us to get a clear picture of what is about to explode on this Earth. The Revised Standard Version reads, "I will sweep away man and beast" (verse 3). God plans to just SWEEP AWAY man and animals. The destruction that is coming will far exceed any previous global devastation. God specifically says that He will destroy the fish in the sea. He did not even do this at the time of Noah's Flood. When this destruction comes, it will be very difficult to find man or beast alive!

Descriptions like this should make us realize what a huge job of rebuilding we will have in the Millennium. Sinning mankind will be punished horribly. After Jesus Christ returns, He will rebuild a devastated Earth.

CUT OFF THE TEMPLE PRIESTS

After God talks about the Day of the Lord, He brings up another subject. And even with all the horrifying destruction that is to occur, it is really this second subject that God is most concerned about. What is happening inside God's own Church is God's number-one priority. He puts these verses together to let us know what His priority really is. The Church disaster is spiritual. It has eternal consequences. That is why it eclipses the world disaster.

God says that He will severely punish His priests. "I will also

stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the *Chemarims* WITH THE PRIESTS" (Zephaniah 1:4). The word *Chemarims* refers to IDOL PRIESTS. And the phrase "with the priests" refers to the TEMPLE PRIESTS, or God's priests. In other words, a seriously *wrong* relationship has developed between God's priests and the priests of Baal. The *Soncino*, *Jamieson Fausset and Brown*, and *Lange's* commentaries all agree on this point. Notice how Lange further explains this verse: "...[w]e certainly infer from the circumstance that the worship of Baal has been introduced into the temple" (volume 7).

We must remember that Zephaniah is an end-time book. The word "temple" in prophecy always refers to God's Church today. So the temple priests in type must represent God's own ministry in this end time. God's ministers have been introducing Baal worship into God's Church. Have any doctrines of Baal been introduced into God's Church in our time? Yes! Which ministers have been doing this? The Laodicean ministers!

The Worldwide Church of God (wCG) leadership underwent a dramatic doctrinal transformation after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong in 1986. The same thing was happening in Zephaniah's time. God will severely punish His Laodicean ministry for introducing false religion into His Church. Verse 4 is all too descriptive of what has happened in the wCG and all but one of its branches today.

TURNED BACK FROM THE LORD

God will cut off all His priests who are involved in false religion. "And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham; And them that are TURNED BACK from the LORD; and those that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him" (Zephaniah 1:5-6). The RSV translates verse 5, "those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens; those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom" (verse 5). God is very angry with His ministers because they pretend that their religion—doctrinal changes and new teachings—are of God, WHEN THOSE DOCTRINES ARE REALLY RANK PAGANISM!

Verse 6 is the most important verse of this segment. Why? Because it describes very clearly what is happening within the Laodicean Church today. The RSV translates this verse, “those who have TURNED BACK from following the Lord, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him.” God’s people are TURNING BACK from Him. Remember that we need to have an end-time focus here. You cannot turn away from God unless you once knew Him. God’s people are willfully turning away from Him and His covenant. It is a great apostasy. This apostasy is also spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2 and Revelation 3 and 12.

God’s Church is turning away from Him. This is the *sign*—the strongest warning sign to God’s Church—that the Day of the Lord is very near. It is a gigantic sign that every member should clearly see. But most refuse to understand.

The same sign is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day [the Day of the Lord, and the Great Tribulation before it] shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.” When you see this happening in God’s own temple, or Church, you know that Christ’s return is imminent.

Another part of that sign is that God has revealed this apostasy to His loyal remnant. When God’s people turn away from Him, tragic events are about to begin! As Zephaniah states, “The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and it HASTETH GREATLY”—when you see God’s end-time Laodicean Church on the scene! (Zephaniah 1:14).

HOLD YOUR PEACE

Even though the Laodiceans are turning away from God at this present time, God still has a message for them. “Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests” (Zephaniah 1:7). To whom is God talking? He is talking about the people who turned back from following Him—the Laodiceans. God is still trying to communicate with these

people even though they have turned their backs on Him. God tells them to “hold their peace” in His presence. In other words, God expects them to be *silent* and LISTEN to Him.

Please note that this verse cannot be referring to churches in this world. They never were in His presence, except in a general way. The world knows *of* God and it hears His message; but it does not KNOW HIM INTIMATELY, in a family way. Here, God is trying to get a very serious message across to His own Church—the people who dwelled with Him.

Who is God using to deliver His message? Is God delivering it personally? No. God always uses men to do His Work. God is warning the Laodicean Church. He is knocking on the Laodiceans' door (Revelation 3:20). They must respond while God is present. Soon it will be too late. But who is delivering a message telling the Laodiceans to be quiet and listen to God? Who is delivering the message that God is about to consume nearly every person from this planet?

We must take this message very seriously! In this little book of Zephaniah, God is saying that human blood is about to become like dust. Human blood will be worthless (Zephaniah 1:17). It “hastens greatly”!

When we see God's own Church turning away from Him, THEN WE MUST KNOW THE END IS VERY NEAR. The Laodiceans must heed this message and repent, or they will perish forever. When the Day of the Lord comes, it will be TOO LATE for them to repent. God will seal all unrepentant Laodiceans for eternal death.

Who is doing this Work for God? His Philadelphia Church! We all must learn to be quiet and listen to God when He speaks through His Work. We occasionally receive letters from people who are upset by what we teach concerning the Laodiceans. Some people say we are too critical and harsh. They feel we do not have enough love for the Laodiceans. But what does God say to the Laodiceans? The Laodiceans' spiritual lives are so corrupt that God says emphatically, if they do not repent, He will *destroy* every last one of them! The Laodiceans will be destroyed with the beasts, the fowls of the air and the fish in the sea. God will SEVERELY PUNISH these people. To warn the Laodiceans is to show them GREAT LOVE! That is their only hope of escaping this catastrophe.

What is far worse, 50 percent of them will lose their eternal lives.



LEAP UPON THE THRESHOLD After Dagon fell, the Philistine priests superstitiously refused to walk upon their temple's threshold. Zephaniah draws on that example to indict the idolatrous end-time Laodicean priests.

STRANGE APPAREL

God will sacrifice the Laodiceans for a great purpose. “And it shall come to pass in *the day of the LORD's sacrifice*, that I will punish the princes, and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with strange apparel” (Zephaniah 1:8). The destruction of the Laodiceans is not just some senseless slaughter. God has **PLANNED** and **DESIGNED IT**. It is the “day of the LORD's sacrifice.” Why is God doing this? Because He wants the **WHOLE WORLD** to come to repentance. He wants all of mankind to recognize the pitiful state of their spiritual lives.

God plans to punish all who wear “strange apparel.” What does this mean? God uses the symbol of clothing to picture a person's religious life. Revelation 19:7-8 show that fine linen represents the righteousness of the saints. But these people—God's

Laodiceans—have “strange apparel.” This symbol of “strange apparel” refers to false religion or unrighteousness. The whole world must come to recognize God’s true religion and then never fall away from it!

We know Herbert W. Armstrong is dead and awaiting the first resurrection at Christ’s return. But if he were alive now and were taken to the church that Christ used him to establish, he would see a lot of *strange apparel*.

As was stated above, the Laodiceans have introduced major doctrinal changes since the death of Mr. Armstrong. That is strange apparel. Many people still sit in the Laodicean churches and act like everything is all right. But those doctrinal changes are NO SMALL MATTER! God condemns His Laodicean Church for all of those changes. He plans to plunge them into the Great Tribulation to bring them to repentance. If they do not repent, they will be lost forever!

LEAP ON THE THRESHOLD

We all must face a certain reality about the Laodiceans. They are in GRAVE SPIRITUAL DANGER. God condemns them for their actions. He continues to reveal their deep-seated problems in verse 9. “In the same day also will I punish all those that *leap on the threshold*, which fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.” What does it mean to leap on the threshold? This phrase is somewhat unusual. But it can be understood if we allow the Bible to interpret itself. Let’s look at another scripture that refers to a threshold.

The following scriptures recount the history of the Philistines capturing the ark of God. “And the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it from Ebenezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God, they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon” (1 Samuel 5:1-2). If we understand God’s purpose for the ark of the covenant, we realize that setting it in the temple of Dagon was *not* a very wise thing for the Philistines to do. Dagon, a dumb, lifeless idol, had no knowledge of what these people were doing. But the image of Dagon suffered great damage because of their foolish actions.

“And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold,

Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD. And they took Dagon, and set him in his place again” (verse 3). God was very quick to point out this folly to the Philistines. In essence, God made Dagon bow before the ark. Remember, inside the ark were the Ten Commandments and Aaron’s rod. The golden lid on top of the ark held the statues of the cherubim whose outstretched wings covered the mercy seat. People who were alive at that time recognized that the ark represented the presence of the God of Israel. God showed the Philistines very clearly that He would not share His presence with a dumb idol, or false religion!

“And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off *upon the threshold*; only the stump of Dagon was left to him. Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon’s house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day” (verses 4-5). God showed the Philistines that Dagon was a helpless god. People today are following helpless gods. The great God of Israel cut off Dagon’s hands and head at the threshold of Dagon’s temple. This DID have an effect on the false priests. In order to prevent personal damage to themselves, from that time forward, the priests of Dagon jumped over the threshold instead of walking on it.

When explaining Zephaniah 1:9, most commentaries refer back to these scriptures in 1 Samuel 5:1-5. It is interesting that the only other scriptures that discuss jumping on or over a threshold are in 1 Samuel. If you add this knowledge from 1 Samuel to Zephaniah 1:9, you can see that God’s priests were *observing pagan practices* in God’s presence. Isn’t this a perfect description of what is taking place within the Laodicean Church today?

VIOLENCE TOWARD GOD’S LAW

God’s people have gotten so far away from His presence that they are becoming entangled with false religion. Zephaniah 1:9 states that God’s own people are committing violence against their master’s house. Violence against God’s house would include violence against the ark of the covenant. God’s Laodicean people

have been violently moved away from the Ten Commandments. Here is what Joseph Tkach wrote to the members of the WCG in a co-worker letter: "These moral problems, along with the more 'invisible' moral problems of neglect and oppression of the weak and the poor, and corruption in business, politics and religion, would indeed be improved if people began keeping the Ten Commandments. However, it is a common mistake to assume, 'If everybody would just keep the Ten Commandments, what a nice world we would have.' Christians should consider that the Ten Commandments do not require kindness, mercy, compassion, generosity, sacrifice for others, impartiality, patience or love. Nor do the Ten Commandments specifically forbid conceit, envy, hatred, rage or selfish ambition" (May 27, 1992).

The above statement is VIOLENCE AGAINST GOD'S LAW! God's law has *everything* to do with love (Romans 13:10). If everyone in this world *would* keep the Ten Commandments, the world *would* definitely be changed. The Earth would become like the Garden of Eden. God's Ten Commandments DO REQUIRE kindness, mercy, compassion, generosity, sacrifice for others, impartiality, etc. The Ten Commandments DO FORBID conceit, envy, hatred, rage and selfish ambition. That law expresses the very love of God! (1 John 5:3).

God's Laodicean Church has also violently attacked Aaron's rod, which represents God's righteous government! God's government is administered by faithful men like Aaron. To remain in God's presence we must obey His law and administer His government. If we do these two things, we will never allow false religion to be mixed in with God's true religion.

We must recognize here that God is speaking to all of His people, not just the Laodiceans. God will punish His people who do violence to His house and law. From time to time, people develop problems within the Philadelphia Church of God (PCG). Some people get bitter and leave. What is the root cause of these problems? Often it all gets back to government, or Aaron's rod. God always wants to know what His people really believe about His government—based on His law. God's government implements that law. The law was established through Herbert W. Armstrong—God's end-time Elijah (Matthew 17:10-11).

God took Mr. Armstrong out of the way in 1986. What did

the leaders of the WCG do? Almost immediately, they began to move the Church away from God's law and government. And many people wholeheartedly support what they have done and are doing.

From time to time, similar things happen within the PCG. Maybe a minister gets sick for a while, or he is visiting another area. God tests His people in these situations. If God notices a bad attitude in a certain area, He may just take the minister away for a while to see what people will do. Do we need some man standing over us, watching us, to ensure that we make it into the Kingdom of God? God wants to know how you and I will react to His government INDIVIDUALLY—when no human government is present!

We need to ask ourselves, how long would it take for us to get away from God's law and government? God does not force His will on us. But He wants to know if we will follow His government. If there is something we don't like about God's government, God will not stop us from rejecting it.

Sometimes it is very sobering to see how God handles situations of rebellion. He does not force us to obey. How we respond to His government is really between the individual and God. It is our choice. If we don't want God's government, then He doesn't want us to have His government. If we don't want to eat God's spiritual food, then He doesn't want us to have it. If we don't want to be a part of God's Church, then He prunes us out. A Laodicean is one who will not obey God's law or follow His government! What about you?

If we don't want to obey God's laws, or follow His government, He will not force us to. God will allow us to fall away. Remember, obedience and government are of the utmost importance to God. It should be the same for us as well. We must learn this vital lesson.

SETTLED ON THEIR LEES

Great destruction is coming very soon. "And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD, that there shall be the noise of a cry from the fish gate, and an howling from the second, and a great crashing from the hills. Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all

the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off. And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are SETTLED ON THEIR LEES: that say in their heart, the LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil" (Zephaniah 1:10-12). What do these verses mean? This world is about to enter into a grave crisis. There will be crying and howling. Anciently, the merchants, or business people, resided in Maktesh. The economies of the United States, Great Britain and other Israelitish nations will soon be ruined. After that, *all* of this world's merchants will be cut off.

God says specifically in verse 12 that He will search out Jerusalem to punish "the men." Why? Because they are "settled on their lees" and say IN THEIR HEART, "the LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil." This verse seems very strange and hard to understand. We need to look into the meaning of the words.

The phrase "settled on their lees" comes from the craft of wine making. As the wine goes through the fermenting process, a wine-maker will take it and pour off the liquid leaving the dregs, or lees, behind. What happens if a winemaker leaves the liquid with the *lees*? The wine will become thick like syrup, and overly sweet.

Doesn't that describe religion today? But remember the context here. God is not addressing worldly religion. God is speaking to His people who have "turned back" (verse 6). Verse 12 perfectly describes the Laodiceans today. Their religion is syrupy and overly sweet. The Laodiceans do much talking about love while they do VIOLENCE to the Ten Commandments. Oh how they *talk* about love as they reject God's government! The Laodiceans can no longer be moved by God. Spiritually, they have become thick like syrup!

It takes great care to make a good wine. Fine wine is made according to certain laws. There is a great spiritual lesson to be learned here. Wine making does typify spiritual growth and the production of character. If we "settle on our lees" in wine making, then we produce a wine of inferior quality. If we "settle on our lees" *spiritually*, our religion is of an inferior quality. We must follow God's law to produce sterling character. If we don't follow the law, we become syrupy and overly sweet and lose sight of God's true religion.

That is not the kind of religion God wants. God wants us to

have religion that has been cared for properly. God wants us to specifically follow the laws of character building. What happens to people, or ministers, who “settle on their lees”? They stop maturing spiritually. They severely stunt their spiritual growth.

Those who *settle on their lees* begin to say, “the LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.” In other words, they don’t have the faith to believe that God will do anything! God gave these people His prophetic message and they did not like it! Verse 12 is very similar to the “prophesy not” attitude spoken of in Amos 2:12. Verse 12 also describes the tragic attitude of one of the Laodicean churches which teaches that God *does not* DIRECTLY lead His Church. What will God do to these people? He will search them out and PUNISH them because they do not believe His prophecies. GOD IS DIRECTING HIS CHURCH AND WORK!

In the very near future, God won’t care about how much people talk about love. He won’t care about their syrupy-sweet religion. God is very serious about His plans for the Church. He is creating GLORIOUS SONS. We are to become God! God is recreating Himself through us. If we do not follow the laws of God, then nothing of value will be produced in our lives.

We must realize that it is so easy to become deceived in this end time. Never before in the history of the Church has our salvation been under such a fierce attack. God wants *everyone* in His Church to take warning!

THE DAY “HASTENS GREATLY”

Josephus tells the story that in Zephaniah’s time people tried to hide in the sewers, caves and pits to escape torture. The people even sought the help of princes and kings. That didn’t work anciently and it won’t work in this end time. “Therefore their goods shall become a booty, and their houses a desolation: they shall also build houses, but not inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, but not drink the wine thereof. The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and HASTETH GREATLY, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly” (Zephaniah 1:13-14). We must seriously consider the admonition here in Zephaniah. God says that the day of His wrath is near. For emphasis, He repeats this fact—IT IS NEAR, IT IS NEAR! The

word “greatly” means “very exceedingly”—emphatically doubled. God says *this day* HASTENS GREATLY.

This verse is really an amplification of Revelation 10:6, which says that we are in the time of “no more delay” (the proper translation of “time no longer”). We have to deeply understand the *urgency* of the times we live in! There has never been a time like this! Events are moving along with lightning speed. It seems as though major prophecies are fulfilled virtually every week. God says that time is quickly running out. World crisis is DANGEROUSLY CLOSE AND SPEEDING VERY QUICKLY! Are we heeding this warning?

THE VOICE OF THE DAY OF THE LORD

Zephaniah 1:14 talks about “the voice of the day of the LORD.” It is voicing this urgent, dreadful warning. It is a fearsome trumpet blast. Do you know where that *voice* is? Is there someone today proclaiming this warning from Zephaniah about the Day of the Lord? God always works through men.

God describes our very near future as a time of great wrath. “That day is a day of WRATH, a day of TROUBLE AND DISTRESS, a day of WASTENESS AND DESOLATION, a day of DARKNESS AND GLOOMINESS, a day of CLOUDS AND THICK DARKNESS, A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: AND THEIR BLOOD SHALL BE Poured OUT AS DUST, and their flesh as the dung” (Zephaniah 1:15-17).

Revelation 12:12 warns that Satan has been cast back to the Earth. He has great wrath! The Great Tribulation represents the time when Satan’s wrath comes to full strength. It will be a time of nuclear war and great desolation. Now is a day for blowing trumpets and GIVING WARNING. That is why our magazine is called the *Philadelphia Trumpet*. Human blood will be poured out like dust! Nearly 90 percent of all living things will be destroyed! God says human flesh will be worthless like dung. Great distress is coming.

At this time, Satan desperately wants to destroy God’s Church. Satan has great wrath toward each one of us individually. We must never relax when it comes to dealing with Satan. He is relentless in his plan to destroy us. Some of our beloved Philadelphia members

“... **A DAY OF DARKNESS** and gloominess,
a day of clouds and thick darkness ...”



have fallen prey to Satan. Remember, the devil is as a roaring lion seeking prey (1 Peter 5:8). Let's be *especially* careful not to fall short spiritually at this time.

The Day of the Lord is the time of *God's* wrath which immediately follows the Great Tribulation. God will unleash His great wrath upon mankind because of their many sins. Unrepentant men will not escape what is coming. "Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land" (Zephaniah 1:18). During the Day of the Lord, God will finally get mankind's attention. He will devour the land with fire. This means nuclear fire! God will make a speedy riddance of men. The time is coming when our sin-sick world will be gone in a heartbeat. But all is not yet lost.

BEFORE, BEFORE, BEFORE, BEFORE

There is still time to turn back to God. "Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; BEFORE the decree bring forth, BEFORE the day pass as the chaff, BEFORE the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, BEFORE the day of the LORD's anger come upon you. Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger" (Zephaniah 2:1-3). God makes a great appeal to us in these three verses. The Day of the Lord is coming very quickly, but there is still time to repent. God uses the word "before" *four times* in these verses to SHOW THAT NOW IS THE TIME TO TURN BACK TO HIM. For the Laodiceans, there will come a time when it will be too late! God wants them to repent now—BEFORE the decree, BEFORE the chaff, BEFORE the fierce anger, BEFORE the Day of the Lord! Now is the time to get ready, *before* raging violence explodes on this Earth.

The expression "gather yourselves together" is an interesting one. The *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown Commentary* states that it means to gather "a religious assembly." It is an expression similar to that found in Joel 2:16. This expression is a call to repentance. It is a call to fasting and prayer. The phrase, "O nation

not desired,” also carries unique meaning. This expression in Hebrew means *to become pale, not desired or shameful*.

What is God really asking for here in verse 1? He is asking His people who have become pale, or shameful, to repent. If a person has *become pale*, it means that at one time he was not pale. Some of God's people have lost their color—SPIRITUALLY! They have become lukewarm. This verse is not referring to the nation of Israel. The nation of Israel was always pale and shameful spiritually, in this end time. This is a thunderous message to God's own Laodicean people!

For God's faithful people, this prophecy should help us realize what a critical time this is for God's Work. God's people must take advantage of this little window of opportunity. We have to perform great works now, BEFORE it's too late. When I study the book of Zephaniah deeply, I REALIZE THAT I'M NOT AS URGENT AS THE SPIRIT OF THIS MESSAGE! I believe that none of God's people are! We must realize and keep in our minds where we are in prophecy and how urgent these times are. We must make sure to do *all we can* BEFORE, BEFORE, BEFORE, BEFORE the Day of the Lord or the time of tribulation begins for Israel.

WROUGHT HIS JUDGMENT

In verse 3, what does “wrought his judgment” mean? *Lange's Commentary* says this phrase would be better translated, “who have observed his law.” The Revised Standard Version translates this expression as “who do his commands.” God is speaking to a people that observed His law, or commands.

God desires that these people seek Him. Obviously, they were seeking God at one time and have stopped seeking Him. What group of people observed God's law and then turned away from it in this end time? What group of people have become pale or shameful in their spiritual lives in this end time? God wants them to return to Him. Why? So He can hide them in the day of His wrath.

We know God promises His people a place of protection. We find this fact in Matthew 24:41 and Revelation 3:10-11; 12:13-14. Zephaniah 2:3 promises the same. But this verse also shows that some of God's people WILL NOT BE PROTECTED!

Those in the PCG know that it should not be our goal to *just* make it to a place of safety. OUR GOAL ALWAYS MUST BE TO MAKE IT INTO GOD'S KINGDOM! However, having God protect us physically does say much about our spiritual lives. Verse 3 is a promise only to those people who humbly turn back to God! It applies to both the Philadelphians and the Laodiceans. All of us must be sure that we are seeking God.

Study the rest of chapter 2. God discusses certain cities that will face destruction similar to that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Worldwide calamity is coming. But after that there is fantastically good news.

SING, DAUGHTER OF ZION

Along with all the bad news in Zephaniah, there is news of the fantastic future ahead. "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, he hath cast out thine enemy: the king of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more. In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not: and to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack. The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" (Zephaniah 3:14-17). When God's wrath is complete, Jesus Christ, the King of Israel, will return and intervene to save all mankind. He will lead men to refashion the entire Earth so that it becomes like the Garden of Eden. This effort will begin in Jerusalem and spread throughout the Earth.

There is a time coming when we shall never see evil like we see in our world today. What an awesome future lies just ahead of us. What a time it will be WHEN THE WHOLE EARTH BREAKS INTO SINGING AT THE PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST! Let's seek God *now* so we can be there to assist Christ after His return!

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