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Zephaniah

Chuck Missler comments on Old Testament prophecy like this; Prophecy like Zephaniah can be either near horizon and or far horizon or it can be both; and it is difficult to differentiate which is being spoken of as you read it. So as we go through this short book of prophecy keep in mind that Zephaniah was speaking to his contemporaries warning them of a horrible day coming upon Judah, but at the same time God is using it to describe what we know as the Great Day of the Lord; a universal planet destroying event.

Israel was re-established again as a nation in 1948 in fulfillment of promises by God to bring them back to the land He had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The only time in recorded history that a nation had gone out of existence and came back into existence.

We have studied briefly the War of Psalms 83 and the following Gog Magog war that God describes as appears yet to come.

Prophets from Zephaniah to Joel were given visions of what was to happen in Israel both in their time and in future time to Israel

and other lands. Many commentators take the terms used in these prophets and describe nations far from Israel as the fulfillment of these prophecies. I am challenged to do that on a broad basis for one specific reason. Israel and specifically Jerusalem is the “apple of God’s eye”. For us to view the names of tribes and nations that are specific to Israel and the surrounding land and cast those names to represent nations on other continents unless specifically called out could be fraught with potential error. As we look at the names of tribes and nations in the Middle East, we will read them as God has laid them out as the exact nations or tribes He calls out. If an occasion arises that we need to look outside of the Middle East, we will do so with great caution and abide in God’s definitions as to whom He is speaking of. Sometimes it will be an educated guess and I will try to be very clear that is what it is.

Zephaniah Prophecies Judgment on Judah

(Matthew 13:36-43)

*Matthew 13: **36**Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. **37**He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; **38**The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

A tare from Jewish Virtual Library

TARES (Heb. זִנִּים, *zunim*), the darnel – *Lolium temulentum*, weed which grows among grain, particularly wheat. The grains resemble those of wheat so that it is very difficult to separate them by sifting, and as a result they are sown together with the wheat and grow with it in the field.

Strong's Concordance as to the spiritual sense of a Tare;

2215 *zizánion* (plural, tares/*zizania*) – a tare (darnel); (figuratively) a pseudo-believer (false Christian); a *fruitless* person living without faith from God and therefore is "all show and no go!"

39*The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. 40***As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. 41***The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; 42***And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43***Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

Even though the title to the chapter reflects a prophesy against Judah we need to consider this as universal, throughout the earth; several verses reflect the inclusiveness of the entire earth in this "Great Day of the Lord".

1*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.*

2I will utterly consume all *things* from off the land, saith the LORD.

Matthew 13:36-43 is about Jesus being asked by His disciples to explain the simile of the tares of the field. Jesus describes an end times event that is likely at the conclusion of Tribulation. We come to that conclusion due to the extent of the destruction God brings. Not just to Israel but worldwide.

3I 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.

The scene God describes is total annihilation of all living creatures that are on the face of the earth. That has not happened since the Flood and even then, a remnant was left to re-establish humanity. Therein may lie the problem. The unregenerated body is still bound by sin and God will not endure sin any longer.

2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

Jeremiah 4:25 I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

Hosea 4:3 Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the

field, and with the fowls of heaven; yea, the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.

God starts by declaring His intention to the entire world, but He also lets Israel know they are going to be included.

4I 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;

Even though God specific directs a good deal of this prophecy against Israel it is due to God's Own directive that He will first and always start His punishment with the Church first. It is in the confines of the Religious leaders that sin is allowed to fester. Their refusal to call out sin, lies and hypocrisy has damaged the foundation beyond repair so it is they who will receive the first blow from God.

Quoted from <https://www.gotquestions.org/Chemarim-Chemarims.html>

“The Chemarim were false priests who may have claimed to serve the LORD but in reality sacrificed to [Baal](#), [Molech](#), and other pagan deities. The Chemarim were the “pagan priests” whom Zephaniah pronounced judgment against. Baal-worship in Judah was put down by King Josiah, who did away with the pagan priests who had been appointed by former kings ([2 Kings 23:5](#)). In his reforms, Josiah stopped the practice of burning incense to Baal and to the sun and moon and stars. He also tore down the altars and shrines to false gods, destroyed the [Asherah](#)

[poles](#), and eliminated anything associated with pagan worship practices (verses 6–20). Josiah then reinstated the observance of Passover (verses 21–23)...

...The word Chemarim comes from a root word that means “black.” Why the Hebrews called the false priests “Chemarim” is unclear, but commentators have several theories: 1) the false priests wore black garments, as opposed to the white garments God had specified that priests wear (see [Leviticus 16:23](#)); 2) the garments of the Chemarim were usually darkened by soot from their numerous incense burnings; 3) the Chemarim branded their foreheads; or 4) the “blackness” of the Chemarim was a reference to the smoke of the fires in which they sacrificed children to Molech.”

Jerusalem is God’s time piece on earth; anything that happens in the world has some relationship to Jerusalem. God had warned the world, all of the world and all of its leaders that anyone who would try to touch Jerusalem they would find it a stumbling block.

Zechariah 12: [2](#)Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

“A cup of trembling unto all the people [round about](#) when they shall be in siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.”

The term “[round about](#)” is used in reference to encircle as if to attack. And, God has specifically identified the geographic location as that of Judah and Jerusalem. So back to anyone of the wars Israel has fought especially since 1948, Jerusalem has

become a **burdensome stone** for those attacking nations and will be again in the Psalms 83 and Gog Magog.

3And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

The idea that the entire world is gathered against Jerusalem speaks more to Armageddon than to Psalms 83 or Gog Magog in one sense. However, in another sense it could mean both of the other wars as well.

“though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it”.

We are well aware of the anti-Semitic or hatred of Jews around the world. It is possible that a majority of the world in an anti-Semitic way sides against Israel, much in the same way we have seen the United Nations side against Israel repeatedly.

5And 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;

This may sound innocuous; to worship the host of heaven upon the housetops? But it is evil; read carefully, they are worshipping the “host” meaning the array of stars, sun and moon not the God of Creation.

How many people today do exactly this; they worship Mother Earth; they worship and think that salvation will come from the universe that salvation will come from aliens.

They were double minded in that they worshiped this starry host but swore by God, the Lord. Malcham was a god that was worshipped by the Ammonites.

6And them that are turned back from the LORD; and *those* that have not sought the LORD, nor inquired for him.

There are three sub groups listed in this verse;

1. Backsliders or those who professed God but were shallow and never really accepted His Son for Who He Is.
2. Those who never really knew God or knew Him only in their heads
3. Those who were indifferent and believe God a myth and gave Him no time.

The Day of the Lord

(1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Peter 3:10-13)

Zephaniah will be speaking of the Day of the Lord. It may be that we may not fully grasp what God is talking about when

He refers to the “Day of the Lord”. In 1 Thessalonians 5 we find a fairly extensive review of that term.

1 Thessalonians 1But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

I recommend at home you read on to get a broader view of what God is speaking of when He refers to the “Day of the Lord”.

7Hold 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 continues on with what the Day of the Lord consists of. God prefers obedience over sacrifice, but when obedience is non-existence and the world is filled with sin, then the only thing left is sacrifice. God has invited those who have denied Him to this great sacrifice as honored guests and to be the sacrifice themselves.

8And 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.

God begins a list of those whom He will afflict and there appears to be an order from the highest in station on earth to the lowest.

There are three specific groups; starting in vs 8 with the ruling elites.

1. Kings and Princes – royalty, the ruling elites.
2. The Kings children were not beyond reach and often sought after by the invading armies.
3. All such that are wearing strange clothing. The “strange clothing” is probably meant to describe those within Israel the elite that had abandoned the native attire of the Israelites and instead took on the appearance of the Egyptians. In the broader sense (worldwide) those elite leaders and their progeny that have lived luxurious lives at the cost of the common man and woman.

9In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters' houses with violence and deceit.

“leap on the threshold” was a colloquial term of the day to describe a thief entering a house. They would not use the door but access the house through the window as is often the case still today. Chuck Missler points out another possibility in that the Romans had a supernatural point of view as to the threshold of a home. The Romans believed that demons somehow resided at the threshold of a home, according to Chuck it is where the idea of carrying a bride over the threshold for a new couple and new home came from.

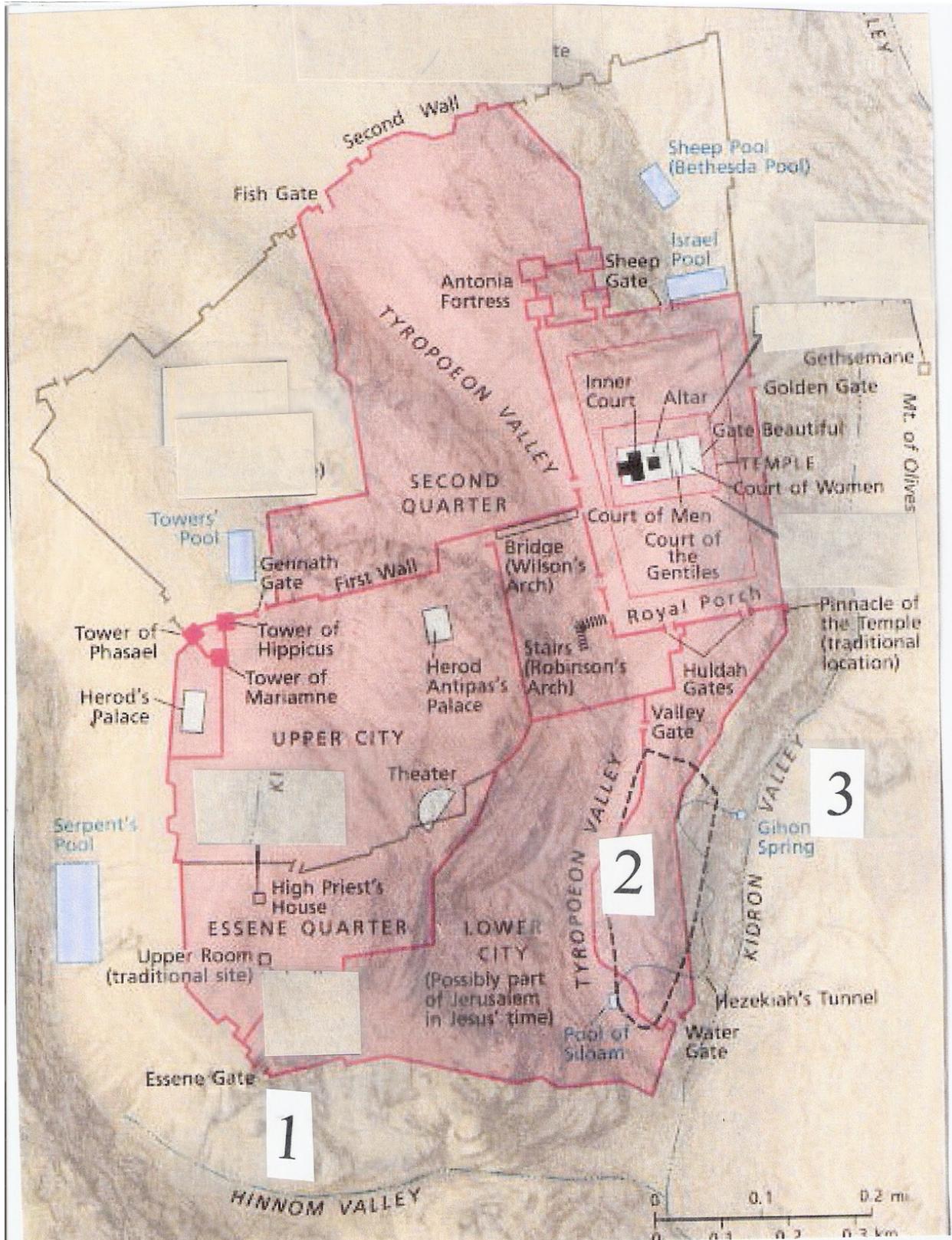
In either case the point is that God will punish those who steal, bring violence and deceit into the homes of His beloved.

10And 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.

The fish gate faces the northwest (Damascus gate) and is supposedly the gate that the fishermen would bring their catch into the city to sell a primary source of food for the entire land.

We are told there is a “howling from the second” meaning the primary security wall as the invaders come into the city. Once, in there is a great crashing form the hills, probably not building falling but people being slain by the swords of the invading army that God will use to punish Israel.

In a broader worldwide view this would be like an invading army penetrating your primary or outer defenses, leaving your nation to rely on their secondary defenses.



11Howl, ye inhabitants of Maktesh, for all the merchant people are cut down; all they that bear silver are cut off.

Maktesh is a valley and the inference here is that the city was divided by a valley with Zion and Aera on the west side and Moriah and Ophel on the east side. There is some thinking that in this small valley within the city tradesmen would hock their wares to the Israelis. It is also believed that many of these tradesmen were Canonites and Philistines, both who had been beaten by the Israelites and were known for the cheating ways when dealing with Jews. God's gives them His attention due to their nature of cheating the Jews in their own city.

12And 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.

The third class of evil doers seek are those who; “settled on their lees” or in other words have hardened their hearts. They may not scoff at the Believers but in their hearts, they think Believers in Christ or Jewish people are fools. They have turned their backs on the One True God, the Creator of the universe they worship. They will try to hide themselves as did the ruling elite when the Chaldean were used by God to punish Israel. This is from

Josephus's account of that event. The invading army will leave no stone unturned and no tunnel left unsearched.

“Jerome and commentators after him refer to Josephus's account of the last siege of Jerusalem for a parallel to these predicted proceedings of the Chaldeans. Here we read how princes and priests and chieftains were dragged from sewers, and pits, and caves, and tombs, where they had hidden themselves in fear of death, and were mercilessly slain wherever they were found (Josephus, 'Bell. Jud.,' “

13Therefore 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.

This is likely referring to the invading army or nations establishing their own laws over the land and everything in the land.

14The 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.*

God is describing to the then listeners of Zephaniah the distress that the mighty men of the day this happens will be in. They will not only cry they will cry bitterly as if finally understanding they have been fighting God. Remember this is a yet coming day for the Lord. The Jews that Zephaniah prophesied to were

conquered, but it is a shadow of what is to come on the “Great Day of the Lord” yet in our future.

15That 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,

God is describing an earth that was pre-Adam, primordial chaos, wasteness and desolation; darkness and gloominess; of “thick darkness”. A devastating attack;

Joel 2:2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

16A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.

Israel used the trumpet and still do to ring in festivals. They used to use the trumpet to sound an alarm of an approaching army or to send their troops into battle. What worldwide alarm will be used to the prelude to destruction.

17And 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.

There is a physiological term called the “fog of war” and it works even in moments of total terror not just war. This particular set of circumstances is obviously associated with an invading army that is so over whelming and vicious that people will walk around as if blind. Terror so over whelming that they lose all sense of situational awareness, direction or even the ability to flee. They will be killed, slaughtered without thought of life by their attackers. So calloused will be this army that they will equal blood to dust, worthless, not to be given a second thought like the dust on their boots. The bodies are left to rot and decay with no one to morn or bury them. The army just keeps on killing and moving on to the next objective.

18Neither 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.

Whatever motivates this army it is not physical wealth; they simply don't care about it. That strikes me as being other worldly. They have one objective; to kill. God will use them to punish the earth and those that have rejected Him and His Mercy and Grace. He is done with sin, and will end it at this point in time.

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