

Sunday, January 8, 2017

The Day of the Lord – Zephaniah

2. Creation Consumed – Zephaniah 1:2-3

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Take your Bibles and open with me to Zephaniah chapter 1. This morning we are looking at verses 2 and 3 in our second message in this series through the minor prophet. The title of the series is “The Day of the Lord” and this second message is titled “Creation Consumed.” As we seek to understand what Zephaniah is telling us about in our verses this morning we will be looking at an overview of several passages in Revelation to see the fulfillment of these prophetic verses.

To review, in our introduction last week we looked at “The Days of Josiah” as Josiah was the King in Judah during the ministry of the prophet Zephaniah. They were cousins, both descending from godly King Hezekiah. They were both instrumental in the reforms that happened, destroying idol worship, repairing the Temple, rediscovering the Law of God, and bringing revival to the Land through a renewed covenant and the renewed observance of Passover in the Land. As we learn the signs of the times and what the prophet, the people, and the King were facing, we see again that this book is divided into three parts. Chapter 1:1-2:3 describes for us the coming day of the Lord. We will begin examining that part this morning. In chapter 2:4-3:8 we will cover a specific list of judgments against specific nations, where God through the prophet tells Judah and Jerusalem, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and others about specific judgments He is about to bring about. In chapter 3:9-20 to close the book we see the last section, Zephaniah closes with an anticipation of the return of God’s blessing.

Now in chapter 1 verses 2 and 3, we read, “I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land,” says the Lord; 3 “I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, the fish of the sea, and the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,” says the Lord.”

This is a description of the great and terrible Day of the Lord. At that day, God says, everything will be utterly consumed. Man and beast, fish and fowl, cut off from the face of the earth. Again, this is what God says, so it will be done. Quite the positive prosperity gospel wishy-washy evangelically message there from the Throne of the Most High, wouldn’t you say?

How popular a message did this have to be for this to be the first thing we are told that Zephaniah preached? Before blaming wicked nations or people – you know the part of judgment we love where the wicked are called out by name – he gives us this stunning overview, this terrible summary of destruction that is coming.

We do know from the context as we move through this prophecy that some of what Zephaniah addresses is the coming Babylonian exile of Judah, the judgment of God upon His people for their stubborn sinfulness. We know in history when that captivity happened and we know from the Scriptures who was there and what they experienced for those 70 years of judgment. We know that while they were there in captivity the Medes and Persians invaded and conquered. We know that after that Greeks conquered the Medes and Persians as foretold by Daniel.

As history unfolds, and as God's hand is seen in judging nations, we quickly learn that here is more here in Zephaniah than just nation rising against nation. There is more here than just the Babylonian exile and return. People and pets were not totally consumed from the land. Some were left, some came back later and rebuilt under Ezra and Nehemiah. So what is Zephaniah talking about here when relays this message from the Lord that He is going to utterly consume everything from the face of the earth? The phrase used here to consume is literally that God is going to scrape the surface of the earth clean. Men, animals, birds, fish. Everything.

When he mentions in verse 3 "the stumbling blocks along with the wicked" the wording is that God is going to remove the wicked, leaving behind only a pile of rubble. Stumbling blocks there can also be translated "ruins." A pile of refuse. There is nowhere to go, nowhere to run or hide. He says, "I will cut off man from the face of the earth."

This definitely is worse than any captivity by a foreign nation. These are terms that are similar to when God talks about Noah and the flood. Listen to this, in Genesis 6:7, "So the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." Man and beast, from the face of the earth – same language. Catastrophic destruction of all living things.

In Genesis 6:17 God says, "And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die." The exception to this judgment we see in Genesis 6:8 and 18-19, "8 But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord." And "I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. 9 And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female."

So we see then that the word of the Lord in Zephaniah is very similar to His words to Noah. In Genesis 7:21-23 it tells us, "21 And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. 22 All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. 23 So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive."

What is the only difference between our two passages here? The only difference, in the flood everything that breathed the air was destroyed. Fish were not affected by the flood, except by the way those who fossils we find on the tops of mountains now. But in Zephaniah even the fish will be consumed. In this judgment Zephaniah is talking about every created living creature on the earth is going to be subject to destruction.

Some scholars, and again, I use the term loosely, some scholars tell us that Zephaniah is trying to shock Josiah and Judah and so is using hyperbole. What is hyperbole? That is to say Zephaniah was exaggerating, like we would say, “I called you a million times and you never answered.” A million, really? That is hyperbole.

Some believe he was only warning about the coming Babylonian captivity but he was making it sound worse than it would really be – and trust me, it was bad – but by making it worse they think he was creating the urgency to repent. So maybe the prophet was taking creative license with God’s Word and trying to overstate things to make a point, to impress upon his hearers the need to take his message seriously – because nothing makes people take you seriously more than overstating the case, right?

What we need to remember is that when God says something, He means it. His Word is sure. And when the prophet begins his prophecy about the day of the Lord in which all of these things are going to happen, we need to see just how serious this day will be in the history of creation. This also serves to remind us that the sin of Adam affected all of creation, didn’t it? It affected the whole earth. Living beings and plants, people and pollen – right?

In Genesis 3:17 we read, “17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat of it’: “Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”

All of creation suffers under the curse for man’s sin. In Romans 8:22 Paul tells us, “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.” Why does the creation groan? What is the creation longing for? For redemption – to be remade, to be new and free from the curse and stain of man’s sin.

If this fallen, cursed creation is going to be burned up and made anew, then there is no reason to believe that Zephaniah is exaggerating. To make this case even more clearly, let’s look at what the Bible has to tell us about the day of the Lord. This phrase, “The Day of the Lord” appears throughout the Scriptures referring to the coming of Christ at the end of the age. This is the second coming. For us, this will be a glorious day, the culmination of history and God’s plan of redemption. We eagerly await this day – or we should! But what does the Day of the Lord mean for the lost, for those in danger of judgment? It means wrath. Certain doom! It is the beginning of their end. It is a horrible, terrible day of God’s holy wrath and justice being poured out on the earth.

Here are just a few verses that describe for us the Day of the Lord:

Isa. 13:6, “Wail, for the day of the Lord is at hand! It will come as destruction from the Almighty.”

Verse 9 says, “Behold, the day of the Lord comes, Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it.”

Joel 1:15 tells us, “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; It shall come as destruction from the Almighty.”

Joel 2:11, “The Lord gives voice before His army, For His camp is very great; For strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; Who can endure it?” – only those in Christ will endure!

Obadiah 1:15 says, “For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; As you have done, it shall be done to you; Your reprisal shall return upon your own head.”

In Acts 2:20 at the Day of Pentecost, Peter preached, “The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord.”

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

This is THE DAY when all that has been tainted by sin will be removed, destroyed, consumed, wiped from the face of the earth by the wrath of our Holy God. The Babylonian captivity is going to be a mere foretaste of the full wrath of God for sin.

Turn with me now to Revelation chapter 5. Here we see the details of the outworking of how God will accomplish the things He has said in Zephaniah 1:2-3. Those two verses, for them to be fulfilled, will take us through several chapters of the Book of Revelation. Revelation 5,6,7,8, 9, 11, and 16 are all here in these 2 verses!

Revelation 5 is the familiar passage of the Lamb taking the scroll and I want to explain this scene to you, to show you what is happening as Jesus takes and opens the scroll that no man could open. Within this scroll we find the details of how God accomplishes the destruction prophesied in Zephaniah 1:2-3, through the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

In Revelation 5 we read, “And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. 2 Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?” 3 And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it. 4 So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll,

or to look at it. 5 But one of the elders said to me, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” 6 And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.”

This is what John sees and explains for us. Here is God the Father sitting on the Throne holding a scroll with seven seals on it. To understand the significance we will start with the seals sealing up this rolled up scroll. In the olden days, so to speak, when a king wanted to send a message to someone he would seal the message to secure and authenticate it by stamping his signet ring into a hot wax seal on the message. Those who received the message would know immediately who it had come from – and a message from the King was always important – it was from the King!

So we find here John describing God on the Throne holding a scroll that has been sealed seven times. The trouble is that there is no one they can find who has the authority or ability to take the scroll from God, open it, and read the message. Imagine if you had a scroll with the King’s seal and you opened it, but it was not addressed to you! That could carry the death penalty.

A message with seven seals is obviously an important document. It is secure. It’s message a secret. But with no one having the proper station or rank to take and open the scroll no one can know what this important message is. So they cry out for one who is worthy to take and open the scroll. Then suddenly someone from the body of believers surrounding the Throne of God in heaven proclaims, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.” Jesus has the authority, He has earned the right to take and open the scroll. How did He earn this right? To know that we have to understand what the scroll contains. This scroll is the title deed to the earth. God holds it. Creation is His to do with as He pleases. This is God’s claim of sovereign ownership and the penalty for those who have stained it with sin. And Jesus is going to take that scroll and break open each of these 7 seals by His authority as the Redeemer, as the One who suffered the judgments for sin described therein, standing as a substitute for His people.

God had given Adam and Eve dominion over creation and they by their sin plunged it into the curse. God is reversing the curse through the penalty of the pouring out of His wrath to destroy this tainted creation. This is how we understand what it means to say that Jesus died for the world, not every individual in the world, not just for sinners, but His death also has redeeming value for creation, for the cosmos. In giving Himself as a sacrifice for sin, He and He alone has earned the right to open and read the scroll.

In verse 8 it continues, “Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls

full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying: “You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.” 11 Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” 13 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” 14 Then the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”

All of creation declares the glory of God! The simple act of taking the scroll demands worship and praise from around the Throne and throughout creation. Here is the moment for which all of creation has been expectantly waiting – the time of redemption.

In Revelation 6 then we begin to see that every time He breaks one of these seals, something happens on the earth. Revelation 6:1-2 give us a report on what happens when the first seal is broken, “Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, “Come and see.” 2 And I looked, and behold, a white horse. He who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.”

We may question who this is, but what we do know is that someone is let loose on a white horse to conquer. Some say this is Christ wearing His crown riding a white horse, however Christ comes with a sword, and many crowns. Who then might be loosed on earth to bring all people under his subjection? Might this be the anti-Christ, promising world peace if people will worship him as the Messiah? By his deceptive demonic power the anti-Christ will usher in a time of peace on the earth.

In verse 3-4 we have the second seal, “3 When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, “Come and see.” 4 Another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword.”

Here now, after a false deceptive time of peace, there will be blood, there will be conflict. The world is going to go to war unlike we have ever seen throughout history.

The third seal, in verses 5-6, “When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, “Come and see.” So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, “A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a

denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.”

This is economic hardship and famine. Food will be scarce and expensive. After a false peace and a world war there is collapse and desolation leading to the fourth seal, in verse 7-8, “7 When He opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, “Come and see.” 8 So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth.”

The term for pale, describing the color of the horse, means literally a green color like decomposing flesh. This is death and the grave. Creation turns on itself and 25% of the world’s population is killed. In today’s terms that is 1 billion 750 million people dead. That is 400 million more people than are in China, or in India today. That is the total population of China and the USA, or India and the USA...all dead. Four seals and a quarter of the world’s population has been destroyed. But wait, there’s more!

Verses 9-11 show us the fifth seal. “When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.”

Here we see the special place each martyr has in the Kingdom of God – a special seat, under His Throne! At the breaking of this seal these precious martyrs cry out for vengeance upon those who killed them. That will happen in time we are told, but at this point we are also told that there are more to be added to their number. There are more who will be faithful even unto death, more of whom the world is not worthy.

Verses 12-17 find the sixth seal opened, “2 I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! 17 For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?”

This is absolute cosmic chaos. The earth will be disjointed by a worldwide quake. The moon looks red like blood, the stars cannot even be seen. And people know why this is

happening! The lost beg for death and they know this is God – but rather than turn to Him they seek death thinking that will spare them. How futile to flee the wrath of God for your sin by pursuing death! That will be a rude awakening, stepping into eternity with no atonement, with no pardon, with no Mediator or Advocate.

Moving to chapter 8 we see the seventh seal, in Revelation 8:1-6, “When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. 2 And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 3 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel’s hand. 5 Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth. And there were noises, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. 6 So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.”

Now the scroll is open, and this seal is a prelude to seven trumpet blasts. The opening of this last seal is so awesome that it results in complete silence in all of creation for 30 minutes. Everything stops. Even a moment of silence can seem a long time. Imagine 30 minutes. We can’t stand silence like this. In a prayer meeting if it goes for a few minutes with no one praying someone has to say something or the preacher closes it, right? In a room full of people, if no one talks, it gets uncomfortable. Imagine then the awe that results in a half hour of complete silence. But the silence is broken suddenly by a trumpet blast!

Each of the seven trumpet blasts represent and reveal more judgment, more wrath, more of the penalty for sin poured out on the earth, as Zephaniah has told us, the Lord is scraping the earth clean.

In chapter 8:7 we find the first trumpet, “7 The first angel sounded: And hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were thrown to the earth. And a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up.” Suddenly the Environmental Protection Agency is out of a job – a third of the vegetation and trees are burned up including all the green grass. Creation is being consumed because of the sin of mankind.

Verses 8-9 show us the second trumpet, “8 Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. 9 And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.” A volcano erupts and the devastation that results destroys a third of all sea life.

Here we are with 25% of the people of the world gone, a third of the trees, all the grass, and a third of the sea life is devastated. Imagine the smell. The smoke. The destruction. All as a result of our sin.

The third trumpet is described in verses 10-11, “10 Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. 11 The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.”

Something like a meteor falls to the earth and poisons a third of the fresh water supply.

The fourth trumpet in verses 12-13, “12 Then the fourth angel sounded: And a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened. A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night. 13 And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!”

A third of sunlight, moonlight, and starlight, the day is thrown into chaos. And there is an angel flying around the earth proclaiming woes, the pronouncement of a curse, saying how bad things are about to get – about to get! Each of the remaining three trumpet blasts will be progressively worse than what has come before.

Remember that all of this is God’s wrath toward sin. And what did Christ pay for us? The full penalty of the wrath of God – are we beginning to see how great and terrible that wrath is that He bore for us on the cross? When the world bears the penalty themselves this is what it will look like.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh trumpet are described as the first, second, and third “Woe.” The first woe, in Revelation 9:1-11, we see demons released from a pit, resembling or symbolized by locusts, released to bring destruction on the earth. They torment people, like a swarm of locusts with the sting of a scorpion. Verses 13-21 give us the second woe, where an army amasses from the east, a million men marching toward Jerusalem to confront the anti-Christ. What we see from Revelation is that as they come marching in and the conflict begins, Christ descends on a white stallion with a sword coming out of His mouth! This woe is the prelude to the Battle of Armageddon – har Meggido. The final battle in the valley that has seen such destruction throughout history that the remains of battle form a mound, a hill, in the middle of the valley. This will be a battle where the blood running off the field will be like a river flowing as deep as a horse’s bridle.

And now there is one more trumpet, one last woe, and we read about it in chapter 11:15-19, “15 Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” 16 And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying: “We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. 18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged, And that You should reward

Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.” 19 Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.”

God takes the kingdoms, the nations of the world, for Himself. He is taking what is His.

In Revelation 16 then we see 7 more judgments to come, yes, there is more! Are you beginning to see how truly horrible sin is? Revelation is written in a way that is similar to a newspaper today, where you have different sections with a different focus or theme, and so these are not all chronological. Now we are moving forward in the book, but back in time to before the battle of Armageddon.

The seven bowl judgments poured out on the earth, to rid it from the stain of sin, begin in Revelation 16:1-2, “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.” 2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”

Those who refuse to repent, who continue to stand fast in their allegiance to the anti-Christ, are stricken with a terrible stinking disease. It affects all of the earth.

The second bowl, verse 3, “Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.”

All of life in the sea ceased to be. This is exactly what Zephaniah said was going to happen. Creation is being consumed. All mankind is going to die. All the beasts, all the fish, all the birds, all going to die.

Verses 4-7 show us the third bowl, “4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.” 7 And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

The fourth bowl in verse 8-9, “8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”

The fifth bowl, “10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”

The sixth bowl, setting the stage again for the final battle, “12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.” 16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”

The seventh bowl, when it is finished! Revelation 16:17 “Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” 18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.”

To the end, through all of this, men continued to blaspheme God and would not repent.

Here when it says, “It is done” this is the phrase, “It is finished.” What is the difference between the first and the last “It is finished?” After the first, Christ had paid our sin debt in full, bearing the wrath of God for us. Now at the end, the lost are bearing the wrath of God forever as the earth itself is cleaned from the stain of sin. And these 7 seals, 7 trumpets, and 7 bowls represent for us what Jesus bore for us on the cross! This is what wrath looks like. This is the price He paid. A price that will consume creation.

This is how serious the pronouncement of Zephaniah is, “I will utterly consume everything From the face of the land,” Says the Lord; 3 “I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, The fish of the sea, And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,” Says the Lord.

The wicked destroyed and nothing remaining but ruins waiting to be remade.

To finish then, we see that Zephaniah was not exaggerating, was he? And we must ask, how does this affect us? What should we do with this Word, beyond rejoicing that He has paid for our sin and satisfied the wrath of God on our behalf? There are two things that we need to know, the first found in Revelation 3:10, “Because you have kept My command to

persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.” This hour of trial, this time of tribulation, God says He will preserve His people. That does not mean we will not be persecuted, or even martyred. It means we will have no reason to fear those who can kill the body, as Jesus said, because we have peace with the One who can kill both body and soul in hell.

We need not fear men because with God, we are secure.

The other thing we need to understand is in 2 Peter 3:10, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 11 Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, 12 looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? 13 Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

Think about how often we are tempted to sin because of things that belong to this fallen world. Covetousness, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. And all of this is temporary and will be burned up. And this is Peter’s question to us, if all of this that has been tainted by sin is going to be burned up like what Zephaniah describes, then “what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” How should we live in this light?

Rejoice knowing that the penalty for our sin, the wrath of God, has been satisfied by the blood of His Son shed for us. Jesus paid it all, all to Him we owe.

Let us pray.