

## Ready or Not, Here it Comes

### Scriptures for Today

#### **Zephaniah 1:14–18**

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. 15 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, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 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. 18 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.

### INTRODUCTION

Ready or not, some things are coming whether we have prepared for them or not.

We spend much of life trying to make ourselves secure. We save money. We protect our health. We build a reputation. We make plans, strengthen our position, and try to keep control of what happens next. None of those things are wrong in themselves. The danger comes when we begin trusting them to hold us up when only God can.

Zephaniah speaks of a day when every false refuge will be exposed. The strong man will not be strong enough. The fenced city will not be secure enough. The high tower will not stand high enough. Silver and gold will not be valuable enough. Everything people believed could protect them will fail at once.

That is what makes this passage so uncomfortable. It does not allow us to treat judgment as a distant idea meant only for someone else. It brings the matter close. It forces us to ask what we are trusting right now. What gives us our sense of safety? What do we believe cannot be taken from us? Where do we expect to turn when life, strength, wealth, and control can no longer help us?

The words of Zephaniah are not designed merely to inform us. They are meant to awaken us. Readiness is not optional, because the day of the LORD does not depend upon whether men believe it is coming.

Zephaniah begins with a warning that leaves no room for delay.

#### **Zephaniah 1:14**

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.

Ready or not, here it comes.

### I. THE DAY IS NEAR

The first truth in the passage is not complicated, but it is urgent: the day of the LORD is near. Zephaniah repeats it. It is near. It hasteth greatly. God is not speaking as though judgment were an uncertain possibility. He announces it as a fixed reality moving closer.

A man may know that a storm is approaching while the sky above him still looks clear. The warnings keep coming, but because he cannot yet see the rain, he continues his routine. He waits until the wind begins tearing at the house before he takes the warning seriously. But the warning did not become true when he finally felt the storm. It was true when he first heard it.

God's warning must be believed before judgment becomes visible. We do not get to decide whether the day is near by looking at how comfortable life feels. The clear sky over our heads does not cancel the Word of the LORD.

That confronts our habit of postponing spiritual matters. People assume they will always have more time. More time to think about Christ. More time to deal honestly with sin. More time to obey what God has already made

clear. More time to stop drifting. But Zephaniah does not speak the language of delay. He says the day hasteth greatly.

Then the verse turns to the mighty man. The man who is accustomed to being strong will cry bitterly. His strength may have carried him through hardship. His skill may have solved difficult problems. His courage may have steadied everyone around him. But none of it can prepare him to stand against the judgment of God.

Physical health is not a refuge. Intelligence is not a refuge. Experience is not a refuge. Influence, discipline, toughness, and control are not refuges. They may be useful gifts, and we should use them gratefully, but we must never trust them as though they could answer for us before God.

So stop treating judgment as distant. Stop building your life on the assumption that tomorrow is guaranteed. Settle what you believe about Jesus Christ. Deal honestly with what God has said. The day is near, and human strength cannot make anyone ready.

The day is not only drawing near; Zephaniah now shows us what that day will be like when it arrives.

## **II. THE DAY IS TERRIBLE**

### **Zephaniah 1:15–17**

15 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, 16 A day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers. 17 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.

The language is heavy because the reality is heavy. Wrath. Trouble. Distress. Wasteness. Desolation. Darkness. Gloominess. Clouds. Thick darkness. Zephaniah piles word upon word so that no one can reduce this day to a mild inconvenience. This is not a temporary setback. This is the righteous judgment of the LORD.

We are often tempted to soften judgment because the truth makes us uncomfortable. We prefer to speak of sin as a mistake, a weakness, or a poor choice. But verse 17 tells us plainly why judgment comes: men have sinned against the LORD.

Sin is personal. It is not merely something that damages our reputation or produces painful consequences. It is an offense against the God who made us, sustains us, and has every right to command us. Until we see sin rightly, we will never understand why judgment is so severe.

The trumpet and alarm sound against fenced cities and high towers. Those defenses were built to provide protection. People looked at the walls and felt secure. They looked at the towers and believed they could see danger coming. But the very things that made them feel untouchable could not stand when the LORD brought judgment.

Imagine someone retreating into the safest room of his house during a disaster. The doors are locked. The windows are covered. The walls feel solid. Then the entire structure begins to shake. The place he trusted for protection can no longer protect him. The problem is not that he needed a stronger lock. The problem is that his refuge cannot withstand what is coming.

We build our own fenced cities. Some trust status. Some trust family. Some trust health. Some trust preparation. Some trust their ability to stay in control. These things may protect us from ordinary troubles, but no wall built by man can shelter a sinner from divine judgment.

Let the language of this passage correct a casual view of sin. Do not soften what God has spoken. Do not hear wrath, darkness, and desolation and walk away merely informed. Let the warning produce sobriety. Let it humble you. Let it expose the high tower you have quietly trusted.

When the fenced cities fall and the high towers fail, perhaps wealth can provide an escape—but the text closes that final door as well.

### III. THE DAY CANNOT BE BOUGHT OFF

#### **Zephaniah 1:18**

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.

Money can solve many immediate problems. It can repair a roof, replace a vehicle, hire assistance, and purchase treatment. Because wealth works in so many situations, people slowly begin to believe it will work in every situation.

But picture a guilty man standing before a judge and placing his savings on the table, expecting the money to erase the truth of the case. His resources cannot change his guilt. His wealth cannot rewrite the record. What has value in the marketplace has no power to cancel righteous judgment.

Silver and gold could not deliver the people in Zephaniah's warning. Wealth might buy comfort, influence, protection, and time in ordinary life, but it cannot reconcile anyone to God. It cannot remove sin. It cannot purchase everlasting life. It cannot bribe the Judge of all the earth.

This does not mean that saving, planning, or owning possessions is wrong. The danger is not having resources. The danger is trusting them. Hold them as tools, not as saviors. Use them faithfully, but never believe they can provide ultimate security.

Ask yourself plainly: What am I trusting? What makes me feel untouchable? What do I believe will hold me up if everything else begins to fall? Name your fenced city. Name your high tower. Name your silver and gold. Then acknowledge what the passage declares: none of it can deliver in the day of the LORD's wrath.

Judgment cannot be delayed by human plans, resisted by human strength, escaped behind human walls, or bought off with human wealth. Ready or not, the day is coming. Strength cannot stop it. Walls cannot withstand it. Wealth cannot purchase deliverance from it.

### CONCLUSION

Zephaniah closes every door that men usually run through. Strength cannot stop the day. Fenced cities and high towers cannot withstand it. Silver and gold cannot purchase a way out. When the LORD rises in judgment, every refuge built by human hands will fail.

That means we must stop asking only, "What do I have?" and begin asking, "What am I trusting?" Your health may be strong. Your plans may be careful. Your savings may be growing. Your name may be respected. But none of those things can answer for sin, and none can deliver in the day of the LORD's wrath.

Believer, do not live as though temporary security were ultimate security. Hold your possessions loosely. Use your strength humbly. Make your plans under the authority of God. When fear comes, do not retreat into your own fenced city of control. Rest in the Lord who saved you, obey His Word, and let the certainty of coming judgment make you sober, faithful, and urgent about the things that matter eternally.

And if you have never believed on Jesus Christ, do not imagine that morality, religion, money, influence, or good intentions can make you ready. Salvation cannot be earned, purchased, or worked for. Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again, and everlasting life is received by faith in Him alone.

Zephaniah's warning is severe because the danger is real. Every false refuge will fall. Every human defense will fail. The day is coming whether men prepare for it or ignore it.

Ready or not, here it comes—so make sure your refuge is Christ.