

The Day of the Lord

Zeph 1:4-6, 14-16; 2:3
SS Lesson for 06/05/2016

Devotional Scripture: Joel 2:1-14

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Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

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From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

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Because hypocrisy is manifested by actions not agreeing with words (Titus 1:15-16)

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Introduction

Overview and Key Verse of the Lesson

The lesson admonishes us that because Israel had strayed from God and would not repent, God would bring judgment to them on **The Day of the Lord** and He can do the same to us. The **study's aim** is to see that God will always bring judgment on sin that has not been repented of. The **study's application** is to see that like the people of Judah, we must heed God's warnings if we are to avoid judgment.

(Adapted from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary)

Key Verse: Zeph 2:3

Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the Lord's anger.

Commentary from The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Zephaniah's prophecy has two major themes: (a) the bold declaration of God's imminent wrath, which implies a serious call to repentance, and (b) the comforting words of the prophet that even in judgment God will not forget his covenantal mercies but will restore His people at a future time. In his initial section Zephaniah sounded a stern warning of doom. He began by pronouncing judgment on the earth (1:2-3) and concluded with the same theme (3:8). In the interim he dealt twice with Judah and/or Jerusalem (1:4-2:3; 3:1-7) and once with the surrounding nations (2:4-15).

With horrifying abruptness Zephaniah set forth the Lord's proclamation of universal judgment. Isaiah also wrote about God's worldwide judgment (Isa. 24:1-6, 19-23). In Zephaniah 1:2 the prophet spoke in general about judgment and in verse 3 he gave details of that judgment. God would bring about this judgment, in which He would **sweep away everything**. "Sweep away" (used three times in vv. 2-3) means "to gather and take away, to remove, to destroy." This impending judgment on **the earth** would extend, Zephaniah said, to life on the land (**men and animals**), in the **air (birds)**, and in the **sea (the fish)**. Interestingly these four are in reverse order from Creation: fish (Gen. 1:20a), birds (Gen. 1:20b), livestock and wild animals (Gen. 1:24), and man (Gen. 1:26). So this destruction which Zephaniah saw is a kind of reversal of Creation. When God would **cut off** (cf. Zeph. 1:4; 3:6) **man**, the only thing left on **earth** would be ruins (**heaps of rubble**) of a once-prosperous past. Since Zephaniah later wrote that a remnant would be delivered (3:9-13), the universal destruction of mankind referred to in 1:2-3 would apparently be limited to **the wicked**. Jeremiah made this clear (Jer. 25:31-33). Having set forth in broad terms the major premise of impending doom, the prophet then focused on Judah and Jerusalem. In the Old Testament a generalized statement is often followed by detailed particulars (cf. Gen. 1:1 with Gen. 1:2-31). This section (Zeph. 1:4-2:3) clearly indicates that Judah's wicked people would be destroyed at the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. But how could Zephaniah at the same time write about *universal* judgment? (1:2-3) How could he turn so quickly from Judah's destruction in 586 to speak of the "day of the LORD" (v. 14), a yet-future event separated from that devastation in 586 by many centuries? When Babylon conquered Judah, judgment was not universal; so how could the two be related? One common answer is that every instance of divine judgment is called the day of the Lord. Another answer is that verses 2-3 and 3:8 refer not to universal judgment but to the Babylonian invasion described in words of hyperbole. Perhaps a better explanation is that Zephaniah saw Judah's destruction and universal judgment as *two parts of one grand event*, "the great day of the LORD" (1:14). The destruction of the prophet's own people would be so terrible that it was envisioned as ushering in God's day of wrath (v. 15; 2:2) on all the world's wicked. Later Zephaniah again associated God's judgment on the nations (3:6) and the whole world (3:8) with His judgment on Judah (3:1-5). The Babylonian destruction of Judah was thus a step in God's work of wrath on His people. The day of the Lord was referred to by many of the prophets (Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31, 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5). In several of these verses and in verses immediately before or after them the day of the Lord is associated with universal judgment (cf. Isa. 24). The prophet informed his hearers that the Lord was about to **stretch out His hand** in judgment and wrath (cf. 2:13) on the Southern Kingdom and its capital, **Jerusalem**. Every aspect of **Baal** worship would be removed. Baal was the Canaanite god of fertility whom many in Israel had worshiped in the time of the Judges (Judges 2:13) and in the time of Ahab (1 Kings 16:32). Baal worship involved

terrible sexual acts. Manasseh, wicked king of Judah, had erected Baal altars (2 Chron. 33:3, 7), but his grandson Josiah destroyed them (2 Chron. 34:4). But this “revival” of Josiah’s in 622 B.C. had no lasting effect. Baal was again being worshiped (cf. Jer. 19:5; 32:35). However, the time would come, Zephaniah wrote, when God would remove every last vestige of that pagan worship.

Zephaniah referred to two classes of priests. One group was **the pagan... priests**, non-Levitical appointees by the kings of Judah (2 Kings 23:5; cf. **idolatrous** “priests,” the same Heb. word, in Hosea 10:5). The Hebrew word for “pagan priests” is *kemārm*, which means idol-priests, priests who prostrated themselves before idols. The other group was the idolatrous priests, Levitical priests who had defected from the worship of the true God to a superstitious faith. After Zephaniah said that God would remove the false priests, he then referred to three forms of idolatrous worship, introducing each of them by the phrase **those who**. First, he noted the worshipers of stellar bodies, people **who bow down on flat housetops** (cf. Jer. 19:13; 2:29) as star-worshippers—through which the powers of nature were supposedly harnessed. The sun, moon, and stars were regarded as deities. Though God had clearly warned against this practice (Deut. 4:19), Manasseh led the way in this perversion also (2 Kings 21:3, 5; cf. 2 Kings 23:4-5). Second, Zephaniah mentioned **those who** attempted to combine the worship of Yahweh with the worship of **Molech**, a form of religious syncretism. Molech was the chief god of the Ammonites (1 Kings 11:33), a people east of the Dead Sea (cf. Zeph. 2:8-9). Jeremiah, a contemporary of Zephaniah, said the Jews were sacrificing children to Molech (Jer. 32:35; cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 21:6). The Hebrew *Malkām* (Zeph. 1:5, NIV marg.) is a variant spelling of “Molech.” To **swear by** a deity meant to pronounce an oath under the threat of punishment by that deity if one failed to carry out his oath. Third, the prophet spoke of others who were religiously indifferent and unconcerned about worshipping the true God (v. 6), though they may not have been worshipping other gods. After citing three types of idolatry in Judah—the overtly pagan, the syncretistic, and the religiously indifferent—the prophet called on all of them to **be silent before** God (cf. Hab. 2:20) because of the imminence of **the day of the LORD**. This is the first of 19 references in Zephaniah to “the day,” “that day,” “a day,” “the day of the LORD’s wrath,” and similar phrases referring to “the day of the LORD.” (See comments on Zeph. 1:4-2:3 and comments on 1:14.) Such impending judgment ought to evoke fear and silence. No more calling on Baal; no more invoking the stars; no more swearing by Molech—for now Yahweh, the only God, would act. They may have forgotten Him, but He would not forget them! In fact God **prepared** Judah like **a sacrifice**, that is, He prepared her for slaughter much as sacrificial animals were prepared to be eaten (cf. Isa. 34:6; Jer. 46:10). The **invited** guests, the Babylonians, were God’s chosen instrument (cf. Jer. 10:25; Hab. 1:6) to eat the sacrifice; they had been **consecrated** or set apart to be the agent of God’s judgment on His chosen nation.

Having boldly pronounced Yahweh’s impending judgment on the land of Judah by delineating the objects of His wrath, the prophet then described the devastation of that judgment. To awaken the complacent (cf. v. 12) nation to its peril the prophet returned to the theme stated in verse 7, **the great day of the LORD**. Grammatically the verse stresses the word **near**, which is first in the sentence in Hebrew (cf. “near” in v. 7, where it also appears in this emphatic position). The fearful wrath of God was to come on the nation **quickly**. Since Zephaniah wrote shortly after 622 B.C., the year of Josiah’s partial revival, the day of the Lord was in fact imminent. In 605, only 17 years after Josiah’s revival, Judah under Jehoiakim became a vassal of Babylon and many of Judah’s best young men were deported. Under Jehoiakim’s equally wicked successor, Jehoiachin, the city was again besieged by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 and some 10,000 Jews were deported. Under Zedekiah the city was under a long siege by Nebuchadnezzar and was finally destroyed in the summer of 586. Verses 14b-16 describe the physical characteristics of that awful day, while verses 17-18 describe the personal trauma of that judgment. The prophet began by calling the nation to hear his words (**Listen!**) for the **day** of Babylonian terror would cause the people to **cry** in bitterness and even the mighty Jewish **warrior** would retreat in fear and horror. The **wrath** of Almighty God on sinners (cf. v. 18; 2:2-3; 3:8) is depicted by such words as **distress... anguish... trouble... ruin... darkness... gloom... clouds, and blackness**. When the Babylonian soldiers did barge into the city, the Jerusalemites were distressed and in anguish; their houses were ruined, and the sky was dark from the smoke of the buildings set on fire. As the Babylonian hordes rushed to conquer, kill, and ravish, they sounded the **trumpet** and shouted in **battle** in their moves **against** not only Jerusalem but also other **fortified cities** in Judah. Soldiers at the **corner towers**, normally strongholds of defense against attacking enemies, were defenseless. So great would be God’s judgment, Zephaniah said, that the Jews in **distress** would wander about **like** helplessly **blind** people (cf. Deut. 28:28-29), unable to find any safe quarter. Such **distress** was not because of God’s impersonal cruelty; it was retribution for their having **sinned against the LORD**. The inhabitants of Judah would be

viciously killed; so much of **their blood** would be shed that it would be **like dust** on the streets. And their bodies would be cruelly ravished, with their innards piled up **like the filth** of dung piles. They would have no hope of deliverance; their wealth (**silver** [cf. "silver" in v. 11] and **gold**) would not **be able to** buy off their attackers (cf. Ezek. 7:19). Zephaniah then returned to the theme of universal judgment (cf. Zeph. 1:2-3). **The whole world will be** destroyed and **all** its inhabitants will quickly (**He will make a sudden end**) be subjected to the wrath of God. All this will stem from **His jealousy**, His consuming passion and concern that His own people follow Him, not false gods.

Commentary from The Bible Expositor and Illuminator Commentary

I was confronted once by a clergyman (who was not well schooled in the Bible) for using the language of salvation. "Saved from what to what?" he indignantly asked me. "What do you mean by being 'saved'?" Well, that was a good question, and I gave it some thought. I had to conclude that such a question is all about God. We are saved from God's wrath, and we are saved unto God's peace. And we are saved by God's grace. If we want to be saved, we must be saved by God, unto God, and from God's wrath. That is biblical salvation. God is the center of life and salvation. His judgment and deliverance are everything. The background of this text is the concept of the "day of the Lord," which is always a reference to God's judgment. God is patient and long-suffering, but the day is coming when His patience will come to an end, as it did for Israel in the days leading up to their exile. Zephaniah ministered during the days of King Josiah (Zeph. 1:1), who was the last good king before the exile of the southern kingdom of Judah. Josiah dealt with idolatry and wickedness in the kingdom, but the people did not truly repent. So Zephaniah warned that judgment was coming. God's people would be punished for giving themselves over to idolatry and unbelief. By way of application, every sinner is under God's judgment. A great day of reckoning is coming for the whole human race. It is imperative that people come to a consciousness of this truth—it is what causes many to seek salvation. How do we seek salvation? Zephaniah tells us first to seek the Lord. This is a command. It refers to an earnest, sincere seeking. We must experience God's salvation or we are lost. God requires that all people seek Him as the first principle of life. Our sins cause us to fail to glorify God properly. By God's grace, we must change the whole orientation of our lives to seek Him and His salvation, which is provided through the Lord Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for our sins on the cross. Zephaniah tells us that seeking the Lord involves "meekness," or humility. "Meekness" is used twice in verse Zeph 2:3. It is key. The term comes from the idea of being in a lowly position, often as the result of affliction. We have no power to escape from the slavery of sin. Only God can help. A man of meekness recognizes his dependence on God. Moses totally understood that dependence. Humility recognizes that we cannot save ourselves; the Lord must save us. Finally Zephaniah tells us that, as a result of salvation from God, we will be hidden from His judgment. This is a wonderful gift—to escape the just penalty of our sins. We find grace and divine protection through the mercy of a soul-saving God, who will preserve us in His eternal kingdom. Judgment and salvation are no laughing matters. We are dealing with the Living God, who is a "consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). Let us learn to proclaim the message of salvation.

Lesson Introduction and Background

From the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When we pronounce the word recreation, we usually say the first syllable with a short e (so that it comes out sounding like the e in wreck). As such, the word typically refers to some kind of leisure activity that provides a break from daily routine. Literally, the word recreation consists of the prefix re- (meaning "again") attached to the word creation. So recreation describes being created anew. Not only does God create (as in Genesis 1 and 2), he also re-creates, thereby providing the opportunity for each person to become a new creation in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17). That promise is part of the title of the lessons for this quarter of studies: "Toward a New Creation." Someone has observed that the grand theme or big picture of the Bible can be stated as follows: God is out to get back what is rightfully his. His original creation was ruined by sin, but God declared his intention to reverse the curse of sin by means of the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15). This is the first promise in the Old Testament regarding Jesus, and it highlights the purpose of his coming: to crush the head of the serpent—Satan (Romans 16:20; Revelation 12:9).

As the history of God's people unfolded, he raised up prophets. Their messages included not only challenges to the people of their day but also glimpses into the future time of the Messiah, what we might call "the era of re-creation." One such prophet was Zephaniah, whose writings are part of the Old Testament grouping of 12 books known as the Minor Prophets. We keep in mind that these are called "minor" not because they are of lesser significance, but because they are not as lengthy as the books grouped under the heading of Major Prophets. (The book of Lamentations is an exception; it is shorter than three books in the Minor Prophets, but it is included in the Major Prophets grouping because Jeremiah is thought to be the author.) Like the other Old Testament prophets, Zephaniah was guided by the Spirit of God as he spoke (2 Peter 1:21). Zephaniah 1:1 establishes this prophet to have been the great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah, who reigned about 727-698 BC. Zephaniah carried out his ministry during the seventh century BC. A contemporary of prophets Nahum and Jeremiah, he delivered the Lord's message to the southern kingdom of Judah during the reign of King Josiah, who ruled from 640 to 609 BC. To put all this in the larger context of history, Josiah's reign began about 300 years after the nation of Israel split into northern and southern kingdoms and almost 40 years before the Babylonian ruler Nebuchadnezzar began a series of incursions into Judah that climaxed in the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC. Josiah was one of Judah's best kings, spiritually speaking. His efforts to restore the nation to a position of favor with God were sparked by the discovery of "the Book of the Law" while the temple was being renovated (2 Kings 22:3-10). Perhaps we can think of Zephaniah's efforts as working in tandem with those of the godly king. Their attempts to turn the nation back to God became the last ray of hope before Judah plunged into a spiritual free fall. The result of that continued decline was divine judgment.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Judgment is Coming (Zeph 1:4-6)

4 "I will stretch out My hand against Judah, And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, The names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests--
5 Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops; Those who worship and swear oaths by the Lord, But who also swear by Milcom;
6 Those who have turned back from following the Lord, And have not sought the Lord, nor inquired of Him."

Against idolaters (4)

Because idolatry is exchanging God's truth for a lie (Rom 1:25)

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

Because idolatry must be avoided (1 Cor 10:14)

14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Because idolatry is participating with demons (1 Cor 10:18-22)

18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Because idolatry leads to death (Deut 30:17-20)

17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. 19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so

that you and your children may live 20 and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Against hypocrites (5)

Because hypocrisy shuts the kingdom of heaven from others (Matt 23:13)

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Because hypocrisy is failing to see our own sin (Luke 6:42)

42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Because hypocrisy causes divisions and obstacles (Rom 16:17-18)

17 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

Because hypocrisy is manifested by actions not agreeing with words (Titus 1:15-16)

15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

Against unbelievers (6)

Because Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor 4:4)

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Because unbelievers minds are dull (2 Cor 3:14)

14 But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.

Because unbelievers follow the ways of this world (Eph 2:2)

2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

Because unbelievers are condemned because of not believing in the name of God (John 3:18)

18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Judgment is Near (Zeph 1:14-16)

14 The great day of the Lord is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out.

15 That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers.

Coming quickly (14)

A quick destruction (2 Peter 2:1)

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them — bringing swift destruction on themselves.

A quick appearance (1 Thess 5:2)

2 for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.

So quick that everyone needs to keep watch (Matt 24:42-44)

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

A quick reconciliation of justice (Luke 18:6-8)

6 And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. 7 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Day of wrath (15)

God's wrath because of suppression of truth by wickedness (Rom 1:18)

18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

God's wrath because not knowing God (2 Thess 1:8-9)

8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

God's wrath because the soul belongs to God and those who sin will die (Ezek 18:4)

4 For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son — both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.

God's wrath to weed out sin and evil (Matt 13:41)

41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

Day of alarm (16)

Alarms about condemnations in the future (Heb 11:7)

7 By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

Alarms about rebellion (Dan 9:4-6)

4 I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: "O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, 5 we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. 6 We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

Alarms about ways and practices (Zech 1:6)

6 But did not my words and my decrees, which I commanded my servants the prophets, overtake your forefathers? "Then they repented and said, 'The Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as he determined to do.'"

Alarms about accountability (Luke 11:49-51)

49 Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.' 50 Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, 51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

Alarms about consequences of wickedness (Luke 16:27-31)

27 "He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, 28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' 29 "Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 30 "No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' 31 "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Hope is Present (Zeph 2:3)

2:3 Seek the Lord, all you meek of the earth, Who have upheld His justice. Seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be that you will be hidden In the day of the Lord's anger.

Hope for the meek (3)

Hope for the meek because of being one of God's chosen people (Col 3:12)

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Hope for the meek because of pursuing gentleness(1 Tim 6:11)

11 But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.

Hope for the meek because of enjoying the presence of God (Isa 57:15)

15 For this is what the high and lofty One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.

Hope for the meek because God chooses the meek to do His work (James 2:5)

5 Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him?

Hope for the just (3)

Hope for the just because of not be shaken (Ps 15:2-5)

2 He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart 3 and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellowman, 4 who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the Lord, who keeps his oath even when it hurts, 5 who lends his money without usury and does not accept a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken.

Hope for the just because of being acceptable to God (Prov 21:3)

3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.

Hope for the just because God will not forsake them (Ps 37:28)

28 For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off;

Hope for the just because God guards their course (Prov 2:7-8)

7 He holds victory in store for the upright, He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, 8 for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of His faithful ones.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from David Guzik

Zephaniah 1 - Coming Judgment and the Reasons For It

(See URL:<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/guz/zephaniah-1.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentator

During my time in Bible college a little over 40 years ago, I was preaching in a church in rural Kentucky. One of the songs that the congregation would often sing during Sunday morning worship included the following words, penned by Will L. Thompson (1847-1909):

*There's a great day coming, a great day coming;
There's a great day coming by and by,
When the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left,
Are you ready for that day to come?*

The refrain repeats the question of that last line:

Are you ready? Are you ready? Are you ready for the judgment day? Are you ready? Are you ready? For the judgment day?

We do not know whether the prophet Zephaniah was a singer. (He does describe the Lord as “singing” in Zephaniah 3:17.) But he clearly warned God’s people that there’s a great day coming (1:14). The New Testament echoes that thought as it foresees the day of Jesus’ return. This is a crucial question: Who shall be able to stand on the great day of the Lord? The answer: those who treat each day as the day of the Lord in order to be ready when that day actually arrives. This means seeing each day as a gift from God and as a day to trust that Jesus will keep his promise to return, in spite of scoffers (2 Peter 3:3, 4). Psalm 90:12 provides an appropriate prayer for each day: “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Many are familiar with the words of Psalm 118:24: “Let us rejoice today and be glad.” We often refer to Sunday as “the Lord’s Day,” but in truth each day is his—a gift to be used in his service to his glory. Thus if we are living each day as faithful servants of the Lord, then the great day coming will be a day of joy. If we are like the people described in Zephaniah 1:6, who “neither seek the Lord nor inquire of him,” then we will be among those who cry bitterly. Most in that congregation in Kentucky where I preached years ago have gone on to be with the Lord. But the question they sang cannot be silenced: Are you ready for the judgment day?

Practical Points from the Bible Expositor and Illuminator

1. Christians must guard against anything that competes for God's place in their lives (Zeph. 1:4)
2. Resist the deceptive mind-set that we can simply mix together our Christian faith with other religions (vs. 5)
3. Christians must be alert to avoid drifting away from worship of God and prayer (vs. 6)
4. Only God can spare us from the terror of His sure judgment (vs. 14)
5. Darkness and fear result when man chooses life apart from the light of God's love and truth (vss. 15-16).
6. Each day is a new opportunity to turn from sin and choose the security of God's forgiveness and love (2:3)