

The Day of the Lord

– Zephaniah 1 –

Zephaniah is a fascinating book. We will be taking an in-depth look at the first chapter. It deals with the topic of the day of the Lord. We will be exploring the imagery used to discover its themes. This will help us to get a better view of the event and what God wants us to expect.

The Day of the Lord

The term “The day of the Lord” mainly refers to the second advent of Jesus. Associated with this term is the idea of complete destruction, and the death of all things living on Earth. The prophets use words like anger, vengeance, howling, and destruction in reference to the second coming. Here are some examples:

“I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the LORD.”—*Zephaniah 1:2*.

“Howl ye; for the day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty.”—*Isaiah 13:6*.

“For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.”—*Jeremiah 46:10*.

The Bible uses the metaphor of a sacrifice to describe the day of the Lord. This reference appears in Zephaniah 1:7:

“Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD: for the day of the LORD is at hand: for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath bid his guests.”

The Lord’s Great Sacrifice

In Isaiah 34:6 we are given more detail to help us understand the Lord’s great sacrifice:

“The sword of the LORD is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the LORD hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea.”

The prophets tell us this sacrifice takes place in Botsrah in Idumea, the land of Edom. The Edomites were descendants of Jacob’s brother, Esau. The Bible uses the story of Jacob to illustrate an experience that the 144,000 will have.

“Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”—*Jeremiah 30:7*.

How fitting then that God’s sacrifice takes place in the land of Edom. If the experience of the righteous is described by the time when Jacob wrestled with God, the work of the wicked is foretold through the example of Esau. Esau marched out at the head of his army to do violence to his brother. The people who have walked in the way of Esau and sold their birth-right for instant gratification will march on the 144,000 to accomplish their destruction.

The reference to the fat of the kidneys in Isaiah 34:6 speaks to the sins of the mind. In ancient times, it was commonly believed that the kidneys were where thoughts were formed. This concept appears in Psalm 16:7, where the word kidneys is translated as reins. It’s reasonable that the ancient peoples thought kidneys looked like the reins of a horse. Because of this it was deduced that they guided the body, and since thoughts guide the mind, then thoughts are formed in the reins or kidneys. Offering the fat of kidneys means burning away the sins of the mind. It is mentioned because God knows the wicked’s intentions towards the righteous. He that hateth his brother is already a murderer. Nobody’s sins can be hidden from the sword of the Lord, it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

In Ezekiel 39:17-19, a unique invitation appears in reference to this sacrifice:

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood.

2 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.”

And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you.”

God extends an invitation to the birds. This invitation appears again in Revelation 19:17-18:

“And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.”

As the righteous are partaking of the marriage supper in heaven, the birds of the air are partaking in a great supper on earth. It is highly likely that this is not an actual occurrence but rather a graphic, poetic depiction of the desolations of the earth that will remain for 1,000 years. Very similar to Revelation’s depiction of Christ riding on a white horse. The horse doesn’t exist. He is actually riding on the clouds of heaven which aren’t actually clouds but a retinue of angels. Ah, biblical poetry, the language of heaven. The point is, the great supper is clearly a reference to the day of the Lord, the Second Advent.

Why does God use the term “great sacrifice” though? This term points us to exactly how the destruction of the wicked is accomplished. There are two cases of great sacrifices in the Old Testament. The first is the case of Samson (Judges 16:23-31), in which the Philistines, or uncircumcised, offered a giant sacrifice to honor Dagon for giving them victory over Samson.

“Then the lords of the Philistines gathered them together for to offer a great sacrifice unto Dagon their God, and to rejoice: for they said, Our God hath delivered Samson our enemy into our hand.”—*Judges 16:23*.

Samson had been tortured, imprisoned, and consigned to forced labor. Then he was brought out at this great feast so he could be mocked and humiliated.

“And when the people saw him, they praised their God: for they said, Our God hath delivered into our hands our enemy, and the destroyer of our country, which slew many of us.”—*Judges 16:24*.

We all know how this sacrifice ended. There

were some fat birds a few weeks later. This story teaches us that without God we are powerless, but it also teaches that God hears even those who have made many mistakes, if their hearts are changed. Samson was a man ruled by passion; he had been set apart at birth, but because of his headstrong disobedience, he united with those whom God had set him apart from. This unity ended when his eyes were blinded and his self-trust broken. He was imprisoned and forced to grind grain for the uncircumcised. He felt his weakness as never before, which led him to sincere repentance. Because of God’s faithfulness, the underdog became the victor. He received power from God to conquer. Pulling down the two pillars that supported the temple, he killed more in his death than in his life. This broke the power of the uncircumcised over God’s people.

The next great sacrifice was to Baal, and Jehu held it for the purpose of destroying Baal worshipers. Zephaniah 1:4 tells us:

“I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests;”

This sentence describes precisely what Jehu did. Howbeit, he accomplished it in quite a spectacular way. You can read the full story in 2 Kings 10:18-27. According to 2 Kings 10:27, there was even an image of baal at this sacrifice. I wonder if it was 66 cubits tall, six cubits wide, and made of gold. Jehu was the successor of Ahab, typological of the papacy (Revelation 2:20). Israel had been freed from the reign of Ahab, and now Jehu disappoints all the righteous in the kingdom by declaring:

“Ahab served Baal a little; but Jehu shall serve him much.”—*2 Kings 10:18*.

The Baal worshipers were ecstatic; he gave them exactly what they wanted. Then he killed them for it. Likewise, God will bring about strong delusions (2 Thessalonians 2:11) to destroy all those who worship Baal, another form of the sun god. Of note, Jehu set apart the Baal worshipers for destruction by clothing them with garments. The day of the Lord is no different. All those who clothe themselves in filthy rags will be punished and Zephaniah recalls the story to the memory of his readers with the term great sacrifice and this reference:

“And it shall come to pass in the day of the LORD’S sacrifice, that I will punish the princes, and the king’s children, and all such

as are clothed with strange apparel.”—*Zephaniah 1:8*.

The example of Samson is not forgotten by the prophet either. He references it in the next verse:

“In the same day also will I punish all those that leap on the threshold, which fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.”—*Zephaniah 1:9*.

The custom of leaping on the threshold was given to honor the severed head of Dagon:

“Therefore neither the priests of Dagon, nor any that come into Dagon’s house, tread on the threshold of Dagon in Ashdod unto this day.”—*1 Samuel 5:5*.

Both gods are referenced by the prophet Zephaniah. This proves that these stories are given us to catch a glimpse of what the day of the Lord will look like.

Destiny Sealed

Looking at Zephaniah 1:12, we read of a class of Jews that God punishes too:

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.”

God searches the hearts of His people, and He does so with candles.

“For the commandment is a lamp (also translated as candle); and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life”—*Proverbs 6:23*.

God punishes those who are “settled on their lees.” A literal translation renders this as “hardened on the settlements of wine.” Fortunately, this idea is paralleled by the description of what they say. “The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.” God describes a group of His professed people just before His second coming. He tells us their hearts will be hardened like the residue of grape juice on the bottom of a cup. They are stuck because they think God will neither recompense the wicked nor deliver His saints. They believe God will not do anything. Because of this, they are engrossed in personal gain. They seem to be unaware that God is bringing evil upon the world. Their message is one of peace and safety.

“The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly.”—*Zephaniah 1:4*.

The Day of the Lord hasteth greatly; now is not the time to be settling into the world. The bitter crying in this instance refers to the repentance of the 144,000. This bitter crying is a reference to the time of Jacob’s trouble.

“Behold, their valiant ones shall cry without: the ambassadors of peace shall weep bitterly.”—*Isaiah 33:7*.

“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”—*Zechariah 12:10*.

“Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”—*Jeremiah 30:6-7*.

The wicked will also cry bitterly when Christ returns. Not for their sins, but because of its results. Essentially, both the wicked and the righteous will go through bitter experiences, but for different reasons. One cries in repentance like Jacob, the other weeps bitterly because no place of repentance can be found, like Esau.

“For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.”—*Hebrews 12:17*.

When Christ pronounces his work finished, all confessed sins have been blotted out, and all unconfessed sins are pronounced to remain. There is no repentance after the work of atonement is complete. As for the righteous, they will receive a new name just like Jacob did:

“Thy name shall be called no more Jacob (Supplanter), but Israel (He will rule as God): for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.”—*Genesis 32:28*.

A Better Picture

In the next verse, we are given many descriptions of the Day of the Lord all at once. After careful research, I have selected specific themes that each of these descriptions seeks to draw the reader’s attention to.

“That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble

- 4 and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness.”—*Zephaniah 1:15*.

Day of Wrath

“Riches profit not in the day of wrath: but righteousness delivereth from death.”—*Proverbs 11:4*.

Here, Proverbs contrasts two places where trust is placed. Righteousness can deliver from death, but money cannot. While wealth gives one power and a defense in this world, they mean nothing in the world to come.

“There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.”—*Proverbs 13:7*.

“The ransom of a man’s life are his riches: but the poor heareth not rebuke.”—*Proverbs 13:8*.

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?”—*James 2:5*.

God only respects the power and defense of faith. Money is nothing to Him who owns the cattle on a thousand hills.

The next reference is found in Isaiah 9:19-20:

“Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm.”

Here, the Bible depicts a time when even familial relations mean nothing to the wicked—a time when brother is against brother, reminiscent of Jacob and Esau. The day of wrath is a time when men are accounted fuel for the fire of God, a time of hunger. Hunger can be a reference to an insatiable pursuit of pleasure, or literal starvation.

The term “eat the flesh of his own arm” is a reference to every man following his own path to salvation (compare John 6:53, Isaiah 52:10, 59:16, Judges 17:9) and trusting in man for deliverance (Jeremiah 17:5).

The next reference is found in Isaiah 13:9:

More Food for the Little Flock —

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it.”

This is a rather simple reference, it explicitly states that on the day of wrath God comes to destroy sinners.

The next reference demonstrated the underlying theme associated with the term “Day of Wrath”:

“They shall cast their silver in the streets, and their gold shall be removed: their silver and their gold shall not be able to deliver them in the day of the wrath of the LORD: they shall not satisfy their souls, neither fill their bowels: because it is the stumblingblock of their iniquity.”—*Ezekiel 7:19*.

In the day of wrath money will be found worthless because the wicked cannot bribe the Righteous Judge. During their life they placed their hope in money. They were even willing to rob their own family to better themselves. But money could not satisfy them and now it cannot save them. Their trust in riches became a stumbling block of iniquity. The theme that is associated with the term “day of wrath” is the folly of looking to riches for salvation.

“To have your name on the church book does not make you a Christian. You are to bring your gifts to the altar of sacrifice, cooperating with God to the utmost of your ability, that through you He may reveal the beauty of His truth. Withhold nothing from the Saviour. All is His. You would have nothing to give did He not first give to you. Selfishness has come in, and has appropriated to itself that which belongs to God. This is covetousness, which is idolatry. Men monopolize that which God has lent them, as though it were their own property, to do with as they please. When their power to grasp wealth is gratified, they think that their possessions make them of value in the sight of God. This is a snare, a deception of Satan. What does outward pomp and show avail? What do men and women gain by pride and self-indulgence? ‘What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’ Worldly treasure is fleeting. Only through Christ can we obtain eternal riches. The wealth that He gives is beyond all computation. Having found God,

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you are supremely rich in the contemplation of His treasure. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.' Ask yourself the question, What am I doing with the Lord's talents? Are you placing yourselves where the words are applicable to you, 'Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation?' —*Councils on Stewardship 84-85.*

Day of Trouble

We will begin our inspection of this term in Psalm 20. It is a beautiful "time of trouble" psalm.

"The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee; Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion; Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand. Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright."—*Psalm 20:1-8.*

In the day of trouble, God is revealed as the God of Jacob. David changes God's title to remind himself of the story of Jacob. In this Psalm, The Lord sends help from His sanctuary, He hears from the holy heavens and saves with His mighty right hand. Those who placed their trust in the wrong place have fallen, but the righteous are risen and stand upright. The imagery reminds us of the three Hebrew boys who stood when everyone else fell down and worshiped. It also speaks of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and reminds us that God saves those that put their trust in Him.

Another reference to the day of trouble can be found in Psalm 50:14-15.

"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."

If we keep the covenant of the Lord and give Him thanks in everything, God promises to deliver us in the day of trouble. In the time of trouble, God's people call upon Him, and if they have kept His covenant, He answers from heaven. Christ comes with the armies of Heaven to deliver the righteous. For all eternity, the 144,000 glorify Christ with the story of their deliverance. They will say:

"I will sing of thy power; yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning; for thou hast been my defence and refuge in the day of my trouble."—*Psalm 59:16.*

Once again, we see that Christ is mighty to save!

"The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth. The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein. Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him. The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him."—*Nahum 1:3-7.*

This section of scripture highlights the power of God. In the chaos of the whirlwind, God is not only present, but His will is fulfilled. When the day of trouble comes upon the earth, God remembers those who trust in Him. He hides them in the cleft of the rock. The Lord of Hosts promises the righteous:

"Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his

angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him, and honour him.—*Psalms 91:8-15*.

The whirlwind of destruction that is soon to break upon the world brings to life all the fears of the wicked. In fact, it is the fears of the wicked coming upon them:

“When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”—*Proverbs 1:27-33*.

The story of Sennacherib’s fall illustrates these points very well. You can read it in Isaiah 37.

The theme associated with the term “day of trouble” is God’s deliverance. It opens the eyes of the reader to the ample provision given to the righteous. In the descriptions of the desolations God is bringing, He takes a moment to assure His people that He protects and saves those that trust in Him.

Day of distress

“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldst not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldst thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldst not have entered into the gate of my people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldst

not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress.”—*Obadiah 1:10-14*.

This section of scripture is a condemnation of the actions of the children of Esau. In the day of Israel’s distress, they rejoiced, they helped the enemy, and they spoke proudly. They used the calamity of their brother for personal gain, even killing those who had not escaped. Instead of helping their brothers, they delivered them to the enemy. Because of this, God promises to cut them off forever.

Here is another reference to a time of distress:

“The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses. Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins. Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred. O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.”—*Psalms 25:17-20*.

“The troubles of my heart” David speaks about echoes Jacob’s time of trouble; Jacob recognized the enormity of his sins and sought forgiveness for them. In his affliction and distress, when his brother was marching to destroy him, he was seeking refuge in the mercy of God.

We see another example of distresses used in Psalm 107:

“Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.”—*Psalms 107:17-22*.

The theme these sections of scripture dwell upon is an experience of deep repentance. Because of this repentance God delivers the righteous from the distresses caused by sin.

Day of Wasteness

“For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have

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digged for my soul. Let destruction (wasteness) come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction (wasteness) let him fall.”—*Psalms 35:7-8*.

The Hebrew word used in Zephaniah 1:15 for “wasteness” appears in Psalm 35 as “destruction”. In this verse, we find the wicked laying a trap for the righteous without cause. The prayer of the psalmist is for the wicked to fall into his own trap. We can find a good illustration of this in the book of Esther, when Haman is hanged on the gallows he intended for Mordecai. The story has all the markers of an end of the world scenario including a universal death decree for the Jews.

Our next reference is found in Psalm 63:9-10:

“But those that seek my soul, to destroy (wasteness) it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth. They shall fall by the sword: they shall be a portion for foxes.”

Here we find the wicked seeking to lay waste to the soul of the psalmist. But he declares they will go down to the lowest part of death, they will die by the sword, and be an inheritance for the wild dogs. Again we see the destruction of the wicked takes on a poetic aspect when they become food for foxes.

“Be not afraid of sudden fear, neither of the desolation (wasteness) of the wicked, when it cometh. For the LORD shall be thy confidence, and shall keep thy foot from being taken.”—*Proverbs 3:25-26*.

This is a precious assurance from God. He commands us not to be afraid when we see the destruction coming upon the wicked. The Lord will keep our feet from being taken. This literally means captured in a noose. It must’ve been quite a vivid depiction of deliverance. One of the methods for capturing birds for sacrificial offerings included a cleverly hidden noose. Christ tells the righteous that they are to be as harmless as doves, and if we are, He will deliver us.

Here is another reference; this one speaks of unrighteous decrees:

“Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation (wasteness) which shall come

from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory?”—*Isaiah 10:1-3*.

The Bible describes unrighteous decrees that pervert judgment. Decrees that rob the widows and the fatherless. When the day of desolation comes, those who enforced unrighteous decrees have no place to turn. Haman intended to enrich himself by taking the substance of the Jews. But he fell into his own trap, and his own house became the spoil of the righteous. This brings to light the theme of the term “day of wasteness.” the wicked layed a trap to plunder the righteous, but to their surprise they fall into it themselves.

Day of Desolation

The Hebrew word for desolation in Zephaniah 1:14 appears only three times in scripture. Here is the only one I found to hold any theme:

“But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock. Yea, whereto might the strength of their hands profit me, in whom old age was perished? For want and famine they were solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste. Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for their meat. They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them as after a thief;) To dwell in the cliffs of the valleys, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks. Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together. They were children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth. And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword. They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.”—*Job 30:1-10*.

In this section of scripture, Job is mourning his condition. He tells his friends that the wicked who were outcasts in times past have now risen against him in hatred, derision, and scorn. They hold Job to be a greater sinner than they are because of the desolations that have come upon him. The theme that is apparent in this section of scripture is the wicked condemning the righteous, who have been made desolate. In the words of Job, for want and famine the Righteous are solitary. Fleeing into the wilderness they live on berries and roots.

Day of Darkness

“Are not my days few? cease then, and let me alone, that I may take comfort a little, Before I go whence I shall not return, even to the land

8 of darkness and the shadow of death; A land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.”—*Job 10:20-22*.

In poetic language Job calls death the land of darkness. But for the righteous God has a promise:

“Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.”—*Psalms 112:4*.

Here we see that the righteous have light in darkness. This means there is hope for them even if they die. But for the wicked there is no hope.

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; 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. A fire devoureth before them; and behind them a flame burneth: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and nothing shall escape them.”—*Joel 2:1-3*.

This is a vivid depiction of the second coming. Though it is described as a day of darkness, the sun is rising on the mountains. Though the day is gloomy, the land is like the Garden of Eden. This is because God is marching across the earth at the head of an army. On this day, not one wicked person will escape the darkness of death.

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine. And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogance of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.”—*Isaiah 13:9-11*.

It is a day that the sun ceases to shine, but the earth is lit with the glory of God.

God warns the righteous not to desire the

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day of the Lord:

“Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it?”—*Amos 5:18-20*.

We should be hastening the coming of the Lord, but we should have respect for what kind of day it will be. This section of scripture is more of a warning to those who desire the day of the Lord so they can be avenged on their enemies. The day of the Lord is a day without mercy for the unrighteous. Everyone has already decided their fates by this time. We should desire the coming of Christ, looking for and hastening the day, but not because we want vengeance on our enemies.

The theme associated with the “day of darkness” is the death and the destruction of the wicked. It comes with a warning to the righteous; do not desire the destruction of the wicked.

“Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.”—*Proverbs 24:17-18*.

Day of Gloominess

“The way of the wicked is as darkness (gloominess): they know not at what they stumble.”—*Proverbs 4:19*.

The Hebrew word for gloominess refers to the time when one loses eyesight at dusk, or to misfortune. Here, the Bible likens the path of the wicked to be like an evening after the sun has set. In a very short time, they completely lose the ability to discern their surroundings. The term gloominess appears in *Isaiah 8:19-22*:

“And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. And they shall pass through it, hardly bestead and

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hungry; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness (gloominess).”

In the context of Isaiah eight, the Lord had hidden His face from Israel because of their sins. The prophet and those faithful to God earnestly sought the Lord, and He was found. The others, like King Saul, decided to seek after familiar spirits because the voice of the Lord was no longer heard. They became hungry, and they began to complain against God, going so far as to curse Him. Then they turned their eyes to the world, and by beholding, they were driven to gloominess. Losing their ability to discern good and evil, they walked in the path of the wicked. The Bible tells us:

“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”—*Isaiah 59:1-2*.

Even when God hides His face from His people because of their sins, He is still mighty to save. He can still be found. There is a time coming that God will not be found nor entreated, a time when those who have chosen their own ways will reap what they have sown.

“Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works: their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood: their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Therefore, is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, but we walk in dark-

ness (gloominess). We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noonday as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them; In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood.”—*Isaiah 59:6-13*.

God’s professed people cover themselves with their own works as if they can make themselves righteous. They do not know the paths of peace; they have become blind. Salvation is far from them. They have lied against God, they have spoken oppression and rebellion. They have shared falsehoods. Are we all that different from ancient Israel? When we are oppressed, do we respond with the same tactics the world has used? Do we try to cover our sins with works of righteousness and pretentious zeal? How is it that we praise one another for practicing sins, for conceiving falsehoods, for ascribing to God the methods of the world? Korah gained the admiration of Israel for his rebellious course, for speaking against the leaders, for silencing the voice of reproof. Could it be that popular voices calling for rebellion are from the wrong side? What about those who are praised for their words of falsehood, the ones who imagine sins in the hearts of others? And let’s not forget those who are seeking to silence reproof! Satan can play both sides; he can appear as an angel of light, and he has his ministers. Despite this, the principles of his kingdom are still employed. His ministers can be identified by slander, accusation, rebellion, and retaliation. The most telling sign is their hatred of sinners. All too often, those denouncing the faults of others are also practicing secret sins. They clothe themselves

10 with webs of deceit. By contrasting themselves with others they appear righteous.

“For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness (gloominess): they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.”—*Jeremiah 23:11-13*.

Even today, we have false prophets in our church. God says:

“I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.”—*Jeremiah 23:21-22*.

Those who interpret prophecy falsely are also a class of false prophets. I have seen many false interpretations, not only of Ellen White’s visions but even of Bible prophecy. Surely false prophets are aiding in the work of criticizing the church, hurling all the troubles the church is going through on the back of one, two, or all the leaders. But what did the true prophet Daniel say and do?

“I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.”—*Daniel 9:3-5*.

Daniel, a man greatly beloved, a man that God upholds in the Bible as an example of faithfulness and fidelity to God, confessed himself as a partaker in the sins of his people. Not to the king, or the Babylonian gossip mongers, but to God. Please don’t listen to people who give false interpretations to substantiate their rebellious course. God has not sent them. The Lord promises us that if we do away with the putting forth of the finger, among other things, He will cause our gloominess to be as the noonday.

“Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and

speaking vanity; And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness (gloominess) be as the noonday”—*Isaiah 58:9-10*.

The “day of gloominess” theme opens the reader’s eyes to a time when the righteous are overcome by the ways of wickedness and driven into wickedness. Instead of being patient and waiting on the Lord’s salvation, they take matters into their own hands. Instead of confessing their sins and letting Christ justify them, they point to the sins of others to justify themselves.

Day of Clouds

“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud.”—*Gen 9:13-14*.

The rain cloud remains on earth as an echo of the judgment brought upon the world nearly four thousand years ago. In such clouds God has left the sign of an eternal covenant with man—a promise that He will not destroy the world with a flood of water again.

Again, we see the cloud being an assurance to the people of God during the Exodus:

“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night.”—*Exodus 13:21*.

When God led the children of Israel, He chose a cloud to veil His presence. It was a shelter from the heat of the day and light in the darkness of night.

A cloud served to veil His presence when He spoke the Ten Commandments too:

“And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.”—*Deuteronomy 4:11*.

The cloud has ever been something that conceals God in His interactions with mankind. In this instance, it shielded the Israelites from the glory of the Father and Son as they proclaimed the Ten Commandments from Sinai.

The presence of God is not the only thing heralded by a cloud.

“For the day is near, even the day of the LORD is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen.”—*Ezekiel 30:3*.

Here we see clouds herald the day of the Lord, but also depict a time when the heathen

rule—a time when every wind of doctrine, deception, and evil passion carry people into darkness.

In Isaiah 44:22, we read:

“I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.”

This verse provides more clarity on what clouds can symbolize. When used in a positive sense, it can mean the presence of God or His judgment and righteousness; in a negative sense, it can depict sins and the wicked.

In this place, the Bible uses clouds to illustrate how fleeting the life of the wicked is:

“And now they sin more and more, and have made them molten images of their silver, and idols according to their own understanding, all of it the work of the craftsmen: they say of them, Let the men that sacrifice kiss the calves. Therefore they shall be as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away, as the chaff that is driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as the smoke out of the chimney.”—*Hosea 13:1-2*.

The term “day of clouds” has several themes associated with it. It is a day when the presence of God is near to judge, a day when God tells the righteous their sins are blotted out, a day when the wicked fade as the morning clouds. It is a day of fulfilled promises where God is present, judging the wicked in righteousness.

Day of Thick Darkness

The Bible teaches us that God is surrounded by light that keeps us from coming near Him:

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see.”—*1 Timothy 6:16*.

Despite this, an apparent contradiction arises. The Bible often depicts God appearing in darkness:

“And the people stood afar off, and Moses drew near unto the thick darkness where God was.”—*Exodus 20:21*.

“Then said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.”—*2 Chronicles 6:1*.

God veils himself from the eyes of humanity in darkness. He does this to hide the light of the glory that surrounds him. If He didn’t, anyone who saw Him would die. The psalmist describes the arrival of God in poetic language:

“He bowed the heavens also, and came

down: and darkness was under his feet.”—*Psalm 18:9*.

“He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.”—*Psalm 18:11*.

This concept highlights a rather humorous turn of events for the wicked. The wicked are depicted as obsessed with hiding their works in darkness.

“For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”—*Job 34:21-22*.

While we cannot see what goes on in darkness, nothing is hidden from God. The wicked hide their works from man in the night, and flatter themselves that they are hid from God too. The theme associated with the term “Day of Thick Darkness” is Ironic.

“And thou sayest, How doth God know? Can he judge through the dark cloud? Thick clouds are a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.”—*Job 22:13-14*.

The wicked snuck about, hiding their evil works in darkness, but they didn’t know the darkness was the presence of the Lord of heaven’s armies. God saw their works as if it were noon. Indeed, they were committed as if “before His face.” Great times of darkness are soon to come upon the people of God, but this term brings to light the presence of God. If we can see the unseen with the eye of faith, our experience will not be dark and hopeless. Just as the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, the presence of God will provide us with light and warmth, while the wicked will be plunged into darkness, thunderings, and the judgments of God.

Towers and Alarms

Zephaniah 1:16 adds a few more terms for us to explore and identify their themes:

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

Day of the Trumpet

“Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities. Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.”—*Jeremiah 4:5-6*.

Here is another fascinating depiction of the

12 day of the Lord. The Lord called upon the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to circumcise their hearts. To cut away the sins from their lives (Colossians 2:11). He warned that evil was coming from the north. This evil was a king that the Bible describes in the following words:

“The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate; and thy cities shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.”—*Jeremiah 4:7*.

Contextually, this is describing the king of Babylon. And in our time, the king of Babylon is also preparing for the final battle. He has gone forth to make desolate with the abomination of desolation. The prophet sees this evil coming and responds in the following words:

“My bowels, my bowels! I am pained at my very heart; my heart maketh a noise in me; I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment. How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet? For my people is foolish, they have not known me; they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.”—*Jeremiah 4:19-27*.

The trumpet is an alarm of war; in this section of scripture, it announces the final battle of Armageddon. This battle makes the earth desolate, without form and void. The mountains are laid low, the earth is left partially uncreated, but the full end is not yet. It lingers for 1000 years. Earth becomes the prison house of the chief of rebels, Satan. The Bible says of Lucifer:

“All the kings of the nations, even all of them,

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lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an abominable branch, and as the raiment of those that are slain, thrust through with a sword, that go down to the stones of the pit; as a carcase trodden under feet. Thou shalt not be joined with them in burial, because thou hast destroyed thy land, and slain thy people: the seed of evildoers shall never be renowned.”—*Isaiah 14:18-20*.

The sounding of the trumpet on the day of the Lord is recorded in Revelation 10:7. It tells us that when the trumpet begins to sound, the mystery of God is completed.

“But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.”

Paul tells us what happens at the sounding of this trumpet:

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first.”—*1 Thessalonians 4:16*.

Did you know that once every 50 years, a trumpet sounded on the day of atonement? It was the trumpet for the year of Jubilee:

“Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.”—*Leviticus 25:9-10*.

When Ellen White speaks of the second coming, she references the year of Jubilee:

“Then commenced the Jubilee, when the land should rest. I saw the pious slave rise in triumph and victory and shake off the chains that bound him, while his wicked master was in confusion and knew not what to do; for the wicked could not understand the words of the voice of God. Soon appeared the great white cloud. It looked more lovely than ever before. On it sat the Son of man. At first we did not see Jesus on the cloud, but as it drew near the earth we could behold His lovely person. This cloud, when it first appeared, was the sign of

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the Son of man in heaven. The voice of the Son of God called forth the sleeping saints, clothed with glorious immortality. The living saints were changed in a moment and were caught up with them into the cloudy chariot. It looked all over glorious as it rolled upward. On either side of the chariot were wings, and beneath it wheels. And as the chariot rolled upward, the wheels cried, "Holy," and the wings, as they moved, cried, "Holy," and the retinue of holy angels around the cloud cried, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" And the saints in the cloud cried, "Glory! Alleluia!" And the chariot rolled upward to the Holy City. Jesus threw open the gates of the golden city and led us in. Here we were made welcome, for we had kept the "commandments of God," and had a "right to the tree of life."—*Early Writings*, pg. 35.

The Hebrew word for "alarm" in Zephaniah 1:16 is actually the same as the Hebrew word for "Jubilee." Thus, the theme of these verses is the coming battle of Armageddon, which culminates in the second coming of Christ, when all things will be returned to their rightful owners, and God will release His people from captivity.

"Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound (The sound of the trumpet on the day of Jubilee) they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance."—*Psalms 89:15*.

Satan will be bound to the earth and will remain there awaiting his punishment, and all the wicked will be laid in the grave to await the second resurrection and the second death.

Fenced Cities

Before Israel entered Canaan, God warned them what would happen if they disobeyed Him:

"The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; A nation of fierce countenance, which shall not regard the person of the old, nor shew favour to the young; And he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy land, until thou be destroyed: which also

shall not leave thee either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of thy kine, or flocks of thy sheep, until he have destroyed thee. And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the LORD thy God hath given thee."—*Deuteronomy 28:49-52*.

In this warning of judgment, God highlights that when His people depart from Him, they will put their trust in the walls' defenses. Walls are not a defense against God's judgment. Nor are they any defense against man. The Bible tells us:

"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."—*Psalms 127:1*.

God repeats His judgment in Deuteronomy through the prophet Jeremiah:

"Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them. Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is as an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword."—*Jeremiah 5:14-17*.

We can see from these texts that the fenced cities are a place of false trust and false hope. A place that people trust in when their hearts depart from God, and they lose sight of His power. The Lord warns that those who put their trust in the wrong place will be brought low:

"For the day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall

be brought low: And upon all the cedars of Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan, And upon all the high mountains, and upon all the hills that are lifted up, And upon every high tower, and upon every fenced wall, And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures. And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low: and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that day.”—*Isaiah 2:12-17*.

The fenced cities also appear as a depiction of something that cannot be, or is difficult to overcome:

“And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brasen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD.”—*Jeremiah 15:20*.

God also uses fenced cities as an illustration of strength:

“Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.”—*Jeremiah 51:53-57*.

This prophecy was fulfilled strikingly! How haughty Belshazzar was, throwing a party while under attack, getting drunk with his officials and praising the gods of gold and silver and brass and wood and stone that cannot see or hear! Though he had fortified his city unto the heavens, his trust was misplaced. The Lord left the gates of his city open, and he told the enemy king:

“Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And

I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.”—*Isaiah 45:1-3*.

King Cyrus was well acquainted with many forms of mysticism and divination, but imagine the moment he realized he was called by name and given the key to victory years before his birth! Cyrus knew there was a God in heaven.

The theme associated with the term “fenced cities” shows God overcoming the obstacles that man thinks are invincible. The strength of man comes to nothing in the day of the Lord. It will prove to be a false hope and a false trust not only for the people of the world, but for all the people of God who foolishly place their trust in anything other than God. God will show that He reigns in the heavens, and in that day He will be the only one exalted.

“Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it. From the time that it goeth forth it shall take you: for morning by morning shall it pass over, by day and by night: and it shall be a vexation only to understand the report. For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it: and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it. For the LORD shall rise up as in mount Perazim (2 Samuel 5:17-25), he shall be wroth as in the valley of Gibeon (Joshua 10:1-14), that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Now therefore be ye not mockers, lest your bands be made strong: for I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts a consumption, even determined upon the whole earth.”—*Isaiah 23:14-22*.

Strong Tower

In Biblical times, towers were built into the corners of city walls for observation, defense, and as a final refuge when a city's walls had been breached.

“Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it. But there was a strong tower within the city, and thither fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut it to them, and gat them up to the top of the tower.”—*Judges 9:50-51*.

In this case, the term “high towers” is better translated as corner towers. They bolstered a city's walls, making them a stronger defense. Woe has been pronounced against the final place of refuge for the people of the world, “the refuge of lies.” But the Bible tells us the righteous run to a different refuge:

“The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.”—*Proverbs 18:10*.

The Final Word

“And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the LORD: and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung.”—*Zephaniah 1:17*.

All who will not come apart and be separate will descend into spiritual darkness. Says the prophet:

“When the eyes have been enlightened with the spiritual eyesight, then we shall see altogether clearly. The things of time and sense that now attract attention will lose their value, for there will be disclosed to men eternal interests. As God made known His will to the Hebrew captives, to those who were most separate from the customs and practices of a world lying in wickedness, so will the Lord communicate light from heaven to all who will appreciate a “Thus saith the Lord.” To them He will express His mind. Those who are least bound up with worldly ideas, are the most separate from display, and vanity, and pride, and love of promotion, who stand forth as His peculiar people, zealous of good works,—to these He will reveal the meaning of His word. The very first exhibition of God's power to the Hebrew captives was in showing the defective wisdom of the great ones of the earth. The wisdom of men is foolishness with God. The magicians revealed their ignorance of the light before the Lord revealed His wisdom as supreme. The

wisdom of human agents who had misappropriated their God-given talents, God showed to be foolishness.”—*Councils to Writers and Editors, pg. 101*.

We need to have our eyes anointed with eye salve so we can see. We do not want to face the consequences of trusting in the wisdom of the world. The practice of secret sins causes blindness and makes us appear as an abomination in the eyes of God:

“For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, they have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.”—*Lamentations 4:13-14*.

On the day of the Lord, the wicked will be smitten with spiritual blindness as the Jewish leaders were. Because they refused to accept the Truth when it was presented, they have perverted their judgment. They will put darkness for light and light for darkness, leading their followers to destruction.

“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”—*Isaiah 5:20*.

Zephaniah again points to riches, saying:

“Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD'S wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.”—*Zephaniah 1:18*.

It should come as no surprise that the wicked are piling up treasure as a fortification against the wrath to come.

“Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you.”—*James*

Riches will be a high tower for many people on the day of the Lord. And the Bible tells us that money is a defense:

“For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.”—*Ecclesiastes 7:12*.

But it is not a defense that can save someone from the second death:

“They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him”—*Psalms 49:6-7*.

We are encouraged to find the true hiding place for the coming storm:

“Gather yourselves together, yea, gather together, O nation not desired; Before the decree bring forth, before the day pass as the chaff, before the fierce anger of the LORD come upon you, before the day of the LORD’S anger come upon you. Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD’S anger.”—*Zephaniah 2:1-3*.

God has hollowed out a cleft in the rock to preserve man from the coming storm:

“And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”—*Isaiah 32:2*.

The Bible tells us we can hide in the rock, or hide in the dust from the wrath to come:

“Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.”—*Isaiah 2:10*.

Conclusion

“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. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heav-

ens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”—*2 Peter 3:10-14*.

The Day of the Lord is coming; it will be like Jehu’s sacrifice. The wicked will be cut off suddenly, in the midst of their idolatrous worship. Money will not be a defense on that day, though the wicked heap it around themselves as walls. Only those whose treasures are in heaven will escape. The wicked will discover that their works were not hidden in darkness. The wicked will be taken in their own snare, and God will fulfill all His promises to those who have hidden themselves in Christ. The righteous will go through an experience similar to Jacob’s time of trouble, and they will be delivered and receive a new name.

“We are homeward bound. He who loved us so much as to die for us, hath builded for us a city. The New Jerusalem is our place of rest. There will be no sadness in the city of God. No wail of sorrow, no dirge of crushed hopes and buried affections, will evermore be heard. Soon the garments of heaviness will be changed for the wedding garment. Soon we shall witness the coronation of our King. Those whose lives have been hidden with Christ, those who on this earth have fought the good fight of faith, will shine forth with the Redeemer’s glory in the kingdom of God.”—*Adventist Home, pg. 542*.

On that day, I hope we will be found hidden, not by webs of deceit or in darkness, but in the dust or in Jesus, the Rock of our salvation.

For a finished work,



Jonathan Taylor

Wisdom is justified of all her children. -Luke 7:35

More Food for the Little Flock —