

The Night of the Day of the Lord  
Zephaniah 1:14-18

## The Night of the Day of the Lord

The Tribulation, for the Christian, might be an academic exercise. We might not care because we will not be in the Tribulation. Yet, it will be a part of history. It will be the most troubling time in history. God the Father will remove the restraining power of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:7). Without restraint, evil will run rampant on the earth. God will have two pieces of evidence for the Angelic Conflict with which to compare what happens when Satan is fully in control and when God is fully in control: Tribulation versus the Millennium. Herman gave us some points from 2 Thessalonians chapter 2 on the “Restrainer”<sup>1</sup>. The “he” Herman is talking about is the “man of lawlessness.”

1	Who is the restrainer?	God the Holy Spirit
2	How does the Holy Spirit restrain him?	The Holy Spirit indwells in every believer of the Church Age and, therefore, by the presence of the Universal Church, the man of lawlessness is restrained in the Church Age.
3	What is he restrained from doing?	From doing all he plans on doing—like opposing God, and exalting himself, and taking his place in the Temple of Jerusalem to be worshipped as God.
4	It may not seem like it today, but the Holy Spirit in Universal Church is restraining lawlessness...sin.	This should give you some ideal of just how horrible things are going to be in The Tribulation.
5	This is why the Church must be removed— <i>raptured</i> , “Gathered Together with JESUS CHRIST in the Air”	so that the Plan of God will continue as it has been prophesied.  No one knows when the departure of the Church will occur.

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Thessalonians/notes/2015-12-27Sunday\\_Morning.pdf](http://www.springvalleybiblechurch.org/Audio/Thessalonians/notes/2015-12-27Sunday_Morning.pdf)

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Jesus says of the Tribulation:

**Matthew 24:15** “Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

**Matthew 24:16** then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.

**Matthew 24:17** Whoever is on the housetop must not go down to get the things out that are in his house.

**Matthew 24:18** Whoever is in the field must not turn back to get his cloak.

**Matthew 24:19** But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!

**Matthew 24:20** But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath.

**Matthew 24:21** For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.

**Matthew 24:22** Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

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**Zephaniah 1:14 Near is the great day of the Lord, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly.**

Sometimes I look back on what I have prepared and become disappointed that I have not stressed how intense Zephaniah is in his descriptions of Tribulation events. But, I am writing in English. If I were to stress harder, I would likely have to delve into profanity since that is how the common (koine) American English provides for intensity. But I won't do that.

**Near.** One commentator pointed out that the term “near” in verse 14 has the form of an infinitive absolute that is used as an adjective<sup>2</sup>. An interesting way for Zephaniah to sneak in yet another way of intensifying his description of the Day of the Lord.

In addition, this verse is full of “ellipsis.” According to Merriam-Webster online, ellipsis is “the omission of one or more words that are obviously understood but that must be supplied to make a construction grammatically complete.”<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there is only a single verb in all of verse 14, “cries out.” The other “verbs” supplied by the NASB are all adjectives. In other words, the real verbs have been left out to stress or emphasize the words that are left. Ellipsis.

**Coming very quickly.** Two adjectives, no verb, i.e. ellipsis. “Hasting exceedingly” is how the Young’s Literal Translation put it. Two adjectives that are synonyms. Back to back with no verb, they intensify each other.

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<sup>2</sup> Sweeney, Marvin A., Zephaniah: A Commentary, Minneapolis:Fortress Press, p 96

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ellipsis>

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**Listen.** This is literally “sound.” But it is used like a command “Listen!” The poetic form allows the author to stretch language to emphasize his point.

**Warrior.** The Hebrew word here is sometimes translated as “mighty men.” David has many mighty men who were battle-hardened warriors.

As GotQuestions.org says, “Second Samuel 23:8–39 and 1 Chronicles 11:10–47 list a group of people known as mighty men of David or David’s mighty men. They are also referred to as the “thirty chiefs” (1 Chronicles 11:15) and simply “the Thirty” (1 Chronicles 12:4). These mighty men of David were a group of David’s toughest military warriors who were credited with heroic feats, including Josheb-basshebeth, who killed 800 men in one battle with a spear (2 Samuel 23:8).”

To translate the word as “warrior” while OK, in this intense context it would suggest these are not just run-of-the-mill warriors. These are battle-hardened, decorated war heroes. They may be anti-God, but they are fierce warriors. Equivalent to Russian Spetsnaz special forces (like American Seal Team forces) who have seen much combat and were recognized with multiple medals.

**Cries out bitterly.** This is a participle. Crying. But in this context, it should be emphatic. One commentator suggests from the LXX translation, “shrieking.”

Here are battle-hardened decorated warrior in their prime who are shrieking out in anguish. Something like my father used to say. “I’m fearless and I was afraid.”

**Zephaniah 1:14 (Revised “Emphatic” Translation)**  
**Near! The Great Day of the Lord (Yahweh)!**  
**Near! Speedy! Quickly! A Sound (or Listen)!**

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**The Day of the Lord, Bitter! Shrieking there the decorated battle hardened warriors!**

There are other Old Testament passages that use “near” in relation to the coming of the Day of the Lord.

**Ezekiel 30:1 The word of the Lord came again to me saying,**

**Ezekiel 30:2 “Son of man, prophesy and say, ‘Thus says the Lord God, “Wail, ‘Alas for the day!’**

**Ezekiel 30:3 “For the day is near, Even the day of the Lord is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time of doom for the nations.**

**Obadiah 1:15 “For the day of the Lord draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.**

**Joel 1:15 Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is near, And it will come as destruction from the Almighty.**

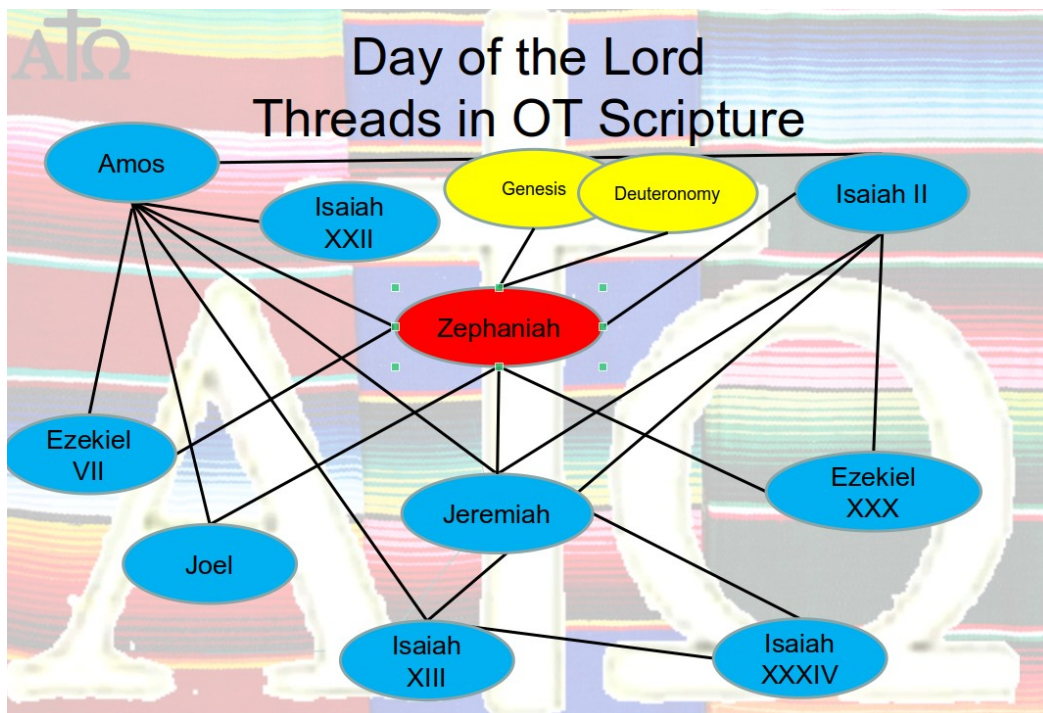
**Joel 2:1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,**

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The next verse in Joel leads us into the same thought in Zephaniah 1:15.

**Joel 2:2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.**

The point of quoting these various verses is to show that the Day of the Lord is not isolated to Zephaniah and that descriptions of it overlap. In other words, another example of what is technically called “intertextuality” or what I call the fabric of Scripture. From my slides in 2014-2015<sup>4</sup>, the following attempts to graphically point to the interconnections among books of the Old Testament on the topic of the Day of the Lord:



<sup>4</sup> The drawing is mine but it is based on a similar drawing by M. Weiss, “The Origin of the ‘Day of the Lord’ Reconsidered” HUCA 37 (1966) 40 Hebrew Union College Annual. Genesis and Deuteronomy are highlighted in yellow since they are not prophetic books. This illustration should have included a link to the book of Obadiah.

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**Zephaniah 1:15 A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness,**

Zephaniah again makes a list describing the Day of the Lord using the word “day” to reference the Day of the Lord. Each of these words has a history in the Old Testament. I have not seen a good coverage of these concepts in the book of Zephaniah. In my mind, this list should tell a story.

**A day of wrath.** What happens at the end of the Tribulation is the result of divine wrath. This wrath is the title or introduction to the descriptions that follow. Up to this point there has been a litany of sins narrated. These are sins of Israel. Perhaps what follows are different dimensions or perspectives on what God will do.

**A day of trouble and distress.** The first word, trouble, means narrowness as in spatial narrowness, cramped quarters. Perhaps “boxed in” would suffice. Distress is more of a kinetic word. There is some kind of action. Sometimes this word in Hebrew is used of siege works. A day of being boxed-in and pressured. Sieged!

**A day of destruction and desolation.** These words are based upon the same root. One commentator says, “Although the distinctive nuances of each term are not certain, their appearance together in this context conveys the meaning of complete destruction.<sup>5</sup> He goes on to comment that the first term “shoah” is used today by the Jews to describe the Holocaust. The sufferings of the Tribulation will overshadow anything

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<sup>5</sup> Sweeney, Marvin A., Zephaniah: A Commentary, Minneapolis:Fortress Press, p 99

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that happened in the Holocaust. Jesus said that which I repeat here for emphasis:

**Matthew 24:21 For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.**

The previous four descriptions deal with space and pressure in that space. Now Zephaniah deals with the absence of light.

**A day of darkness and gloom.** Darkness in the Hebrew is the same word used in Genesis 1:1

**Genesis 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.**

Zephaniah is using a word for primordial darkness. It is a darkness that only God can pierce. This happens in Zephaniah chapter 3 when the Lord God, the king of Israel is in their midst. In other words, Jesus Christ who is the light.

The second word is also a word for darkness. Both words show up in one of God's curses on Egypt:

**Exodus 10:21 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt."**

**Exodus 10:22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick**



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**darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days.**

In the Exodus passage the words for darkness are the first word for darkness in Zephaniah 1:15. The second word shows up as “thick” in the Exodus passage.

**A day of clouds and thick darkness.** Clouds are sometimes associated with the presence of God. Same word used of the pillar of cloud that accompanied the sons of Israel in the desert.

Thick darkness is where God was when speaking to Israel.

**Exodus 20:21 So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was.**

If we have time, we may want to read Exodus 20. Also remember what happened at the sixth hour during the crucifixion: darkness.

**Zephaniah 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers.**

A day of trumpet and battle cry. Trumpets, in this case the Hebrew “shofar,” made from a ram’s horn, was “used during battle to signal, for example, the end of the battle, announce victory, or to fulfill an otherwise unidentified function.<sup>6</sup>” It could also be used to announce the accession of a new king.<sup>7</sup> The end of the Tribulation will be all of those. Satan will lose the battle to Jesus Christ. The battle will be over and Jesus will have the victory and ascend the throne in Jerusalem as king of the Jews and indeed of the whole earth.

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<sup>6</sup> Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, volume XIV, pages 541-542.

<sup>7</sup> Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, volume XIV, pages 541-542.

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**Battle cry.** Of course, the end of the Tribulation will be overwhelmed with battle. A victorious battle for Jesus Christ. It will be the victory by the Jewish king that the Jews have been waiting for. But only those who put their trust in the Messiah Jesus will enter the kingdom.

**Corner towers.** These towers were situated on the corners of fortress to provide the fighters inside a 270 degree view of the battlefield outside of the fortress. Below is a picture of a castle in Naples, Italy with corner towers. I include it since I took the picture and hence there are no copyright issues:



**Zephaniah 1:17 I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung.**

**Dung.** We are getting close in the Hebrew to English four-letter words. Zephaniah is trying to emphasize continually the horrible terrible things that will happen. This is all because Satan is unrestrained in his rule on the earth and all he knows is violence. And it is also the result of

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millions, perhaps billions, of people who will worship him or his surrogates and abandon all pretense of worshiping the Living God.

**Zephaniah 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the Lord's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.**

**Silver and gold.** Rich people have in the past couple of years been having fortified compounds built in order to escape world chaos that many see on the horizon. But, their riches will not allow them to escape the tribulation of the events in the Tribulation. There will be no escape.

**Deliver.** This is not the word one would normally associate with salvation or deliverance. This word is like rescue or to be snatched away from evil suffering. The Church will be “snatched” from the earth by Jesus. But these sinners who are unbelievers will not be rescued. They will die horrible deaths and end up in the Lake of Fire. I want to emphasize that they and people in all ages have a choice. It is simple to trust Jesus Christ, His work on the cross, for our salvation. We do not work for it. We do not deserve it. But it is a free gift to those who just trust Him.

**Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;**

**Ephesians 2:9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.**

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**All.** Here is our word “all” again times two. There will be no escape for unbelievers. From a detached person today, this may seem cruel on the part of God to doom these people to such suffering and from there into the Lake of Fire. God gave them opportunities which were rejected. Read the Jesus narrative of Lazarus and the rich man. Let us read Luke 16:19-31. The last verse of that narrative is pertinent here:

**Luke 16:31 But he (Moses) said to him (the rich man), ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”**

Even today, there are unbelievers who can quote John 3:16 by heart who refuse to believe and even fight against Christianity, thinking their greatest achievement would be to cause a Christian to lose his faith. And others who would like nothing better than to kill a Christian by beheading him.

**2 Corinthians 16:21 The greeting is in my own hand—Paul.**

**2 Corinthians 16:22 If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed. Maranatha.**

**2 Corinthians 16:23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.**

**2 Corinthians 16:24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.**

Outline of Zephaniah (Wenstrom)<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [https://www.wenstrom.org/index.php?option=com\\_libwritten&view=libwritten&selCat=2&Itemid=124&task=display&view=summary&entryId=1562](https://www.wenstrom.org/index.php?option=com_libwritten&view=libwritten&selCat=2&Itemid=124&task=display&view=summary&entryId=1562)

## **The Night of the Day of the Lord Zephaniah 1:14-18**

- I. Introduction (1:1)
- II. Announcement of Judgment Against Judah, Jerusalem and All the Earth (1:2-2:3)
  - A. Judgment Against All the Earth Inhabitants (1:2-3).
  - B. Judgment Against Judah (1:4-13).
  - C. The Character of the Day of the Lord (1:14-2:3)
    - 1. Day of Wrath (1:14-18).
    - 2. Day of Repentance (2:1-3).
- III. Announcement of Judgment Against Gentiles and Jerusalem (2:4-3:7)
  - A. Judgment of Gentiles (2:4-15).
    - 1. Judgment Against Philistia (2:4-7).
    - 2. Judgment Against Moab and Ammon (2:8-11).
    - 3. Judgment Against Cush (2:12).
    - 4. Judgment Against Assyria (2:13-15).
  - B. Judgment of Jerusalem (3:1-7).
    - 1. Indictment Against Jerusalem (3:1-4).
    - 2. The Lord's Judgment Against Jerusalem (3:5-7).
- IV. The Restoration of Israel and the Nations (3:8-20).
  - A. Restoration of the Nations (3:9-10).
  - B. Restoration of Israel (3:11-20).
    - 1. The Remnant (3:11-13).
    - 2. The Joy of the Remnant (3:14).
    - 3. The Ruler of the Remnant (3:15-17).
    - 4. The Vindication of the Remnant (3:18-20).

Up to this point in Zephaniah, chapter 1, the prophesy started with judgment on the entire earth and then focused on the causes for judgment and then the description of judgments against Judah and Jerusalem. To the Jew first.