

The Beauty and Glory of the Last Things

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Edited by
Joel R. Beeke



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The Beauty and Glory of the Last Things
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With heartfelt appreciation for

Ronald Kalifungwa and **Conrad Mbewe**

dear Zambian brothers and good friends,
able preachers and pastors,
and former speakers at the PRTS Conference.

—JRB

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Preface

We live in a challenging cultural moment; there are reasons for great alarm and concern in society around us and it's easy to lose heart. We are daily surrounded by the ugly and the unthinkable, by the vain and the vanishing. We dare not join the world in its discordant anthem of rebellion against God—in the evil thoughts, words, and actions of a self-asserting, fallen humanity. Yet even as we say “no” to ungodliness, we cannot avoid being stung by the discouragement of living in a fallen world. The Christian hope of the last things, so wonderfully disclosed in the Scriptures and so certainly embodied in our risen Savior, is a beacon of beauty and glory shining on our way as we traverse the ugly and the gloomy.

Suffice it to say that there are few things more important than the theme of the last things for faithfully living the Christian life: Nothing fills the Christian's heart with more joy than the anticipation of seeing Christ face to face and joining Him in His eternal glory. Sadly, there are few themes more abused, misunderstood, and misapplied by believer and unbeliever alike. What are the signs of the last times and what do they mean? What will heaven be like? How does the Bible describe hell? These questions require biblically-informed, practical, and reverent treatment, especially in the face of a kaleidoscope of far-flung opinions the world presents us with. There is a heaven that awaits; there is a hell that we must flee; there is a victory of Christ in the world by the gospel.

At the Puritan Reformed Conference held in August 2019, we glimpsed afresh the beauty and glory of the last things. We benefited greatly from the combined wisdom and experience of professors and ministers who have unfolded the captivating and transforming

truths of the last things. This book presents conference messages that so satisfyingly fed the souls of those in attendance.

The first part of this book provides scriptural studies on the last things. It begins with Michael Barrett's stirring message on the Day of the Lord from Zephaniah 1–2, in which, after depicting the terror and imminence of that Day, he calls us to flee not *from* the Judge, but *toward* the Judge, for He extends mercy to repentant sinners. This is followed by two messages from David Strain, the first one explaining what John's vision of the number of the sealed in Revelation 7 teaches us about the unspeakable joy that awaits us in Emmanuel's land. Strain's second message, on the last battle in Revelation 19:11–20:15, helps us see our daily life in the world with new eyes, as the arena of Christ's final victory. Finally, Daniel Timmer's incisive message on John's use of Isaiah in Revelation 21–22 gives us a sense of the beauty and glory of the new creation while providing clear biblical-theological principles to help us appreciate the striking unity between the Testaments.

Three topical studies comprise the second part of this book, the first being David Murray's practical look at the characteristics of the signs of the times, the perils of misinterpreting them, and what they mean for us today. Derek Thomas provides the next two messages. In the first, he describes the heaven that awaits us and that we hope for, and in the second, he outlines the biblical teaching on hell, especially from the lips of Jesus, while providing arguments against annihilationism.

The third part of the book gives us three historical studies. First, Greg Salazar's fascinating paper argues that the Puritans framed the eschatological statements of the Westminster Standards with a conscientious conservatism that enabled generations of believers who held differing millennial views to maintain unity. Let us follow the humble charity and unity modeled by the Puritans of the Westminster Assembly. Then, Adrian Neele gives us an inspiring analysis of the thoughts, journals, and sermons of Jonathan Edwards, revealing that, for Edwards, the themes of the beauty and glory of God, the Christian life, and the last things were a common and constant ever-developing thread of devotion. Thirdly, William VanDoodewaard's address on Thomas Boston shows us how a seasoned shepherd, through his sermons and journal entries, prepared both himself

and his congregation for the appointment that no one can miss, by reminding himself, and us, of the interest we have in the covenant of grace through Christ.

In part four of this book we have two experiential studies. First, Joel Beeke gives us a panorama of the beauty and glory of the marriage supper of the lamb in Revelation 19:7–9, revealing that Christ, who makes heaven heavenly, is the one to whom we may one day be married in the greatest wedding of all time. May Christ, the centerpiece of heaven, be the centerpiece of our hearts! Finally, Gerald Bilkes's message on 1 Corinthians 15 gives us a taste and an expectation of the final victory, when the last Adam at the last trumpet defeats the last enemy. How wonderful and encouraging it is to have our hearts filled with the promise of Christ's victory and of the glory that awaits!



SCRIPTURAL STUDIES

The Day of the Lord: Escaping the Inescapable (Zephaniah 1–2)

Michael P. V. Barrett

There are some texts in the Bible that leave us with happy consideration. There are some texts that the poorest of preachers can expound and transport hearers into the heavenly places. The great gospel themes of salvation deserve the attention of faithful preaching. But there is another side of the gospel that is never easy to preach and is often unpopular to pulpit and pew alike. But it is a vital message that highlights and intensifies the beauty of saving grace. God's sovereign love for sinners is understood to be all the more gracious in the light of His just wrath and judgment of sinners. It is on this hard word of judgment that I want to focus our thoughts in this address. We must understand that the way and end of transgressors is hard. Those outside of Christ must heed the warning of certain doom and flee to Christ. Those who know the safe refuge of grace must be ever grateful and increasingly diligent to see others enter the stronghold of grace and flee the wrath to come.

Our text is from Zephaniah—not a household name among the prophets, but one whose recorded pedigree is traced back to the good king Hezekiah. He preached during the reign of Josiah, king of Judah (Zeph. 1:1), in an era of corruption. After the forgotten reforms of Hezekiah, Zephaniah most likely helped to foster the yet to come reforms of Josiah. Zephaniah's ministry most likely did not cover the entire span of Josiah's lengthy reign from 640–609 BC, which is evident, for instance, from the fact that Nineveh's fall in 612 BC had not yet occurred (2:13). In addition, many of the sins cited in 1:3–13 were common before, but not after, Josiah's reforms. Second Chronicles 34:3–35:19 indicates that Josiah's reforms occurred in two stages: the first, in his 12th year, and the second, in his 18th year (that is, 628 and 622/621 BC). So, Zephaniah's preaching would have spanned

between 640–621 BC, during the first half of Josiah’s administration, making him contemporary with the early days of Jeremiah.¹

Politically, socially, and spiritually, the nation tottered on the brink of collapse. To this depraved and perverted society, God raised up this prophet and gave him the authority of heaven (Zeph. 1:1) to warn sinners of the judgment to come. As a messenger of judgment, he announced the terrors of the Lord. He declared impending doom, called sinners to repentance, and unfolded the mercy of God. Zephaniah preached the whole counsel of God, a message of judgment and salvation.

As common for the prophets of his day, some aspects of his message saw near fulfillment in the Babylonian captivity, while other predictions leap forward to that ultimate divine judgment yet to come. It was a hard word to hear—a message of bad news about the terrors of the Lord to be let loose on the impenitent. But the announcement of bad news opened the very way for a call to repentance and for the unfolding of the mercy of God, the good news. The certain judgment of sinners is the reason for repentance. Whether we consider God’s past or future work of judgment, there are lessons that are timeless and warnings that are universal. The God of the past or future is the same God of the present. Indeed, Zephaniah’s message of judgment and grace assures us that God controls all of history and will vindicate His name in the final victory over sin and the ultimate salvation of His people. So, in this address, I want to consider Zephaniah’s timelessly relevant message on how to escape the inescapable.

Divine Judgment is Just

God’s judgment of sinners is never capricious; it is always earned and deserved. Nothing is quite as fearful as getting from God’s hand what is deserved. Zephaniah gives two reasons for this fearful thought of God’s judgment.

First, God’s judgment is fearful because of who the Lord is. He is righteous. Zephaniah 3:5 refers to Him as the “just LORD,” that is, the righteous Lord. The root word for “righteous” or “righteousness” designates

1. See this and other introductory notes of mine on Zephaniah in Joel R. Beeke et al., *The Reformation Heritage KJV Study Bible*. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2014).

straightness, and by extension, conformity to a standard of evaluation. It is not necessarily a moral term. For instance, a “path of righteousness” describes a straight path, one that does not curve or bend; or a “righteous balance” describes accuracy with regard to the standards for weights. But when the standard of evaluation is God’s law, righteousness refers to moral conformity to that law. When it refers to God, it means that God conforms to Himself; God cannot deviate from who He is. That God is righteous simply means that God can be nothing other than what He is. As the psalmist declared, “the righteous LORD loveth righteousness” (11:7). This straightness, or conformity to the divine self-standard, extends to the entirety of His person and perfections, one of which is His infinite, eternal, and unchanging justice. Because God is inflexibly just as is evident in His person and expressed in His law, He cannot ignore or tolerate sin, which is totally contrary to His character. For sin to go unpunished would require God to waiver from Himself. His justice means that judging sin is the right thing for Him to do. Judgment is inescapable.

Second, God’s judgment is fearful because of who sinners are. Verse 1:17 sums up the cause of the justly deserved judgment: “because they have sinned against the LORD.” The word “sinned” is from a root meaning to miss a target, vividly picturing the sinner’s missing the mark of God’s perfect standard. This is no trivial matter, highlighted by Paul with his all-inclusive assessment that “all have sinned and come short” of God’s glory. Remember that God is righteous and cannot tolerate the slightest deviation from His holy law. Significantly, Paul’s conclusion in Romans 3:23 follows a detailed exposé of specific sins. Similarly, Zephaniah, anticipating the Pauline logic, exposes the people’s sins with overwhelming and condemning evidence.

The people were *idolaters* (Zeph. 1:4, 5). They were guilty of breaking the first and greatest commandment. God requires total devotion (Deut. 6:5) and prohibits having any other god before Him (Ex. 20: 3). They did not love the Lord, but replaced Him with gods of their imagination and of the world around them. Their worship was a hellish mixture of Baal worship (a perverse fertility cult), astrology and magic (the host of heaven) with the professed worship of the one true God. They swore (pledged their allegiance) to both the LORD and to Malcham (a common designation of Baal). What a clear

case of missing the mark of the first commandment as the people brought these “other gods before” the Lord! Tragically, they followed their religious leaders into these transgressions. There were renegade, black-robed priests of foreign gods, called the Chemarim, who seemed to work alongside the Levitical priests (the supposed legitimate clergy) in leading the people in this worship of nature and fate mixed with a bit of orthodoxy. They were attempting to cover all the bases, appealing to whatever god would do them good. Religion was a way of manipulating some god to satisfy personal needs—a religion for profit.

The manifestations of idolatry may look different today than they did then, although there are striking similarities with earth worshippers and cults led by charismatic leaders who use and abuse the Bible for personal gain. But whenever and however God is reduced to being nothing more than an instrument to be manipulated for personal satisfaction, His law is violated and those who are guilty are in jeopardy of judgment (especially in violation of the third commandment, Ex. 20:7). God demands love and total allegiance. He will not share His glory with another. Violating those demands is warrant for judgment.

The people were also spiritually *insensitive*: they “turned back from the LORD; and...have not sought the LORD, nor enquired for him” (Zech. 1:6). They recoiled from the Lord, drawing back and shrinking away from Him. Not seeking the Lord equates to spiritual ignorance (see Ps. 14:2). Without spiritual perception, they were alienated in their minds, insensitive to gospel grace, and doomed in their ignorance. This ignorance or insensitivity is no excuse; rather, it is another reason for God’s just judgment. To have no bent toward God is to be bent toward hell. To have no heart for the Lord is certain doom. That was true then; it is true now.

The final piece of evidence proving their sin is that they were *incredulous* (Zech. 1:12). Those on the verge of judgment had no excuse for being ignorant because God had given them His word of warning. Throughout Israel’s history, God had revealed Himself and His law; His expectations and demands were clear. Perhaps preaching to these same people, Jeremiah had said that the Lord had sent His servants the prophets “daily rising up early [an idiom expressing earnestness] and sending them: Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor

inclined their ear, but hardened their heart” (Jer. 7:25–26). Likewise, Zephaniah addressed those who refused to believe the word of God. He refers to God’s thorough searching as with a light to expose and punish those “that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil” (1:12). The picture is of wine that has not been drained from its dregs and has thickened into a viscid sludge. The image describes those who are confirmed and hardened in their obstinate denial of God, His Word and His work. They interpreted the delay of what the prophets had warned as evidence that God was inactive and incapable. Peter encountered skepticism in his day regarding the same issue (2 Peter 3:4–15). There is something about the status quo that lulls unbelievers into complacency and denial of impending doom. But unbelief is a deadly sin that damns the soul.

The evidence is overwhelming. Sinners are justly under the wrath and condemnation of the righteously just and holy God. Zephaniah is a pattern for modern preachers to be bold in exposing sin and faithful in proclaiming the righteousness of God that includes His just wrath “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). Part of gospel preaching is warning sinners of impending and inescapable judgment.

Divine Judgment is Terrible

It is a “fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:11) who is described as a “consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29) and just in all His ways. Zephaniah highlights three reasons why divine judgment is so terrible.

First, it is terrible *because of its source*. The judgment is divine. The prophet designates this judgment as the Day of the Lord (Zeph. 1:7, 14). This is why this text is fitting for a conference on the last days. The Day of the Lord became a frequent theme in prophetic preaching. This expression occurs around twenty times in the Old Testament, with fifty more corresponding designations occurring (a day belonging to the Lord, a day belonging to the Lord of Hosts, a day of vengeance belonging to the Lord, a day which is coming of the Lord, or simply, that day). Significantly, some of the most detailed expositions of the Day of the Lord appear in the earliest of the writing prophets (Obadiah and Joel in the 9th century BC, on my dating of

these books), and are carried throughout both the Major and Minor Prophets. Zephaniah's description and development of the Day is one of the most explicit.

The Day of the Lord refers to God's spectacular intervention in time to bring retribution against wickedness and deliverance for righteousness. The Day of the Lord is when eternity breaks into time. It does not refer to a 24-hour period, but rather to an indefinite time when God interrupts human history in an extraordinary way, either for judgment or blessing. It may be a good day or a bad day, depending on one's relationship with the Lord: the same day can be a dread for sinners but a delight for saints. Indeed, there are components of this day that include punishment, salvation, and the blessings associated with the Messiah and His kingdom. It is true that God providentially governs the events and circumstances of time. Providence is His ordinary work. The Day of the Lord, on the other hand, is His extraordinary and unique work. This extraordinary and unique work can be accomplished with or without the use of secondary means (like natural disasters or foreign armies). But even when secondary means are employed, it is clear that they are just instruments in God's hand to accomplish His special purpose. For instance, locust plagues happened in regular cycles, but there was something about the locusts in Joel's day that he recognized as extraordinary: "Alas for the day! for the day of the LORD is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel 1:15). And that was just a precursor of a more devastating day that was imminent, terrible, and irresistible (Joel 2).

It is important to understand that there have been multiple days of the Lord, all of which are types, or picture prophecies, of the final, eschatological Day that is yet to come. For instance, the Day of the Lord against Edom (Obadiah) and Babylon (Isaiah 14) are matters of ancient history, but those past days point to the appointed day when God "will judge the world in righteousness" (Acts 17:30). On the one hand, some components of Zephaniah's announcement of the coming Day of the Lord found fulfillment in Babylon's destruction of Jerusalem (which, though it is past, still illustrates timeless and universal principles). On the other hand, some components of Zephaniah's prophecy refer specifically to the eschaton and have yet to be fulfilled. Prophets often juxtaposed near prophecies with

distant prophecies, telescoping the events without reference to time intervals that separated the events.

The extraordinary divine activity of the Day of the Lord is underscored by the verbs expressing the divine initiative. Consider Zephaniah 1:2–4, 7–9, 12, 17. The prerogative and execution of judgment belong to God. It is thus not surprising that Nahum asked, “Who can stand before his indignation? And who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?” (Nah. 1:6). The psalmist’s answer to this question is likewise not surprising, “the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment” (Ps. 1:5). There is no contest, no appeal, no excuse, no escape. Joel describes the inescapable terrors of this day: “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision” (Joel 3:14). The thought here is not that those in the valley have the opportunity to decide their own fate; on the contrary, they are in the valley of that which has been divinely decreed. They have no hope; they have no way of escape. Amos illustrates this imminence in almost tragic comedy when he compares trying to escape the Day of Lord with a man who flees from a lion to the supposed safety of his home, only to encounter a bear and be bitten by a serpent (Amos 5:19).

Zephaniah, in a most startling expression, puts in bold the divine source of the judgment when he equates the Day of the Lord with the Lord’s sacrifice that He has prepared, or more literally, consecrated (1:7–8). The sacrifice speaks of satisfaction. Justice must be satisfied. What a statement this is, testifying to God’s inflexible justice that must be appeased! That satisfaction will be made either by the sinner himself in eternal damnation or by Jesus who satisfied God’s infinite justice by His self-sacrifice for His people. The message of judgment is therefore an occasion for the message of grace, which we will see shortly.

Next, the judgment is terrible *because of its horrors* (1:15–17). In verses 15 and 16, Zephaniah describes “that day” six different ways, linking the word “day” with some dreadful characteristic. It seems to parallel the six days of creation, when God made everything good, with six devastations of creation’s reversal, making everything bad.

- 1) It will be a day of “wrath,” referring to God’s rage and fury—His passionate yet controlled outbursts of anger. Significantly, Peter describes the final Day in terms of a

fire that will engulf the heavens and the earth (2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12). It is as though the heat of God's anger kindles the flames of destruction.

- 2) It will be "a day of trouble and distress," referring to the effects of God's outpoured wrath. From every side, sinners caught in this judgment will feel pressure and suffocation as they are choked by the fumes of God's anger in the flames of hell.
- 3) It will be "a day of wasteness and desolation," referring to the utter ruin and emptiness of catastrophe.
- 4) It will be "a day of darkness and gloominess," without a ray of hope and with all the fears and anxiety associated with the dark.
- 5) It will be "a day of clouds and thick darkness," suggestive of the clouds engulfing Sinai at the giving of the law, which is the righteous standard that sentences the guilty to this terrible day.
- 6) It is "a day of the trumpet and alarm." The trumpet or ram's horn was the instrument used in the course of battle, either to warn of the approaching enemy or to signal a force's advance or retreat. Here, it sounds the alarm of danger, but it is too late to retreat. The battle has been lost; escape is impossible.

Verse 17 vividly sums up the horrors of this judgment: "I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men...and their blood shall be poured out as dust, and their flesh as the dung." "Bringing distress" conveys the idea of harassing or pressing hard against another with hostility. Zephaniah's description of the objects of God's hostility, as those walking like blind men, parallels Isaiah's image of sinners as those walking in darkness, groping for the wall like the blind, and stumbling at noon as in the night (Isa. 59:9-10). It is a picture of total hopelessness. That their blood is as dust and their flesh as dung indicates the worthlessness of life. The point of the comparison is not so much the quantity of what is poured out like dust, but the quality. Blood, and by metonymy, the life it represents, is as worthless as the dirt under foot. Their flesh is like dung.

The most careful exegesis cannot escape the fact that dung is dung. It is not a pretty statement, but rather a vivid picture of that which is despised. If the "six days" of verses 15 and 16 allude to a reversal of creation, verse 17 is the climax of that analogy. In the original creation at the apex of the creation week, man was made in the image of God. But sin has corrupted and marred that image. In the final judgment, that which enjoyed honor in time is forever dishonored in death. The description of judgment is terrible. How much more terrible will be the reality!

Finally, the judgment is terrible *because of its certainty*: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly" (1:14; compare verse 7 where "at hand" is the same as the word "near"). The language expresses both certainty and imminence. This is no idle threat; indeed, it is just about to happen. This teaches us something important about the predictive words of Scripture. Predictive prophecy tends to use the language of imminence. This means that regardless of how distant the prophecy is from its actual fulfillment, the prediction is made as though its fulfillment were impending. This intentional temporal ambiguity is one of the most significant features of prophetic language. Since the time of fulfillment is not specified, the application of the prophecy is not limited. To attempt to precisely date a prophecy would effectively rob it of its purpose to affect the hearts of those living in the pre-fulfillment generations.

Because of common misunderstandings of how prophecy works, let us reiterate an important point. In one sense, the fulfillment of this Day of the Lord prophecy against Jerusalem was intended for that specific generation. In another sense, this prophecy, like each of the multiple Day of the Lord prophecies throughout the prophetic corpus, projects an eschatological day that will signal the end of time as we know it. This does not mean that a single prophecy is fulfilled over and over again. Rather, each prophecy finds a single, ultimate fulfillment. Nevertheless, even the past "Days" typify the final eschatological day. Every judgment of the ungodly parallels and points to what God will do on that final day.

My point of application is this: Just as it is certain that Jerusalem's destruction occurred in the 6th century BC, so with the same certainty will the climactic day of the Lord occur when God has determined. Do not misinterpret the longsuffering of God that delays

its execution to be evidence of divine inactivity. Heed the warnings now while there is time and opportunity so that when the Day comes you may be “found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Peter 3:14). Otherwise, the judgment will be inescapable.

Divine Judgment is Discriminating

Zephaniah shines forth a glimmer of hope in what is mostly a hopeless message. Two thoughts set the tension.

First, judgment is *inescapable for unrepentant sinners*. This is true because of its extent. God’s ultimate judgment is universal. Zephaniah 1:2–3 reveal that no part of the world is exempt. The prophet depicts a destruction of man and beast that is as wide and sweeping as the flood that destroyed the world in the days of Noah. Note Peter’s link between the flood and the fire of judgment (2 Peter 3:5–7). There will be no place to hide in that day (see Amos 5; Rev. 6). The judgment is also particular in that it extends to every class of man, from royalty to servants (1:8–9). This contrast is an example of *merismus*, a literary device that uses two opposite parts of a thing to designate a whole. Referring to the extremes of royalty and servants, all classes of humanity in between are affected. God is no respecter of persons—not in salvation, not in judgment.

This judgment is also inescapable because of the futility of human efforts. Verse 17 pictured the helplessness of sinners who walk around as blind men groping and grabbing what they can but to no avail. Verse 18 describes absolute human inability: “Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD’s wrath.” All buying power is deflated; people cannot buy or bribe their way out of judgment. Psalm 49 makes it clear that self-redemption is impossible because the cost of a soul is more expensive than any can afford; every attempt is futile (49:8). This is why Peter says we are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold (1 Peter 1:18). Man has no currency recognized by God. Self-salvation is impossible.

Second, judgment is *escapable to repentant sinners*. There is a message of hope after all. There is a way to escape judgment that is contrary to human reasoning. At the sight of danger, common sense says to flee the potential destruction: go as far and as fast as possible

in the opposite direction. But when the danger is divine wrath, faith demands that we run to the Source of the destruction, for mercy.

Zephaniah gives the invitation to those under the sentence of destruction: "Gather yourselves together, yea gather together, O nation not desired" (2:1) and then "Seek ye the LORD, all the meek of the earth" (2:3). The invitations are instructive. The word "gather" comes from a root meaning "to pick up stubble." It pictures one who is stooping down; it is a picture of humiliation. The expression "not desired" literally has the idea of turning pale, depicting the shame resulting from the consciousness of sin. It is an image showing the contrition and confession that are such essential components of repentance. Seeking the Lord is a form of the verb (*piel*) that functions as an iterative, a repeated and habitual seeking. The meek are not those who are humble as an innate character trait, but rather as those who are poor and needy, helpless in themselves, and without any resources to care for themselves. To so seek the Lord is to find Him, for He promises to allow Himself to be found by those who seek Him with all of their heart: "if ye seek him, he will be found of you" (2 Chron. 15:2; note the tolerative sense from the *niphal* stem). Rather than trying to outrun judgment, we must run to the Judge as the only hope. It is those who acknowledge that they are helpless who find help in Him.

Zephaniah offers the hope of safety for those who repent: "it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger" (2:3). This is not an expression of doubt but of hope. It is not presumption but faith that God will be found by those who seek Him. The unbreakable promise is that those who come unto Him He will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

But the prophet, as a preacher of the gospel, presses the urgency of this invitation to repent. Zephaniah 2:2 iterates the urgency: "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." Once the Day of the Lord comes it will be too late: escaping will be impossible. Do not find yourself in the valley of decision; flee to God against the coming day. And the day is coming; like the chaff blowing in the wind, the day is rushing ever near. It is both foolish and impossible to speculate or set dates for the coming of the Day of the Lord. But one thing is absolutely certain: It

is nearer today than it has ever been before. Today is the day of salvation; tomorrow is the day of destruction. Be certain that justice will be served—either in self forever or in Christ.

The paths to eternity may differ for us—for one, it is death, and for another, it is Christ's return—but the destination is the same. Outside of Christ, there is nothing "but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation" (Heb. 10:27)—and no escape. In Christ, we have the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). The only way to escape the inescapable is through Jesus: the only way, truth, and life.