**Zephaniah 1:1-9 The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah. 2“I will utterly consume everything From the face of the land,” Says the Lord; 3“I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, The fish of the sea, And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,” Says the Lord. 4“I will stretch out My hand against Judah, And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, The names of the idolatrous priests with the *pagan* priests - 5Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops; Those who worship and swear *oaths* by the Lord, But who also swear by Milcom; 6Those who have turned back from *following* the Lord, And have not sought the Lord, nor inquired of Him.” 7Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; For the day of the Lord *is* at hand, For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests. 8“And it shall be, 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 foreign apparel. 9In the same day I will punish All those who leap over the threshold, Who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.**

We’re in the book of Zephaniah tonight. This is another minor prophet whose name means **Jehovah hath guarded or hidden**. Jonah prophesied around 833 BC. Nahum prophesied around 663 BC. Now, Zephaniah is prophesying around 625 BC. We’re drawing ever closer to Ninevehs fall, Assyria being conquered, and Babylon coming to power.

Under Babylonians, Judah will fall – Israel fell earlier to the Assyrians. Zephaniah focuses on the coming judgement and fall of Judah. We find a prophecy in 2 Kings 21:11-13 – God says - *“Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations (he has acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols), therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.****13****And I will stretch over Jerusalem the measuring line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab; I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down.* Judah will fall, not because of the power of Babylon, but because of Judah’s sin! Babylon is but a tool in God’s hands.

Verse 1 says *- The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah.*This verse gives us Zephaniah’s genealogy. It’s not likely that the Hezekiah mentioned here is the King Hezekiah. We know Zephaniah prophesies in the days of King Josiah, who had worked to turn Judah back to God in 2 Kings 23. Under Josiah, there was somewhat of a revival going on, though it was short-lived. Judah did not change in heart, only in rules. True change must come from the heart – true repentance must flow from the soul. Then – and Now!

 Verse 2 *“I will utterly consume everything From the face of the land,” Says the Lord;* This has to do with the Babylonian invaders and their allies. It means, “I will gather up all good things of the land.” The Babylonians and their allies hauled off all the best of the land, including the best people. Recall, Daniel was taken away. Meshach, Shadrach, and Abedego were taken away. Nothing good was left behind between 605 BC and 586 BC when Jerusalem fell.

 Verse 3 *“I will consume man and beast; I will consume the birds of the heavens, The fish of the sea, And the stumbling blocks along with the wicked. I will cut off man from the face of the land,” Says the Lord.* Verse 3 is meant to show the complete devastation that will take place. The Babylonians will take captive men, women, children. They’ll seize land and houses. Crops and domesticated beasts will be taken or eaten by the invaders. We don’t know what disaster befell the birds and the fish. God will put an absolute end to the wicked (the Hebrew means **Gathered into bundles to be taken away**), and He’ll destroy the things that caused stumbling.

Verse 4-6 *“I will stretch out My hand against Judah, And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. I will cut off every trace of Baal from this place, The names of the idolatrous priests with the pagan priests –**5Those who worship the host of heaven on the housetops; Those who worship and swear oaths by the Lord, But who also swear by Milcom; 6Those who have turned back from following the Lord, And have not sought the Lord, nor inquired of Him.”*God is confirming that His power and judgement is being manifested, just as in Israel 100 years earlier. V4 Against all of Judah and Jerusalem – all suffered for the sins of the nation. Baal will be cut off utterly, nothing will be left. The names of the idolatrous priests (unlawful priests – literally black robed, they’re found in Hosea as priests of calf-worship) and the pagan (idol worshipping priests) will all be destroyed. V5 Those who worship the stars, moon from rooftops. Those that join the worship of idols to that of the One true God, God will judge. Milcom is false god of the Ammonites. In Deuteronomy 10:20 we read *You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name.* To take an oath by Milcom or any idol was a form of worship. Taking an oath before God is a form of worship. V6 Those that turned back – These had turned from following God and back to idolatry and have not sought the Lord - They live without any sense of God, and, as though there were no God. God is stretching out His hand upon all. God does not promise a life free of suffering for His followers when a nation is in sin. If that were so, Jesus would not have suffered at all! He was free of sin and yet suffered things we can never imagine, and because of His work, we will never have to suffer.

Verse 7*Be silent in the presence of the Lord God; For the day of the Lord is at hand, For the Lord has prepared a sacrifice; He has invited His guests.*Silence is demonstration of reverence for the Lord God. Zephaniah is recognizing God’s presence in all of this and refuses to utter a word. The day of the Lord is at hand – execution has begun. The Lord prepared a sacrifice – the slaying of the wicked is a sacrifice in preparation for God’s justice. He has invited His guests… The Babylonians were His guest – they came and took from the land at His invitation. Make no mistake – No one takes what God does not allow to be taken. God allowed Christ’s crucifixion, Christ laid down His life, all are His invited guests to benefit from His sacrifice.

Verses 8-9 *8“And it shall be, 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 foreign apparel. 9In the same day I will punish All those who leap over the threshold, Who fill their masters’ houses with violence and deceit.* V8 is fulfilled in 2 Kings 25:7 *Then they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him with bronze fetters, and took him to Babylon.* And verse 21 *Then the king of Babylon struck them and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive from its own land.* Those clothed in foreign apparel represented the worshippers of idols – each false god had it’s own costume and the priests and followers were known by these garments. V9 The worshippers in the temple of Dagon – the Philistine false god – would not walk on the threshold of Dagon’s temple, but hopped across. Other false gods were worshipped by leaping and dancing across divides. **1 Kings 18**. It may also refer to invaders that leap through doorways and fill the house with violence and pillage, in spite of the master of the house being there. Part of the punishment of Judah is to have households pillaged and valuables carried away.

In Nahum, we saw a prophecy against Nineveh and the Assyrians. In Zephaniah, we are seeing a prophecy against Judah. All will come to pass, and all are the will of Almighty God. God turns the fortunes of nations. When a nation draws near to Him, He draws near to it. But when a nation turns it’s back on God, God withdraws His favor from it. It happened with Israel, and Judah, and I’ve no doubt it’s happening today. As for us in this house, we will continue to seek God’s face and cry for our nation. 2 Chronicles 7:14 *if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.* May God see us humbled, praying, and seeking – May He find us turning – May He hear us, forgive us, and heal our land.