**Zephaniah 1:10-18 “And there shall be on that day,” says the Lord, “The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, A wailing from the Second Quarter, And a loud crashing from the hills. 11Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; All those who handle money are cut off. 12“And it shall come to pass at that time
*That* I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, ‘The Lord will not do good, Nor will He do evil.’
13Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit *them;* They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.”**

**14The great day of the Lord *is* near; *It is* near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. 15That day *is* a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers. 17“I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the Lord; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse.” 18Neither 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 will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.**

We’re back in the book of Zephaniah tonight. Recall he is a minor prophet whose name means **Jehovah hath guarded or hidden**. Zephaniah is prophesying around 625 BC - we’re drawing ever closer to Nineveh’s fall, Assyria being conquered, and Babylon coming to power. Under the Babylonians, Judah will fall – Israel fell earlier to the Assyrians. Zephaniah focuses on the coming judgement and fall of Judah. As we spoke about back in April, there’s 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. 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 Babylon, but because of Judah’s sin! Babylon is a tool in God’s hands, as is all of creation.

In our scripture tonight, verse 10 says *“And there shall be on that day,” says the Lord, “The sound of a mournful cry from the Fish Gate, A wailing from the Second Quarter, And a loud crashing from the hills.*The Fish Gate and the Second Quarter were located along the North of the city. God is indicating that the Babylonians and the Chaldeans will enter from the north. Jeremiah 39:4 says that King Zedekiah fled this – going toward the plains to the south, across the hills Jerusalem is built on. Recall that this is a prophecy, yet God is giving a detail that even the Babylonians wouldn’t have known years in advance!

Verse 11 *Wail, you inhabitants of Maktesh! For all the merchant people are cut down; All those who handle money are cut off.*Entering through the fish gate would have placed the invaders in the area of the working class, those who look up to the money handlers and traders. Maktesh literally means mortar where corn is ground. It refers to the valley running between Mt Olivet and Zion, down to the pool of Siloam. Those who look up to the upper class will see them cut off and crushed by the invaders, they will wail – literally they will howl in pain at the sight.

Verse 12 *“And it shall come to pass at that time That I will search Jerusalem with lamps, And punish the men Who are settled in complacency, Who say in their heart, ‘The Lord will not do good, Nor will He do evil.’* God will have the invaders search – ancient secular historians write that the Babylonians searched sewers, caves, pits, no stone was left unturned, no place left untouched – princes and priests were pulled from dumps and landfills – these men had settled in complacency – we have settled in complacency. Because God has been patient, we believe he will ever be patient. He relented, but He won’t turn a blind eye. The world today wants us to believe that God doesn’t notice. Believe me when I say – God notices.

Verse 13 *Therefore their goods shall become booty, And their houses a desolation; They shall build houses, but not inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards, but not drink their wine.”* The traders, the rich, the royalty will lose everything. The strength (their wealth) will be stripped away. The Babylonians were known to exile the conquered – many of the Jews were taken to Babylon – Daniel was one. Jeremiah bought a field even as the invasion drew near.

Verse 14 - 16*The great day of the Lord is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. 15That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, 16A day of trumpet and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers.*These verses describe the coming disaster. It gives us an incredible picture of what’s ahead, but no one believes. It is near and hastens quickly. Alarm! Trumpets blaring! High towers won’t help. Walls won’t help. Mighty, brave men, great warriors cry out in sheer panic. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter. It’s the same today – because Jesus hasn’t returned, we become complacent. Mark 13:35-37 *Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—****36****lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping.****37****And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”* Jesus warns us – Watch.

Verse 17 *“I will bring distress upon men, And they shall walk like blind men, Because they have sinned against the Lord; Their blood shall be poured out like dust, And their flesh like refuse.”*This is saying – I will bring them into such trouble that they won’t know which way to turn. God is a jealous God. He says His very name is Jealous! Sin has brought this distress, this disaster. In Deuteronomy 28:28-29 we read a Curse on Disobedience given by Moses to the Children of Israel. Does this sound familiar at all? *The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. 29 And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.* Moses, writing around 1450-1400 BC – Zephaniah 625 BC. Sounds like God is God and He changes not. Sin brings destruction. In Noah’s time, in Moses time, in Zephaniah’s time, in our time. Blood shall pour out like dust, flesh like garbage.

Verse 18 *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 will make speedy riddance Of all those who dwell in the land.* Gold and silver will not deliver – not from the Babylonians and certainly not from God. The rich and the poor alike give an account to God. The whole land will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. God will make speedy work of all. No one will resist. Just as when Jesus returns, no part of the earth will be spared – all will be judged. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess.

Of course, we know that between 607 BC and 586 BC, the destruction described in Zephaniah comes to take place and Jerusalem is completely destroyed. Only God inspires prophecy that foretells in such accuracy. Zephaniah happened. The destruction under the Romans happened just as Jesus said. We have every reason to know Revelation as it is written will happen. We don’t know the when, but we know the Who, what, and where. We certainly know the why… Jesus says no one knows the hour or the day – we must do as He says and Watch.