



## Daily Verse and Comment

### [Zephaniah 1:8](#)

(8) 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.

*King James Version*

Zephaniah makes no bones about the fact that his prophecy deals with the Day of the Lord and His anger at humanity for its hostility to Him: "I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land," says the Lord" ([Zephaniah 1:2](#)). It is clear that He is most disappointed with His chosen people, who should have known better because He had worked with them for many generations ([Amos 3:1-2](#)). Yet, even they had become idolaters, worshipping Baal and Milcom and "the whole host of heaven," turning away from [God](#) and no longer seeking Him ([Zephaniah 1:4-6](#)).

In verse 7, God calls for silence; He wants no more protests or excuses. He has decided to prepare a sacrifice and invited guests to partake of it. The modern Westerner has little notion of what this entails. Under the Levitical system, not all sacrifices were completely consumed in the altar's fire. Some burnt sacrifices, as they were called, were annihilated, but others were strictly divided: Certain parts went on the fire, another part was given to the priest to eat, and the remainder—the majority of the animal—returned to the offerer. Usually, with such a large amount of meat to consume in a short time, the offerer would call a feast for his family and close friends.

From this comes a major principle of the sacrificial system. The altar symbolized a table and the giving of an offering represented the sharing of a meal among God, the priest, and the offerer. The three were united in fellowship, solidifying and strengthening a relationship. For Christians, this three-way relationship exists among the Father, the Son (who is our High Priest), and the Christian. As the apostle Paul enjoins us in [Romans 12:1](#),

rather than giving our lives in death to Him, we are to be "living sacrifices," holy and acceptable to God, continuing the relationship in service to Him.

However, Zephaniah reveals that God has something different in mind for the Day of the Lord. For His sacrifice—or sacrificial meal—He has invited guests from afar, and the sacrifice of which they will partake is His people, Judah! In verse 8, He is particularly incensed against Judah's rulers, the corrupt descendants of David, who have led the nation further into [sin](#). He expected the royal house to follow the examples of David and [Josiah](#), but they had instead pursued carnal habits and political expediencies, bringing Judah to the brink of war, captivity, exile, and destruction.

As the verse closes, He highlights the particular failing of listening to foreign influence, seen in the wearing of "foreign apparel." It likely refers to a trend among the aristocrats of the time of wearing the clothing style of the foreign nation he supported in the power-struggle over the strategic land-bridge that was the Kingdom of Judah. (The conflict over that bit of territory is still ongoing today.) At the time, it was probably the distinctive styles of Egypt and Babylon, both of which were quite different from that of the Israelites. The verse suggests that the nation's leaders had stopped wearing Israelite-style clothing altogether—symbolizing their departure from God and what He had commanded (for instance, [Numbers 15:38-40](#))—and by donning the clothing of these powerful, competing empires, they were pledging their loyalties to the nations rather than to God. It could also mean that these aristocrats were worshipping the idols of these nations.

Behind the NKJV's translation of "punish," the Hebrew literally reads that God will "visit" the royal sons of Judah, which, in its negative sense, is a common metaphor for coming in judgment. It should come as no surprise that, when Judah finally fell to the Babylonians, Zedekiah's sons were killed before the eyes of their father, just before he was blinded and taken off to Babylon ([II Kings 25:2-7](#)). In addition, many of the aristocrats were killed and their children were dragged off to Babylon as slaves, as was the case with Daniel and his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego ([Daniel 1:1-4](#)).

Judah's destruction in the early-sixth century BC is just a type of the Day of the Lord that will be visited upon [the world](#) just before the [return of Jesus](#)

[Christ](#). God will be just as jealous for the loyalty of His people, true Christians, at that time as He was 2,600 years ago. We need to be asking ourselves if we have allowed ourselves to be "clothed with foreign apparel."

— Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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