

Zephaniah: A Study in Causation
Copyright, J. Michael Strawn

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 1: CAUSATION IS NOT NATURAL, 1:1.

"The word of the Lord which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi, son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah, in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah". THE PHENOMENON OF CAUSATION IS NOT NATURAL; IT IS SUPERNATURAL. All causation originated in the spiritual. This is unarguably true because it was God who created all things and established the relation that exists between them. Causation is not inherent in the universe, it was put here. That necessarily means that causation is not inherent in any situation nor circumstance. It is added. Causation is not a necessary agent between the particles of the material universe, it is put here. We do not live in a field of causation, rather, we exist in a *field of the caused*. The revealed understanding of causation has the force to change how one comprehends the nature of temporal life. It is a great and wonderful gift!

As the "word of the Lord...came" to Zephaniah, he was caught up in a causal continuum. Revelation is caused and is, therefore, an example of causation. What he was given was a supernatural language manifold that explains the connection, the relation of God to time. Time is given meaning by the word of God and not by human experience of it. Human experience cannot and does not bestow meaning. The revealed truth that Zephaniah received came to him "in the days of Josiah" which unfolds into historical conditions, particular circumstances, a sociology, certain personalities and a governance. The word of the Lord came to the people of Judah. It would bring them face to face with causation in a way beyond their conception. They were not the recipients but they were the first to hear it.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 2: CAUSATION IS DECLARED, 1:2.

"I will completely remove all things from the face of the earth, declares the Lord". God is causal and the absolute source of causation. Finding their source in the Almighty, therefore, His declarations are not subject to moderation nor to human will. The lesson is that history will follow all eternal declarations. This is to serve as a warning for all subsequent generations. However, the declaration of such impending causation creates a fundamental requirement. Such a phenomenon requires a maximum of faith. Here is why:

(a) True faith in the biblical teaching on causation involves the necessary element of *incommensurability* (two things that are nothing alike). Spiritual causation has nothing in

common with the temporal and that which is material. They are incommensurables. This set of conditions poses a serious challenge to the human mind and raises the possibility of doubt!

(b) Spiritual causation is immaterial (not composed of material substance), so how can the spiritual come to bear on our human material conditions and produce redemptive temporal effects or seriously threaten us?

(c) Throughout Scripture, unfaithfulness and doubt directly correlate to this issue of incommensurability, (Red Sea, Exodus 13, 14).

(d) The people of Judah "in the days of Josiah" had eliminated the condition of incommensurability from their faith and thereby diminished it. Many believers in the contemporary churches do the same thing! It is considered passé, imprudent, irrational and even irresponsible to trust the spiritual power of God to put redemptive force upon our temporal/material circumstances and or to threaten us.

(e) It is considered "radical" to trust the Word of God in its declarations that the Almighty can and will heal us of our infirmities, attend to our adversities or that we should inordinately fear the retribution of God upon our behavior.

(f) It is now quite "modern" in the churches to withdraw "too much faith" in the declarations of the Bible and instead to pursue more commensurable (experiential) ways of thought, speech and behavior.

(g) The Bible serially represents to the reader the necessary faith element of incommensurability. It also demonstrates the very human proclivity to reject it in favor of more rational and "realistic" possibilities.

(h) Doubt about trust in biblical declared causation has overruled incommensurability and severely humanized the revealed faith. So, in our time, we are attempting to hold a faith commensurable with our experience!

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 3: CAUSATION IS IRRESISTIBLE, 1:3.

"I will remove man and beast, I will remove the birds of the sky and the fish of the sea, and the ruins along with the wicked; and I will cut off man from the face of the earth, declares the Lord". Spiritual causation is fundamentally and absolutely irresistible by anything temporal. This means that everything, all things in this world, were *created downstream from the spiritual*. Furthermore, the implication surges that all reality, the spiritual and the temporal are mounted on a gradient. As we deal with the material world and personally confront the stresses of historical conditions, believers remember that their universe of struggle and suffering are on the lower end of the gradient!

Therefore, the logical and proper human posture for men, in this spiritual arrangement, is three-fold: humility, fear and hope.

- Humility, because none of us is the master of our place on this inherent gradient.
- Fear, because of the overarching causation of God among men and in the physical universe.
- And hope, because not one of our hardships is beyond the supernatural causation that governs the gradient.

The creation (Genesis 1-3) passage proves the generating force of causation and warns all mankind about the destructive energy that awaits those who transgress.

Unfaithfulness demands that the structure of this gradient be turned upside down.

Those persons to be "remove(d)" had determined to assign themselves, in terms of their behavior, to the higher levels of the gradient. The idea was to push the Almighty to the lower and dependent end. Living on this spiritually arranged gradient obliges manifolds of thought, speech and behavior conforming to revealed truth. The law of the gradient is God! Human thought, speech and behavior are observed and judged by the Lord.

Historical conditions are at the subordinate lower end of the gradient. "The wicked" are driven by one controlling fascination; to elevate man above God, human experience above Spiritual causation and human wisdom above revelation. This is a warning. The lower end of the gradient can be "cut off" under our feet!

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 4: THE ULTIMATE ANTITHESIS: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and MEN, 1:4-6.

Spiritual causation, the most important factor in the entire realm of human existence, had become an irrelevance. The people of "...Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem..."(v.4) had "...turned back from following the Lord, and (there were) those who have not sought the Lord or inquired of Him", v.6. Any causal relation between the God of revelation and time, circumstance, historical conditions had been amply forgotten. The people of that sociology still claimed a certain fealty to the Lord, but that was nothing more than *SURFACE LANGUAGE*. "And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven, and those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom (an idol)", v.5. A persistent character of just such surface language is that it disavows any actual causal connection between God and personal circumstances. Zephaniah emphasizes that the word of God thoroughly contradicts religious surface language. In consequence of all that, the prophet signals that there had been *A DISCONNECT FORMULATED BETWEEN GOD, THE WORD OF GOD and THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH*. "...and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests", v.4. The priests were operatives of the disconnect. They were the designated keepers of the surface language; they generated "meaning".

Through the biblical review of Israel's history, they often determined to *serve the disconnect* between themselves and the Lord. That disconnect represents a way of reasoning imposed upon the revealed language. Such a conscious maneuver constitutes a complete ideology. False gods justify the ideology which, in turn justified its logical extension into behavior. Idolatry has always served as pretext for anti-God behavior.

One hears of the necessity of "being on the right side of history" (a Marxist idea). Preposterous! But we had better *be on the right side of this disconnect*. Spiritual causation is the backbone of true faith. Without a revealed comprehension of causation we will turn to what we may call *INHERENT CAUSATION*.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 5: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION: THE BEDROCK OF BIBLICAL FAITH.

The Bible forces a distinction between two perspectives on causation.

- 1) SPIRITUAL CAUSATION: All causation is grounded in, rooted in God alone. All causation flows from Him.
- 2) INHERENT CAUSATION: All important causation resides in the material universe and inherently so. -- Everywhere in Scripture, faithfulness in action is directly relative to SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. On the other hand, textual examples abound to the effect that unfaithfulness is immediately relative to the theory of INHERENT CAUSATION.
- Beginning in Genesis 3, a satanic design was pushed into consideration. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION should be discounted as a sufficient understanding of circumstance. One should respond to historical conditions on the trust in INHERENT CAUSATION. And so they did. Unfaithfulness is preceded by confidence in INHERENT CAUSATION.
- Abraham and Sarai behaved on that same basis leading to the Hagar option (Genesis 16). An act of unfaithfulness.
- The pharaoh of the Exodus proceeded upon the foundation of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION in abatement of the experiential aspects of INHERENT CAUSATION (Genesis 37-50). An act of faithfulness.
- The Israelites, under great distress, were unnerved by their "hopeless" situation at the Red Sea (Exodus 14). Their confidence directly relative to INHERENT CAUSATION.
- At Kadesh-Barnea (Numbers 13, 14) the Israelites listened to the report of the 12 spies. Ten of whom generated a report resting on INHERENT CAUSATION.

- Joshua and Caleb countered with an understanding preceded by faith in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. The people elected to disobey God.
- At the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18, 19) King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah both conducted themselves, as leaders, upon their exclusive faith in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION.
- The contest between David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17) gives witness to this same distinction.
- Jesus' disciples (Luke 24) responded to the death of the Lord in characteristic fashion preceded by greater faith in INHERENT CAUSATION than in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. They thought that Jesus' body would still be found in the tomb in spite of His revealed teaching.

And that is the biblical difference between faithfulness and unfaithfulness. In the contemporary, human rationalized causation has taken over. We need not rely upon SPIRITUAL CAUSATION! But, then, there is Zephaniah 1:7-14.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 6: THE INERT GOD, 1:7-13.

"It will come about at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps, and I will punish the men who are stagnant in spirit, who say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do good or evil!'", 1:12. Thorough belief in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION leaves its mark upon thought, speech and behavior. Equally, the denial of it, in favor of INHERENT CAUSATION, will put an indelible mark upon everything one does.

Faith in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION dramatically alters one's understanding of circumstance. "Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near...", 1:7. This text is powerful because it posits a *change of context*. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, once recognized, means that God is the true context and the particulars of circumstance are all variables and are, therefore, non-determinant. Accordingly, one should be respectful, humbled and "silent".

But the people of Judah had made themselves and their desires the controlling context for God! They reversed the revealed understanding of temporal reality. The Almighty had warned the people that irresistible causation was coming their way. It meant nothing to them. An ideology had been developed in Judah, shared by the people and their leaders. That ideology blocked the revealed truth; making it irrelevant. God was inert! "The Lord will not do good or evil!" The earth, temporal circumstances and historical conditions took shape within a naturalistic or *closed system*. The Almighty was thought to be relative to time; not the other way around. However, that false ideology was the product of a failing spiritual condition.

The people and their leaders had become "stagnant in spirit". People who have become stagnant in spirit comprehend the world in experiential, personal, limited and social terms. Revelation is overlooked as unusable history. A campaign had been conceived and conducted to deplete the nature of God and diminish His authority. The stagnant in spirit do not "see" beyond the immediate; cannot transcend human experience; have not the gravity to fully trust God; lack the will to repress fleshly instinct. Pairing INHERENT CAUSATION with spiritual stagnation gives a negative meaning to the validity of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. The stagnant in spirit resist the climb to higher spiritual levels.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 7: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION: THE REVERSAL OF CIRCUMSTANCE, 1:14-18.

- Zephaniah teaches us that *the "distance" between the spiritual and the physical is non-existent*. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is imminent (proximate) to human, personal events. The universe of appearances is always and only misleading about spiritual reality. Appearances cannot be trusted. The imminence of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION to time forces the logical conclusion that the universe of appearances is meaningless. There is a law regarding the relation between SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and time, the material dimension: THE LAW OF REALIZATION. "Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; 'Listen, the day of the Lord!'", v.14. The law of realization put SPIRITUAL CAUSATION into the human condition; and it was irresistible.
- "wrath...trouble...distress...
- destruction...desolation...
- darkness...gloom... clouds...", v15.

Since the Almighty can push disaster into human circumstance at will, then He can most certainly push redemption into whatever human personal situation, at will. "A day of trumpet and battle cry against the fortified cities and the high corner towers", v.16.

Because of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, security can never reside in any status quo (fortified cities, high corner towers). Security and well-being are not functions of time and accumulated materiality. Those things are the function of God. Everyone in the world lives proximate to SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. So, one must consider: Anything can be added to us; anything can be taken from us.

Job, enduring his own universe of pain, loss and heartache, understood this truth. Living proximate to SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is a great privilege and is dangerous. "...Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord", Job 1:21.

This phenomenon of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is fully independent of human sensibility.

In fact, the Lord often, if not regularly overwhelms our sensibility. Hence, the source of "devastation"; emotional and mental. "I will bring distress on men so that they will walk like the blind", v.17. The practice of sin, anyone's sin, does not pass without notice. It is the Lord who assigns meaning to human behavior and it is He who reacts, in time and human circumstance. "Because they have sinned against the Lord...their blood will be poured out like dust...their flesh like dung", v.17.

This poses an advanced theory of historiography. History has no goals. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is calling the shots. Such revealed and thusly perceived proximity to that kind of power changes all the rules. When those rules are offended history will register its incursion. Material status accounts for nothing ("Neither...silver nor gold" can "deliver"). We must take into account "the fire of His jealousy", v.18.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 8: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION: PROVIDES THE FRAMEWORK FOR TIME,
2:1-3.

"Gather yourselves together, yes, gather, O nation without shame", v.1. In view of the revealed judgment of God and the forthcoming deployment of ABSOLUTE SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, the prophet urges the people to come together around a single source of meaning: revelation.

Three elements of structure matter.

- (1) There is the Word of God, source of meaning;
- 2) A time framework, wherein behavior unfolds and
- (3) The relation of revealed truth between the two.

This is the source of understanding and meaning that is absolutely beyond time, culture, human wisdom, human experience, human preference and personal human control. The Almighty puts the meaning for all time frameworks. In this case in Zephaniah, the time framework is called "SHAME". Many theological scholars, using multi-disciplinary tools (psychology, sociology, anthropology), insist that no one can escape from one's cultural/social influences. Ever! There is no sense in trying.

The prophet makes a counter proposal: We had better! Whatever we are thinking now, we had better forsake it, displace it! Without this determination the people of faith cannot stand distinct from the world. Between the Lord's "decree" (v.2) being made known and its "tak(es)ing effect", there is a time interlude. That interim time is to be devoted to a thorough reconsideration of one's state of being in revealed terms. "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances, seek righteousness, seek humility...", v.3.

Conscious human behavior either as sin or as righteousness should take into consideration an eternal imposed time pressure. That time framework is in the hands of God, alone. And it is calendrical! Not symbolic; its days are numbered. "Before the decree takes effect--the day passes like the chaff--before the burning anger of the Lord comes upon you, before the day of the Lord's anger comes upon you", v.2.

Of course, the days conceded to each of us by the Almighty all fit within that gracious interlude of time between the word of God, the promises of God and the end of time in general or the end of our days in particular. Today and for as many days as we have left, we can take every effort to reverse whatever source of "shame" we have left unattended. Such a way of life is achievable and it puts us at variance with the mainstream of human temporal existence. Those who "Seek the Lord" (v.3) are concerned about the "now and what comes "later"!

Hear the word of the Lord: "Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord's anger".

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 9: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION: CONCEIVING OF THE UNNECESSARY, 2:4-7.

Zephaniah's revelatory explanation about SPIRITUAL CAUSATION opens the mind to a non-natural range of understanding and conceptualization. Time, the material universe and human sociology are *regions of supernatural enterprise*. More specifically, our world is a place of applied SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. This is *necessary* because the realm of the created cannot hold itself together. But there are some things, some historical conditions and states of being, that are fully *unnecessary*. For example, "Gaza will be abandoned and Ashkelon a desolation; Ashdod will be driven out at noon and Ekron will be uprooted", v.4. This is not geopolitics; this is destruction forced into human history by SPIRITUAL CAUSATION.

Individuals have free will and men are held accountable to the Almighty for that range of conceptualization and concrete behavior. Such unendurable punishment was unnecessary; it did not have to be. But those peoples had sinned against God in an effort to separate their discretion and ambitions from SPIRITUAL CONTROL. Conscience was suppressed and ultimately abandoned.

"Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites! The word of the Lord is against you, O Canaan, land of the Philistines; and I will destroy you so that there will be no inhabitant", v.5. The Lord never leaves Himself mute regarding human behavior. *The word of the Lord is the universal standard for human thought, speech and behavior*. The mind of God, it was revealed, stood in complete contradiction to everything that generated behavior in those individuals and collectives. *Destruction was not built into history; it was applied to their behavior*. One may presume, then, that all forms of decency, constraint and self-discipline, right and wrong, had been forsaken by enough individuals that it became a collective phenomenon.

God does not practice cultural relativism nor moral diversity. He is not given to the contemporary social movement of "inclusion". Judah, especially the leaders, had cast aside the revelation of God in favor of "social diversity" and the "social policy of inclusion", 1:8, 9. Individual lives are being destroyed or will be "uprooted" in the same way and for the same reason. Their collectives will follow in the path of "desolation".

Judah had followed the world and the Lord executed His judgment against them. When evil men have been removed and when individuals and their collectives manifest repentance, then there is something else: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION INDUCES RECOVERY. When one turns to the Lord and to the Word of God, another promised phenomenon is applied: RECOVERY BY SUPERNATURAL INDUCTION! Recovery is not a process but an induced effect. If we stay true to revealed truth, we can recover from anything!

"And the coast will be for the remnant of the house of Judah, they will pasture on it. In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening; for the Lord will care for them and restore their fortune", v.7.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 10: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and "REASONABLE EXPECTATIONS", 2:8-15.

If thrown into a fiery furnace or a lion's den, the "reasonable expectation" of a person is death. Trapped at the Red Sea between impassable water and an unyielding stronger enemy, the "reasonable expectation" is death. Once Jesus was killed and entombed, the "reasonable expectation" was that His body would remain in that tomb.

But there is a problem for "reasonable expectations": SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, everywhere in Scripture, contradicts "reasonable expectations". Zephaniah makes the case: Believers are instructed to put unquestioned faith in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and to obey the grammatical structure of the Word of God and that in full disregard of "reasonable expectations".

Faith in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and trust in "reasonable expectations" do not mix. The leaders of Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia and Assyria had been busy trying to generate the "reasonable expectation" that Judah could not stand up against them. "I have heard the taunting of Moab and the revilings of the sons of Ammon, with which they have taunted My people and become arrogant against their territory", 2:8, 10. Along with Ethiopia and Assyria these were the "exultant" peoples (2:15) who said to themselves, "I am, and there is no one besides me".

But the Lord had other ideas. "The Lord will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth; and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him, everyone from his own place", 2:11.

Prayers should be offered in direct rebuttal to "reasonable expectations". Biblical faith

displaces the persuasive attraction of such expectations. This represents a great shift in cognition away from human lived experience and to SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. The foundation of thinking has to change. Such a change of the basis of cognition determines how one will confront all of the perils of temporal existence. And in this world believers are always in peril from one source or another; of one character or another. Standing upon the foundation of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, revealed forms of thought, speech and behavior have no obligation to -- have no indebtedness to -- "reasonable expectations".

Something to remember in the day of trial: The will of God, the power of God, the promises of God will not be held hostage to our "reasonable expectations". "(. . .As it is written, 'A father of many nations have I made you') in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist", Romans 4:17.

Great faith does not yield to "reasonable expectations"! Keep your nerve up!

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 11: BEHAVIOR UNTETHERED FROM SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, 3:1-7.

The Bible presents SPIRITUAL CAUSATION (the power of God) as *solutional*. Throughout Scripture, in every Textual episode, SPIRITUAL CAUSATION was brought to bear upon historical conditions as a solution to one situation or another.

Today, such a phenomenon is generally treated as a biblical historical anomaly. It does not really apply. The fear of God is meaningless without the precedent of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. In absence of its tempering effect, people tend to descend into depravity and degeneration of the worst sorts.

All corruption is spiritual corruption. That is its genesis. The descent was calamitous. "Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the tyrannical city! She heeded no voice, she accepted no instruction. She did not trust in the Lord, she did not draw near to her God", v.1, 2.

The people of Judah and Jerusalem took upon themselves the prerogatives that belong only to God -- ("rebellious"). There was no degenerate behavior beyond their willingness to personify -- ("defiled"). A political, legal and social structure had been put in place to coerce and bludgeon all who reflected, what is today called "antisocial" behavior. Social engineering is an old game -- ("tyrannical city").

Political correctness is not a modern invention. Impervious to any higher calling of thought, speech and behavior, their minds were disinterested in opposing or alternate ideas -- ("heeded no voice"). Revealed demands and commandments that would have been abrasive to their chosen agenda -- ("accepted no instruction") were despised as ridiculous. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION was thought to be superfluous and ascription to it

would have changed their relationship to time and materiality -- ("did not trust in the Lord"). Israel was the very creation of God. Jerusalem existed in a sea of supernatural meaning. Yet, the Jews of that time had denied its legitimacy and forsook its promises -- ("did not draw near to her God").

We can disconnect ourselves from God, but we cannot disconnect God from time. And therein is the danger.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 12: BEHAVIOR UNTETHERED FROM SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, 3:1-7.

SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, in all ways, is solutional to every human circumstance. It is "the unifying principle" of the universe. But it is not derived within time. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is imposed by the Almighty. It is revealed to us.

Judah determined to construct a world according to human genius. The leaders of Judah had facilitated, apparently in every way, that construction and it was not without precedent. The "princes within her" were "roaring lions", v.3. The "judges...wolves at evening", v.3. A description is here of thoughtless, pitiless men in high positions who knew nothing of personal responsibility nor sacred duty. "They left nothing for the morning"...ravenous, implacable, remorseless. Decency had been subordinated to their unspiritual appetites.

The "prophets" were "reckless, treacherous men", v.4. Their "priests...profaned the sanctuary" and had "done violence to the law", v.4. The men charged with the defense of the word of God and its integrity had done injury to "the law". What is violence to the law? That behavior involves extreme disregard of and even direct contradiction of revealed truth. Their agenda demands full diminishment of revelation. These men were without conscience (treacherous, profane).

They had no fascination for SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. The revealed language was made *irrelevant*. And so, eventually *it became irrelevant*. It was taken out of the way. However, the reality of God cannot finally be made irrelevant. God, Himself, is the supreme fact and His law is a representation of the *eternal mind*. The mind of God brackets all of time; that embrace is inescapable. The Almighty exercises "righteous(ness)" and "justice". "He does not fail", ever, v.5.

Oppressors, the corrupt and the profane never operate in a vacuum of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION; they just think they do, v.6! Men in the material universe cannot survive without *revealed "instruction"*, v.7. Anti-spiritual behavior leads inevitably to destruction; "According to all that I have appointed concerning her".

As powerful as SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is, human beings are even more "eager to corrupt all their deeds", v.7. We are warned.

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 13: THE COMING OF THE WITNESS, 3:8-11.

SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is a representation of the actuality (fact) of God. It is the index (connection) between God and time. This supreme power index has, in the contemporary and before, been shoved aside by the human pursuit of *the understanding of nature*. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is, today, all but mythic.

But the Lord appoints Himself as the the ultimate "witness" of its actuality. "Therefore wait for Me, declares the Lord, for the day when I rise up as a witness"..., v.8. *Waiting on the Lord* is the prescribed response to trust in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. "Wait(ing)" on the Lord is the gathering up of thought, speech and behavior under the direct influence of revealed truth. This is nothing less than a complete revealed version of past, present and future. The Lord has spoken in the past, by it He judges the present and accordingly, will execute His judgment in the future. Therefore because we understand and trust Him, we wait!

The primary witness is God Himself; believers are the collective secondary witness. While we wait, circumstances will worsen, become more coarse and depraved and unmanageable. Under extreme, excessive, prolonged and dreadful conditions, waiting for the Lord to put solutions requires a faith that much exceeds the structure of the circumstance. So waiting on the Lord is a commitment to spiritual reality and a symbol of categorical faith in the promises of God.

The priority is not to survive but rather to prove faith. That is our burden in the midst of trial. The Lord's "decision" (v.8) is to, one day, "assemble" the world to receive His "indignation" and "burning anger". This finality will be delivered with "My zeal". This tells us that the Almighty is always zealous for the judgment of sin but that His zeal yields to His personal restraint.

Why? Because the Lord has a purpose in time. He calls it "My holy mountain", v.11: A cohort of people alert to SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. These souls speak with "purified lips", serve the Lord "shoulder to shoulder" and they all publicly "call on the name of the Lord", v.9. These people believe that "the holy mountain" subsumes time and materiality. So they live to "bring offerings", v.10. And they will come beyond "the rivers" to do that. Such people are servants of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION and "...will never again be haughty...", (think they are above God) v.11. These people will not be given over to "shame" (before God) generated by dark "deeds", v.11. The world will finally yield to those who choose to stand together on that "holy mountain".

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY OF CAUSATION.
ARTICLE 14: THE GREAT DIVIDE, 3:12, 13.

"But I will leave among you a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of the Lord", v.12. One use of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is to annihilate, remove, dismiss and discomfit those who stand as recognized enemies of God and therefore typical enemies of revealed truth. The Almighty's disapproval of such individuals is patent in this text. They will not survive because they cannot cope with SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. No one can.

It is to be observed that the *universe of unbelief*, organized or casual, is not the actual source of unbelief in the world. They do not help, but they are external influences. Unbelief in SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is internal; it is within each one of us. It can be resisted. The Lord can clear out the *spiritually antagonistic*, but He will leave in place a kind of person: "humble and lowly". Such individuals do not resist SPIRITUAL CAUSATION; to the contrary, it is their only hope.

To "take refuge in the name of the Lord" is a curious statement. That is not a material set of walls; physical, structural, asset soaked, financial nor tangible. *This "refuge" is to be comprehended as STRONGER than any temporal magnitude and density.* And that is the EXACT DEMONSTRATION OF FAITH.

But what is the "pragmatic" behavior of faith? It is a firm reliable confidence in an invisible God who acts directly upon the material universe; a force outside of time and beyond its control. Pragmatic (applied) faith is not *number-guided*, rather, faith is trust in a revealed solutional force. Those who are left practice ideal behavior founded upon the fact of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION.

EXACT FAITH PRECEDES and QUALIFIES PRAGMATIC FAITH. Believers, therefore, "will do no wrong", v.13. And this by revealed measurement; a world away from human standards of consideration. They will "tell no lies". No "deceitful tongue (will) found in their mouths...". Falsity and manufactured appearances have no place in the thinking and behavior of believers. They go about the affairs of daily life in the shadow of SPIRITUAL CAUSATION, with utter dependence upon the power of God. "For they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble".

From the Book of Zephaniah. A STUDY IN CAUSATION.

ARTICLE 15: SPIRITUAL CAUSATION AT THE AXIS OF EXPERIENCE, 3:14-20.

The axial propositions are found in v. 16, 17. "...Do not be afraid, O Zion; do not let your hands fall limp", v.16. This imperative only makes sense if dangerous, distressing historical conditions are imposing. So how shall the believer experience such personal circumstances? He does not fall prey to naturalistic interpretations of historical conditions; by which, circumstance is presumed to tower over SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. That is the contemporary preference, whereby one's confidence in the Lord "falls limp", a personal state of faith cut down to the measure of general human experience. Revealed truth has got to be added to the situation with the purpose of *amplifying the personal experience of such difficulty and distress.*

Everywhere in Scripture, belief in the Word of God is proven to vastly amend and amplify how believers experience the trials of life. Adding SPIRITUAL CAUSATION to the situation works against *conjuring up spiritual weakness*. Hence, "The Lord your God is in your midst...", v.17.

Zephaniah locates the meaning of the term "advantage" not in the material set of conditions nor within human ingenuity or resilience. The only advantage is bestowed by SPIRITUAL CAUSATION. The power of God does not provide an "edge"; it is, instead, the decisive factor. "...The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst; you will fear disaster no more", v.15. The real King of Israel is invisible and present to every temporal state of affairs among His people.

Victory over circumstance is a gift of the Lord; "Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O Israel! Rejoice and exult with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem"! One can count on solutional causation. That is a causal concession to those who detest sin; "I will gather those who grieve about the appointed feasts--they came from you, O Zion; the reproach of exile is a burden on them", v.18. They stand aloof from worldly ways.

SPIRITUAL CAUSATION serves as the *master delineator* among men. "Behold, I am going to deal...with all your oppressors...save the lame...gather the outcast...will turn their shame into praise and renown in all the earth", v.19. SPIRITUAL CAUSATION is the author of personal restoration. "...Indeed, I will give you renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes," says the Lord", v.20.

ALL HONOR TO THE KING!