

The Consequences of Disobedience

Key Verse:

“Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.”

—Zephaniah 3:8

Selected Scripture:

Zephaniah 3:6-9

eliminated, and men's hearts must be purged and cleansed. However, the literal earth has done nothing worthy of being consumed and “devoured,” and the Scriptures plainly state that “the earth abideth for ever.” (Eccles. 1:4) The Apostle Peter said that “times of restitution,” or

THIS PORTION OF ZEPHA-

niah's prophecy speaks not only of the anger of the Lord against Israel, but also against all the other nations around her. A more important picture, however, is in the application of these words to the ending of this present evil world, which is progressing during the time in which we now live. Daniel speaks of this time, saying, “There shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation.”—Dan. 12:1

It is of importance to first note that our Key Verse refers to the symbolic “earth,” and the related judgments to come upon its nations and social order. God's “fierce anger” burns against all forms of injustice and iniquity.

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plainly state that “the earth abideth for ever.” (Eccles. 1:4) The Apostle Peter said that “times of restitution,” or

restoration, would come to earth and its inhabitants following Jesus' return, not burning and destruction. At that time, he continues, "all the kindreds of the earth . . . shall . . . be blessed."—Acts 3:20,21,25

In our lesson, God instructs us, "wait ye upon me." The admonition to wait on God, even in the midst of the present "time of trouble," implies that we must have full confidence in the Heavenly Father's methods, plans and purposes. His times and seasons are best for us, and for the entire world of mankind. Any attempts on our part to "run ahead" of the Lord, or be engaged in work in advance of his set time, are sure to meet with his disapproval.

James tells us, "Be patient therefore, brethren," as we view the events associated with our Lord's Second Presence. (James 5:7,8) We are further warned not to trust in carnal weapons, nor to be in harmony with their use by others. Carnal weapons refer not only to guns, bombs, swords, and spears, but also to anger, malice, hatred, strife, and a combative spirit. The Apostle Paul states, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God."—II Cor. 10:4,5

God's truth is mighty, and it will pull down all the strongholds of error to accomplish the setting up of his kingdom upon the earth. Everything associated with sin—anger, hatred, pride, selfishness, and every other fallen human tendency—must be destroyed. These are the conditions present in the earth today that will be "devoured with the fire" of God's jealousy. Once this is accomplished, the salvation of the citizens of all nations will come to pass. "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent." (Zeph. 3:9) Those who learn God's "pure language" of love, humility, and kindness, will gladly turn their hearts fully back to him, and receive the blessings of everlasting life upon the earth. ■