

Hartford Bible Students Newsletter

September 2010

THE FIRE OF ANARCHY

“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. For 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.” Zephaniah 3:8-9

Firestorms of trouble among the nations are ablaze throughout the world today causing great distress in the hearts of many. Fire, as used in Scripture, is a fitting symbol of anarchy. It is a most destructive force, and there is nothing more destructive to society than anarchy. The prophetic description of anarchy is found in Ezekiel 38:21...

“Every Man’s Sword Against His Brother”

While this sad prophetic statement of final anarchy yet looms on the horizon of End Time prophecy, brushfires of anarchy are already flaring up around the world. Since 1998, in the Congo conflict, tragic loss of human life from tribal infighting is estimated to be 5.4 million. Rowanda, Kenya, Liberia, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Sudan’s Darfur are all crying for help. Even with international aid, however, the “fire” is spreading.

Every day seems to bring a new explosive conflict. Tragic scenes appear in the media briefly but are soon replaced by our own personal crises or diversions. Few are prepared to keep these stories fresh in our minds, much less be able to do anything to help but remotely.

These struggles between the oppressors and the oppressed, the Scriptures warn, are but brushfires compared to what will eventually be world-wide anarchy. If it were not for the reassuring conclusion of Zephaniah’s prophecy, the student of Scripture could become paralyzed with fear. Luke 21:26 says of our time: “Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth.” But, thank God, there will be a glorious outcome.

Common Elements Fanning the Flames of Anarchy

Education has led to demands for personal rights and liberties, adding fuel to these *brushfires*. Governments have tried in vain to hold the enlightened people in place, but the people have revolted. Without a government in place—whether good or bad—to maintain order, the *fires* of anarchy soon ignite.

This explosive trend continues to wreak unspeakable devastation on humanity. The *war-revolution-anarchy* pattern is driven by any number of common factors:

- > Economic collapse, overpopulation, famine, poverty, disease or fear of these events;
- > Social jealousies, civil wars, ethnic or tribal revenge;
- > Religious zeal to gain converts, dominate or annihilate;
- > Selfish ambitions by power-hungry individuals or factions.

Much like the French Revolution, it was the mothers' cry for bread which brought about anarchy in the streets. The cry of the world's poor will be one of the driving forces behind the fulfillment of Zephaniah's prophecy. These common elements which fuel the flames of anarchy have also given rise to terrorist activities throughout the world—religious, social, economic and political issues still being the root cause. The unfortunate fact is that unsolvable conflicts will continue to frustrate the nations and press many of earth's billions under the wheels of crushing war machines.

The Gathering of Nations

There have always been pockets of anarchy among men. So why have the past 100 years been any more remarkable to indicate that we are now at the time period of Zephaniah's prophecy? It is the *gathering of nations* that makes this prophetic statement quite unique to our time.

The world is interconnected—*gathered*—as never before in history. A global marketplace is further contributing to the instability of the social and financial fabric of nations large and small. The world's economies are now lined up like so many tottering dominos—any one could bring the others down. Investment giants such as Citibank are being bought out by the oil-rich United Arab Emirates, illustrating how even the growing credit crisis plays into the *gathering of all nations*.

Yes, God will "*gather the nations*" to pour out the "*fire of His wrath*." And while all that sounds painful—there is hope. God has a plan which will bring healing! As Zephaniah prophesied, after the *fire* of that day, God "*will turn to the people a pure language*," and they will call upon His name and "*serve Him with one consent*." Mankind will learn to work side by side—"*shoulder to shoulder*" (NAS)—instead of fighting against one another. The "*pure language*"—Truth—will be given to those who have never heard of it before. And, because of the troubles they have experienced, they will now be ready to listen to God's *pure truth*—untainted by the erroneous doctrines of men.

After the Fire—A Purified Earth

As has been seen, the term *fire* as used in Zephaniah's prophecy is not literal, but symbolic of God's mighty power—destroying and removing the old structure of society to make way for the new. Who will make up this new society? Again, the prophet Zephaniah wrote that God

will “*turn to the people*” the “*pure language*” of Truth—which indicates they did not have it before. “*The people*” referred to will be the untold billions of mankind who have never heard the “*pure language*.” These will begin to *hear* God’s Word as they are raised from their graves to a newly purified earth.

After these corrupting elements—political, financial, social and religious systems—are removed, resurrected mankind will see clearly the valuable lessons of the consequences of sin and selfishness. The Apostle Peter states that the “*heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt...*” (2 Peter 3:7-13) These “*heavens*” and “*elements*” are not *people*—they are the oppressive *systems* that the selfish and power-hungry created.

The purpose of this apocalyptic fire at the return of Jesus is not to save a mere few and destroy the remainder along with the earth. The Scriptures say that the heavens retain Jesus until the *times of restitution*—the restoration of the majority of mankind to their Eden-like home upon the earth. “...*He [God] shall send Jesus Christ... whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.*” (Acts 3:20-22) This *restitution of all things* will include all that Adam—and all of his children—lost: perfect life and home on a perfect earth. “*For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.*” Matthew 18:11

The purpose of Jesus’ return, therefore, is not to destroy but to restore the earth in *times of refreshing* as is stated in Acts 3:19. As Revelation describes these “*times*,” the “*water of life*” will proceed “*out of the throne of God and the Lamb*,” and the symbolical “*leaves*” will be for “*the healing of the nations.*” (Revelation 22:1-2) Instead of the *fire of anarchy*—with every man’s hand being against his brother or neighbor—earth’s billions will serve God “*shoulder to shoulder*,” hand in hand, heart to heart.

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