

The Consequences of Disobedience

Teaching Tips

June 12, 2016

Bible Study Guide 2

Words You Should Know

A. Waste ([Zephaniah 3:6](#)) *charab* (Heb.)—To be dried up, desolate.



B. Instruction (v. 7) *musar* (Heb.)—Discipline, correction, chastisement, or warning.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—Maintaining Common Human Bonds. Sometimes people persist in destroying something beautiful even when they know the consequences. What are some consequences of destroying a good thing? Zephaniah recounts the way God began punishing the people for their disobedience, hoping they would correct their behavior.

A. Read the Bible Background and Devotional Readings in a modern translation.

B. Complete Lesson 2 in the *Precepts For Living*® Personal Study Guide.

C. Reread the Focal Verses.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Open with prayer.

B. Have students read the Aim for Change in unison.

C. Ask for a volunteer to read the In Focus story.

D. Discuss the Lord's promise to punish sin and what that means for humanity.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Read and discuss the Background section.

B. Ask for volunteers to read the Focal Verses and The People, Places, and Times. Discuss.

C. Encourage students to examine their lives, repent of any sin, and ask for the Spirit's help to live in a manner pleasing to God.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Review and discuss the Search the Scriptures and Discuss the Meaning questions and the Lesson in Our Society section.

B. Ask students to share the most significant point they learned from the lesson and how to use that point this week.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Complete the Follow the Spirit and Remember Your Thoughts sections.

B. Remind students to read the Daily Bible Readings in preparation for next week's lesson.

C. Close in prayer, thanking God for His great mercy.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: The Consequences of Disobedience

Song: "I Surrender All"

Devotional Reading: [Deuteronomy 8:11–18](#)



The Consequences of Disobedience

Bible Background • [GENESIS 1:1–2:3](#); [ZEPHANIAH 3:1–8](#)



Printed Text • [ZEPHANIAH 3:6–8](#) | Devotional Reading • [DEUTERONOMY 8:11–18](#)



Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: EXAMINE Zephaniah's prophecy that God would want to save His people and the people's intransigent rebellion; HELP adults realize that God loves us, wants our obedience, and will give us a second chance to repent; and COMMIT to asking God to give another opportunity for redemption and salvation.



In Focus

Marvin ran his hands over his head. The courtroom was very cold, but he was still sweating. He was awaiting sentencing for his crime and wondering how long he would be in jail.

It was surreal. It started as a night of partying and drinking games. He knew he was drunk when he got in the car but he only had a few miles to go. He was sure he could make it with no problem. He said that he would be careful. He had been caught driving under the influence of alcohol twice before, but he really wanted to just get home and sleep.

The next thing Marvin knew, he was in a hospital. He had run a red light and crashed into a minivan carrying a family of five. Four were killed. He was arrested and convicted on four counts of first-degree manslaughter.

Marvin's heart pounded when the judge walked back into the courtroom. He stood, not knowing how much time he would serve. He held on to the chair for support when the judge sentenced him: sixty years in prison.

We must not persist in our sin. God is patient, but there are consequences to our actions. What causes us to persist in our sin even though we know of the negative consequences?

Keep in Mind

“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](#)).



Focal Verses

KJV

[Zephaniah 3:6](#) I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant.



7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

8 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.

NLT

[Zephaniah 3:6](#) “I have wiped out many nations, devastating their fortress walls and towers. Their streets are now deserted; their cities lie in silent ruin. There are no survivors—none at all.



7 I thought, ‘Surely they will have reverence for me now! Surely they will listen to my warnings. Then I won’t need to strike again, destroying their homes.’ But no, they get up early to continue their evil deeds.

8 Therefore, be patient,” says the LORD. “Soon I will stand and accuse these evil nations. For I have decided to gather the kingdoms of the earth and pour out my fiercest anger and fury on them. All the earth will be devoured by the fire of my jealousy.”

The People, Places, and Times

Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital city of the Southern Kingdom, Judah. It was known as the Holy City. The temple, central to Jewish worship, was located in Jerusalem. Because Judah persisted in her sinful ways, the Lord promised judgment. True to Zephaniah’s prophecy, the city was captured by Babylonia’s king, Nebuchadnezzar, in 597 B.C. and destroyed in 587 after a decade of occupation.

Background

Beginning in [Zephaniah 2](#), the prophet describes God’s coming judgment on the nations. First, the Lord started with Philistia. He promised to make the coastlands that the people inhabited a pasture for flocks. Next He judged Moab and Ammon, the descendants of Lot, who had mistreated God’s people. He promised that He would humble them, and did so. The Lord then turned to Egypt and promised to punish the Egyptians through war, killing their youths. Next, He promised the Ethiopians death by the sword. Finally, the Lord addressed Assyria and promised that the great city of Nineveh would become a wilderness.



Here in [Zephaniah 3](#) is a prophecy directed at Jerusalem. Verses 1 through 6 give a detailed picture of Jerusalem. The City of God had deteriorated into a polluted city filled with violence and crime (v.1). The people of Jerusalem resisted all attempts at correction. Though Josiah had instituted religious reforms and nearly eradicated Baal worship, the people of Judah remained rebellious. They had no faith in the Lord and would not seek Him (v. 2). The leaders preyed on the people. Even their worship was tainted. The priests defiled the temple and the



prophets were seeking only personal gain. The Lord had attempted to restore Jerusalem, but they refused. At this point, the Lord's wrath will come upon the people of Jerusalem for their sinful ways.

At-A-Glance

1. Other Nations Are Destroyed

([Zephaniah 3:6](#))



2. Judah Refuses to Repent (v. 7)

3. The Lord Promises Utter Destruction and Offers Hope (v. 8)

In Depth

1. Other Nations Are Destroyed ([Zephaniah 3:6](#))



The Lord describes how He executed judgment on other nations. [Zephaniah 2:4–15](#) describe the Lord's judgment on surrounding nations. He pronounces judgment on Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and Assyria. He uses their destruction as an example of judgment for sin. Their foundations and their towers had been destroyed. These other nations had been "cut off." There were no survivors. These nations had become extinct.



The Lord reminded Judah of the destruction of these other nations as an appeal for Judah to repent. He had judged sinners. Would He not judge His own people who had lost faith in Him, the ones who had chosen not to walk in His ways, even more so?

2. Judah Refuses to Repent (v. 7)

While Judah was aware of the destruction and judgment of surrounding nations, they were certain that it would not happen to them. They believed that the Lord would do nothing to them (1:12). As a result, Judah was unaffected by the destruction of other nations.

The Lord had hoped that after seeing the destruction that had come to the surrounding nations, Judah would repent and turn to Him. He did not want to strike Judah and bring destruction. Judah, however, remained deeply entrenched in its sin—so much so that the inhabitants of Judah rose early in the morning to engage in their sin (v. 6).

By making examples of surrounding nations, God was giving Judah a chance to repent. He gave them a chance to choose wholeness rather than desolation. Judah had an opportunity to receive the Lord's instruction and correction, and avoid judgment. Instead, Judah chose to continue in their sin.

3. The Lord Promises Utter Destruction and Offers Hope (v. 8)


Because Judah did not heed the Lord's warning and refused to repent, the Lord promised utter destruction for the unrepentant. Still, a message of hope remained for the faithful. The Lord also spoke to the small remnant that served Him. He commanded them to wait on Him. He promised that He would judge the sinners and restore the righteous. The faithful were instructed to await the redemption of the Lord. He urged them to wait on Him and depend on Him alone.

The prophecy describes the final Day of the Lord when the nations will be judged. This time of extreme tribulation will be unlike anything that has ever been seen before ([Matthew 24:21](#)). The Lord will pour out His fury against the nations for their rebellion against Him.



The Lord promises a tragic end: the whole earth will be devoured by the fire of His jealousy. This is particularly unfortunate because He is destroying the very creation He delighted in making and declared good. The fire of His jealousy would consume all.


Search the Scriptures

1. In what ways did the Lord appeal to Judah to repent ([Zephaniah 3:6–7](#))? 
2. What did God expect Judah to do after witnessing the destruction of other nations (v. 7)?

Discuss the Meaning


1. Today we have the benefit of being able to look in the Word of God to see His punishment for sin. How can we examine our own lives to deal with sin? How can we fully submit to God as Father?
2. As Christians, we are challenged to hold a balanced view of God. How can we live in the reality of God as both Righteous Judge and Gracious Redeemer?
3. In our current time, God usually does not use wars, military invasions, and disasters (natural or manmade) to discipline His people. How does God correct people today? Have you ever experienced the correction of God?

Lesson in Our Society

So many in our society believe, like the people of Judah, that the Lord will do nothing to them. Many lose sight of the fact that we will one day stand before God ([Romans 14:12](#)). Each person will have to give an account. So many carry on as if there were no punishment for sin and no need for a savior. 

Zephaniah prophesies the judgment of the whole earth. God does indeed punish for sin, but He is also rich in mercy and seeks repentance and reconciliation. Spend some time with the Lord to confess any sin and let Him speak to you about how you can please Him more.

Make It Happen

[Proverbs 15:32](#) says, “If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding.” The Holy Spirit is constantly speaking to us. We must be attentive and responsive to the Lord’s leading and correction. Regularly spend time reading the Bible and praying. Seek the Lord and let Him instruct you. 

Follow the Spirit


What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

[Zephaniah 3:6–8](#)

6 I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. 

In the previous verses, God has indicted Jerusalem. He describes the wrongs of the officials and leaders. He contrasts their injustice with His justice as a righteous judge. Next the Lord, through Zephaniah, declares His track record and the foolishness of Jerusalem’s rebellion. He declares, “I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate.” The word for tower (Heb. *pinnah*, **pee-NAH**) refers to the corners of a building, usually where a tower of a

citadel or fortress would be positioned. These towers would be key points in the defense of the city. Once these towers fell, the whole city would be open and vulnerable to attack. These towers were now desolate (Heb. *shaman*, **shah-MAHM**), which means destroyed to the point of being empty. The Lord is saying that the strength of the nations—their armies—is no more. The streets are made waste (Heb. *charab*, **khah-RAHV**), which means here to be in ruins. The picture is that the streets would have no one walking on them. After God's judgment, no one would be left.

7 I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off, howsoever I punished them: but they rose early, and corrupted all their doings.

Zephaniah gives us a glimpse into the divine mind and heart. After all that God has done to the nations, He expects His own people to fear (Heb. *yara*, **yah-RAH**) Him. This fear is a theological term with reverential awe as the dominant aspect, which would drive those who possess it to a life of piety and obedience and a willingness to receive instruction (Heb. *musar*, **moo-SAHR**). This word also refers to discipline, correction, and chastisement. In this context, Zephaniah specifically has in mind discipline and chastisement with a view to a change of behavior. The purpose of the discipline is to keep Israel from being cut off (Heb. *karat*, **kah-ROT**), a euphemism for ceasing to exist in the sense that God would find a way to end the person's family line (cf. [Leviticus 7:20–21](#); [Jeremiah 11:19](#)). The Lord desires His people to continue on in spite of the fact that He needs to punish them. This punishment was something that could not be averted, but if they repented of their sins, it would be remedial and not result in total destruction.

8 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.

As a result of Jerusalem's continuous rebellion, the Lord says to wait (Heb. *chakah*, **kha-KAH**) for Him—the day when God's judgment comes, when He rises up to seize the prey. The word for rise up (Heb. *qum*, **KOOM**) means to rise up, but also to physically stand up or to arise with power over somebody or something—in this case the deserved punishment of the people of Jerusalem is the consequence of God assuming His full power. The Lord says His decision is to gather (Heb. *asaph* **ah-SAHF**) or bring in the nations into the court of justice. He will assemble (Heb. *qabats*, **kah-VATS**) the kingdoms. The Hebrew word for assemble means to collect in the sense of grasping by the hand as with grain during the harvest, but most of the time means a gathering of people. This gathering of the nations would be according to the Lord's sovereign plan and He would be intimately involved. The purpose is that He will pour out His indignation (Heb. *za'am*, **ZAH-am**), which is related to the idea of foaming. This indignation will be unleashed on the nations, and Judah will be a recipient as well. Zephaniah adds that in the fire of the Lord's jealousy, the whole earth will be consumed. Here jealousy (Heb. *qin'ah*, **kee-NAH**) means the appropriate desire for what someone has a right to—in this case, the jealousy of God who is Lord over the whole earth and His people in particular.

Say It Correctly

Inhabitant. in-ha-bi-**TENT**.

Indignation. in-dig-**NAY**-shun.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Remember the Commandments
([Deuteronomy 4:9–14](#))

TUESDAY

Godly Planning

([Proverbs 16:1–9](#))



WEDNESDAY

Ungodly Planning
([Ezekiel 33:27–33](#))



THURSDAY

Promised Rest
([Matthew 11:25–30](#))



FRIDAY

Humble Planning
([1 Peter 5:1–6](#))



SATURDAY

Faithful Planning
([1 Peter 5:7–11](#))



SUNDAY

Consequences of Disobedience
([Zephaniah 3:6–8](#))

