

FROM HOT ASHES WE HEAR A CRY

Largely untouched by the ravages of war, immune to political upheaval and blessed by fortune, Americans have enjoyed mostly untroubled affluence until 9/11/01.[1] In the planning for over six years, the terrorist attacks on this country show how vulnerable we are to even a few individuals.

Hatred for America is widespread throughout the Muslim world. Even in countries we consider as allies, there was celebration in the streets over the terrorist attack. In the Middle East, one country saw children joining parents in celebrating the devastation. Recently, in a sermon at the Palestinian Authorities Mosque – Al Aqsa Mosque – the appointed Mofti of Jerusalem intoned: “Oh Allah, destroy America, her agents and her allies!” This was repeated over and over.[2]



To Seventh-day Adventists the recent tragedy should provide alarming insights. The weighty issue goes beyond the satanic frenzy that guided the Islamic extremists. A penetrating question must be raised: “*Why did God permit the attack on this country?*”

The focus is on the Arab world. Is it possible the focus should also be on us? Something is occurring which was foretold that should violently shake all lethargy from our hearts. In 1888 a familiar prophecy was made which we have dimly comprehended:

“When our nation, in its legislative councils, shall enact laws to bind the consciences of men in regard to their religious privileges, enforcing Sunday observance, and bringing oppressive power to bear against those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath, the law of God will, to all intents and purposes, be made void in our land; and *national apostasy will be followed by national ruin.*”[3]

It has been assumed that legislative acts would bring the curse of national ruin. But are there other issues that join with these laws which brings an end to the United States as a strong country? An almost incomprehensible question must be asked: “Are there movements within the U.S. that *precede* national ruin?” This is where careful insight into Revelation 13 can be helpful. The United States will soon serve Satan’s wishes – it becomes dragon like for a period of time before probation closes. There must be a *defined* transition between the Christian abiding interest and the dragon supported acts.

“The time is right upon us when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. *The Spirit of God is being withdrawn from the world.*”[4]

What brings that sorrow? – Disasters. Why? The sensitivity to His Spirit is blunted.

“God sees that the world is in need of cleansing. In the very near future, this cleansing will come. It will at first be done in a limited degree, and then with greater and still greater power, *till men will see that God means to bring them to repentance.*—Letter 21, 1904.”[5]

This is a call to the world as the great conflict draws to a close and, unequivocally, for God's people also:

"God wants us to come to our senses. *He wants* us to *seek* for the *meaning* of the *calamities* that have overtaken us, that we may not tread in the footsteps of Israel, and say, 'The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord are we.' when we are not this at all. When we reach the mark of our high calling in Christ, the protecting arm of God will be with us. We shall have a covert from the storm."^[6]

Is the world recognizing the calamities and this disaster as a call to righteousness?

"Tying the spiritual to national security concerns, Christian Broadcasting Network founder Pat Robertson spoke yesterday [9/11/01] about the need for spiritual revival in America. 'It's not a missile shield that we need right now. We need a prayer shield throughout this nation. And I'm asking this nation, the Christians of America particularly, to pray to ask God for revival in America,' he said during a '700 Club' broadcast."

"Gary DeMar, author of 'Last Day's Madness' and president of *American Vision* ... sees this assault as a wakeup call from God.

"It's interesting how many journalists are talking about God,' he told WND [WorldNet Daily]. 'We never hear about God unless something like this happens.'

"America has strayed a long way, and maybe God is calling us to account.'

"The soul of our nation is facing one of its darkest hours,' said [Chuck] Colson. 'May God help us.'

"To that end, [Jerry] Falwell cites a passage from 2 Chronicles: 'If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.'^[7] Is it true that calamities are the result of defying God? Certainly. "And because of men's wickedness the Lord does not restrain the destroying power."^[8]

There are several things that will bring the world to a "final choice." A major tool in His quill of attention-getting arrows will be – calamities. Another – the Loud Cry of a people who understand prophecy and the gospel.

God is sensitizing the world to the reality that a decisive moment is soon to come. Beyond that point, there will be no further chance for moral decisions. "Everything has been moving on just as the Lord revealed in prophecy that it would."^[9]

Perhaps this thought might be valuable to provoke a closer look as to where we are:

"The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fire-proof buildings and said: 'They are perfectly safe.' But these buildings were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction."^[10]

"The time is right upon us when there will be sorrow in the world that no human balm can heal. Even *before* the last great destruction comes upon the world [seven last plagues], the flattering monuments of man's greatness will be crumbled in the dust. God's retributive judgments will fall on those who in the face of great light have continued in sin. Costly buildings, supposed to be fire-proof, are erected. But as Sodom perished in the flames of God's vengeance, so will these proud structures become ashes."^[11]

These calamities are also a clarion call to God's people. It is for **us** as well that He makes urgent appeals to turn from our evil ways.

"The message that God gave to the churches in Ephesus and Sardis are applicable to those who in this age have had great light but have not opened the door of the heart to the knock of Christ. *The Lord has shown plainly that He has a controversy with His people.* The fires that have lately raged in New York and other cities were no accident. It was the hand of omnipotent power. The Spirit of God is withdrawing from the world because the warnings of heaven have not been heeded. *We need to beware, for a similar condition of things is coming in amongst us as a people.*"^[12]

The last sentence above raises a solemn concern. What does it mean, "The Lord has a controversy with His people?" The warnings of heaven have not been heeded. Are there heart rending disasters ahead for the church?

The focus, again, is on the terrorist. We want justice done. God, however, is reminding us that mercy's plea is about to end. God's Spirit is soon to leave most individuals and most Adventists. The call for revival by many of this country's religious leaders is deeply needed, it is also a call to us – personally.

"Now is the time when we are to confess and forsake our sins, that they may go beforehand to judgment and be blotted out. Now is the time to 'cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' It is dangerous to delay this work. Satan is even now seeking by disasters upon sea and land to seal the fate of as many as possible. What is the defense of the people of God at this time?—It is a living connection with heaven. If we would dwell in safety from the noisome pestilence, if we would be preserved from dangers seen and unseen, we must hide in God; we must secure the protecting care of Jesus and holy angels. In these days of peril, the Lord would have us walk before him in humility. Instead of trying to cover our sins, he would have us confess them, as Joshua confessed the sins of ancient Israel. We profess to be the depositaries of God's law. We profess to be building up 'the old waste places,' and to be raising up the foundations of many generations.' If this great and solemn work has indeed been committed to us, how important that we depart from all iniquity!"^[13]

"We were confronted anew by the fragility of life and all we hold dear in it, and the realization of how precious it is, and how vulnerable, and how implacably it must be defended. No, never say there is no evil in the world. It has just struck, and now must be struck down. Just give us the strength, Lord. Let the memory of this day forever gird us.

"The United States is at war against an invisible enemy, and he operates in a darkness

suddenly made visible. The only trace he leaves is panic, chaos, incredible loss and fear of the next attack.

“Across the harbor from the twin towers that are no more, away from the screeching sirens and hospital emergency rooms, the Statue of Liberty still holds her torch aloft, and if you look closely, you can see the eyes narrow, the great hand clench into a mighty fist: Liberty Aroused.

“Already the inexpressible anger felt by every citizen of the Republic begins to concentrate itself in a cold, useful, organized fury. We will bury the dead, tend the injured, solace the mourners and clear away the only material losses. But we will not rest till justice is done, no matter how long it takes, so help us God.”^[14]

On September 14, 2001, President Bush led out in a memorial service at the Washington Cathedral in a special National Day of Prayer. In his remarks, he so eloquently said:

“We come before God to pray ... This world He created is of moral design. Grief and tragedy and hatred are only for a time. Goodness, remembrance and love have no end.”

Billy Graham said, “We’re facing a new kind of enemy, we’re involved in a new kind of warfare, and we need the help of the Spirit of God.”^[15]

To us – the real enemy is well known. Since he knows now that time is short, every evil malice and hateful design will get uglier.

Let God’s people make this our time to have organized fury against sin. Resolve to clear away the debris of this world entrenched so deeply in our hearts and not rest till the character of God is revealed in us. Then the work of His justice can be completed. Then we can enjoy the unrestrained flood of God’s mercy. From the hot ashes of New York and Washington comes a cry – “revenge.” Through the devastation, another voice is heard – “repent.” **We** have received a warning call – it is from a divine voice.

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EndTime Issues..., September 2001

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