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TERRORISM IN AMERICA: FORESHADOW OF END-TIME EVENTS

by Thomas Ice

Henry Ford is reported to have said, “history is one damn thing after another.” For the non-Christian history is merely a random sequence of meaningless events. In a nutshell, this is the belief of the professional secular historian. They may be good at chronicling these alleged random events, but when it comes to finding the meaning and significance of major events, this is the exclusive domain of the Bible-believing Christian. When it comes to explaining *why* the events of September 11, 2001 occurred in history, the Bible, especially Bible prophecy, provide a framework for making sense of this tragic mess.

DANIEL AND THE PURPOSE OF HISTORY

In a time of public and personal crisis we all need a framework in order to make sense of specific events that occur. This is especially true of monumental events like the recent round of terrorists attacks here in America. Daniel faced a similar situation in Babylon when King Nebuchadnezzar was experiencing a melt down over a puzzling dream and he wanted to know “why.” Daniel stepped forward and said, “there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and He has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will take place in the latter days” (Dan. 2:28). Earlier, in a similar vein, Daniel had declared to Arioch, the captain of the king’s bodyguard, the following about the Lord: “it is He who changes the times and the epochs; He removes kings and establishes kings; He gives wisdom to wise men, And knowledge to men of understanding. It is He who reveals the profound and hidden things; He knows what is in the darkness, And the light dwells with Him” (Dan. 2:21-22). A large part of the framework that Daniel operated upon included prophetic details about the future.

Now why would prophecy be an important part of Daniel’s framework? Because when an individual is going through a crisis, that appears to be out of control, it is important to know that someone—God—is really in control. How do we really know that God is in control? We know God is in control because He has provided a detailed outline of the future to Daniel, thus demonstrating that He is in control of the crisis that Daniel was experiencing. Only the God of the Bible is able to provide one hundred per cent accurate prophetic details about God’s future plan for humanity.

The Book of Daniel is set-up with a combination of personal stories (true stories) about Daniel and other Hebrew captives in Babylon and prophetic revelation about the future.. It is a book that provides needed wisdom for how Israel was to live faithfully for the Lord outside the Land of Israel, while awaiting return back to Jerusalem and the Land.. This same wisdom can often be applied to Christian believers who are living in the world (Babylon) awaiting the return of Christ. So knowing prophecy is part of the framework that a believer needs to know to give one the needed confidence and trust in Christ needed to live boldly for our Lord at any time, but especially during a time of crisis.

WHY?

The day after the destruction of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers and partial destruction of the Pentagon, I was a newspaper with huge headlines that screamed out "Why?" Well, it is certainly not God's fault. Like all evil events, this tragic scheme is the result of fallen human depravity. It is due to man's sinful depravity striking out against his fellow human beings. The prophet Jeremiah said, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately wicked; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9) Yes, the wickedness of mankind is hard to understand. People have a difficult time figuring out how our fellow human beings can do monumentally evil deeds to one another. Yet, it is due to sin in the human heart, not socio-economic reasons as is so commonly thought. However, there is another factor that works in conjunction with the sinful human heart.

The mystery of iniquity (KJV) is said to be "already at work" during the present church age (2 Thess. 2:7). This is a reference to the satanic influence that works in conjunction with human sin. Within the context of 2 Thessalonians 2, the mystery of lawlessness during the tribulation is preparing the way for the entrance of antichrist upon the stage of history, once the restraint of the Holy Spirit is removed (2 Thess. 2:7-10). This means, I think, that Satan and fallen sinful human beings are working in tandem to produce an evil that exceeds what humanity could produce on their own. This is why we have a conspiracy of evil such as was perpetrated in the events of September 11, 2001. It is hard to explain, but the only explanation that makes sense is one that is the result of cooperate evil. An evil that originates in both the sinful hearts of man and from the spiritual realm of the satanic.

A related question that many often ask at a time like this is related to the previous query. "Why did God allow this to happen?" Many people think that God should intervene in history to stop great atrocities of man's inhumanity to man. Some have ask: "Where was God in Nazi Germany?" "Where was God during the Vietnam War?" Romans 1 tells us that because of our sin God has given us over to that which we want—our sin.

And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them. (Rom. 1:28-32)

Because we are rebellious toward God and will not submit to Him and His authority, God's present judgment or wrath is to give us over to our own sinful desires. In this present time in history, God, by and large, does not restrain evil. Since sinful man in his rebellion wants to be free of God and His restraints, our Lord says, "Fine, see how you like My hands-off policy in regards to your sin." The Psalmist says, "Surely the wrath of

man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain” (Psa. 76:10; KJV). It is not God’s fault, but the result of man’s choice.

One day there is going to come a time when God will remove evil from mankind. This process is known as the seven-year tribulation period. Since God’s kingdom will be a righteous one, He will have to separate good and evil. This is what the judgment of the tribulation is all about. God will purge out evil and evil doers before He is able to set up His righteous rule in the thousand year kingdom we know as the millennium, which will then give rise to the Great White Throne judgment and then the Eternal State.

STAGE SETTING

The present church age is not a time in which Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. Bible prophecy relates to a time after the rapture (the seven-year tribulation period). However, this does not mean that God is not preparing the world for that future time during the present church age—in fact, He is. But this is not “fulfillment” of Bible prophecy. So while prophecy is not being fulfilled in our day, it does not follow that we cannot track “general trends” in current preparation for the coming tribulation, especially since it immediately follows the rapture. We call this approach “stage-setting.” Just as many people set their clothes out the night before they wear them the following day, so in the same sense is God currently preparing the world for the certain fulfillment of prophecy in a future time.

Dr. John Walvoord explains:

But if there are no signs for the Rapture itself, what are the legitimate grounds for believing that the Rapture could be especially near of this generation?

The answer is not found in any prophetic events predicted before the Rapture but in understanding the events that will follow the Rapture. Just as history was prepared for Christ’s first coming, in a similar way history is preparing for the events leading up to His Second Coming. . . . If this is the case, it leads to the inevitable conclusion that the Rapture may be excitingly near.¹

The Bible provides detailed prophecy about the seven-year tribulation. In fact, Revelation 4—19 gives a detailed, sequential outline of the major players and events. Using Revelation as a framework, a Bible student is able to harmonize the hundreds of other biblical passages that speak of the seven-year tribulation into a clear model of the next time period for planet earth. With such a template to guide us, we can see that already God is preparing or setting the stage of the world in which the great drama of the tribulation will unfold. In this way this future time casts shadows of expectation in our own day so that current events provide discernible signs of the times.

CURRENT EVENTS

What are some possible relations between recent events and Bible prophecy? First, the destruction of the World Trade Center and the ensuing chaos could be a foretaste of what it will be like after the rapture. There will be some wreckage due to the fact that

some planes will suddenly become pilotless. People will be grief-stricken, wondering where their loved ones have gone. The rapture will be different in one way it will be a global event affecting the entire earth in a single moment.

Second, this gives us a microcosm of what the global judgments of the tribulation will be like. During this time, a majority of the earth's population will die. The earth, sun, moon, and stars will be effected. Every human being on earth will experience in some way these judgments for themselves. There will be no safe places to run to, the entire world will come under God's judgment and it will have a terrifying impact on those who are left behind.

The recent events are leading to another global coalition to fight against terrorism. This will further prepare the way for the one world government of the antichrist during the future tribulation.

More than likely, Americans will have to give up more of our individual liberties so that the government can provide safety for its citizens. An increase in governmental oversight of the individual is also preparatory for the global economic control that Antichrist will exert in the tribulation (Rev. 13).

Through these events, it is more likely that Israel, more specifically Jerusalem, will increasingly be viewed as that "cup that causes reeling to all peoples" and "a heavy stone for all the peoples" (Zech. 12:2-3). Israel will be blamed in some way for these events. Even though many will turn against Israel, God will stand with her and guide her through the events that lay ahead during the tribulation.

CONCLUSION

Our Lord has given His church a wake-up call through these horrible events that have recently occurred in America. Because of these events, Christians have an unprecedented opportunity to turn conversations about this disaster towards the Lord. Believers need to give a biblical perspective and take advantage of this opportunity to proclaim the gospel to those who need Jesus Christ as the solution to man's sin. Evil can be taken care of individually by trusting Christ as our Savior to forgive our sins and God will judge global evil during the tribulation. Are you ready? Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹John F. Walvoord, *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*, revised (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), p. 217.