

# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

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IS GOD  
TO BLAME?



# IS GOD TO BLAME?

**M**any have noted that the September 11 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., has forever changed the way Americans live their lives. Gone is the foolish reliance on the supposed invulnerability and impregnability of fortress America. "Normalcy" now includes within it a measure of apprehension.

For almost two hundred years, our shores remained uninvaded from east or west because America lies so far removed from where the wars of the past raged. We felt that the spans of two great oceans were so great that any plan of invasion would prove impossible. Any enemy would easily be revealed and countermeasures taken long before it could mount an effective attack. However, events of September 11 exposed the reality that the enemy is already within, having invaded us through deceitful impressions of peaceful intentions.

The sudden and mysterious mailings of anthrax to media and political figures seem to be following up the terrorists' first strike. At the time of this writing, no one has directly tied these mailings to the bombers or their cohorts, but the packages that have been positively identified originated from within the United States. In addition, federal investigators recently disclosed that credit cards used by some of the terrorists on board the hijacked planes were used after the bombings to purchase items within the U.S. Again, the enemies of our security are already among us.

Flag-waving patriotism has reached a highpoint unseen for many decades, but these circumstances are undoubtedly affecting the American's sense of well-being. Political and media figures are talking confidently of victory over the forces of terror, but the sudden and devastating effectiveness of the attacks has unquestionably struck a blow at our freedom of movement and created suspicion of those of Arabic ancestry and Islamic faith. Some Americans now admit they catch themselves "looking over their shoulder."

The economy, already in decline before the attack, has worsened significantly. Air travel has lessened to such an extent it has motivated the layoffs of some 80,000 Americans. Those in the hotel business are also expressing financial concerns. Today, one cannot even receive mail without thoughtfully and carefully examining the outside of the package or envelope before opening it.

## WHERE WAS GOD?

The attacks have also stirred a revival of interest in God. A minority of Americans had nearly succeeded in running God out of schools and public life in general, yet now Americans in highly visible and public positions are invoking God at virtually every appearance. God has become very popular once again. Popular, yes, but understood? Hardly!

A recent *USA Today* article reports that President George W. Bush is an openly religious man who mentions God frequently in his speeches, prays on his knees, and reads the Bible every morning before beginning his workday. The article adds that he frequently prays in the Oval Office and often asks a Cabinet secretary to lead a prayer at the beginning of Cabinet meetings. Following a recent meeting with Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski, a fellow Methodist who is also a lay minister, he invited his guest into his private study, and there the two men knelt side by side in silent prayer. Overt expressions of faith by elected leaders, however, make some Americans quite uncomfortable because they fear it is the beginning of state-imposed religion.

For some, not only the success of the attacks but that they happened at all is a deep and solemn mystery. They apparently believed that the United States existed under automatic and eternal divine protection, so that tragedies like this were just not supposed to happen here. In Europe, Africa, Russia or Southeast Asia, yes, but not here.

Front-page newspaper articles report Americans asking, "Where was God?" as they struggle to understand

how something of this magnitude could possibly have happened here. Syndicated columnist Leonard Pitts, Jr., writing in the *Charlotte Observer*, tells of a minister at the church he attends opining in a sermon, “. . . that God allowed the planes to be stolen, and the people to die, because He was helpless to stop it. Maybe He didn’t have the power.” At first, Pitts reports, he thought this might be a clever speaker using a daring rhetorical device to make a positive statement later, yet as the preacher continued, Pitts was disappointed to find it was not. He writes, “This was just what it seemed to be: a man of God publicly struggling with a crisis of conviction. Of all I’ve seen in the wake of September 11, this was, in some ways, the most dismaying.”

Another article by David Von Drehle of the *Washington Post* posits the familiar question, “What would Jesus do?” and applies it to President Bush’s responsibility as the leader of this nation. Though he quotes one scripture that has little bearing on the truth, he reaches this conclusion:

Nowhere are God’s intentions more obscure than in war, which consumes lives and destroys hopes even in a good cause. The United States rightly respects conscientious objections. But not in a president. If he is fortunate, his duty during war will not be the occasion for too many sins. But that’s not his primary concern until after it’s all over. He can worry over that in retirement and plead his case come Judgment Day.

Some religious figures touched on some of the truths of God’s Word in an effort to help Americans think that perhaps the attacks were not completely undeserved. All this accomplished was to raise the ire of many in the media, who turned their verbal guns against them, pillorying them as unscriptural, narrow, deluded, and destructive to the confidence of the American people.

Despite the horrific results caused by the terrorists, who succeeded in ramming three hijacked planes into buildings, is it possible that God may have actually stopped far worse from occurring? We know that a fourth plane commandeered by terrorists apparently crashed after a struggle between the terrorists and passengers, who mutinied to attempt to retake control of the plane. That plane was almost certainly headed for either the White House or Capitol building

In a *WorldNet Daily* commentary of September 20, 2001, Craigie McMillan writes:

A fifth plane that took off from Newark, New Jersey, near the time of the attacks was grounded when U.S. airspace was closed. The next day

Ayub Khan, 51, and Mohammed Jaweed Azmath, 47, who had been on the Newark flight, were removed from an Amtrak train during a routine drug search, when police discovered box-cutting knives and \$5,000 in cash. Their associates in New Jersey are now being questioned by investigators. Was that fifth plane intended for the U.S. Capitol building? It seems likely. We know that the White House was a target, because shortly after the first airliner crashed into the World Trade Center, the Secret Service received an anonymous call using the agency’s code words relating to Air Force One procedures and whereabouts. We don’t know if the Capitol building was a target—but the assumption seems reasonable.

This suggests that whoever masterminded these attacks intended not to “send a message” or cripple—but to entirely destroy the United States government. We need to think long and hard about what that means as we head into war. To me it suggests more than a terrorist attack, even one as well-planned and coordinated as this. It suggests a terrorist attack executed in conjunction with as yet unknown actions by one or more hostile

nation states. I would suggest that under those circumstances, we would have been vulnerable to anyone strong enough to step forward and offer “leadership.”

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(DEUTERONOMY 29:29)**

## **WAS GOD INVOLVED?**

Is it possible for us to know the mind of God? The apostle Paul asks this question in Romans 11:33-36:

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! “For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor?” “Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.

To know the fullness of God’s thoughts on any subject or any event is, of course, so far beyond us to be unimaginable. To this end, we truly do look through a glass darkly. However, He has revealed certain things about Himself, His way and His plan sufficiently enough that we may seek Him, come to conversion, and grow thereby. He has also revealed much to us about His attributes and Himself and His activities as Creator, Sovereign Ruler, Provider, Lawgiver, Judge, Savior and Father so that we are not completely without some

knowledge and understanding of how He functions within His creation.

Deuteronomy 29:29 confirms God's revelation by saying, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law." I Corinthians 2:10 provides a New Testament confirmation of this: "But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." We can understand a great deal about God.

The "catch" in all this, though, is whether we choose to believe Him and thus choose to conduct ourselves within the parameters of what He reveals in His Word. Far more, it seems, choose not to believe. Some say they believe, but carelessly continue living their lives as though they, and not He, are all that matters—until some crisis occurs and He suddenly becomes very important to them.

Was God aware of what was transpiring? Did God see what was happening from the attack's conception through its planning and development to the systematic execution of each step? Of course He did! God is omniscient; nothing escapes His attention in His creation.

◆ **Psalm 33:13-15:** The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works.

◆ **Psalm 66:7:** He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; do not let the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.

◆ **Psalm 121:4:** Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

◆ **Proverbs 5:21:** For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He ponders all his paths.

◆ **Proverbs 15:3:** The eyes of the LORD are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.

◆ **Jeremiah 32:19:** You are great in counsel and mighty in work, for Your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, to give everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings.

◆ **Matthew 10:29:** Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will.

Even to begin to consider that God was unaware or that He somehow lacked the power to intervene suggests unfamiliarity with the God of the Bible. But to do so is neither a frailty limited to modern man nor unusual. Many who go to church apparently do not spend much time meditating on the intellectual immensity, purity of character, and almighty power of Yahweh, the LORD the Bible presents. The apostle Paul puts it this way in I Corinthians 1:25, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

Just mere months after God liberated the slave-nation Israel from centuries of bondage to Egypt through awesome and terrifying displays of power, capping their redemption by dividing the Red Sea and drowning their captors in its waters, they reconfigured the nature of Almighty God into the form of a bull (Exodus 32)! One has to ask, what in the world were they thinking as they cried, "This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!" (verse 8).

Is this not similar to what one may discover on the world scene today? People have created gods in their own image. They interpret God according to their own cultural biases, as well as what family, educational, and business associations have predisposed them to believe. They then attribute His favor to their political parties, athletic teams, motivations, and prejudices. All this is done with precious little careful study into,

meditation upon, and especially wholeheartedly believing His inspired revelation of Himself in the Bible.

At the worship service held in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., a few days following the attack, clergy from Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim faiths participated. Which clergyman represented God? Which did God hear? Can they all be His representatives, even though they all believe differently? Do these differences not matter to Him? They must matter to those men; otherwise, they would not advocate their brand of faith. Certainly, God hears just as surely as He sees

what is going on. He makes very clear that no one comes to Him except through Jesus Christ, eliminating two of those faiths immediately.

He also makes clear that those who approach Him with favor must be subject to His government. In other words, they must keep His commandments. The remaining two faiths keep none of His Sabbaths, and in fact, they tell people they do not have to keep the commandments—in other words, they need not be subject to His government in daily life—because His law is "done away."

Might God, as an act of mercy, nonetheless hear and

## WAS GOD AWARE OF WHAT WAS TRANSPERING?

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respond by delivering us from future destructions planned for us? He might. It has happened before, for instance, when God mercifully forgave Nineveh after it repented at the preaching of Jonah, and He delivered Israel a number of times. Yet when that happened, it was accompanied by a wholehearted repentance that God was willing to accept. Have we as a nation repented? How deep must the repentance be? How many must repent before it tips the balance of God's judgment so that He moves in our behalf? In Genesis 18:32, God tells Abraham He will spare Sodom if He finds ten righteous people in it. Is God using the same standard of measurement for America today?

## TERRORISM, A SIGN OF GOD'S JUDGMENT?

Much negative, indeed inflammatory commentary, arose in America's newspapers and radio and television programs when some suggested that we are not as innocent as we like to think we are and that we must consider this attack to be a judgment from God and repent. The fact remains that, long before the attacks occurred, critics of American morality—Americans themselves—have been calling upon their fellow citizens to change their immoral ways. The attacks and a wave of sympathy for the grief of those directly impacted by them, as well as a sudden spurt of patriotism, changed the way people heard these messages. Before, they just tuned them out. After all, the messages were not for them but for others because they considered themselves to be "okay". Afterward, however, the sense of being innocent victims of a sneaky and undeserved attack made the hearers feel that the messages were demeaning and insulting. But were they true?

If a person believes the Bible, he is forced to conclude that God is in control of all things, whether good or evil. Consider such scriptures as:

◆ **Daniel 4:35:** All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, "What have You done?"

◆ **Daniel 4:17:** This decision is by the decree of the watchers, and the sentence by the word of the holy ones, in order that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.

◆ **Isaiah 45:6-7:** I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.

◆ **Exodus 9:29:** And Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will spread out my hands to the LORD; the thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, that you may know that the earth is the LORD'S."

◆ **Deuteronomy 4:39:** Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

◆ **Psalms 99:1:** The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble! He dwells between the cherubim; let the earth be moved!

◆ **Isaiah 33:22:** For the LORD is our Judge, the LORD is our Lawgiver, the LORD is our King; He will save us.

◆ **Jeremiah 18:6:** "O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?" says the LORD. "Look, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel!"

**"I AM THE LORD,  
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(ISAIAH 45:6-7)**

The Bible declares quite clearly that God is not only well aware of what is taking place, but He also has the power, wisdom, and love to either stop it at any time or let it run its course. In fact, Scripture plainly shows God actively—indeed, proactively, not merely permissively—involved in earthly matters. God has not gone "way off somewhere," letting things simply proceed naturally. Note that Isaiah 45:7, quoted above, records God proclaiming that He "creates calamity."

Judges 2:11-15 provides a unmistakable record:

Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served the Baals; and they forsook the LORD God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the LORD to anger. They forsook the LORD and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no

longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the LORD was against them for calamity, as the LORD has said, and as the LORD had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

Forms of the situation described here appear frequently in the history of Israel's relationship with God. Several hundred years after this, God inspired Isaiah to write, "Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation. I will send him against an ungodly nation, and against the people of My wrath I will give him charge, to seize the spoil, to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets" (Isaiah 10:5-6). This can only mean that God inspires and empowers the Assyrian nation to punish the nations of Israel for their flagrant disobediences.

Such punishment precipitated Israel being scattered, taken into captivity into foreign lands, and losing their homeland, to which they have never returned. God remarks in II Kings 17:18, after providing a long list of Israel's sins, "Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone."

However, the tribe of Judah was hardly better than Israel, as II Kings 17:19 states: "Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made." The result was similar to Israel's, for in II Kings 24:2-4 God carried out His threats of punishment against Judah too:

And the LORD sent against [Jehoiakim] raiding bands of Chaldeans, bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon; He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

## IS GOD RESPONSIBLE?

In addition to this brief summary of God's sovereignty over Israel, ample additional evidence exists to show that He exercises equal dominion over the other nations of the world. He determines their rise and fall and the times of dominance of every nation. Clearly, God judges the inhabitants of His creation, and His judgments are not limited to Israel or to "biblical times." God lives and He always rules and judges—just as surely today as He did

thousands of years ago. Since the One who judged during Old Testament times is the same One who judges today, we can be certain that He uses the same standards now that He did then. His laws, which define His standards of morality, have not changed one iota. Jesus emphatically asserts in the Sermon on the Mount that we should not think that He came to destroy the law or the prophets (Matthew 5:17). Indeed, Malachi 3:6 proclaims, "I am the LORD, I do not change," while Hebrews 13:8 says that Jesus "is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Is God to blame because He exercises His authority, punishing to maintain order and to continue the advancement of His purpose in His creation? Who sins and brings upon themselves the necessity of punishment? God does not sin, men do. If God does not punish for sin, then righteousness loses all meaning. Life will soon become a violent free-for-all (Ecclesiastes 8:11). The Bible makes it clear that human nature is violently evil, and when left unchecked as it was before the Flood, it will reproduce similar conditions (Genesis 6:5). Indeed, God forecasts that exactly those conditions will face those living just before Christ's return (Matthew 24:37). Every indication is that we live during that time now.

The Bible prophesies scores of horrific punishments: epidemics of incurable diseases; wars; fires burning fields, forests and homes; earthquakes; famines; floods from raging seas; violent weather patterns; and infestations of insects and wild animals. All of these occur as punishments for sin as God exacts His vengeance on "those who destroy the earth" (Revelation 11:18). "Earth" here represents all aspects of His creation—including man—which He created for man.

God is most certainly not to blame if He reacts in accordance with what He has told man He will do. Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 establish that, if one does well, God will bless him. Conversely, God strongly warns that, if one does not do well, He will surely punish him. Though not to blame because His sins did not cause these tragedies, He is responsible for them because He at least allowed them to occur. He may even have inspired them to occur and oversaw events so that they would.

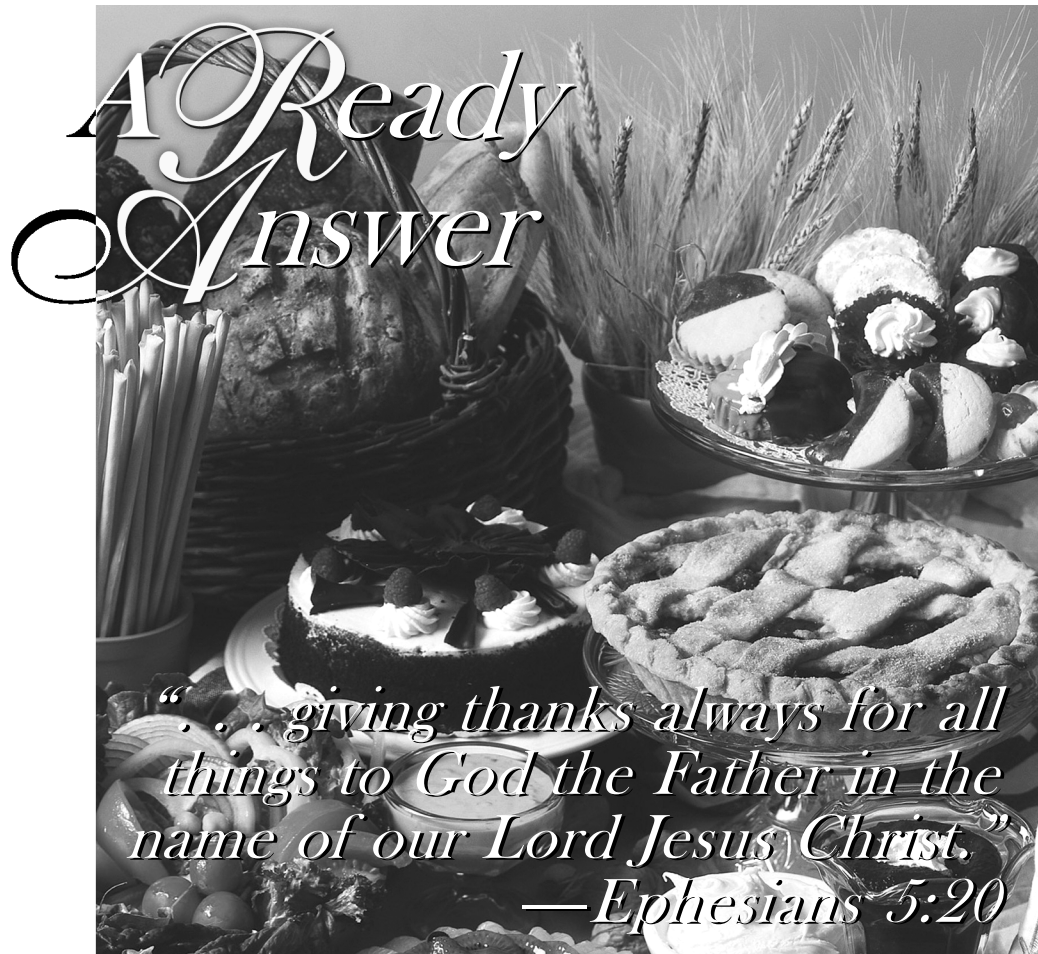
## THE CURSE CAUSELESS?

Proverbs 26:2 says, "Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight." We can understand "curse" in several ways: as the invoking of evil or misfortune upon another, or as the evil or

**"I AM THE LORD,  
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(MALACHI 3:6)**

**"JESUS CHRIST  
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(HEBREWS 13:8)**

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# Thanksgiving

**B**oth America and Canada celebrate a day of Thanksgiving each year in the fall. America's Thanksgiving Day occurs on the last Thursday of November, while Canada's often coincides with the fall holy days on the second Monday of October. Last year, the Last Great Day and Canada's Thanksgiving Day took place on the same day, and incredible similarities exist between them.

*The Canadian Encyclopedia* article on "Thanksgiving Day" remarks that it is "proclaimed as a day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed." God's people are not to participate in the majority of the world's holidays, but this is one we can celebrate if we keep it in the proper spirit.

*The Canadian Encyclopedia* article continues:

Thanksgiving draws upon 3 traditions: harvest celebrations in European peasant societies for which the symbol was the cornucopia (horn of plenty); formal observances, such as that celebrated by Martin Frobisher in the eastern Arctic in 1578—the first North American Thanksgiving; and the Pilgrims' celebration of their first harvest in Massachusetts (1621) involving the uniquely American turkey, squash and pumpkin.

For years, God's people have used the cornucopia as a decoration in our Feast of Tabernacles celebrations. Canadian Feast-goers have frequently

kept Thanksgiving together when that day has fallen during God's fall festival. Interestingly, the Last Great Day has traditionally been the day when we say a well-deserved "Thank you" to those who have worked so hard to make the Feast a success. More important, however, is why and how God's people should give thanks to Him.

## Ingratitude

**T**o a member of God's church for many years, explaining why and how we should thank God may seem unnecessary. But ingratitude is a disease that has crept into our societies, and a real danger exists that it could rub off on God's children in these end times:

But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, *unthankful*. . . . (II Timothy 3:1-2)

Paul's words vividly and accurately describe our Western societies. It is a disgrace to our nations to hear children and adults in public places apparently devoid of the smallest elements of common courtesy. The average Canadian or American acts today as if the good things of life are somehow owed to him. This lack of gratitude to God reveals itself in his refusal to offer thanks before a meal. He is certainly in complete ignorance of the requirement to pay tithes, to give offerings to God, and to worship Him on His Sabbaths. For most, even our Thanksgiving Days have lost their real, original meaning, becoming mere excuses for partying, reveling, and getting.

God takes a serious view of ingratitude. Jesus expresses dismay after healing ten lepers and only one makes the effort to thank Him (Luke 17:11-19). Ninety percent of those lepers were ungrateful, using God rather than serving Him. What would our percentage be?

Ingratitude and selfishness are bad for us, both individually and collectively. A study of the appropriate scriptures reveals that ingratitude:

- ◆ Contributes greatly to our nations' moral decadence and crumbling culture.
- ◆ Produces vain imaginations and foolish hearts.
- ◆ Weakens our spiritual, moral, mental, and ultimately, our physical health.
- ◆ Wars against the permanent, eternal, spiritual things.
- ◆ Comprises part of the reason for apostasy:

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, *nor were thankful*, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. (Romans 1:20-21)

Paul writes here about a group of people who had known God's truth and had practiced His way of life, but they were not thankful for it. They rejected it and returned to the ways of the world.

God looks upon ingratitude as being a sin that is Laodicean in nature: "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17). Only a selfish, thankless and ungrateful person says or thinks, "I am wealthy, a self-made man. I have earned it all by my own hard work and ingenuity. I need thank no one for what I have."

Again, God considers ingratitude quite seriously, due to where it can lead.

## Why?

**F**rom a positive viewpoint, why should we be thankful? What are the reasons we should give thanks to God?

Many scriptures, including many psalms, express thanksgiving to God. We will concentrate on one of them, Psalm 92, which answers our two main questions:

It is good to give thanks to the

LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High. (verse 1)

We should give thanks to Him, first, because it is good for us to do. It is good for God too. Although He does not need our thanks, He is glad when His children offer them. It is certainly beneficial for us. In contrast to the dangers of ingratitude, the benefits of a thankful attitude include:

- ◆ Guarding against ungodly attitudes and works.
- ◆ Subduing what one commentator calls "man's potentially animal-like nature."
- ◆ Teaching God's "way of give," as we *give* thanks.
- ◆ Promoting good spiritual, mental, moral and physical health.

In addition, it is common sense to thank God when He has answered our prayers. After all, we undoubtedly will need help again!

To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night. (verse 2)

We should acknowledge and thank God for His lovingkindness and faithfulness toward us. In His love and faithfulness, He had endowed us with so much. We should constantly think about the following blessings and thank God for them, and be careful not to take them for granted:

- ◆ His truth, which He continues to reveal to us.
- ◆ His gifts, spiritual and physical, that He continually pours out to us.
- ◆ His church and our part in it.
- ◆ His ministry and their unstinting service to us.
- ◆ Our brethren and the opportunities for fellowship with and service to them.
- ◆ Our families and their health and prosperity.
- ◆ Our nations and all the blessings that accrue from our citizenship.
- ◆ And myriads of other gifts and good things He bestows so freely.

For You, LORD, have made me

glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands. (verse 4)

We should thank God because He gives gladness and even a sense of triumph and victory to those who play an active part in His work, and every single member of His church has such an opportunity. We are all members of Christ's Body, and like the parts of the physical body, we have been given different talents and functions (I Corinthians 12:12-31).

The apostle Paul also relates thanksgiving and triumph in I Corinthians 15:57, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." When the Last Great Day's fulfillment arrives at last, and we see our loved ones rise in the Second Resurrection, we will shout with great joy, "'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (verses 54-55).

O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep. (Psalm 92:5)

God's works and thoughts are worthy of our gratitude. His creation is marvelous in its beauty, detail, and usefulness, and His thoughts are deeper than any human being can comprehend. If we consider the care in which He created the universe, we can catch a glimpse of the same care He employs in creating children for His Family.

A senseless man does not know, nor does a fool understand this. When the wicked spring up like grass, and when all the workers of iniquity flourish, it is that they may be destroyed forever. But You, LORD, are on high forevermore. For behold, Your enemies O LORD, shall perish; all the workers of iniquity shall be scattered. (verses 6-9)

Verses 6 and 7 interrupt to mention the future of the incorrigibly selfish and ungrateful of the world: the brut-

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# GLOBALISM

## Part Five: Globalis

1945. The bombings of spring and summer were ferocious. The United States struck the main islands of Japan repeatedly, hoping to “soften-up” the people and their leaders for a late summer invasion. The Emperor’s palace burned. On one night alone, March 9, the residents of downtown Tokyo shook as 234 thundering bombers dropped 1,167 tons of incendiary bombs on them. The toll that night was 83,973 civilians dead, more than all the combat deaths America suffered in the Korean and Vietnam wars combined.

The campaign lasted five months and destroyed about 900,000 Japanese civilians—a number more than twice the total combat deaths America has sustained in all her foreign wars. The campaign culminated in the nuclear air bursts over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in midsummer.<sup>1</sup> Those two bombings themselves destroyed another 175,000 people immediately and about the same number later on through the direct effects of radiation. Leaflets dropped earlier to warn the population to flee the cities spoke of “a rain of ruin the like of which has never been seen on earth.”<sup>2</sup>

Wielding a bigger stick than Theodore Roosevelt ever dreamt possible, America was displaying her warrior culture for all to see—and fear. Roosevelt’s “big stick” maxim shows his understanding of a basic reality: A big commercial power needs a big military. Historically, military might has always backed

up commercialism; navies remove pirates from sea routes, and armies protect land routes and trade centers. *Today, America’s global military protects America’s global economy.* It should not come as a surprise then to learn that in 1998 America



President Franklin Roosevelt signing the declaration of war against Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941. It culminated in nuclear war and a broken Japan.

spent as much on defense as its NATO allies, South Korea, Japan, the Persian Gulf states, Russia and China *combined*. . . . Since the end of the Vietnam War . . . the United States has deployed combat forces in, or used deadly force over, Cambo-

dia, Iran, Grenada, Panama, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Turkey, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Sudan, Afghanistan, the South China Sea, Liberia, Macedonia, Albania and Yugoslavia. This is a record that no other country comes close to matching. . . . American troops have a stronger “warrior culture” than do the armies of other wealthy countries. Indeed, of all the NATO countries other than Turkey and Greece, only Great Britain today has anything like the American “war lobby”<sup>3</sup>

No wonder former Army Chief of Staff Dennis Reimer declared his service to be “the 911 force for the global village.”<sup>4</sup>

What are the roots of America’s deep-seated warrior culture? What place does that culture play in America’s role as globalism’s prime mover? God provides the answers in the Bible.

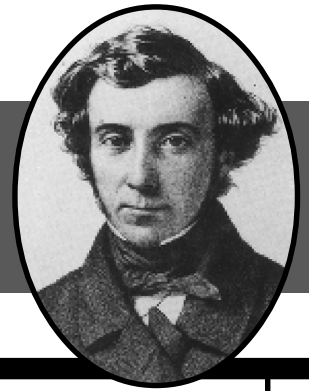
### Ancient Manassite Warrior Culture

Before the children of Israel entered the Land of Promise, the folk of Gad, Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh appealed to Moses to let them settle in the grazing lands of Transjordan, east of the Jordan River. Moses acquiesced to their request on the condition that “all your armed men cross

prophecy watch

The truth is well understood in the United States as anywhere else: the Americans are already able to make their flag respected; in a few years they will make it feared.

—Alexis de Tocqueville



# sm's Teeth

over the Jordan before the LORD until He has driven out His enemies from before Him” (Numbers 32:21). Later, Joshua reminds the people of these tribes of the bargain they had struck with Moses:

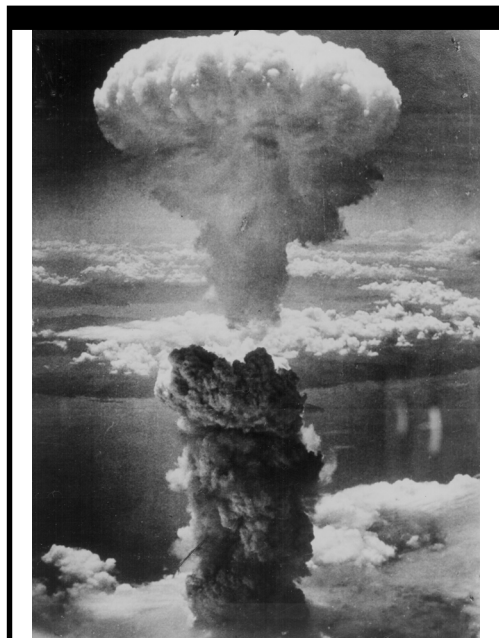
Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land which Moses gave you on this [east] side of the Jordan. But you shall pass before your brethren armed, all your mighty men of valor, and help them. . . . (Joshua 1:14)

This was precedent breaking! Numbers 2:3-9 shows that, in the long wilderness trek, Judah (with Issachar and Zebulun) led the march: “These shall break camp first” (verse 9; see also, Numbers 10:14). Joshua’s change in the order of march must have appeared to him only good strategy. Manasseh must have proven itself a formidable fighting force in Joshua’s experience.

Manasseh did not renege. Joshua 4:12-13 tells us that “about forty thousand” men of Reuben, Gad and the eastern half-tribe of Manasseh “crossed over before the LORD for battle, to the plains of Jericho.” Considering the victories of the Israelites, Manasseh must have carried the big stick very well.

Nor was the other half-tribe of Manasseh, which finally settled to the west of the Jordan River, made up of wimps. As he was parceling out the land, Joshua describes Machir, a

Manassite leader, as “a man of war” (Joshua 17:1). In verse 17, Joshua encourages a griping (western) Manasseh and Ephraim, telling them, “You are a great people and have great power. . . .” In verse 18, he continues:



**A** mushroom cloud rises over Nagasaki, Japan, August 9, 1945. The United States is the only nation that has played the “nuclear card,” another piece of evidence that it possesses a deep-seated warrior culture.

. . . the mountain country shall be yours. Although it is wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the

Canaanites, though they have iron chariots and are strong.

Joshua was fully confident that Manasseh could defeat its enemies, even though the Canaanites, having entered the Iron Age, then deployed a military technology far superior to that of the Israelites.

Manasseh maintained a challenging military capability for many years. I Chronicles 5:18-22 describes a war in which the eastern half-tribe of Manasseh, along with Gad and Reuben, were victorious over various Gentile peoples. The Israelite troops were “valiant men, men able to bear shield and sword, to shoot with the bow, and skillful in war” (verse 18). Their leaders were “mighty men of valor, famous men” (verse 24).

The record of David’s coronation in Hebron bears witness that Manasseh’s warrior culture was alive and well about a thousand years before Christ. Of the 304,822 troops sent by the various tribes to this august occasion, 158,800, or 52.6% were from Ephraim and Manasseh (along with Gad and Reuben). I Chronicles 12:23-40 tells the story. Joseph appears to be a major contributor largely due to his warrior culture.

## Modern Manassite Warrior Culture

Today, this long-standing Manassite warrior culture seems alive and thriving:

prophecy watch

Never before—including even the glory days of the Roman Empire—has one military so towered over all others on the planet. And certainly never before has the U.S. military exercised such political power in times of real peace.<sup>5</sup>

Another commentator, also unable to avoid comparing the current United States' military stature to that of the Romans, makes much the same point:

Probably not since classic Rome or ancient China has a single power so towered over its known rivals in the international system. Today only the U.S. military retains the ability to reach into any region in the world within mere hours.<sup>6</sup>

Presently, with no serious challengers at all, the United States military is 22 times larger than it was in 1939, at the outset of World War II. This fact leads other nations, even some allies, to suggest that it is not rogue nations, but “the United States, rather, that poses the military threat to others.”<sup>7</sup> Such power tempts Americans—citizens and leaders alike—to adopt a self-righteous, almost better-than-thou, stance, considering themselves to be

the indispensable nation, the sole superpower, the uniquely responsible state, or the lone conscience of the world. . . . Zbigniew Brzezinski . . . speaks openly of America's allies and friends as “vassals and tributaries.”<sup>8</sup>

Globalists are not notable for their humility. Madeleine Albright avers that the United States “stands taller” than other nations, enjoying a better perspective than others because she is able to scan horizons beyond the vision of others.<sup>9</sup> The United States reminds those from foreign nations that she is “number one” every time they telephone America. The international dialing code for the United States and Canada is “1.” Let no one

forget that America is “the chief of the nations” (Jeremiah 31:7).

The world's nations “anywhere else,” as de Tocqueville pointed out so many years ago, have come to recognize America's martial spirit and to respect and fear—and resent—it. Other nations have taken note of the warrior culture deeply ingrained in the hearts of Americans. They have learned that, while we may be slow to act, when push comes to shove, the United States will respond with a stick that is quite a bit bigger than anyone else's. The result: America's warrior culture has given her “immense advantages in international affairs.”<sup>10</sup>

Like their counterparts of antiquity, modern-day Manassites march to war in the van of the other nations of Israel, as in the case of the Gulf War. Secretary of State, Madeline



**M**adeleine Albright, former Secretary of State under Bill Clinton, frequently described America as the “hub” or “center” of the global system.

Albright, uses another metaphor, placing the United States at the *hub* of the nations. She told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the United States has “kind of open[ed] the whole system up. . . . America's place is at the center of this system. . . . The United States is kind of the organizational principal [sic] of the international system.”<sup>11</sup>

## Manasseh at the Hub

From her catbird seat at the center of the international system, America today supports vast networks of financial, economic and military organizations to ensure that the system—America's system—works. Whether it be the IMF riding rough-shod over Russia or the Air Force deploying cruise missiles in Sudan, whether by economic coercion or military force, the United States is now wielding her “big stick” in an attempt to push nations around the world together (Deuteronomy 33:17) into a united world system.

A properly functioning [international] system requires rules. The ordained role of the United States is to impart to this emergent system the discipline and cohesion that will enable it to work. As . . . President [Clinton] explained last year, [in a speech to military officers, America's role] . . . lies in “helping to write the international rules of the road for the twenty-first century, protecting those who've joined the family of nations and isolating those who do not.” . . . The President has designated the Department of Defense as chief enforcer. . . . [Its] mission is primarily a constabulary one. Absent American military power, the system will break down and globalization will fail. . . . Any suggestion that the United States is not measuring up to its obligation to enforce the rules might call into question its claim to be the hub from which the spokes of the international system extend. . . . The defense establishment seeks to stifle opposition to the American version of globalization by institutionalizing U.S. military supremacy.<sup>12</sup>

Some nations—generally called “rogue states”—do not want to join

the club. Algeria, North Korea, Iraq, just to name a few, have international agendas outside the interests of the United States and, we are told, outside the comity of nations she has built. Their actions threaten the stability of an international system that America has increasingly defined as “the only way to go.” Compliance with international norms is becoming necessary. Mr. Clinton continues:

No nation, rich or poor, democratic or authoritarian, can escape the fundamental economic imperatives of the global market. No nation can escape its discipline. No nation can avoid its responsibility to do its part.<sup>13</sup>

As a result, America is using her “big stick” more frequently. Her foreign policy, to the dismay of some allies and rivals alike, is highly proactive and assertive. Continues the same analyst:

. . . Force has become the preferred instrument of American statecraft. The deployment of U.S. forces into harm’s way . . . has become commonplace. The result has been the renewed, intensified—and perhaps irreversible—militarization of U.S. foreign policy. . . . The result has been a spectacular outburst of military activism—not campaigns and battles, but myriad experiments in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace enforcement; the repeated use or threatened use of air power to warn, coerce or punish. . . . “Diplomacy and force are two sides of the same coin,” President Bill Clinton declared in a speech at the National Defense University.<sup>14</sup>

Today, no one even tries to hide the connection between militarism and America’s *economic* interests. Mr. Clinton

himself has bluntly declared that “growth at home depends upon

growth abroad.” . . . Market expansion is not an opportunity; it is a necessity. Thus, for example, the administration’s blueprint for *national security*—“A National Security Strategy for a New Century,” released in 1998—states categorically that “we must expand our international trade



President Clinton speaking to the military in 1999. He used America’s military might to defend and promote his globalist aims throughout his two terms in office.

to sustain economic growth at home.” . . . To function properly, a system based on the principle of openness must have some mechanism for maintaining order.<sup>15</sup>

America’s warrior culture, then, is not anything new. Nor, really, is the “big stick.” What might be new is America’s commitment to utilize that stick so readily in her support of globalism.

If, economically, the United States is the world’s most important country, militarily it is the decisive one. Thomas Friedman puts the point simply: *the world is sustained by “the presence of American power and America’s willingness to use that power against*

*those who would threaten the system of globalization.* . . . The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist.” But, the fist is in full view. On its military forces, the United States outspends the next seven biggest spenders combined. When force is required to keep or to restore the peace, either the United States leads the way or the peace is not kept. . . . The United States is the only country that can organize and lead a military coalition. . . . America continues to garrison much of the world and to look for ways of keeping troops in foreign countries rather than withdrawing them. . . . The 1992 draft of the Pentagon’s Defense Planning Guidance advocated “discouraging the advanced industrialized nations from . . . even aspiring to a larger global or regional role.” The United States may at times seek help from others, but not too much help, lest it lose its leading position in one part of the world or another.<sup>16</sup>

## Manasseh and Babylon

The “system” of which Madeline Albright and others speak is the international system. It is Shemite, rooted in the religious, economic and political ideas of the children of Shem. Right now, it is not centered in Europe, but in Joseph, which has held sway over it for more than two centuries, the first and second ages of globalization.

It is, as well, the Babylonish system, a world system against God. The leaders of Joseph, and of Israel at large, are confident that this system of theirs will work to produce universal prosperity and peace. As such, they view theirs as a worthwhile effort to push capitalism and democracy on other nations worldwide. Against their confidence stand three witnesses: The word of history, the “more sure word of prophecy” (II

Peter 1:19), and the personal and corporate experiences of God's people in the past decade or so. Of these in their order:

1. Historically, mankind has witnessed the calamitous failure of the first era of globalization in the "war to end all wars," the First World War. Make no mistake about it: That war was *not* of marginal importance. Eliot Cohen is right to call it the "dominant event of [the 20<sup>th</sup>] century." His magnificent prose sounds a clarion warning to those who think that the second age of globalization will end any differently than did the first. The First War killed more than 10 million soldiers and

smashed the Austro-Hungarian, Turkish and Russian Empires, and administered lasting shocks to their British and French counterparts. It created the conditions for the political success of communism and, ultimately, Nazism as well. In the bloody womb of its conduct and consummation sprouted the seeds of another, even more ferocious and pitiless global war that broke out less than twenty-one years after the first one ended, and that completed the wrecking of an entire system of world society and politics. It marked the entry of the United States onto the stage of world power

even as it augured the collapse of the Powers of Western Europe. . . . The war stands . . . as a warning that the progress of mankind cannot be conceived of as something smooth and inevitable. . . . Unthinking optimism about the capacity of modern man for decent adjustment of his differences surely died in the trenches, alongside the choking and blasted young men who fought there. Ever afterwards, those who believe that humans have, at last, escaped the coils of international conflict have had to make their arguments with a nervous glance over the shoulder at the shadow cast by the ossuary of Verdun—that warehouse of soldiers' bones. . . .<sup>17</sup>

2. God's Word, a second witness, is even more reliable than history. Jeremiah asserts that prophet and priest will encourage the populace, "saying, "Peace, peace!" when there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6:13-14).

In verse 19, God continues, predicting that the fruit of the peoples' plans will bring desolation: "Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people, even the fruit of their thoughts."

Verse 20 is particularly interesting in the context of international trade. An unrighteous people

cannot please God, though they offer to Him expensive, exotic gifts from distant countries: "For what purpose to Me comes frankincense from Sheba, and sweet cane from a far country? Your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to Me."

3. Finally, the witness of our own experience instructs us that global integration is tenuous at best. In less than a decade, those of us who knew the "old church" have witnessed its ostensible cohesion—its worldwide integration—quickly give way to the overwhelming, unrelenting forces of disintegration. So precipitous was its dissolution that we find reason now to question the real depth of its earlier cohesion. Like a mirror repeatedly dropped, the church fragments and fragments again. Globalization is here today, gone tomorrow.

What we have all experienced in the church of God the whole world will soon experience. Globalism is generating a reaction, the backlash of *disintegration*, which threatens to tear the social and economic fabric of the world to shreds. Surprisingly, this backlash, tribalism—not globalism—will characterize this decade! We will address the nature, scope and dangers of today's "new tribalism" in the next installment.

—Charles Whitaker

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Walter Russell Mead, "The Jacksonian Tradition and American Foreign Policy," *The National Interest*, Winter 1999, p. 5. Mr. Mead is senior fellow for United States Foreign Policy at the Council on Foreign Relations.

<sup>2</sup> *The People's Chronology*, "Nagasaki."

<sup>3</sup> Mead, *ibid.*, p. 5 (emphasis added).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Philip Gold, "The Essentials of Self-Preservation: What Our Military Can't Live Without," *Policy Review*, December 2000/January 2001, p. 33. Mr. Gold is director of defense and aerospace studies at the Seattle-based Discovery Institute.

<sup>5</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, "Why the Gap Matters," *The National Interest*, Fall 2000, p. 38. Mr. Cohen is professor of strategic studies at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

<sup>6</sup> Charles W. Maynes, "The Perils of (and for) an Imperial America," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1998, p. 36. Mr. Maynes is president of the Eurasia Foundation. Brzezinski's comment appears in *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. In this book, he argues that America should emulate Rome in the approach and execution of her foreign policy. America should seek "to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected and to keep the barbarians from coming together."

<sup>7</sup> William Pfaff, "The Praetorian Guard," *The National Interest*, Winter 2000/2001, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> Maynes, *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted by William Pfaff, "The Question of Hegemony," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, p. 221.

<sup>10</sup> Mead, *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, "Policing Utopia: The Military Imperatives of Globalization," *The National Interest*, Summer 1999, p. 5. Mr. Bacevich is professor of International Relations at Boston University.

<sup>12</sup> Bacevich, *ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>13</sup> Bacevich, *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> Bacevich, *ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

<sup>15</sup> Bacevich, *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth N. Waltz, "Globalization and American Power," *The National Interest*, Spring 2000, p. 46 (emphasis added). Mr. Waltz is a research associate of the Institute of War and Peace Studies and adjunct professor at Columbia University.

<sup>17</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, "Counting the Dead," *The National Interest*, Fall 1999, p. 110. Mr. Cohen's comments are part of his review of Niall Ferguson's book, *The Pity of War: Explaining World War I* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

# Divine Warning

*The following is an edited transcript of a special announcement given by Church of the Great God pastor John W. Ritenbaugh during Sabbath services on September 15, 2001.*

**W**e have all been sobered by the events of September 11, and we have all done a measure of thinking about the who, what, where, when, and why of it all. In one sense, we have been almost overwhelmed by a flood of factual and speculative information so that, in many cases, we are virtually numb, not knowing exactly what to think. In the midst of all this information, however, some things are beginning to become clear.

The book of Amos describes social conditions in Israel and God's reaction to them more specifically and clearly than any other book. Amos also shows Israel's reaction to God's attempts to bring them to repentance and to make changes in their lives. The paraphrased words of Amos 4:4-13 from *The Living Bible (TLB)* catch the essence of God's point:

Go ahead and sacrifice to idols at Bethel and Gilgal. Keep disobeying—your sins are mounting up. Sacrifice each morning and bring your tithes twice a week! Go through all your proper forms and give extra offerings. How you pride yourselves and crow about it everywhere!

"I sent you hunger," says the Lord, "but it did no good; you still would not return to Me. I ruined your crops by holding back the rain three months before the harvest. I sent rain on one city, but not another. While rain fell on one field, another was dry and withered. People from two or three cities would make their weary journey for a drink of water to a city that had rain, but there wasn't ever enough. Yet you wouldn't return to Me," says the Lord.

"I sent blight and mildew on your farms and your vineyards; the locusts ate your figs and olive trees. And still you wouldn't return to Me," says the Lord. "I sent you plagues like those of Egypt long ago. I killed your lads in war and drove away your horses. The stench of death was terrible to smell. And yet you refused to come. I destroyed some of your cities, as I did Sodom and Gomorrah; those left are like half-burned firebrands snatched away from fire. And still you won't return to Me," says the Lord.

"Therefore I will bring upon you all these further evils I have spoken of. Prepare to meet your God in judgment, Israel." For you are dealing with the one who formed the mountains and made the winds, and knows

your every thought; He turns the morning to darkness and crushes down the mountains underneath His feet: Jehovah, the Lord, the God of Hosts, is His name."

As I listened to commentary Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, it struck me that it was not until I heard Billy Graham use the word "repentance"—one time, in his address during the service at the National Cathedral—that any figure of national prominence even remotely suggested that we might be guilty of something and that the attack was in reality a warning of God's displeasure with us. Instead, the full concentration of all commentary focused on our "innocence." All the talk boiled down to an insistence that all of those affected by this sneak attack were innocent victims—as though they were all somehow disconnected to the whole of America and what America as a nation does.

Not only that, our national leaders never mentioned the multitudes of sins Americans perpetrate every day. It is as if what individuals do in their private lives has no affect on the whole of society, and that the law of "what one sows one shall also reap" does not exist.

On Friday afternoon, Pat Robertson interviewed fellow-televangelist Jerry Falwell on *The 700 Club*. Falwell said that, earlier in the week, he had publicly stated that we Americans ought to be asking God what we have done that this should happen to us. He had received so much criticism from people accusing him of judging them that he admitted that he wished he had never said it.

That is disheartening, but it is not fully unexpected considering what Amos prophesied would occur. Modern America is following the same well-worn and proud path as ancient Israel: "There's nothing wrong with me. Everybody else is evil. I'm an innocent victim." With this attitude, there will be no change. The disasters can only increase in frequency and intensity as time proceeds.

Listen again to Amos in light of the service at the National Cathedral yesterday:

I hate your show and pretence—your hypocrisy of "honoring" Me with your religious feasts and solemn assemblies. I will not accept your burnt offerings and thank offerings. I will not look at your offerings of peace. Away with your hymns of praise—they are mere noise to My ears. I will not listen to your music, no matter how lovely it is.

I want to see a mighty flood of justice—a torrent of doing good. (Amos 5:21-24, *TLB*)

Amos, like all of God's true prophets, did not receive any thanks for his warnings about Israel being guilty. So, in Amos 7:10-13, he is reviled and castigated for telling the truth:

But when Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, heard what Amos was saying, he rushed a message to Jeroboam, the king: "Amos is a traitor to our nation and is plotting your death. This is intolerable. It will lead to rebellion all across the land. He says you will be killed, and Israel will be sent far away into exile and slavery."

Then Amaziah sent orders to Amos, "Get out of here, you prophet, you! Flee to the land of Judah and do your prophesying there! Don't bother us here with your visions, not here in the capital, where the king's chapel is!"

It is very plain that nothing has changed. Carnal people do not like to hear spiritual truths.

Like it or not, none of this relieves us of our responsibilities as spiritual priests (I Peter 2:5, 9). I am convinced that most Americans are so far from a true knowledge of God that they do not even know what to repent of. Humility is so far from them that the reality of sin—and its profound effect on the quality of life—is incomprehensible. Americans understand somewhat of crime and its effects on the quality of life, but of sin and its effects, they are virtually blind.

Thus, yesterday they prayed at the National Cathedral. A woman, in defiance of God's Word, introduced the service. There were Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim clergy praying and reading God's Word. Which did God hear? Did God hear any of them? It is clear that they all disagree as to the nature of God and the ways He is to be served. And, except for the Jews, none of them pays attention to keeping His Sabbaths, among other things.

None of what I have said is in any way intended to denigrate the sheer terror and agony of those who died, nor the grief of those grieving for their lost ones. I am just reporting what God shows happened in ancient Israel and what modern Israel will do in our time. What God's Word provides as prophetic evidence is already beginning to happen.

Listen again to God's Word but this time from Joel 2:17 (TLB):

The priests, the ministers of God, will stand between the people and the altar, weeping; and they will pray, "Spare your people, O our God; don't let the heathen rule them, for they belong to You. Don't let them be disgraced by the taunts of the heathen who say, 'Where is this God of theirs? How weak and helpless He must be!'"

Brethren, this happens at a time when the power of the holy people is shattered because of our own sins (Daniel 12:7). Any warning of the people of this land is certainly not going to be done by our power or might. It is very plain that it will have to be done by God's Spirit (Zechariah 4:6). God will hear us because He loves us and has appointed us to this priestly responsibility. We had better not fail to make use of our privilege. It is time to "sigh and cry" for the abominations of this land (Ezekiel 9).

To me, this is a wake-up call to the church more than anybody else, and we must take advantage of it because our lives are "on the line" more than anybody else's. We must ask God to guide us to repentance, to truly love Him and our neighbor (especially our brother), and to raise up a witness in His behalf before the Israelitish peoples.

We must ask God to guide the leadership of this nation. And we must ask God to be merciful, patient, forgiving—and to teach them what they must do—for His name's sake.

—John W. Ritenbaugh

## *A Ready Answer*

# Thanksgiving

**Continued from page 9**

ish, foolish, wicked workers of iniquity. Then the psalmist contrasts them to God, who is eternally exalted. We should thank God because He is the Most High, the great and sovereign God. We must come to appreciate that He is God and no other!

But my horn You have exalted like a wild ox; I have been anointed with fresh oil. (verse 10. In Hebrew, the verbs are future tense.)

We should be grateful that God will one day exalt His people. From the weak and simple of the world (I Corinthians 1:26-29), He will bring

us to glory, raising us from our lowly beginnings to anoint us as kings and priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10).

My eye also has seen my desire on my enemies; and my ears hear my desire on the wicked who rise up against me. (Psalm 92:11)

The psalmist encourages us to thank God for His justice upon His and our enemies. Is it right that we should be thankful for God's judgment and punishment upon them? We certainly should not gloat over their fate (Proverbs 24:17-18). However, we would be wise to remember the just punishments of Nadab and Abihu, of Eli's sons, of Uzzah, and of Ananias and Sapphira. We must beware of thinking of God as harsh or rash in His judgments. God's enemies are our enemies too, and His punishment of them is for our good (and ultimately theirs).

The righteous shall flourish like

a palm tree, he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. (Psalm 92:12)

God gives spiritual and physical health and growth to His people, according to His will and His great wisdom and mercy. This is certainly something to rejoice and give thanks for!

Those who are planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. (verse 13)

The psalmist repeats the word "flourish" (Hebrew *parach*), which can be translated as "bud," "blossom," "grow," "sprout," "fly," and "spring up." In the Old Testament, "the courts of our God" refers to God's physical Temple, an earthly symbol of His heavenly throne room. In the New Testament, the term refers now to God's church and prophetically to the time when the Father and Christ will reign on the earth (Revelation 7:15; 21:3). We should thank God, then, for

“planting” us in His church where we can grow abundantly in preparation for that future time when we will work and rule with Him forever.

They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh [vigorous] and flourishing. (Psalm 92:14)

We should be grateful to God that even seniors in His church are generally in good physical and spiritual health, still able to be active in His work in bringing forth fruit. This is attributable to living God’s way of life, including obedience to the laws of vibrant health revealed in His Word, as well as to the blessings He bestows upon each of us. One day, in the fulfillment of the Last Great Day, all sickness and disease will be eradicated forever (Revelation 21:4; 22:2). God speed that day!

To declare that the LORD is upright: He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. (Psalm 92:15)

Last, but certainly not least, we are to be thankful to God because He is totally—one hundred percent—dependable, upright, solid, and righteous.

## How?

**W**e now move on to our second question: How should we thank God?

At some undeterminable time in the past, God created some very special spirit beings. They are described in Revelation 4:4-11 as twenty-four elders and four living creatures. Some of their special functions in heaven are to worship, glorify, honor, and to *thank* Him continually:

And they do not rest day or night, saying: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!” Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and *thanks* to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and wor-

ship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You have created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:8-11)

When the Last Great Day is fulfilled, the whole world will be able to see these marvelous spirit beings. God arranged for many furnishings and procedures in His Temple to serve as physical symbols of various aspects of His heavenly throne room (Hebrews 9:23-24). Perhaps as physical counterparts of these heavenly creatures, God designated a special group of priests to preside over the formal and regular thanksgiving ceremonies in His Temple:

Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah . . . led thanksgiving psalms. . . . For in the days of David and Asaph of old there were chiefs of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving to God. (Nehemiah 12:8, 46)

Psalm 92:1-3 tell us how God’s people should thank Him in these last days:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, on an instrument of ten strings, on the lute, and on the harp, with harmonious sound.

A way we should thank God is by singing praises to Him. The closest we in the modern church of God come to the thanksgiving activities of the ancient and heavenly Temples is in singing hymns, leading songs, offering special music, and participating in church choirs on God’s Sabbaths.

We have our greatest opportunities for singing praises to God during the eight days of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day. These song services are all the more enjoyable for the members of the smaller groups who meet in homes each Sab-

bath and, sadly, no longer have the regular opportunity to sing praises to God as part of a large group.

Both Paul and James encourage us to sing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 5:19-20; see James 5:13). The implication is that this can and should be done anytime, anywhere the Spirit inspires us. We tend not to express our religion publicly these days, but how often has a psalm or hymn popped into mind at the store or in the car or at work?

The reference in Psalm 92:3 to ten-stringed instruments, the lute, and the harp, refers to the instrumental accompaniment of songs of worship and thanksgiving. Although we have occasionally made use of other instruments, today’s church has traditionally used pianos to accompany our hymn singing. This shows our thanksgiving does not always have to be done in words.

In addition to our weekly hymns of thanksgiving, we most certainly need to thank God in our daily, personal, detailed prayers. In Psalm 92:2, God urges us to do so morning and night. In His “prayer outline” in Matthew 6:9, Jesus indicates that thanks should be given right at the beginning of our prayers, though thanking Him throughout our prayers is undoubtedly fine.

We tend to ask God for a lot in our prayers. Do we place equal importance on thanking God when He answers those prayers and gives us what we ask for? Some years ago, a minister in our area recommended that, every so often, we should spend our whole prayer time in nothing else but thanking God.

We have so much to thank Him for! As God’s children, let us not be guilty of the great sin of ingratitude. God admonishes us in Colossians 3:15:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you are called in one body; and *be thankful*.

—John Plunkett

## IS GOD TO BLAME?

scourge itself. The proverb primarily deals with invoking a curse against another when no justification for doing so exists. Such a curse is akin to the aimless flitting of birds, suggesting that it will have no effect. It will not “hit” its intended target.

We can definitely consider the tragedies of September 11 as a curse. However, God undoubtedly approved of it, or it never would have happened. This curse hit, and it hit hard. Therefore, we must conclude that there was more than ample justification for it falling upon this nation. Currently, the death toll stands somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 people, a horrendous figure to be sure, but it pales when compared to just one other death-toll figure:

Every day in the United States over 4,000 human lives are snuffed out of existence by abortion. In the 30 days following September 11, 120,000 lives ceased to exist. Of those 120,000 abortions, 95% of them—114,000—occurred solely for the mother’s convenience!

Is it any wonder that God cries out in Ezekiel 7:23, “Make a chain, for the land is filled with crimes of blood, and the city is full of violence.” George Mason, whose great influence can be seen in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution, wrote that sin, “brings the judgment of heaven upon a country. . . . By an inevitable chain of causes and effects, Providence

[God] punishes national sin by national calamities.” George Washington declared in his First Inaugural Address, “We ought to be no less persuaded that the propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right, which Heaven itself has ordained.”

The apostle Paul states in Romans 9:14. “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not!” As a people, we are guilty and fully deserve anything He in His loving wisdom decides to inflict upon us. Most assuredly, we are not innocent victims. Individually, few of us have sinned against any of the people, groups, or nations that may have done this, but as citizens, we are part of this nation, and our well-being rises and falls with it. We have eagerly accepted God’s overflowing abundance of material blessings with which He showed this nation. So when He judges that we need to be brought down a peg—or many pegs—we would do well

to consider deeply the many ways we may have offended the great God who created us and gives us every breath of air we breathe.

This article has not even considered the many other commandments that Americans are breaking in a multitude of ways, but one must be mentioned because it is the most important of all, the first commandment. As a nation, we Americans are not worshipping the God of the Bible. If we were, we would not be having the problem that faces this nation. We worship a multitude of gods created in our own imaginations. Many people in self-indulgent America—people who seemingly cannot delay gratification, sadly—worship a god tantamount to a nicey-nicey Santa Claus who gives good things whether one is “naughty or nice.”

As a nation, we urgently need to wholeheartedly turn from breaking God’s Ten Commandments, the very ones we have removed from our schools and courts of law. We “in the church” easily see these September 11 incidents as a wakeup call to America and the Western world. A couple of symbolic beasts are arising that will drag this world into horrific

warfare. Yet should it not be even more of a wakeup call for us? We have so much more at stake in our lives because the true God has revealed Himself and His way to us. Our Savior says, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

There is no doubt that the Laodicean era is underway. At this time, it is especially easy to become attracted by and dragged into the course of this world. We cannot afford to allow such great salvation to slip from our grasp due to inattention. Paul writes about this time:

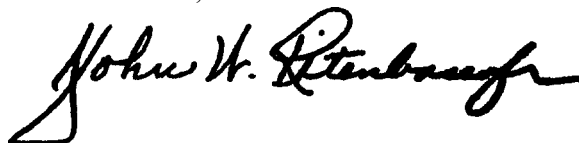
**“WE OUGHT TO BE NO  
LESS PERSUADED THAT  
THE PROPITIOUS SMILES OF  
HEAVEN CAN NEVER BE  
EXPECTED ON A NATION  
THAT DISREGARDS THE  
ETERNAL RULES OF ORDER  
AND RIGHT, WHICH HEAVEN  
ITSELF HAS ORDAINED.”**

**GEORGE WASHINGTON,  
FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS**

And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in licentiousness and lewdness, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:11-14)

In this way, the September 11 events should change the way we live our lives.

In Christian love,





# BIBLE STUDY: TITHING

The biblical system of tithing has been a point of controversy among Christians for years. Its opponents claim it is part of the Old Covenant, and thus it was instituted solely for the support of the Levitical priesthood. They often acknowledge that the principle of giving to support the ministry is still valid, but say God does not command paying a set percentage of one's income. Yet this ignores clear passages throughout the Bible.

From Genesis to Revelation, tithing is the only finan-

cial system God endorses. He shows that blessings accrue to those who faithfully tithe of the increase God has bestowed upon them. Through the tithing system, God provides for the preaching of the gospel and the feeding of His flock (Matthew 28:19-20). In so doing, faithful tithing expresses love toward God and love toward neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40). In this first Bible study on tithing, we will see that these laws—still in force today—are important for personal spiritual growth.



1. Who really possesses all things? Job 41:11; Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; I Chronicles 29:11, 14; Psalm 24:1-2; 50:10-12; Haggai 2:8.

**COMMENT:** Everything that exists belongs to God, He has the right to keep everything for Himself, but He chooses to share with human beings. He does not need to pay or repay anyone, or ask us for anything. Silver and gold are symbolic of everything of value.

2. What is tithing? Genesis 28:22.

**COMMENT:** Tithing, in its simplest form, is returning one-tenth of one's income (increase) to God for His use. The patriarch Jacob, knowing about God's command to tithe, promises *to give God a tenth* of his blessing or increase.

3. How did Jacob know about tithing? Genesis 14:18-20.

**COMMENT:** Jacob must have been taught about tithing by his grandfather, Abraham, and his father, Isaac. Genesis 14 succinctly reveals several principles of tithing. *First*, the tithe goes to God through His representative, the priest. *Second*, the Bible repeats that it is one-tenth. *Third*, this law was in effect long before God commanded it through Moses. *Fourth*, Abram, blessed for his faithfulness to God, gave tithes in recognition of God's rulership and providence.

4. For what purpose did Israel give tithes? Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:20-24.

**COMMENT:** Israelites gave tithes to the Levites to perform the work of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. Because they were involved in God's work and had no significant land of their own, the Levites had to be supported by the rest of the congregation of Israel.

5. Did Jesus give His approval of the tithing system during His ministry? Matthew 23:23.

**COMMENT:** In this denunciation of the Pharisees, Jesus does not condemn tithing—or even punctilious observance of it. Instead, He denounces their lack of justice,

mercy and faith! To the contrary, He supports tithing: “These you ought to have done [justice, mercy and faith], *without leaving the others* [tithing] *undone*.”

6. Was the law of tithing changed? Hebrews 7:1-17. Is the principle of supporting the ministers of God's work in force in the New Testament church? Matthew 10:8-10; 24:14; 28:19-20; Mark 16:15; I Corinthians 9:13-14.

**COMMENT:** A vital principle to remember concerning the Old and New Covenants is that *what did not originate with the Old Covenant did not die with it*. The gist of the argument in Hebrews 7 is that, since the Levitical priesthood has no authority under the New Covenant, the ritual laws pertaining to the priesthood are no longer valid. The priesthood has been conferred on Christ, now our High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:20). This “change of the law”—the ceremonial law of sacrifices, ritual washings and other rites pertaining to the Tabernacle/Temple and priesthood—applies only to the *administration* of tithing (verse 12). Since the tithing law predates the Levitical priesthood, and is thus still in force, tithes are now to be given to Jesus Christ, our High Priest, for use by the church. The church is commissioned to preach the gospel free of charge. The tithe pays for this important responsibility.

7. Does God bestow blessings on those who tithe—and withhold them from those who do not? Proverbs 3:9-10; II Corinthians 9:7; Acts 20:35; Malachi 3:8-12.

**COMMENT:** When we give God back the tithe that is His to begin with, He blesses us abundantly spiritually and physically. Notice that God says He commands tithes so “that there may be food in My house” (Malachi 3:10). Tithes are primarily used to feed His people spiritually! If we support the work God is doing through His faithful ministers, He promises to bless us far above anything we could imagine (Ephesians 3:20-21)!