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America's Response to Terror, or Can America Punish the Wicked?

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It has now been five days since America awoke to the horror and carnage of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Many families have been impacted through the personal loss of a loved one, and millions of others have had the security and peace of their lives attacked. In this day when many are seeking to know what these things portend, and to understand what the response of the saint should be, we are given many clues to aid in our quest for understanding.

My family and I live in close proximity to Robins Air Force Base, which is the largest single employer in the state of Georgia. A friend of ours who works at the base shared with me that one of his co-workers came in to work on 9-11, the date of the tragedies, and his scripture calendar had the following verses for the day.

Zephaniah 1:14-16

14 The great day of [Yahweh] is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of [Yahweh] is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out.

15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

(NKJ)

The events of September 11 were incredible. A nation that has felt nearly invulnerable was suddenly made aware of its vulnerabilities. All air traffic was grounded. The financial markets were closed. All sporting and entertainment events were canceled, or postponed. Our government leaders had to flee from the Capitol and the White House. In a moment of time the life of our nation was altered.

The details of what occurred has seemed too significant to be coincidence. The date was 9-11, and 911 is the emergency number for our nation. Many people have

spoken about this date and this correlation, both those who prophesy within the church, and the national media as well. This date would not have held significance anywhere else, for 911 does not hold the same meaning in other countries, and in much of the rest of the world the date would have been 11-9, not 9-11. In most European countries the date is written as dd-mm-yy, but here in America we record our dates as mm-dd-yy.

The nation watched on television as the President of the United States was notified of the hijacking and crash of a plane into the first of the World Trade Center buildings. The President was in Sarasota, Florida when he received the news and made his first statement to the nation. The scripture that appeared on the aforementioned calendar for this date was Zephaniah 1:16, which states, "*A day of trumpet and alarm* against the fortified cities and against the high towers." Strangely, just a few days later, Sarasota, Florida was flooded as Tropical Storm Gabrielle dumped masses of water upon the area. Gabrielle is the feminine form of the name Gabriel, and it is the angel Gabriel that is most often associated by Christianity as the angel that blows the trumpet announcing the return of the Lord Yahshua.

It is certain that there is a message in all of this for the saints of God. The question is, "What is the message, and how would Yahweh have us respond?" I will share with you those things of which I feel confident. The scriptures say that now "we know in part and prophesy in part" (I Corinthians 13:9). I am learning to be careful to not speak beyond those things that I know. It is an irresponsible act for the saint of God to speak things and confess that they represent Yahweh's mind and will when the saint is not sure of those things.

As I witnessed the immediate response of this nation going to prayer on 9-11, and then as a day of prayer was called on 9-14 I received this from the Spirit of God. "Many people are speaking to Me, but they are not listening."

When a tragedy befalls an individual, a family, or a nation they should certainly be drawn to prayer. But what should be the manner of these prayers? Should we simply pray for God's protection on our nation and for vengeance upon those who did such wicked deeds? Should we not rather seek the face of God that we might hear what He would speak to us?

If the hedge of protection has been removed from this nation, we should seek to know why. If Yahweh God is disciplining us as sons, or pouring out His judgment

upon the wickedness of our nation, should we not seek His face to discern the matter? If this is discipline or judgment then only true repentance, humility and righteous behavior will close up the breach that has been made in the wall of protection surrounding us. Rather than going to a one hour prayer meeting and spending a few minutes crying out for God to protect us and give us vengeance on our enemies, we should remain at His feet until we have heard His voice declare all that He would speak to us.

The immediate response of the nation is to exact retribution upon those who did these evil acts. Can the wicked bring correction to the wicked? If we have sin in the camp, can we as a nation stand before our enemies and prevail? Will we not rather be as the Israelites who went up against Ai and were defeated for they had secret sin in their midst?

Much of what has been spoken so far has been proud words. The President has vowed to go to war and to prevail against the sources of terrorism. The President has stated, "This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing." It is God that rules over the affairs of men and nations. These are proud words from a proud nation that has not yet examined itself to see if it is naked and shameful in the eyes of the Creator.

As a nation, America needs to examine itself, and to not be hasty to rush out to exact retribution against those who have done this wicked and horrid act. We need to take to heart the story that is told in great detail in the book of Judges. There is perhaps no more detailed narrative of a single event in scriptures than of this "righteous war" of Israel against the small tribe of Benjamin. Three whole chapters and 103 verses are devoted to describing this matter. I sense in my spirit man that America needs to take a close look at this passage.

In Judges chapter 19 we are told that there was a Levite man who had a concubine from the tribe of Judah. This concubine played the harlot and ran away and returned to her father's household. After a period of four months the Levite went to speak kindly to her and to bring her back. He began the journey home with his concubine from Judah to Ephraim, where he lived. Along the way the day was growing late and the man decided to spend the night in Gibeah, which was a city belonging to the tribe of Benjamin. The man felt that he would be safe in a city belonging to the children of Israel.

As the Levite lodged as a guest of a man in Gibeah, certain worthless men came up and pounded on the door and demanded that the Levite be brought out to them so that they could have sexual relations with him. The man in whose house he was staying implored them to not do such a wicked and foolish thing. When they would not go away, the Levite's concubine was given to them and they ravished her and abused her the whole night. In the morning they released her and she fell on the steps of the house that the Levite was staying in. When the Levite came out he found her dead.

The Levite was greatly angered at the evil deeds of the men of Gibeah. He took his concubine home and when he got there he cut her into twelve pieces and sent her body parts throughout the twelve tribes of Israel, calling for judgment against the men of Gibeah and Benjamin. All Israel was shocked at what had happened, and they were incensed by the wickedness of the men of Gibeah. They all gathered as one man to respond to this situation.

At this point it is not hard to see parallels between this story and the atrocities that happened in America. A wicked and violent act was committed in the territory of Israel, even as a wicked and violent act has been committed in America. All of Israel was made aware of the act in a very graphic way, and similarly all of America has been able to literally watch and re-watch the horrifying events of September 11th.

In the 20th chapter of Judges we are shown that the response of the people and the leaders of the nation was a spontaneous and united response.

Judges 20:1, 2, 8, 9

1 Then all the sons of Israel from Dan to Beersheba, including the land of Gilead, came out, and the congregation assembled as one man to [Yahweh] at Mizpah.

2 And the chiefs of all the people, even of all the tribes of Israel, took their stand in the assembly of the people of God, 400,000 foot soldiers who drew the sword....

8 Then all the people arose as one man, saying, "Not one of us will go to his tent, nor will any of us return to his house.

9 "But now this is the thing which we will do to Gibeah; we will go up against it by lot."

Similarly, the response of the American people and the government of the United

States has been spontaneous and united. Over and over the news media has commented on the change that has come over the members of the Senate and House of Representatives. Just a day earlier they were arguing over who was responsible for losing the budget surplus; there was much finger pointing and accusation. All of a sudden, however, they have come together as one man in a way that has not been seen before in this generation. Even during the gulf war there was not such unanimity. The senate vote to use military force during the gulf war was 52 - 48. However, the vote this week to allow the President to use whatever military force was deemed appropriate was 98 - 0.

With Israel, the talk was not about whether they should go to war, but about how they would do it. It is the same for the USA. It was immediately decided by the President, the Congress, and the people of America that those who did this thing should be punished. We find that Israel made the same determination.

Judges 20:10-11

10 "And we will take 10 men out of 100 throughout the tribes of Israel, and 100 out of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000 to supply food for the people, that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, *they may punish them for all the disgraceful acts that they have committed in Israel.*"

11 Thus all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united as one man.

(NAS)

Never before in our generation have we seen America so united to bring punishment to those who have acted wickedly. We see another parallel as we look at what Israel did next. They went and demanded that the wicked men be handed over to them. Even so the USA has demanded that Osama bin Laden and his terrorists be handed over to them. Benjamin refused to hand over the wicked men in its territory and Afghanistan has refused to hand over theirs.

Judges 20:12-13

12 Then the tribes of Israel sent men through the entire tribe of Benjamin, saying, "What is this wickedness that has taken place among you?"

13 "Now then, deliver up the men, the worthless fellows in Gibeah, that we may put them to death and remove this wickedness from

Israel." But the sons of Benjamin would not listen to the voice of their brothers, the sons of Israel.
(NAS)

In response to Benjamin's rebuff, Israel immediately determined to go to war against them, and they went to inquire of God as to how they should proceed to carry out this punishment against the wicked.

Judges 20:18

Now the sons of Israel arose, went up to Bethel, and inquired of God, and said, "Who shall go up first for us to battle against the sons of Benjamin?" Then [Yahweh] said, "Judah shall go up first."
(NAS)

Israel asked God a question and they got the answer they wanted. Even so, America has gone to pray to their God, but they have not asked the right question. They have not considered whether they might be just as guilty before God of grotesque sin. They have not allowed God to search their hearts and reveal any wickedness in their midst. Instead, they have said "These are worthless fellows guilty of evil and we must punish them." America has not stopped to consider that God would have her repent and do a thorough housecleaning before attempting to "rid the world of evil" as she has said she will do.

Israel outnumbered Benjamin 400,000 to 28,000. The numbers alone looked like a sure deal. There seemed to be no need for Israel to do a lot of soul searching for she was in a position of strength, even as America appears to be. Yet when Israel went to battle the first day against Benjamin, Israel lost 22,000 men and Benjamin was unscathed. The men of Israel then encouraged themselves, and once again they asked God if they should go to battle and they went a second time. On the second day Israel lost 18,000 men and Benjamin was again unscathed.

In two days the vastly superior army of Israel was decimated. She lost a full ten percent of her warriors while achieving nothing in return. After such defeat the men of Israel finally came to God with a heart of humility to hear what He would say to them.

Judges 20:26-28

26 Then all the sons of Israel and all the people went up and came

to Bethel and wept; thus they remained there before [Yahweh] and fasted that day until evening. And they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before [Yahweh].

27 And the sons of Israel inquired of [Yahweh] (for the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days,

28 and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, Aaron's son, stood before it to minister in those days), saying, "Shall I yet again go out to battle against the sons of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?" And [Yahweh] said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."
(NAS)

After much loss Israel humbled herself before God. The whole nation fasted and wept and waited upon the voice of Yahweh. The people offered sacrifices and peace offerings to cover their own sins, and then they truly inquired to know the mind of Yahweh. Before they had said, "Who shall go up against Benjamin." All of Israel felt they were righteous and able to punish the wicked. Now they had examined themselves and found they were lacking and in need of repentance. Their words were much more humble now, "Shall I yet go out to battle..., or shall I cease?"

On the first two attempts to punish Benjamin, Yahweh had told them to go forth, but He did not say they would prevail. Yahweh needed to bring Israel to repentance and she was not humble enough to examine her own household to see if there was sin in her midst. Israel had to be humbled first, and to endure great loss and tragedy. Will America have to go through the same process?

Currently there is little soul searching going on. Currently there is much pride and a focus on the evil of others and a glossing over of America's own evil. The terrorists may have killed more than 5,000 people, but every year America kills this amount multiplied many times over as she puts to death unborn babies. What is more evil, to attack a people who are at work assuming they are in a place of safety, or to tear apart, attack, and poison babies that are in the place that Yahweh determined should be the safest place for them, their mother's womb?

The leaders of America have determined to go to war to eradicate those people who would terrorize innocent citizens, yet these same leaders have legalized the murder of unborn children. Can the wicked bring correction to the wicked? Is it not hypocrisy for a government that has removed God from the public school systems to now declare that all children should spend two minutes in silence this past Friday? What

are they to do during this silence since they are forbidden to pray in school?

In the end of this story in Judges we see that having humbled themselves and repented, the nation is now able to correct Benjamin. We also see that Israel's heart has changed toward Benjamin. Israel is grieved that a tribe of Israel has nearly been eradicated and they feel pity on the survivors. They even make plans to provide wives for these men that a tribe of Israel should not perish from the Earth.

Currently there is little compassion in the things being spoken. People are saying that America must "have the stomach" to do what is necessary, and by this they are indicating that America must accept the fact that there may be "collateral damages". By "collateral damages" they are saying that there may be many innocent people who may die as the wicked are sought out in their midst. It is not compassion to speak of people like they are some type of produce in a grocery store that might be damaged.

I have observed the comments of people I am in contact with daily and they are saying that we should just nuke Afghanistan or other places that harbor terrorists and not be concerned whether women and children are killed. Much of this is due to simple prejudice and a judging of all people who look differently as being of no value. America is not yet humble and contrite before Yahweh and I am afraid that things will go badly for her until she finds repentance.

There are two things in particular that have led to so much arrogance and pride in America. Foremost is her great wealth, and second is her advanced and powerful military. It is no coincidence that these were the areas that suffered damage on September 11. Let us look one more time at the scripture that I mentioned at the first.

Zephaniah 1:14-16

14 The great day of [Yahweh] is near; it is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of [Yahweh] is bitter; there the mighty men shall cry out.

15 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness,

16 A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.

(NKJ)

It is amazing that high towers are mentioned here and that the two towers that dominated the New York skyline were devoted to world trade. These lofty towers represented the pride of America's great economic might. Suddenly they were no more. The word that is used to describe the "high" towers is the Hebrew word "gaboahh".

Strong's 1364 gaboahh (gaw-bo'-ah); from 1361; elevated, powerful, arrogant:

KJV-- haughty, height, high (-er), lofty, proud, X exceeding proudly.

I need not make a case that America's wealth and economic might have led to much pride and arrogance. This pride was symbolized in these two vast towers which reached into the heavens. What will it take for Yahweh to bring America to humility and righteousness? Will her economy need to be left in ruins and her military might diminished? Let us hope not, but at this moment the heart of America is not right.

The prophet Zephaniah gives us these words that reveal who will escape the judgments of Yahweh.

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek [Yahweh], all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; *seek righteousness, seek humility*. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of [Yahweh's] anger.

(NAS)

The Father is interested in bringing righteousness to the peoples of the Earth, and right now the sins of America are great and they have ascended to the heights of heaven. Yahweh is looking for repentance from the people of the Earth. Yahweh is looking for righteousness in America. God will not wink at the sin of our nation. Let us pray that our leaders and citizens will humble themselves quickly that further disaster might be averted and America restored to peace and prosperity.

Isaiah 26:9b

For when the earth experiences Thy judgments the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

(NAS)

Selah (Pause and consider)