

What Lies Ahead for America?

The Harbinger captured the attention of more than 1 million people this year with its prophetic warning to America. But the book's ongoing implications should be the real concern behind this profound revelation.

What happens when a nation ignores God's warnings and the call to return to Him? What happens to nations that actually return to God?

Regardless of how much the world mocks Christians for believing that God's Word is absolute truth, there are biblical principles and patterns concerning the judgment or redemption of nations—and this revelation holds profound meaning for America.

I wrote about these principles in *The Harbinger*, a prophetic wake-up call for America released in January 2012 that has since sold more than 1 million copies. The message has obviously resonated with people from all walks of life (it spent the entire year on the *New York Times* best-seller list), yet there is far more to this continuing story.

It begins more than 2,700 years ago, when God repeatedly called ancient Israel to return to Him after the people He birthed opted to turn away from their God. The very words of the Torah, spoken through Moses to their ancestors in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, were His first call and His foretelling future calamity if they failed to repent. When the people of Israel's northern kingdom ignored those words, God sent His prophets to confront them face-to-face with their transgressions.

Even then the people and their leaders refused to listen, hardening their hearts to His message and persecuting the messengers. God finally allowed Israel's enemies to breach His protective hedge around the nation. Though the subsequent

damage was significant, it was limited—proving that even in judgment God was calling the nation to wake up, turn from its self-destructive course and be reconciled to Him.

Israel's defiant answer to God's final call is found in Isaiah 9:10: "The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with hewn stones; the sycamores are cut down, but we will replace them with cedars." Despite being in ruins, Israel vowed to rebuild itself stronger than ever—and without God.

Verse 11 describes the beginning of the tragic consequences of that defiance, the nation's progression to judgment: "Therefore the Lord shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and spur his enemies on."

The answer continues in the verses that follow: "And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still. ... The land is burned up. ... What will you do in the day of punishment, and in the desolation which will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help?" (Is. 9:12, 19; 10:3).

Thus, Isaiah 9:10 leads to a prophecy of national destruction, fulfilled when the Assyrians returned, laid siege for three years and destroyed the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and exiled its people.

Patterns Reproduced in America

We have seen in America's story the same patterns of apostasy, initial warnings and a further warning through the limited calamity of 9/11. We've seen how all nine harbingers of Israel's coming judgment, including all that is contained in Isaiah 9:10, have been manifested in America. We have also seen how, in the years since 9/11, America, like ancient Israel, failed to return to God's ways but responded in defiance, and how seven years later there came a second shaking of the nation.

If America continues on its course away from and in defiance of God, what lies ahead?

The Bible reveals several patterns of judgment involving a consistent course. The nation's blessings are removed by means of the sword (i.e., war), destruction, violence or division. The pattern also involves famine (i.e., lack, want, deprivation, the removal of prosperity, impoverishment). Judgment can involve natural disaster, man-made disaster, terrorism, internal division, the collapse of a nation's infrastructure, decline and fall.

In the case of a nation so blessed as has been America, it would certainly involve the removal of these blessings. And in the case of a nation given the position of "head of nations" economically, financially, culturally, politically and militarily, it would also involve the removal of this crown. Thus, if America does not turn back to God, we can likely anticipate the end of history's American age.

Judgment or Redemption?

But is judgment inevitable? What cases do we see in the Bible of a nation hanging in the balance?

We have the case of Sodom, in which not even 10 righteous people could be found. The result was destruction.

A nation can partially turn back to God through the influence of godly leaders, as the southern kingdom of Judah did under King Josiah, experiencing a revival during their rule, only to backslide over the next generation and face judgment. In that case judgment was postponed.

Finally, a nation can turn completely to God in repentance, as Nineveh did after the warnings of the prophet Jonah, and avoid judgment for generations to come. In that case the judgment was turned back and the city was saved.

Between a future of judgment or revival, there is another possibility: There can be both. Sometimes revival only comes through judgment, through shaking, through loss. Most people come to the Lord through such shaking and loss, or some kind of crisis, external or internal.

So it is with nations. After 9/11 people flocked to houses of worship. It looked as if there could be a national revival. But the movement was short-lived. There was no real repentance, no changing of course. And without repentance, there can be no revival.

But what happened in those first few weeks after 9/11 shows the connection between calamity or shaking and revival. It is often only through such calamity and shaking that people return to the Lord and to their first love. So there is possibility also for a dual picture: judgment concerning the ungodliness of American mainstream culture, but revival for those who in the midst turn to God in repentance.

End-Time Prophecy

Which course will America follow? A look at end-time prophecy may provide some answers.

One of the key signs that we have entered the end times is the miraculous return of the Jewish people to their land, following 20 centuries of exile—all in accordance with biblical prophecy. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet delivered two declarations from God concerning this that have been fulfilled:

“For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land” (36:24).

“Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and ... bring you into the land of Israel” (37:12).

As the Bible foretells, the reborn nation of Israel and the

city of Jerusalem will be the center of controversy (Zech. 12). Besides Israel returning as a nation, a further sign of the end times will be the rise of a one-world government, the most powerful in history. It will be associated with a godless ruler, alluded to in the book of Daniel and described more fully in the book of Revelation. Called "the beast," he is worshipped by the world, blasphemes God, wars against God's people, and conquers the nations through war and seduction (Rev. 13:4-8).

As the book of Zechariah foretells, Israel will eventually be attacked by all nations. As Revelation 16 relates, it is the one-world ruler who gathers them against her. And as both Zechariah and Revelation state, God will, through the return of the Messiah, destroy this final attempt to wipe out Israel and set up His kingdom in Jerusalem.

The Missing Superpower

All this leads up to the question: Where is America in all these prophecies? The answer is that there is no clear reference to America in end-time prophecy. Moreover, not a word is said in these end-times prophecies about Israel's most powerful human ally rescuing Israel. It is God who literally does so in the end.

Thus between where we are now and where the world is at the end of the age, there is a gap and a question: How do we go from the American age where America stands preeminent among nations, to a post-American age as revealed in end-time prophecy? Something has to happen.

The Harbinger fills in the gaps between where we are and what is yet to come.

At the same time, even though the overall direction of American culture points to a continued progression of moral descent, apostasy, shaking and judgment, we cannot underestimate the power of prayer and the Lord's Spirit. And

even amid apostasy, shaking and judgment there can be true revival among those who seek Him.

That alone means there is still hope.

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