

A Misleading Bit of Sarcasm

by Lynn Andrew

Rev. Billy Graham once quoted his wife's remark, "If God doesn't punish America, He'll have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah." In fairness to Ruth, she was commenting on a book her husband was writing where trends in American culture were depicted. She meant it, no doubt, as a compliment to him on the force of his writing. Unfortunately he thought it was worth repeating.

It seems no one thought of Ruth's little quip as a bad joke. It was picked up and repeated by eminent preachers like Dr. James Kennedy and countless others. We all know this, for it has become a famous saying and we have all heard it.

On its face it is heresy. We repeat it because it is a clever way of saying its opposite, which we would rather not say: "God will have to severely punish America if he is to be consistent in his judgments in the past." Well, no, we don't mean to be condescending toward God, do we? We must mean, "We have no reason to be surprised if God punishes America very severely."

But a student of the Bible knows that Sodom was down to fewer than ten righteous people; God had promised Abraham he would not destroy Sodom if there were ten.

So the comparison, while effective rhetoric to make a point, is not exactly truthful. But neither is the point it makes!

Here's why: The use God makes of a nation cannot be predicted by its morality. That's perfectly clear in biblical and secular his-

tory. He uses even evil nations and then destroys them when he is through using them. Are we as brutally evil as Babylon was or more pagan than Nineveh was? Even if that were so (which to say so would unfairly discredit the majority of Americans), might it be God's purpose to use America to save the world again as he has done in the past?

Those questions mean nothing to the doomsayers among us. They point to the record of the punishment ancient Israel received though not everyone in Israel was blatantly disobedient.

To make that comparison you have to assume that the USA is somehow equivalent to Israel. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that Israel is unique among nations, so you have to take Israel off the board if you're looking to have America treated the same way.

Here is your choice: let Jerusalem go to the enemies of God and wait for God to judge a burnt-out America whose purpose has been used up, or respect what the prophets said about Jerusalem's future and not be surprised if God continues to keep America in order to protect his city.

It does look like God is using Israel reserve the place from which Christ will rule the world. Sure, Israel is a secular state. But does that matter at this point? Sure, America has its share of backsliders, but does that matter? Not according to history.

Who else can God count on to remember his promise to Jerusalem? The UN won't do it; the Vatican can't do it. No other nation has the inclination and the strength. Looks to me like he is not through with the USA and may still bless us.

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