

Remembering 9/11

5th Anniversary Commemoration

By Rev. David Mook

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Bible Text: Revelation 19:19

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Phoenix Free Church

8925 W. Larkspur Dr., Suite 107

Peoria, AZ 85381

Website:

http://www.fpcna.org/fpcna_church_detail.asp?churchid=phoenix

Online Sermons:

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At mid morning on September 11th, 2001 the answering machine at the Walter Hines home clicked on to record a message. The voice was that of Captain Hines of the New York Fire Department's ladder 13. His rig was leaving the station. It was just after 9 AM and they had received alarms from the World Trade Center of a major disaster.

He said in his message that the situation seemed to be very bad and then he concluded by saying, "I don't know if we will make it out. I want to tell you that I love you and I love the kids."

When his wife heard that message she knew that she would never hear her husband's voice again in this world.

Those kinds of messages were heard all over this country on that morning. Some of the messages came from inside the World Trade Center. Some came from hijacked airliners as they hurdled toward their targets. Some came from the intrepid passengers on one of those airliners who resolved that they would try to prevent yet another attack. They gave their lives in that noble effort.

Nine days later the President of the United States stood before a joint session of the Congress and delivered one of the most memorable presidential addresses in recent history. Toward the end of that speech he declared, "Great harm has been done to us. We have suffered great loss. And in our grief and anger we have found our mission and our moment. Freedom and fear are at war. The advance of human freedom, the great achievement of our time and the great hope of every time now depends on us. Our nation, this generation will lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future. We will rally the world to this cause by our efforts, by our courage. We will not tire. We will not falter and we will not fail."

Five years have now passed since the beginning of the war. We cannot forget the shock and horror of that morning. We cannot erase those images of those twin towers belching flames and thick columns of dark smoke into the clear September sky. We cannot forget those awful moments when those massive towers gave way and collapsed in a roar of shattered glass, steel, concrete and humanity.

The cloud of debris that enveloped lower Manhattan that morning snuffed out any remaining delusion that we were at peace in the world. Over the days that followed that horrifying morning rescue crews were able to extract a few people from the mountain of wreckage. But most of the bodies of those trapped in those towers were obliterated either by the explosion and ensuing fire or by the final collapse of the structures.

It was evident almost immediately that those who had orchestrated the attack were following in the train of those who adhere to other failed ideologies. As President Bush also said in his address, "We are not deceived by their pretenses to piety. We have seen their kind before. They are the heirs of all the murderous ideologies of the 20th century. By sacrificing human life to serve their radical visions, by abandoning every value except the will to power, they follow in the path of Fascism and Nazism and Totalitarianism and they will follow that path all the way to where it ends in history's unmarked grave of discarded lives."

They were adherents of Islam. And in spite of the efforts of President Bush and many others since that day to make these people part of a radical offshoot of Islam, it is still the case that those who carried out the attacks and those who backed them were and are the representatives of historic Islam, a religion of blood and perversion, a religion of terror and tyranny.

There are political and security reasons why our leaders have consistently sought to minimize the religious aspects of this war, but there have been many who have urged that we accept the truth that our enemies regarded themselves as a religious war. They abhor anything that is not Islam. They detest anything that promotes liberty. They despise that which is modern. They abominate most of all the concept of religious freedom that is the abiding legacy of the Protestant Reformation.

On this anniversary of our nation's entry into this war, we do well to ponder again the terror of that day when our country was viciously attacked. But if that is all we do, then we will not advance toward victory in the war. It is a long war. And quite possibly there are people here who will not live to see the end of it. Possibly it will not be won for decades. Possibly there are people here who will die in this war.

But we must not lose our resolve as a people.

Mr. Newt Gingrich, former speaker of the House of Representatives delivered this pointed recommendation in a recent opinion column in the *Wall Street Journal*. First the president should address a joint session of Congress to explain to the country the urgency of the threat of losing millions of people in one or more cities if our enemies find a way to deliver weapons of mass murder to American soil. He should further communicate the scale of the anti American coalition, the clarity of their desire to destroy America and the requirement that we defeat them. He should then make clear to the world that a determined American people whose very civilization is at stake will undertake the

measures needed to prevail over our enemies. While desiring the widest possible support, we will not compromise our self defense in order to please our critics.

He added elsewhere in then same column this recommendation. Congress should immediately pass the legislation sent by the president to meet the requirements of the Supreme Courts Hamden decision. More broadly, it should pass an act that recognizes that we are entering World War III and serves notice that the US will use all its resources to defeat our enemies, not accommodate understand or negotiate with them, but defeat them.

And I think that that recommendation is much to the point.

It has been objected by many religious liberals that Jesus was always in favor of peace, never in favor of conflict. Of course, they ignore the truth that the Bible has a lot to say about war and that there are times when God himself is at war.

I wonder what they will say on the day of which we have read in Revelation 19 when the Lord Jesus Christ will appear from heaven as we read in verse 11 to wage righteous war against those who have despised his rule over them.

We read in verse 19, which is the text that I want to leave before you today, that they will gather to make war against him and against his army.

We ought not to forget that behind the massive conflict in which our country is now engaged there is the ongoing campaign of the devil himself to destroy the truth in the world and to pull Christ down from his throne. There is much at stake here.

I have been appalled that so many seem to have forgotten the savagery with which those attacks happened. Yesterday I looked again at some video tapes of the attacks that took place on that day and felt, again, the horror watching one tower already on fire and then seeing suddenly another jetliner approach at tremendous speed and slam into the other tower, causing a horrific explosion.

We dare not forget what happened. We have been called to take part in this struggle.

One of the disadvantages of having the war so far removed from us, in one sense, is that the people here don't seem to understand its reality. You realize that in this country we have not really faced war for a long, long time. But I would still rather fight the war where we are fighting it than fight it here in our own cities.

We are called on this anniversary to remember, to recall the events that occurred that day, to mourn with those who lost friends and family members like the family of Captain Hines of the New York Fire Department and many of his colleagues. But let us not lose sight of the ongoing realities as we engage today in remembering 9/11.

There is no doubt in my mind that there were definite spiritual overtones in the message of the attacks on our country that took place five years ago tomorrow. Sadly, most people in this country missed those messages.

There was a call at this time to this nation to consider its ways, to turn from its path of wickedness and rebellion against God, to turn back to the truth of the Scriptures, to turn back to God.

The goodness of God appeared that day in many ways. It is hard to think of the goodness of God on such a day. There were nearly 3000 people who died that day. That was, certainly, a horrific toll. But if you remember that day, it was initially feared that there would be 20,000 to 30,000 dead. For at any one time in those towers there would be 20,000 to 30,000 people working. And it was only by the skill and the courage of the fire fighters and the police officers who responded to the scene that many people got out of those towers before they fell. And some who were caught inside survived and were rescued.

There was another indication of the goodness of God in the actions of the passengers on the fourth of those flights, United 93. For they found out that the Muslim terrorists who had commandeered their aircraft were going to use that plane to carry out another attack. And it developed later on that that attack was to be on either the White House or the Capitol in Washington and that either of those attacks taking place, there would have been many more deaths.

The heroism of those passengers who simply said, "We have got to do something." One said, "We are all going to die, but we are going to do something." Their heroism prevented that attack from reaching its target. That was the goodness of God.

The goodness of God could be seen in that Americans received the warning that day that their lives could end just as suddenly, that they could get up in the morning and go to their places of employment or to their places of education and that their lives could be snuffed out. That was a warning from God to people in this country. There was every incentive given for people to take thought for the brevity of life and for the need to repent individually and nationally of sin.

Sadly, such repentance has not occurred. Oh, for a time you may remember there was what was described as a renewed interest in spiritual matters. But the ecumenical apostasy quickly hijacked that interest for its own perverse ends. And since then the country has just continued its march down the road to Sodom and Gomorrah.

We have a double responsibility in this war. And make no mistake about it. We are at war. I think we need to remind ourselves of that every single day. We are called to support and to defend our country against all its enemies, both foreign and domestic. But we are called, as well, as soldiers in the army of the Lord Jesus Christ to warn those around us of the solemn reality that life is but a shadow, a wisp of vapor and that eternity is real and never ending.

Are you prepared for that reality?

There was on that morning five years ago a young woman. She didn't live in New York, but she was in the World Trade Center that day. She was from California. And the only reason she was in New York was to attend an important meeting dealing with trade and it was a meeting that took place on one of the upper floors of one of the towers. In the pandemonium that followed the attack she realized that she was going to die. She called her home in California and left a message for her husband to whom she had only recently been married.

“Sean, it is me. I just wanted to let you know I love you.”

And within an hour she was gone from this world.

If that were you, where would you be found? In heaven? Or in hell? For make no mistake about it, every single person who died that day went either to heaven or to hell.

I am asking you to ponder that question, because I would not want a single person here to go from the sound of God's Word to the fires of hell.

When we remember 9/11 there are four statements to be made about it. And, yes, we are going to come to our text. But let me make these statements, first of all.

It was an act of war.

The United States Congress in cooperation with the president appointed a special commission to investigate all of the things that happened before and during and after that day. It came to be called the 9/11 commission. One of the findings of the commission was that the forces of Islamic terrorism were at war with us long before we realized that we were at war with them.

The first attack on the World Trade Center happened in December 1993 when Islamic terrorists blew up several vehicles in the parking garage of the World Trade Center with the idea that they would destabilize the structure and cause the whole building to collapse.

A few people were killed on that occasion and others were injured. Some of those who were killed, I think, were... may have been some of those who carried out the attack.

Now in the wake of that attack our government indicated that they would round up those responsible for the attack and the ones that they could, they did apprehend and they put them on trial as having broken the criminal laws of this country.

Now they were criminals and they had broken our laws. There is no doubt about that. But the mindset of our country at that time needed to be changed by that event and it was not.

It was not until nearly eight years later on September 11, 2001 that the tremendous attacks that occurred got us to see the scope of the struggle in which we are now engaged.

On that morning when I saw the smoke rising from those towers, I remembered the images of the United States fleet in Pearl Harbor on December 7th, 1941 and I remembered the thick columns of smoke billowing up into that morning sky on that day. Not only was it an act of war that took place on September 11th, but it was an act of war that was particularly reprehensible because it targeted civilians.

President Bush noted that fact both in his address to the nation on the evening of September 11th and in his address to Congress on September 20th. He said, “We have been subjected to surprise attacks before, but always against our military, never against our civilians.”

Our enemies to this day complain about civilian casualties during the war that is going on while they locate their weaponry in the midst of the civilian enclaves and while they target civilians specifically for destruction as they sought to do not too long ago in the plot that was uncovered by our allies in the United Kingdom on those jetliners that were to be blown up over the Atlantic Ocean. Those were targeting civilians.

Those who witnessed the atrocities of that day five years ago can have no doubt that those were acts of war.

When I looked at that, that was exactly what I said. This was an act of war.

And what was the object? What was behind those attacks?

Well, that is the second statement I want to make. It was an attack on liberty.

Now let us recognize what is at stake here. The Muslim terrorists who orchestrated these attacks want to impose on all the world their vision. And that is consistent with historic Islam. Historic Islam has a very effective means of evangelism. You convert to Islam or you get your head chopped off. And they have done that since the seventh century and they are still doing it. These journalists who were recently taken captive in Gaza, they were forced to convert to Islam. And I read a column about that not too long ago that said that pointed out that this is nothing different than what they have always done. This is the way they operate. They don't believe in liberty. They don't believe in freedom. They don't believe that people should be free. They believe that people should be held in very close channels.

Under the rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, as President Bush noted in his address, a man could be put in jail if his beard was not long enough.

The Scriptures speak of liberty as being one of the hallmarks of the gospel. When Paul spoke to the Galatians of the liberty wherewith Christ makes you free, he was speaking of the liberty to do that which is right according to the Scriptures. But it is liberty to do it.

We do not follow the Scriptures out of terror or out of fear. Those attacks sought to destroy liberty.

A third statement. It was an expression of contempt for the truth.

Again, let us not be under any delusion today. We have to face the reality that Islam despises the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. From the Koran itself comes this telling passage.

Chapter nine, paragraph 30. “And the Jews say, ‘Whose heirs the son of Allah.’ And the Christians say ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah.’ These are the words of their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieve before. May Allah destroy them. How they are turned away. They show nothing but contempt for the truth that Christianity teaches that Messiah is the Son of God.”

This, they say, is an evidence of their disbelief and the reason why they ought to be destroyed.

I think we want to recognize that the people who adhere to Islam in truth are not at all happy that there are others who are free to practice other religions. They would see them all murdered or converted to Islam.

So here is an expression of contempt for this truth. And I think we need to realize that Muslims have contempt for the truth because it is truth that is wrapped up in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. We read of the Lord Jesus Christ, in Revelation 19. We read of him particularly in verse 13.

“And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.”¹

The Word of God, the embodiment, the full expression of God, the full of expression of God’s will is in the person of Christ. He is the incarnate Word.

And down in verse 16.

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”²

Here is the one against whom we read in the words of our text that the armies of the world gather together. They are gathering against him. And notice, as well, in verse 19 “against his army.”³

¹ Revelation 19:13.

² Revelation 19:16.

³ Revelation 19:19.

Who is in his army? We read of them in verse 14.

“And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.”⁴

And I am aware of the ramifications of this passage in relation to the specific fulfillment of prophecy. I am not dealing with that today. I am dealing with the idea that there is always throughout history a confederation of the ungodly in the world who hate Christ, who hate the truth of the gospel and who resolve that they are going to do all that was within their power to wage war against that truth.

This is the truth as it is in Jesus Christ. And that is why I say we must resolve that we will never surrender that truth. We will never give up that truth whatever it costs us.

Let me make a fourth statement. It was a call to action.

Yes, what happened five years ago today was a call to action for every citizen in this country. But in most importantly for every believer in Christ in this country it was a call to action. We are called as citizens to act in defense of our liberty, to support those who are called upon to make decisions for this country and to act in support of those who are called upon to fight this country's battles. We are called upon to act in support of them. And that is not just for ourselves. It is with the realization that we have children and grandchildren who are coming in the way after us. We are acting in their defense.

We would like to hand to them a country that is marked by freedom, not a country in which Islam is imposed at the bloody point of a scimitar.

We say that we are called to make any sacrifice that is necessary to be made to secure our liberty. We are at war.

I believe that there need to be greater calls to the people of this country to be on a war footing. It is not politically popular. But those who lived through World War II will remember well the sacrifices that had to be made in those days to defeat the enemy that was a real threat.

And I will tell you something else about World War II. You read about it in the history books and it seems like it was no problem at all. But those who lived through it will remember that there were dark days in World War II. In 1942 and in 1943 when it was feared that the war would be lost, when then world would be under the domination of Hitler and Mussolini and Tojo.

So let us remember that in every war there are dark days. There are reverses. But those who value freedom and liberty are committed to defending it whatever it costs.

We are also called to remember, as citizens, the vicious power of the attacks that were

⁴ Revelation 19:14.

launched against our country and to remember that were it not for the rapid response of our government, other attacks would have been carried out that day, perhaps as many as six others.

We are called to remember that lives have been lost in the war. There were lives lost that day, not just those who innocently went off to their offices on that occasion, but those who were called to come and rescue them after the first attack. Many fire fighters, police officers gave their lives that day. There were the casualties of the war. And many other lives have been given since then. And our tribute to them must be we will not abandon the fight now. To abandon the fight now is to cast on the graves of those who have already died, our contempt for all that they have done.

Well, let me just say that when we speak of this call to action, it is a call to us as believers. We are called to be true to Christ. We are called to be true to the Scriptures. That means that we are called to stand for our Lord Jesus Christ. We are called to take this Word of God, we are called to hold it closely. We are called to hold it up. We are called to contend for it. We are called to deny those who say, “Well, it is not really the Word of God at all.”

We are called to take our stand for Christ. We are not just citizens of this country. We are citizens of the heavenly kingdom. And we are called in these days to look to the one who is going forth on that white horse of whom we read in verse 11, the one who is called Faithful and True. He is faithful to us. Let us be faithful and true unto him. Let us stand with him. He bares reproach. The world despises him.

Now the world has its own Christ that it has invented. Sadly many evangelicals have gone right along with the world’s invention. They have a Christ that does not resemble the Christ of the Scriptures whatsoever. We are not contending for that Christ. We are contending for the Christ of whom we read in Revelation 19, the one who is faithful and true, the one who has that name written on his vesture and on his thigh, King of kings and Lord of lords. We exalt him. We bow at his throne. We seek to do his will, to carry out his calling whatever the reproach is that comes to us. We will bear it.

When we remember that day—and I tell you to watch some of those things again—brought back all those emotions. To read some of the messages that people left for their family members brought back all those emotions. There is horror. There is anger. There is resolve. There is determination. There is understanding that we are fighting an enemy that is implacable. Every time I hear people say, “We need to negotiate with these people,” I say, “How do you negotiate with someone who is holding a sword to your throat?” That is not negotiation.

We are engaged in a war as citizens of this country, but let us remember we are engaged in the long spiritual war between our Lord Jesus Christ and the devil. We are called to take our stand in that war.

The best way for us to remember 9/11 is not to lay down our responsibilities as citizens

of this country and as citizens of our Savior's everlasting kingdom. And if you are not a citizen of that kingdom, this is the day for you to come to Christ. Christ is going to come. That is what Revelation 19 makes plain. He is going to come. And he is going to come to make war on all those who are opposed to him.

If you are not with him, you are against him.

So today is the day for you to say, "I don't want to fight Jesus Christ anymore. I surrender. I surrender to him. I come to believe on him."

If I can help you in the things of God, then I am happy to do that. Today you need to be sure you are in Christ so that if your life is suddenly snuffed out, as many lives were that day five years ago, you will be with the Savior in the house of the Lord forevermore.