

DOES GOD GET ANGRY AT NATIONS?

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The people of the land have used oppression, and exercised robbery; yes, they have vexed the poor and needy, and have oppressed the foreigner wrongfully. I sought for a man among them, who should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none. Therefore have I poured out my indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath: their own way have I brought on their heads, says the Lord Yahweh.

Ezekiel
22:29-31 WEB

Does God get angry at nations? Moses thought so! So did all of the prophets, and even God's Son, Jesus Christ. It's a modern-day loss that we think mostly in terms of individual sins and seldom of the much more grievous sins of nations.

The prophet Ezekiel said it well in the above biblical passage. He explained the source of God's anger; detailed what could have been done about it; and outlined the threatened end product of national sin.

God was angry at Israel because they had committed national sin by oppressing, robbing, and vexing the poor and needy of their own people as well as those foreigners living among them. This was, unfortunately, not a new problem, since it had been the cry of prophets for centuries.

National sin is the product of political, economic, and social systems deliberately designed by the wealthy and powerful to dominate and oppress lower classes of people. It

far transcends individual cases of injustice because it affects every person in society. It is systemic in nature, meaning that its tentacles pervade every aspect of society from individuals through families, clans, nations, and finally the entire world order. It is destructive of peace, order, prosperity, and all other aspects of society affecting the general human welfare. And God hates it!

National sin

must either be forgiven or punished. In this case God sought someone "to stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it. But I found no one." God looked for someone to lead the people, as Moses had once done, in humbly confessing national sin, praying for forgiveness, seeking God's will, and turning from their wicked ways. Had there been anyone to "stand in the gap," God indicates he would have reconsidered his decision to destroy the land. But alas, there was no one!

So God's

anger fell upon the sinful nation, as described in 2 Kings 17. In this case national destruction ("I have consumed them with the fire of my wrath") meant the end of nationhood for ten-tribed Israel as they were militarily defeated and taken by the Assyrian king (probably Tiglath-pileser III) into captivity in 721 B.C., a disaster from which they never returned to Palestine and seemed lost in history until resurfacing in the Caucasus region of what is now Russia.

In the Old Testament God certainly got angry

at nations, and especially at his people Israel because "I have written for him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12). But what about today? Has the advent of Christ removed or perhaps pacified God's anger against nations and peoples who ignore the great national gift of God's law?

Ignoring

God's laws for justice, righteousness, truth, and mercy still angers God and brings negative consequences upon perpetrators. Jubilee tells us that the earth belongs to God and is given to us for our use and pleasure, not our pillaging and destruction. So perhaps the anger of God at this phase of sin is right now being expressed in an angry and rampaging earth that seems almost daily to beget some new natural disaster. But as climate deniers refuse to admit the reality of global warming, so does the religious order of today refuse to acknowledge the reality of national sin, preferring to place all sins upon the shoulders of wayward individuals. Think about it!