

WHAT IS NATIONAL SIN?

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Therefore
it will happen that, when the Lord has performed his whole work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the willful proud heart of the king of Assyria, and the insolence of his haughty looks. For he has said, "By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I have understanding; and I have removed the boundaries of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures. Like a valiant man I have brought down their rulers. My hand has found the riches of the peoples like a nest, and like one gathers eggs that are abandoned, have I gathered all the earth. There was no one who moved their wing, or that opened their mouth, or chirped." Isaiah 10:12-14 WEB

This Bible
reading relates God's plan for dealing with the arrogance and insolence of Assyrian invaders who attributed their success in subjugating God's people to their wisdom, understanding, and military strength. They figuratively "thumbed their noses" at Israel and its God, likening their conquest to an invader gathering eggs of wealth from an abandoned nest. Their arrogance reached its peak as they wonderingly explained that there was no one who "moved their wing, or that opened their mouth" or even peeped in anger or protest.

Do you
suppose that today various enemies of America might be similarly bragging over their ability to cast us into political, economic, and social chaos? Could they, like Assyria, applaud the fact that we seem to be unable to create leaders, with few exceptions, who seem able to open their mouths, flap their wings, or even peep in protest? Have they really robbed our treasures and removed our boundaries (not land, but borders of decency and justice)? And the biggest question: Will they get away with this?

What the
Assyrians failed to realize was that God, not their military might or wisdom, gave them the victory. The purpose was so that Israel would realize their perfidy in turning from God, and would repent of their sin and be once again healed and delivered by their Lord. So Assyria and its power was just a tool in God's hand to bring a repentant Israel back into fellowship with God.

This passage is in the Old Testament, meaning that many of us will perhaps spend a lifetime ignorant of its power and truth. This is much more than personal sin and redemption; it is also national sin and national deliverance through divine intervention.

Christians

generally act as if there were no such thing as national sin, preferring to categorize all sin as individual acts contrary to Mosaic Law, common morality, and the teachings of Christ. This view is often defended with the comment, "Well, aren't all sins personal in origin as individuals make decisions affecting all of us?" Looking at sin this way, it's easy to forget that individual acts have a tendency to morph into laws of the land as political parties and other organizations pick them up for inclusion in party platforms or other policies.

Our friend

J. Rufus Fears from the Great Courses says that all political, social, and economic decisions begin with one person's choice. I can't argue with that, but what about when these decisions gravitate into the political arena where they become party policy decisions or even law? Do they remain individual choices forever, or is there a place where they become prominent enough to be considered national law?

Most of the

Old Testament and quite a bit of the New Testament deal with national sin, or what occurs when nations, their leaders, and many of their institutions fall into behavior that can only be described as favorable to the rich and powerful and actively antagonistic to the peace and safety of the great masses of citizens.

If God

favours righteousness and justice as the founding principles of human organization, then any action by government and other structures of society to either rescind or water-down these founding principles must be sin because it so clearly violates God's law, or the Mosaic Code and its antecedents. So let's remember that national sin and national deliverance are both parts of God's plan.