

**Palisades Community Bible Church**

**Online Sunday School**

## **What Divides Us? Part Two**

November 29, 2020

If you did not get Part One of this series, I hope you will. Please email me: [br3nt923@ptd.net](mailto:br3nt923@ptd.net). I'll get you a copy asap. If you have a friend without email, let me know and I'll post mail it to them. We now have an archive of past studies on our website; [www.pcbchurch.com](http://www.pcbchurch.com).

In Part One, we looked at the reason the USA is divided. We have two groups with different agendas. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Our nation's founding is based on Godly, moral laws that honor God above man. Why? If man is our highest prefect, we are doomed to endlessly repeating human history; the tyrannical rule of one miserable despot followed by the next. If man authors moral laws, then 'moral' becomes the flavor of the month. Our founders did not want their own mortality and flawed morality to be the model of a new nation.

Our founders learned in their study of world history, and their direct experiences in a divided and warring Europe. They came to this land and established a nation on simple, natural truths based on love of God, respect of man and honor for man's enduring passion to be free.

England followed, razed the forests for building warships, taxed every form of agriculture and industry, enslaved settlers in this new land for the sake of England, and brutally murdered those who rebelled. When the colonies had endured enough, they unified and proclaimed their full intent to eject England from this land and to establish a new government based on the following:

**"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.**

**That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on**

**such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness....**

**...And for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes and our sacred Honor.” Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence.**

No matter how many may argue against it, this United States of America was, from its inception, a bold effort to raise a nation of free people – which can only be accomplished by honoring God. In doing so, God has, indeed, blessed this nation with strength, prosperity and freedom. Yet, we have become a very divided nation.

In our first installment, we looked at what it is that is dividing our society. **Our division is due to our sin.** Abortion is our national sin – not our ONLY sin, but the rallying point of all those who reject God and choose their own way.

Homosexuality is abortion’s brother in this regard. They have consciously rejected God in their personal lives (no matter their labels) and have grown in numbers sufficient to force their sinful behaviors into the mainstream.

Make a list of their depraved, perverted and unnatural sins, and at the top of that list is their demand for the “right” to murder a child. There is no ‘new’ sin....

**Jeremiah 7:31 They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.**

**Deuteronomy 12:31 You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.**

**Ezekiel 16:21 You slaughtered My children and offered them up to idols by causing them to pass through the fire. (they burned their children)**

As stated in our first installment, our national sins have caused God to chastise our nation. God is not randomly judging us; HE has been judging us all along. Until we offended him deeply, we enjoyed his blessings. But, when our nation sinned, as a nation, the return for that sin came the natural consequence. What

is the consequence of touching a hot stove? What is the consequence of a nation rebelling against God?

**Isaiah 59:2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.**

To understand how God is judging our national sin, and the division this sin is causing, we need to study something in our recent history. We'll see how it mirrors a time in Israel's history when they severely dishonored God, as well. Let's start with 9/11/2001. Our nation was attacked. It wasn't just a random act of terrorism. It had purpose.....a Godly purpose. God may have actually placed in our attackers hands the 'club of His wrath.' As we see in Isaiah:

**Isaiah 10:5 "Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! 6 I send him against a godless nation, I dispatch him against a people who anger me, to seize, loot and snatch plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets.**

God not only sent the Assyrians against Israel, He cursed them for their own Godlessness, too. Let's look at this in more depth:

If you are a student of the Old Testament, you learn a few extremely key things:

- God tells us what he is going to do, gives us a sign that will be a proof that the action is from none other than God, then, He does it. The wise remember God's miracles. The foolish do not.
- God gives warnings before he removes his hand of blessing from his people. When the mild warnings are not heeded, the warnings become more dire, then judgement.
- God loves his people and desires his best for them. It is the sin of the people, and not God's judgement, that separates man from God. Chastisement is a natural result of sin.
- God uses "Paradigms." God acts in the same predictable way over and over, and He saw to it that these acts were well preserved in His word for all generations. God is a God of order. We can predict what God will do in a present or future event by studying God's actions in historical events.

Please pull out your Bible and make notes. Turn to the book of Isaiah and open to chapters 7-10:

## **Isaiah 9 The Lord's Anger Against Israel**

**8 The Lord has sent a message against Jacob; it will fall on Israel.**

**9 All the people will know it— Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria— who say with pride and arrogance of heart,**

**10 “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled,**

**but we will replace them with cedars.”**

**11 But the Lord has strengthened Rezin's foes against them and has spurred their enemies on.**

**12 Arameans from the east and Philistines from the west have devoured Israel with open mouth.**

**Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.**

**13 But the people have not returned to him who struck them, nor have they sought the Lord Almighty.**

**14 So the Lord will cut off from Israel both head and tail, both palm branch and reed in a single day;**

**15 the elders and dignitaries are the head, the prophets who teach lies are the tail.**

**16 Those who guide this people mislead them, and those who are guided are led astray.**

**17 Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks folly. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.**

In the passage, above, Ephraim had sinned against God. After suffering God's initial warnings, they sinned even worse! (Ephraim and Judah = northern and southern tribes of Israel)

In Chapter 7, Isaiah made a bold prediction of the decline and fall of the tribe of Ephraim and its eventual exile to Assyria. His words came on the footsteps of the alliance between Ephraim and Aram to attack Judah. Isaiah goes on to describe the four 'burdens' God will place upon Ephraim in Chapter 7:

- Within 65 years, Ephraim will be too shattered to be a people (7:7-8)
- The king of Assyria will destroy both Aram and Ephraim (7:16)

- Ephraim's land will no longer be cultivated. She will be a wasteland full of briars and thorns (7:24)
- The King of Assyria will win his victories because 'God is with him.' (8:8)

The four sins of Ephraim that brought these judgements are (Ch 9 & 10):

- **Arrogance and pride** -refusing to accept that their present calamity was from the hand of the Lord (9:9-10)
- **Rebellion** – refusal to return humbly to the LORD who punishes them (9:13)
- **Wickedness** – spreading like a grass fire too great be put out (9:18)
- **Injustice and Oppression** – making widows into prey and robbing the fatherless (10:2)

We see that God has used the Godless to inflict His judgement upon Ephraim. God then judged the Assyrians because of similar sins: **(10:15)**

OK, that's a lot to digest. Let's boil it down. Ephraim was the leading tribe of the northern kingdom of Israel. Samaria, the capital, had a large economy, cities, agriculture, etc. They became entangled with the non-Jews whom God had forbidden them to associate. They rebelled, fell out of fellowship with God, worshipped false gods, and conspired to attack their own people; Judah.

God sent judgement; first He told them what He was going to do (through the prophet, Isaiah). They did not heed the warning. Then, God gave them signs that would prove that these 'burdens', or judgements, could only come from God, himself. The "burdens" were put upon them, yet they did not repent. So, God allowed a limited strike against the center of their economy. It was a one-time, devastating strike, which should have gotten their attention.

Ephraim responded with pride and arrogance. They literally stated that they would rebuild themselves even GREATER than before, using the might of their own hands (Ch 9: 10). God, then, sent the Assyrians in full strength to devastate Ephraim, as promised (9: 13 & 18 and 10:2).

What does this have to do with America? And, what about 9/11?

In the same manner as God sent His prophet to Ephraim to warn of His coming judgement, God has had modern day prophets proclaiming our nation's sins and our offenses against God. In worship meetings every week, pastors, priests,

rabbis, etc. - even many elected officials, have been communicating that our national sins have been separating us from God, and one another. So many have been ignored for so long that a new generation of religious leaders have been raised up to preach that our nation's sins are to be "tolerated", "embraced", "understood." Indeed, many of our jobs are dependent upon our keeping our Christian values mute as our employers openly support our national sins.

**Judges 2:10 After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.**

America's sin is a separation between us and our God. We see it in the explosion of corruption at the highest levels, the depravity and promulgation of our social sins, and the unending assaults on our constitution from our own government. It seems as though God has been removed from most of our society.

If you pick up an ice cube, you might describe it as "cold." However, there is no such thing as cold. There is only heat; either its presence, or absence. What we "call" cold, is actually less heat. Heat is energy, and we can only measure energy. We have no way of measuring cold. The "coldest" it can be is a state of zero heat energy. It's the same as darkness. There is no such thing as dark. Dark is what we call "no light." We cannot measure "darkness." We can only measure light energy in its varying degrees. **Darkness is zero light.**

This is an example of how sin works. Sin is the absence of God. We can only measure God's influences; His power, as it's manifested in creation. Sin is what occurs when God is not present. **Sin is the absence of God.**

Look at the "burdens" God placed on Ephraim in Isaiah **7:24. With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briars and thorns.** It's a description of what God warned would come when Ephraim pulled far away from Him. There would be violence, and their once rich agriculture would become punishing thorns. In other words, where there once was, there is now 'no God.' **Sin is the void.** Sin puts a void between man and God.

OK, so what about 9/11? America, as a nation, has the same arrogance as the leaders of Ephraim. Our leaders responded to God's warnings, 'burdens' and the attack with the same speech in **Isaiah 9:10**.

The first of the four sins of Ephraim was arrogance and pride. They refused to accept that the attack was the result of their rebellion against God. They treated it as if it was just an isolated attack. This is significant to America because this is exactly what happened on 9/11. And, what was the response from our leaders? Same as Ephraim's:

**"I know that there is only the smallest measure of inspiration that can be taken from this devastation. But there is a passage in the Bible from Isaiah that I think speaks to us all at times like this. 'The bricks have fallen down but we will rebuild with dressed stone; the fig trees have been felled but we will replace them with cedars.' That is what we will do. We will rebuild and we will recover..." So spoke United States Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle, on September 12, 2001, in response to the shocking terrorist attacks the day before.**

Senator Daschle was not known to be a Godly man. A speech writer gave him these remarks to read. As one of the highest leaders in our government, he spoke for America when he, as did the leaders of Ephraim, shook his fist at God and told Him that His judgement was puny in comparison to what WE WILL DO FOR OURSELVES.

Let's examine these remarks:

- "Though the bricks have fallen, we will rebuild with dressed stone..."  
Bricks are made by man's hands and God's ingredients. Dressed stone are cut with man's tools and are stronger than bricks. The message is that, we will surpass what God helped us do, originally. The monument at 'ground zero' features a prized cut stone.
- "...the fig trees have been felled but we will replace them with cedars."  
Fig trees are symbols in the Scriptures of nations. Their fruit – God's providence. They symbolize strength, protection and provision. The

falling fig symbolizes a falling nation. Fig trees are symbolic of prosperity – Wall Street, NYC was once called “Buttonwood Street” because of the large buttonwood tree that marked it. Buttonwood is a species of FIG! That ancient buttonwood was uprooted on 9/11. Cedar trees have been planted around “ground zero” its place! Cedars are most notable for producing lumber for man’s purposes.

So, in BOTH Ephraim’s day, and following 9/11, we see nations that had once honored God, but fell out of God’s grace by rejecting God and embracing sin. The national leaders stood before the people and proclaimed their pride and hubris by making the EXACT SAME SPEECH!

I will close with two critical points. First; think hard: What was the ONE THING that both nations suffering from God’s warnings failed to do? **They did not repent.** There was no revival. They loved their sin and would not let it go. Will we be destroyed, as Ephraim? Without repentance.....?

Finally, in the book of Revelation are descriptions of the ruling powers of the earth in end times. They are interpreted as the powers we know, today; Russia, China, etc. America is NOT depicted in these descriptions.

**Lord God, your word states; “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14. Help us to heed your warnings. Help us to become people who are humbled in your presence, who seek your face, and please help us to turn from our wicked ways. We want to have fellowship with you.**

**Amen**