

AMBUSH ALERT

—The Barbarians Are Here!

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“The men of Ai looked back and saw the smoke of the city rising against the sky, but they had no chance to escape in any direction, for the Israelites who had been fleeing toward the desert had turned back against their pursuers ... they turned around and attack the men of Ai.”—Joshua 8:20-21

Joshua the man of valor who succeeded Moses, crossed River Jordan with the Israel people on dry ground. In obedience to God’s strategy they conquered Jericho.

But when they came upon the city of Ai they were defeated. The Israelites prayed and wept before the Lord and were told that there was sin in the camp. After Achan’s sin of covetousness was exposed and dealt with, the Lord promised victory to Joshua and laid out a battle plan including an instruction: “Set an ambush behind the city.” (Jos. 8:2). Joshua did as told.

As soon as the two forces met again, the Israelites pretended a defeat. They retreated and ran toward the wilderness (away from the city). The king of Ai and all his people gave chase and left their own city open and vulnerable. At this time and according to plan, Joshua raised up the javelin in his hand toward the city. With this signal the Israeli ambush soldiers came out, entered the undefended city and set it on fire.

When the pursuing people of Ai saw their city was aflame they knew the end has come. Joshua and the fleeing Israel-

ites turned around and attacked the people of Ai and took the city. A remarkable campaign indeed!

However, in today’s spiritual warfare the order of things is in reverse. It is not God’s people who are doing the ambush but Satan and his followers. While there are more missionaries in the world today serving in global frontiers, Satan is coming in from behind and waging a decisive ambush by assaulting the mission-bases, by secularizing the sending churches and by “paganizing” the home countries. This is exactly what is happening today to the Christian world beginning from Europe to North America.

Ever since the Renaissance, humanism has been gradually but persistently on the rise. Nothing in human nature is more readily and easily used by the Adversary than human pride.

Renaissance—14th-16th centuries

Thought pattern: “Man, the measure of all things.”

Enlightenment—17th, 18th centuries

Thought pattern: “Man has come of age and is no longer in need of God.”

Modernism—19th, 20th centuries

Thought pattern: “Man overcomes nature (heaven).”

Post-modernism—20th, 21st centuries

Thought pattern: “Man not only is independent from God but man is God.”

This was the way Adam and Eve fell. This was the way the Devil himself fell (Is. 14:12-15). This is also the way Satan has been enticing mankind into self-exaltation against their Creator throughout history.

The Christian West in recent years (Western Europe, the Scandinavians, Canada and America) has in various degrees become not only non-Christian, but even anti-Christian. This situation has been intensifying ever since World War II. Sadly, the Christian world has allowed Satan's ambush to reach its targets in their society, schools, home and even the church.

Dr. Carl Henry in *"Twilight of A Great Civilization"* said in 1988, "A half-generation ago the pagans were still largely threatening at the gates of Western culture; now the barbarians are plunging into the ... mainstream. As they seek to reverse the inherited intellectual and moral heritage of the Bible ... we are engaged as never before in a rival conflict for the mind, the conscience, the will, the spirit, the very selfhood of contemporary man."

Dr. Henry gave further analysis of the world, in essence:

1. *Today's West*

Mainstream thought-pattern: Atheism, secularism, humanism and post-modernism.

2. *Today's America*

Drifting away from God. *Newsweek* magazine had this to say in one of its covers: "The American century is over; the world order is changing."

3. *Today's Culture*

No one lives in cultural vacuum; one either transforms it or transformed by it. Post-modernism has rendered all presuppositions relative. But as Christians, we ought to "think Christianly, serve Christianly and live Christianly".

4. *Today's Society*

Today's most dreadful disease is not AIDS but atheism—the destruction of both body and soul.

Bishop Lesslie Newbigin has this to say: "Today's society is not secular but pagan."

5. *Today's Faith*

The West has adopted religious pluralism. Its laws and thought-pattern became increasingly atheistic. Morality, ethics and faith are being marginalized. Christians will be forced to accommodate, compromise and be constantly on the defensive.

6. *Today's Marriage*

God ordained traditional marriage between a man and a woman is facing unprecedented challenge. Sexual revolution in the middle of the 20th century has resulted in the increase of divorce; the annual killing of 1.5 million pre-born babies, the spread of AIDS, and the ushering in of same-sex marriage.

Holland, Belgium, Denmark, Spain and some of the Scandinavian countries have all legalized same-sex marriage. Canada has followed suit. May God have mercy upon America.

7. *Today's Church*

In theory America has 50 million evangelical Christians. But most of them are not living-out their "Christian-ness".

An average American Christian gives 2.5% of his income to the church. American churches openly split on the issue of the Inerrancy of the Bible.

8. *Today's Warfare*

The church is to be the Valiant For Truth like John the Baptist. Close-door policy renders the church irrelevant. We are not to seek safety in the ark but to rise and shine! Our warfare today includes the battle of good and evil, man's will, Christian mind-set, Christian values, Christian leadership in education, media, art, politics and other arenas of life.

While the essence of Henry's book does not present an optimistic picture of the West, it is nonetheless realistic. The entire book reads almost like a Requiem, lamenting the bygone days of a robust, righteous, compassionate, evangelistic and mission-minded Christian civilization, which has traveled its course and has now coming to its twilight hour!

An American missionary who serves in a Muslim country as a "professional" recently confided, "What I fear most in the country where I serve is not political unrest, religious tension or even my own safety. What makes me shudder is when the people whom I hope to convert would say to me, "Sir, please go back to your own country and convert your own society. Our Muslim morality and social discipline are superior than yours!" What an indictment!

But it does not have to be this way. God's grace is sufficient and He does send help during men's crucial hours. He sent Luther when churches were selling indulgences. He sent the Wesleys when London was saturated with pubs and

drunkards. He sent Finney and Moody for the weakening early American church. And He sent John Sung and Wang Ming-Dao to save the masses in China and to awaken the slumbering church.

Doing missions in the traditional sense is no longer sufficient for today. Our home society, our sending church and our mission base are at stake. Current scenario demands us to wage war in two fronts, simultaneously:

1. Frontline battle: Evangelism, church planting and frontier missions.

2. Rear-guard battle: Prayer, repentance and revival to safeguard the biblical faith, and the spiritual health of the home country and the sending church.

May God protect America from Satan's ambushes! And, may America walk not in the path of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the steps of the liberal philosophers, or deviant Western Europe, but in the way of the Lord and follow Him to the end. "For there the Lord bestows His blessings, even life forevermore." (Ps. 133:3)



Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C.