

For October Interim
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Columnist: R. Hamel, Guelph, ON

Judgment is Coming

“But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8)

It was an unsettling conversation, and quite unlooked for. I brightly greeted the Tim Horton’s cashier with a cheery, “Good morning, how are you”? We had many times exchanged such pleasantries, so I was surprised by her response. With sad eyes, and a pained look she said, “Not so good. How can anyone feel good after they’ve read the morning paper, and you read all the garbage that’s happening in the world.” I instantly guessed she had been reading about the hostage taking of schoolchildren in Russia. That was indeed the case and we spent a few moments commiserating on the horror before she had to move on to her next client. I retreated to my seat with my tea and bagel and began to quietly reflect on her comments.

For the victims, the Russian hostage-taking crisis was truly a horrendous event. Both children and adults in the stifling Beslan school gym had been denied water for the better part of two days. Some children urinated in their underpants and sucked out the liquid to satiate their raging thirst. Some of these tiny children had seen adults executed right in front of them as a lesson to them if they did not obey. Terrorized by bombs hanging from the basketball hoops, deprived of sleep, anguished by thirst little did these tiny ones know the worst was to come. For when the moment came that they were forced to run for their lives their heartless captors opened up with AK machine guns. Many of the 150 or so children, so tiny that they barely made an impression in the body bags, were cut down in that fruitless run.

How does one begin to come to grips with such a tragedy? For even from afar one can feel some of the excruciating anguish felt by parents and grandparents as they mourn for beloved children. They are trapped in anguish too deep for words, too deep for tears, the gash in their soul will travel with them for the rest of their days.

But this tragedy feels worse than if there had been, for instance, an explosion in a school boiler room. For in this awful event people conspired ahead of time to target and kill innocent children. Cynical, Islamic terrorists who have no regard for human life, not even the most innocent, and the most vulnerable brought about this tragedy.

I finished my tea and approached the same cashier I had spoken to earlier. I only had a minute or less. And so I said to her (more or less), “ I don’t know about you, but I believe in God, and I believe that one day there is going to be a judgment. I believe that those who do such horrific things will be judged by a fair God.” She was a little taken aback

and didn't know quite how to respond, but another girl standing by her side who had heard the conversation said to me, " I agree with you completely".

The modern world doesn't like to think about it, much less talk about it. But the Bible is clear and unequivocal that there will be judgment measured out to the whole world, to both the living and the dead. This is God's business to be sure. And vengeance belongs to Him not to us. Nonetheless the doctrine of Divine retribution must surely have been put in the Bible not just to warn mass murderers like Hitler, and Stalin and all others who do evil deeds. For I am convinced that even as it warns the rapists who did their awful work in the Balkans, even as it warns the killers who slaughtered in Rwanda, even as it warns all terrorists who ply their grisly trade, even as it warns the abortionist who cuts in pieces the most helpless of all...so it is meant to be a comfort, now, to those victims who daily cry for justice.

But God's promise of judgment upon all is first and foremost a teaching that will tend to restrain men and women from evil. John Paton, missionary to the cannibals in the islands of the New Hebrides, recounts over and over again that he was able to save his life from those who tried to kill him by sternly warning them. He would tell them that God, who sees all things, would see this evil deed and that he would surely punish them for it. On many occasions this truth alone saved him from the cruel intentions of murderous cannibals.

At the time of the attack on the World Trade Center we learned that at least some Islamic terrorists believe that their reward in paradise will be the attentions of some 72 virgins. Perhaps it is time to broadcast to jihadists everywhere that those who wantonly murder the innocent will be sadly disappointed in their unending eternity. For it is much more likely their companions will be demons, not fair virgins.

It is much more likely their eternity will be hellish indeed.

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