

What's Up, God?

I wonder what God is doing today? Sure He's still up to all the usual "God" stuff like holding the Universe together, listening to five or six billion prayers, and making sure His "action plan" is being carried out. But when He gets done with all that is He going to click on Fox News to see what's going on in Iraq, to see how "our" boys are doing, and to see what the casualty count is? What's His take on all this? How schizophrenic is the view He gets of this world?

I don't know for sure what the world looks like out your front window, but let me give you a look at mine. While at least 5 TV stations carry full time coverage of the war, which all of you can also see, I am looking out over a peaceful country landscape. Just 5 minutes ago I watched two deer, a doe and a yearling fawn, walk peacefully by, at least until the dogs began barking. Then they turned up the hill into the woods. That's good, at least they didn't head for the highway. The rain was very heavy last night, and the deer, which forage for food at night and sleep during the day, wouldn't lie down at dawn because the ground was too wet. So, my warning for the day is to watch out for deer on the road as I drive into town later. Tough, huh? If it weren't for the news I would assume from my perspective that all the world is at peace. But it isn't. Somewhere someone is crying, or dying, or running, or mourning, or giving up.

What can I do then? I wonder what God might want from all of us who are still going through our daily routines, only mentally aware of problems somewhere else in the world? After all, as we each become aware of the events in the world, we are also aware that we are each only one person. What could God possibly want us to do about things going on half a world away?

I also wonder where God's attention is focused? I don't mean to suggest that for a moment He has forgotten or neglected any one of us, but it seems that we are witnessing events in the news that have immense implications on the religious and spiritual focus of the world. There appears to be much more at stake than just territory and military power, and even more than the weight of the lives that hang in the balance. Despite the overwhelming negative opinion and criticism of the world, and despite our own ambivalence to war, we are witnessing actions, which demonstrate the character of our nation and its leader. Character, as I described in my last letter, **"is that quality which is most effectively defined in us in our worst moments, when crisis or external pressures are their greatest, and when we may be challenged to stand alone in our convictions."**

Despite that, I am not writing this to voice or encourage a particular political or moral stand regarding war in general or this particular war, but instead to focus our attention on matters that are weighty and consequential to God and His purposes. We follow in the footsteps of our spiritual and moral guide, Jesus, and He did not dictate much regarding politics or the coming and going of nations and kingdoms. When being tested by the Pharisees, He replied *"Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's. (Matt. 22:21)* Yet he prefaced this response with the critical question *"Why are you testing me, you hypocrites." (v.18)* He knew that they were less interested in the moral integrity of a nation or kingdom than in the personal benefit or loss the support of any issue might incur. They were much like the political pundits of today, using current affairs as a platform for self-promotion and control. They didn't and don't much care if an idea or "fact" is true or not, but promote it as truth for the sake of the power they gain. He did say, though, that we are to pay attention to the affairs of the world in order *"that no one misleads you. For many will come in my name, saying 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many." (Matt 24:5)* The household of Jesus is still being built, and will continue to be built until His coming, and that is to be our primary goal as His servants. (v.45)

Today, when you pray to God, what will you say? Will you repeat the same prayers for forgiveness, for blessing, for safety for your family, maybe some little extra prayer for our young men fighting a war on another continent, and, Oh yeah, please help our President. I know that some very faithful prayer warriors are spending all their extra time praying that God will prevail in the midst of this current conflict and controversy, that He will be glorified through its conclusion, and that massive destruction and death will be averted. But I also know from my own self-centered perspective that I still tend to begin my prayers with everything that concerns me personally, and then get on to issues of importance in the larger world. I wonder if that's what God wants?

Do we believe that God has a plan and a purpose for each one of us? I can picture a lot of heads shaking up and down, but do we really believe it? Then, if so, what is it that we are to do? I have this mental picture from probably hundreds of scenes in movies and television shows, involving a crisis, any crisis, a hero, and supporting roles. (I'm sure each of you has seen these same scenes and may even remember them humorously.) When one of other cast asks the hero what they might do to help, the hero replies "pray," as if to reduce the utility of prayer to a supporting role. In fact, it is always God who does the work while our feeble attempts to be heroes generally fail. Our true role in all of this is to be fervent pray-ers while God does the work that must be done. As for me I clearly hear God calling me to seek Him in this peaceful place, to focus my attention on Him, and to lay the burdens of the world as I know them at His feet. He doesn't need me or my prayers in order to get on with His plans, but He wants me to pray. Check it out, He may want you to also pray for things and people outside of your immediate life.

Be blessed, Bill Z