



"God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing."

—C.S. Lewis

14-Sep-12

Interesting Times

A purported ancient Chinese curse says, "May you live in interesting times," and so we do. Important events seem to occur about once a week these days, and over the past week, in my estimation, we have witnessed at least two of them. One happened right here in Charlotte, North Carolina, while the other happened a few days later a world away.

The first of these, which took place last Tuesday, September 5, 2012, at the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, concerns the re-inclusion of references to Jerusalem as Israel's capital and to [God](#) in the official Democratic Party National Platform. Earlier in the week, the exclusion of these terms had been made public, and the reaction to them from Joe and Jane American was decidedly negative. Thus, the decision was made, evidently by high-ranked party leaders—President Obama himself certainly gave his approval—to return the pro-Israel, pro-God language to the platform. To do that, however, a two-thirds majority of the assembled delegates had to approve the reinstatement.

The matter was brought up in Tuesday's session. The convention chairman, Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, brought the change to the floor for

a voice vote. The video of this is clear: He did not get the required two-thirds majority. In fact, Villaraigosa had to ask the delegates three different times, and each time it sounds as if the "nay" votes became louder. After the second request, the L.A. mayor was clearly perplexed, and a Democrat party official had to advise him, "You got to let them do what they are going to do," which he took to mean that he was to ignore the crowd and its reaction. He asked for their votes a third time, and then read the scripted response from the teleprompter: "In the opinion of the chair, two-thirds have voted in the affirmative. The motion is adopted, and the platform has been amended as shown on the screen."

While the official platform now retains the mentions of Jerusalem and God, it cannot be denied that the original document purposely left them out, and further, that the sentiment of the convention delegates was at least evenly divided on the matter. Those who shouted, "No!" louder and louder each time were clearly agitated that the approval had been rammed through over their objections. How ironic that the party that proudly bears "democracy" in its name did not abide by democratic principles on this issue but applied the heavy hand of authoritarianism to do its leaders' will. If the parliamentary process had been followed at the convention, God and Jerusalem would not have been part of the party platform.

What is more, some commentators have made a point of drawing a line between the three nay votes on this issue and the apostle Peter's three denials of [Christ](#) before His crucifixion, which is found in all four gospel accounts (see [Matthew 26:31-35](#), 69-74; [Mark 14:27-31](#), 66-71; [Luke 22:31-34](#), 56-61; John 13:36:38; 18:17, 25-27). Like Peter, the Democrat Party has a longtime association with Christianity and Christian values and claims to be doing the Lord's work in caring for the poor and powerless in society. However, when its delegates are asked to choose to support *mere language* about God and Jerusalem—when they must take a stand one way or the other—they, in effect, deny Him.

Since those at the convention were delegates of Democrats all over the nation, the loud denial makes one wonder how closely they represent party members at home. Does at least half of the largest political party in the nation want nothing to do with God? Have America's citizens drifted so far from its religious roots that association with God and Jerusalem are

considered a political liability? These are serious questions because of what Paul calls a "faithful saying" in [II Timothy 2:11-13](#), part of which reads, "If we deny Him, He will also deny us" (verse 12). That has truly frightening implications.

The second "interesting event" occurred in Benghazi, Libya, on the eleventh anniversary of the al Qaida attacks on September 11, 2001. Protesters stormed the U.S. Consulate there, and in a night-long, well-planned and well-coordinated attack by professional militants—a violent, anti-Gadhafi group connected with al Qaida—the American Ambassador to Libya, Christopher Stevens, was killed along with three other embassy staff members. When the killers attacked the U.S. compound, they were heavily armed with anti-aircraft automatic cannon and rocket-propelled grenades.

The news media reported that the attack was in response to a YouTube trailer for a low-budget, anti-Muhammad film, *Innocence of Muslims*, made by a Christian Egyptian-American filmmaker in the U.S. Many Muslims across the Middle East consider the film blasphemous for its negative depiction of Islam's founder. According to Reuters, the film trailer portrays Muhammad "as a fool, a philanderer and a religious fake," while others add that the movie characterizes him as a pederast, a murderer, and a homosexual. However, as more information surfaces, it appears that the attackers used the protest over the film to carry out a terrorist strike against the United States, if nothing else, to commemorate the 9/11 attack.

It has also been reported that vital intelligence files have gone missing after the attack, including sensitive documents identifying Libyans working with the American government and private information regarding oil contracts. Also missing was information locating the supposedly secret safe house where much of the consular staff had retreated and which itself came under attack later that night.

Worse, the Independent reports:

According to senior diplomatic sources, the US State Department had credible information 48 hours before mobs charged the consulate in Benghazi, and the embassy in Cairo, that American missions may be targeted, but no warnings were given for

diplomats to go on high alert and 'lockdown,' under which movement is severely restricted.

This is being called "a serious and continuing security breach." The Obama administration denies that the information was actionable.

To this point, the U.S. response has been tepid, issuing an apology to Muslims for the insult against Muhammad, condemning the attack, and sending a Marine response team to Libya. Two Navy destroyers armed with Tomahawk missiles have been dispatched to patrol the Libyan coast, and drones have begun flying over the country to search for the perpetrators.

These two events, occurring within days of each other, seem to be signs of the time. It makes one wonder if the two are linked—a quick response from God to show what happens when a people thinks to remove Him from their lives. Will this nation recognize God's warning (see [Amos 4:6-13](#))?

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Trumpets, Christ's Coming, and Works](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Considering the parable of the faithful and wise servant and the evil servant, as well as the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the Day of Trumpets emphasizes the state of caution and faithfulness required during the turbulent end times. The parables focus upon the relationship which we must have toward our fellow workers, warning us not to fall into a state of spiritual malaise in the midst of increasing stress. As a metaphor, sleep often has negative connotations of insensitivity, lack of alertness or awareness. Because the exact time of Christ's return is not known, we must be continually motivated as though His return were imminent. Those not prepared for the Day of the Lord will be blindsided by its unexpectedness. Christ and Paul realized that God only knows the time of Christ's return and have subsequently warned that we cannot rest on our laurels or fall asleep as

in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins. We must be making our preparations individually, not cuing in on our brethren, our family, or the world around us. As children of light we must conduct ourselves soberly, making positive use of our time, not allowing it to drift away. Being spiritually asleep or drunk will lead to poverty. We must wake up spiritually, taking off our carnal pajamas (the old carnal man) and clothing ourselves with the armor of God (Christ), redeeming the time and urgently pressing toward sanctification, holiness, and the Kingdom of God. The apostle Paul, afflicted with multiple health problems and considering his past life as worthless refuse, nevertheless, with sterling self-discipline, single-mindedly pressed on toward his spiritual goal, providing us an example for conduct under affliction and pressure. If we follow Paul's advice, we will not be emulating the wicked servant or the foolish virgins; we will be prepared.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Where Is the Promise of His Coming?](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

As this world keeps on turning, more people become skeptical about the return of Jesus Christ. The Bible, however, insists that He will come again and quickly. Richard Ritenbaugh advises watchful, sober expectation because the Lord does not delay His coming.

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