



"The greatest sin is to be conscious of none."  
—Anonymous

**11-Sep-02**

## *September 11 One Year On*

An entire year has flashed by since four airplane crashes changed the way Americans behold [the world](#). As the nation remembers the victims of terrorism and contemplates its continuing response, it is fitting to ask, "Has the tragedy of September 11, 2001, changed us for the better?"

Looking back on that day, we were first shocked, then dismayed, grieved, angry, vengeful, and patriotic. Our initial reactions were to help, aid, give, and pray. The nation rallied behind President Bush and his plans for retaliation against al-Qaida and the Taliban, sporting flags and "[God](#) Bless America" bumper stickers. Many gave blood to the Red Cross, sent care packages of various sorts to New York City, wrote letters and made videos for our soldiers in Afghanistan, and closed ranks as Americans with little regard for belief or ideology.

Yet, one year later, we are "back to normal," and all we have to show for it is tightened and bothersome security at our airports and dwindling freedoms.

God says in [Amos 3:2](#), "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." This is very significant. America calls itself a Christian nation. We have churches on every corner, Bibles in every house, Christian scripture and principles in our founding documents and on our governmental buildings, and the Ten Commandments on public monuments. We produce more Bibles and send more missionaries than any other nation on earth. We piously intone Christian principles

in our politics and foreign policy. We even say public prayers before auto races! If we are so close to Him, God says, He must hold us more accountable than others.

Then, He asks a series of questions that are designed to get us to think in a cause-and-effect mode, that is, we are to think about why certain things occur. "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (verse 3). The answer is obviously not. God wants us to place Him and ourselves as the "two," and we must remember that He just said that He must punish for [sin](#). The conclusion must be that God is not walking with us because of our sins (see [Isaiah 59:2-15](#))! There can be no agreement between a righteous God and a sinful nation.

[Amos 3:4-5](#) contain four more cause-and-effect questions, but verse 6 applies specifically to our situation in America: "If a trumpet is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it?" God is forcing us to agree with His logic. Do not people fear when they are made aware of danger nearby? Yes, of course. In the same way, if a disaster strikes, is it not true that God had a hand in it? Yes, of course! Especially if it occurs amidst a people who claim to be so close to God.

Later, in [Amos 4:6-12](#), God tells us that we have missed the meaning of all the disasters we have endured in recent years. Using famine, drought, crop failure, epidemics, and "natural" disasters as examples of divine wake-up calls, He says, "Yet you have not returned to Me" (verses 6, 8-11). For a people who know God, calamity is not haphazard! God allows it to happen to inspire [repentance](#) and revival of true worship.

Has the nation taken the September 11 attacks as warnings to return to God, truth, and right living? Sadly, only a few have heeded them. A Barna Research Group (BRG) poll released on September 3, 2002, shows that "an overwhelming majority [90%] admit that 9/11 has had no lasting impact on their religious beliefs." BRG president George Barna reaches the proper conclusion: "The fact that we saw no lasting impact from the most significant act of war against our country on our own soil says something about the spiritual complacency of the American public."

Indeed it does. There is only one solution to this, "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you" ([Amos 5:6](#)). Even if the rest of the nation will not heed, we can as individuals use this first anniversary of a divine warning to put ourselves back in pace with God.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

## *From the Archives: Featured Sermon*

### [Would Our God Do That?](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

God's character is not all sweetness and light. Sometimes He has to be a God of judgment and vengeance. The distorted perception of Jesus as a weak, effeminate, and ineffective Savior fails to take into account Paul's revelation that the so-called stern God of the Old Testament (I Corinthians 10:4-5) is the same as the God of the New Testament'at times, a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29). The blowing of trumpets on the Feast of Trumpets suggests 1) the giving of the Law (the code upon which justice rests), 2) that God is drawing near, and 3) judgment is coming. We must respond by repenting, being watchful and sober, and yeilding to His merciful correction.

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## *From the Archives: Featured Article*

### [Is God to Blame?](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The September 11 bombings were certainly tragic and terrible. Some have since asked, "Was God involved? Is He to blame?" John Ritenbaugh soberly answers some of these tough questions, concluding that God certainly allowed them to occur for our ultimate and eternal benefit.

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