

Snippets From KeyCom
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Why Do the Nations Rage?

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As I write this the bombs are still falling. The media is full of angst about whether our conflict with Iran was justified and what the exit strategy might be. Christians are wondering what the conflict portends. People have asked me whether it is prophesied in Scripture and/or this is a precursor to Armageddon. Regardless of how one chooses to interpret events, all the clamor and furor over Iran has obscured another conflict which impacts what we do here at Key Communications. It is the war which Pakistan and Afghanistan are waging against one another.

The roots of the current war stretch back over hundreds of years. More recent factors include the arbitrary border drawn between the two countries by the British, and the resistance movements spawned by the Soviet and then the American occupations of Afghanistan. Now the Afghans accuse Pakistan of harboring ISIS affiliated terrorists who attack them, while the Pakistanis accuse the Afghans of giving sanctuary to the Pakistan Taliban and those fighting for Balochi autonomy. Troops all along the border are exchanging fire. Suicide bombers from Afghanistan are hitting mosques as well as military installations throughout Pakistan and the Pakistani Air Force is blowing up targets as far inland as Kabul.

I've always had a soft spot in my heart for Afghanistan. I thoroughly enjoyed the six months our family lived in Kabul. On later visits I traveled throughout the country. I've forgotten how many times I've driven through the Khyber Pass between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Though this sounds crazy in light of subsequent events, I felt a sense of exhilarating freedom while we lived there. As a teenager I wandered all over Kabul and nearby areas with no sense of danger. The people were friendly and welcoming with no resentment toward foreigners.

During the 1970s it looked like Afghanistan was on a trajectory to becoming a modern nation. Though it was illegal to openly preach to Afghans and it was illegal for Afghans to convert, King Mohammad Zahir Shah allowed a lot of freedom to his people. Even mission organizations were invited to do humanitarian work. For example, in order to obtain a resident visa, Dad worked for a while at a mission hospital. We also became good friends with one of the doctors at the Noor eye hospital (the only eye hospital in the entire country). The doctors were not shy about sharing their faith. A vibrant underground church of Afghan believers came into being which the authorities more or less ignored. (Discretion was still necessary. We knew a man who was incarcerated for over a year for giving a Bible to an Afghan.) The King even allowed his granddaughter to attend the international church with her foreign nanny. I often saw her there at the worship services which were conducted in English. The King also allowed the foreign community to build a large church building on prime real estate in Kabul. This was the only church building in all Afghanistan.

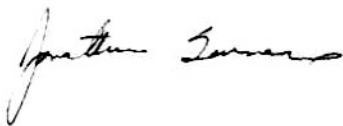
But then, the King was overthrown in a coup in 1973. Ever since then Afghanistan, for the most part, has deliberately chosen to reject Christ. Here are a few examples: The new regime dismantled the church building and bulldozed the foundations. (According to the ordinary man on the street in Kabul, the Soviet invasion in 1979 was God's retribution.) During the invasion, the hospitals were forced to close, removing their Christian witness. One of the Afghan war lords fighting the Soviets captured and tortured to death a leader from the underground church whom we knew. Our family sponsored the son of another of the resistance leaders. I was present when he rejected the Gospel. We also helped provide humanitarian assistance to refugees within Afghanistan. It was done in the name of Christ. But no one responded to the Gospel. When the Soviets were finally driven out, the new leaders of Afghanistan met to write up a constitution. My father was acquainted with some of the people advising them. He and the others strongly urged the Afghans to embrace freedom of religion. Instead, they deliberately chose to make Afghanistan an Islamic nation and made it illegal for anyone to convert. As I recall, the penalty for leaving Islam to become a Christian was death. It goes without saying that the Taliban, which took over from that regime, also violently opposes the Gospel.

While Afghanistan has become more and more closed to the message of Christ, the people of Pakistan and Iran have become increasingly open. Leaving geopolitics aside, could it be that God is using the conflicts to bring more freedom to these societies? Perhaps the day will come when people can openly embrace Christ without persecution from their government?

There's another side to all this. The Apostle Paul told the Elders from the church in Ephesus, "I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:27 ESV) We tend to think of the Gospel in positive terms. Christ forgives us of our sins and reconciles us to God. However, there is a negative aspect as well. Paul not only preached redemption, he also made clear the consequences of not accepting Christ. To preach redemption without condemnation is as incomplete as to preach condemnation without redemption. The Afghans not only need to hear about salvation, they also need to hear the consequences of turning Christ down.

Here at Key Communications, we try hard to present a balanced message. Like Paul, we try to present the "whole counsel of God." There are great benefits to following Christ. There is also a cost. There are consequences for rejecting. Thank you for helping us proclaim the whole of God's will. May the day soon come when the people of Afghanistan and Iran escape the misery which they have suffered during the past 50 years!

Yours in the Name of Him who calls us to Himself,



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