



A woodcut by Hans Lufft from the Wittenberg Bible of 1534 containing Martin Luther's translation. The woodcut depicts the scene in Revelation 9:13-19: The Islamic armies prophesied by God, the second of three curses or punishments which God will send upon those nations or peoples who have fallen away from the gospel at various times throughout the New Testament. This severe scourge will be used by God as needed until Judgment Day.

God is Behind the Muslim attacks.

After a succession of successful attacks by Islam against U.S. targets beginning decades ago with the hijackings and bombings of U.S. airliners in the Middle East in the 1970's and the 1980's, the bombing of the U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983, the attacks on the U.S. embassies overseas, the USS Cole bombing in 2000, and the murder of 13 soldiers at Fort Hood in 2009, it would be hoped that at least one hand would have been raised in a biblical studies class in at least one church throughout this land, and would have asked Gideon's

question, "If the Lord would be with us, why then has all of this happened to us?" (Judges 6:13.) "Why is God letting a non-Christian group successfully punish a Christian nation?"

Indeed, further related questions could be asked. "Why have the American Christian churches changed so much in the last fifty years?" Things that never would have been allowed in a Christian church fifty years ago are now preached and practiced shamelessly. Worldly methods, manners, and music have been injected into church worship to titillate the sinful flesh, not to feed the Christian soul. Pulpits preach clichés, gimmicks, and fads. The fear of God is shunned; genuine, biblical repentance is avoided; and the function of faith has been changed into wishful thinking and superstition.

This is why God is stirring up the Muslims to attack Americans: he is using them to punish America.

Would you be offended by that remark? Will you not see this, though? He has done so in the past centuries of the New Testament era whenever the Christian church had become worldly and had sunk into unbelief. In the first six centuries after Christ, his church spread over North Africa with remarkable rapidity. Forty thousand congregations once flourished there; millions were brought to the saving knowledge of their Redeemer; many Christian schools and charitable institutions were

established; mighty religious leaders arose to proclaim the power of the Christian faith. In North Africa, it seemed, the kingdom of God had a secure stronghold. Yet as often happens, prosperity made the churches lazy, worldly, and disobedient to God's Word. They fell away from the gospel faith. Then suddenly the Mohammedan conquest spread over North Africa. The crescent of the moon supplanted the cross of Christ; the Koran took the place of the Bible; the towers of the mosques rose over the Christian churches. Today, throughout certain North African areas, where faith once flourished, no followers of the Savior survive, no divine Deliverer is worshiped, and no hymns are sung to our Lord.

The same punishment by an Islamic army destroyed Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum (Matthew 11:20-24). Later, after Asia Minor, Greece, and the Balkans fell away into worldliness and unbelief, they, too, were punished by the invasion of an Islamic army. At the time of Martin Luther, an Islamic army had Vienna surrounded, and was threatening to overrun Europe. Thus the rise of Islam and its punitive role in the history of the Christian church until the end of time is not accidental or coincidental. In response to the falls from faith which the unrepentant in the Christian church would make from time to time in the New Testament period, God prophesied in Revelation 9:14-19 of a curse, namely, Islam, the second of three, which he had designed for New Testament times, which he would send as a punishment upon those church members who had fallen away from the true gospel faith. The Almighty would never send a curse on his church as long as it would remain obedient, but only after it would entrench

itself in unfaithfulness. "The nation and kingdom that will not serve" God "shall perish" (Isaiah 60:12). In order to describe the fierce intent and the consequence of Islam in its punitive role, Scripture uses picturesque language in this Revelation passage. It simply pictures one thing to describe another.

Moreover, it could be asked, "Why are conditions so bad in this country? Life is not getting easier, but harder to live. "Things are terrible and terrifying and only getting worse." Why is there so much selfishness and lawlessness? Why have we become a "house divided"? That is to say, why are there such deep divisions among the citizens that grow more irreconcilable every year? Why are we becoming more restricted by laws so that we have become a police state?" It is because we are no longer a Christian nation. As a result, our current life in America is not something which could merely be changed by rolling back the laws. First of all, our unbelieving citizens and our unbelieving government show no desire to roll back the laws. Secondly, our unbelieving government realizes that it actually would need more restrictive laws to keep a lawless, immoral, and irreligious society in check. Thirdly, a hard life and an oppressive government are minor punishments which God sends upon any unbelieving society to get it to repent. If that country would not repent under the minor punishments, crying to Heaven for forgiveness and relief, God will send a final blow: total war, not to get that country to repent, but simply to punish it thoroughly.

If only America would repent genuinely of her sins, and believe sincerely the gospel promise that Jesus

Christ already has saved us on his cross, God also would bless American with good government and outward peace! Years ago in 1946, in Marshall County, Kansas, in the community of Bremen, there had been no arrest or court procedure in thirty years. The community was made up almost entirely of the Lutheran faith and had two Lutheran schools, making a public school unnecessary. Because of this, think of how much lower the tax and the insurance rates must have been! Around the same time the *Chicago Tribune* reported that Frankenmuth, Michigan had never had a crime of violence in the 102 years of its existence. During the prior twenty-five years its jail had been entirely empty. Throughout the Great Depression of the 1930's not one person had been on the relief rolls. Since its founding the town had been first in the state to report all of its taxes paid in full, and had given more than the average in charitable drives. What is the explanation? Ninety-five percent of the people in Frankenmuth were Lutherans.

At this time a golden age for Lutheranism and for the rest of Christianity was going on in the United States. No longer are such incidents occurring today. Why? The gospel golden age in America is over. It began its fall years ago, and has fallen to great depths. God has warned America about this, and sought her repentance and return by using both minor and now, later in time, major irritations, such as bad weather, droughts, floods, and oppressive government; ideological, social, and economic oppression. Yet this is nothing new. This is characteristic of God. He tells us in his threats and in his promises in the Bible that this is what he will do. For example, God had promised David national peace and

safety under his son, Solomon, pledging, "I will give him rest from all his enemies all around... I will give peace and quietness" (1st Chronicles 22:9). However, years later, after Solomon's heart "had turned from the Lord God" "the Lord became angry with" him (1st Kings 11:9), and "the Lord raised up" three adversaries who caused national crises (1st Kings 11:14, 23, & 26).

The Old Testament prophets pointed out these same facts to their respective nations after they had fallen from their golden ages. Read about it! See how the people, though, refused to believe it, and went down to their national death and doom by the Lord's punishing hand! Thus no one in America should be surprised at this if everyone would have read the Bible. Indeed, no one in the American Christian churches should be surprised if everyone thoroughly would have read his Bible. The declining spiritual conditions in American Christian churches today stand as they were in the years of the Old Testament prophets. However, then as now the churches are unconvinced of this fact. That is, they are self-blinded to this fact.

Hence, if you would ask your Lutheran pastor today: "To where will all of the bad things happening in America lead?" What would he answer? Ask him! Might he say: "I would not know. The Bible is silent"? Might he respond: "We must be in the last days. The next major event would be Judgment Day"?

The correct reply would be: "God is responsible for the Muslim attacks on America. He is the one who has sent them, and he will give them success in their punishing capacity. He is using them, as he has threatened to do clearly in his Bible to punish and to war

on any nation which would reject him. All of this will lead to World War III on American soil as the Almighty's final say in the matter."

Thus it would be your biblical duty to call your fellow citizens to repent (Matthew 3:2; Daniel 9:3-20), to humble yourself (Psalm 10:17), to confess and then to ask for forgiveness of our nation's sins (Daniel 9:9), and to pray to God to grant his peace on our land (Jeremiah 29:7) instead of his punishment as it deserves. The Almighty will remove this punishment only after enough citizens would repent and believe the gospel. Only then will he give them success over Islam

Then what?

Imitate Habakkuk!

Habakkuk 3:2, 16-19:

*O Lord, I have heard your speech
And was afraid;*

*O Lord, revive Your work
In the midst of the years!*

*In the midst of the years make it known;
In wrath remember mercy!*

When I heard, my body trembled;

My lips quivered at the voice;

Rottenness entered by bones;

And I trembled in myself,

That I might rest in the day of trouble.

When he comes up to the people,

He will invade them with his troops.

*Though the fig tree may not blossom,
Nor fruit be on the vines;*

*Though the labor of the olive may fail,
And the fields yield no food;*

*Though the flock be cut off from the fold,
And there be no herd in the stalls –*

*Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

The Lord God is my strength;

He will make my feet like deer's feet,

*And he will make me walk on my high
hills.*

Six hundred years before Christ, a citizen by the name of Habakkuk was told by the Lord that his country was about to be destroyed. Because his country had continued on its senseless and reckless course of rejecting the Lord who had been so merciful to it, the almighty was now going to level it to the ground. What is more, there would be nothing that Habakkuk could pray or do to stop it. Habakkuk felt helpless. In fact, the thought of the coming war upon his country filled him with so much dread and trembling that Habakkuk could barely stand. His heart trembled; his lips quivered, his bones lost their supporting strength. All that he could do was to wait for that terrible day on which the fury of an invading, foreign army would descend upon him and upon

his unsuspecting country. What else could Habakkuk do?

Realize that America also is to be destroyed. This highly blessed land along with Habakkuk's country has joined the long list of nations throughout history which has continued on the senseless and reckless course of rejecting the Almighty, who has no alternative now but to level it to the ground. What is more, there would be nothing that any American could pray or do to stop it. As with Habakkuk, so the American Christian could only now sit and wait for his land to be invaded and utterly laid waste by invading armies, unleashing the Almighty's fury over this country. What else could he do?

Take a lesson from Habakkuk! Look to the Lord's unchangeable pledges! Though he must remain a God of justice, he still is a God of mercy. Habakkuk took that promise to heart. He took God's mercy at its face value, and received divinely-worked soul-deep comfort. In fact, so thorough was the peace provided by the powerful words of God's mercy that Habakkuk could even rejoice in the Bible's assurance that God will bring an end to the destruction, and will provide relief at last. Thus instead of fretting and despairing; instead of panicking and losing sleep, Habakkuk waited quietly for the day of destruction (verse 16). Though the very life of his nation would grow dim; though destitution would cover his land as a funeral shroud, still the prophet would rejoice in his Lord (verse 18), for the Lord's gospel

power would steady him and lift him up - even make him go swift and sure through the worst of times as a deer would leap through the woods (verse 19). With God at his side the prophet could ease his trouble mind even to the extent of joyous confidence.

Take note, fretful Christian! Respond likewise! Though God in his justice must bring a terrible war upon America, still he is a God of mercy. Therefore, the small minority of Christians that have not bowed their knees to Baal could and should take comfort in the fact that God will bring an end to the destruction, and provide them ultimately with relief, and take them home to heaven.

In the meantime, rather than shake with fear over the pending doom, take the Lord's gospel pledges to heart! With his power contained nowhere else than in his biblical passages, confess right now, "The Savior will lift me up and sustain me through the worst of times"!

Ease your troubled mind! Rejoice in the Lord with joyful confidence even in darkened days! Be assured from his unbreakable gospel guarantees! Be confident that he will not leave you comfortless, but will always be at your side with unrestricted salvation and support!