

## **Ukraine-A Foreshadowing? (Part 1 of a Series)**

### **Psalm 46:1-11**

I have become increasingly exercised over the past weeks with the Putin invasion of the nation of Ukraine. I would, if permitted, probably rename it an intrusion. An intrusion into the lives of a beautiful culture and country. An beastly intrusion into the peace and security of a people going about their lives hindering or harming no one, presenting not the slightest threat to any neighbor.

Their lives, their homes, their sense of even their next step now wrapped up in a maddening display of post traumatic stress syndrome the likes of which we have seldom seen on a national scale. I have watched in horror and disbelief as the world has been confronted with the kind of annihilation of a culture that we thought the world had once and for all defeated with the victory over Atilla the Hund, and Hitler, over Mao Tse Tung and Emperor Hirohito. When we saw Saddam Hussein's statue fall to the ground following Desert Storm, many of us thought, we'll perhaps now we are, on the world stage, finally rid of the last war criminal, the last despot, the last brutal dictator whose appetite for world domination and expansion is an insatiable bloodthirsty ambition that knows not the bounds of either humanity or human decency.

Just yesterday, an explosive was attached to a carton of milk which formed part of a Russian humanitarian aid package received by a woman in Kherson, according to a local report. An unnamed man said his retired mother had brought an aid package home, despite his recommendation not to. Residents in the city had been rejecting the packages since the occupation by Russian troops but are taking them more frequently because of the increasingly desperate circumstances. He said that among the products, which included oil and cereal, was a milk package which his mother said looked like it had already been opened. "My mother saw that the twist in the milk was not airtight, she thought that someone had already drunk it, that it could be spoiled," he said according to a translation, "She carefully unscrewed it and saw something like a thread, she showed it to me."

Images posted on In Kherson show the milk carton with what appears to be an improvised explosive device inside, which the man said it was lucky that his mother did not detonate.

And yet, there is an even greater atrocity taking place that concerns even still more. It is the world's cowardice in the face of countless atrocities inflicted upon a gentle people by a ruthless thug whose threats of nuclear conflagration we cower before. Where I have pondered is the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 that dared any European nation to colonize any independent nation in the Western Hemisphere. Where I ask is the courage of the United States in deploying her navy across the path of any ship from the Soviet Union approaching Cuba? Didn't Khrushchev have nuclear missiles then? Wasn't that the whole point of the Cuban missile crisis? Where now is the "No-Fly Zone" over Iraq? Over Syria? Didn't Putin have nuclear missiles then as he supported Assad in his brutality over those seeking freedom from that regime?

But, you implore, “Oh pastor but thou dost protest too much and politicize thine pulpit!

But, “Nay, nay! I say! Hast thou so quickly forgotten the teaching of the Good Samaritan? He did not simply send his donkey, laden with supplies, to the brutalized and beaten stranger on the road. He did not shout to him from a distance, “I’ll send you more stuff tomorrow!” “I’d come to your aid in person, but the robbers who beat you senseless have threatened to obliterate me if I get too close to you!”

Or have we failed to remember the Holy writ that commands us...

***Proverbs 3:27-28 Holman Christian Standard Bible***

***27 When it is in your power, don’t withhold good from the one it belongs to. 28 Don’t say to your neighbor, “Go away! Come back later. I’ll give it tomorrow”—when it is there with you.***

Preaching involves at least two responsibilities. The first is to explain the Bible and relate it to life. It is the very application of the Scriptures to current world events that moved the “Black Robed Regiment” to challenge the behavior of the then King of England.

*"It was Sunday morning early in the year 1776. In the church where Pastor Muhlenberg preached, it was a regular service for his congregation, but a quite different affair for Muhlenberg himself. Muhlenberg's text for the day was Ecclesiastes 3 where it explains, 'To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die, a time to plant, and a time to pluck what is planted...'"*

*"Coming to the end of his sermon, Peter Muhlenberg turned to his congregation and said, 'In the language of the holy writ, there was a time for all things, a time to preach and a time to pray, but those times have passed away.' As those assembled looked on, Pastor Muhlenberg declared, 'There is a time to fight, and that time is now coming!' Muhlenberg then proceeded to remove his robes revealing, to the shock of his congregation, a military uniform."*

*"Marching to the back of the church he declared, 'Who among you is with me?' On that day 300 men from his church stood up and joined Peter Muhlenberg. They eventually became the 8th Virginia Brigade fighting for liberty."*

*The pastors of that day, and their congregations, were living out of what had come over 100 years prior...where religion and politics were woven into the same fabric. There was no separation between the two spheres.*

I fear and tremble at the specter that we have instead of using the power of might that God has given this great nation to be the protector of the downtrodden and the fearsome nightmare to those who oppress them, we have found convenient ways to salve our cowardice and convince ourselves that a few shoulder fired missiles are just as much a deterrent to Russian aggression as deterrence as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, or an aircraft carrier battle group taking up station in the Black

Sea. We have smugly persuaded ourselves that some howitzers and ammunition are the same as Apache attack helicopters deploying hell-fire missiles in defense of women and children being wholesale slaughtered by the thousands and bull-dozed into mass graves in order to hide the war crimes of one Vladimir Putin.

We have chosen instead to squander our energies and resources on fighting Disney World and schoolteachers over the indoctrination of our children. We have chosen timidity in the face of a tyrant and have trembled at the fear of losing a country to a nuclear holocaust when were losing it anyway as multiple perversions of God's law that is destroying the nuclear family...One man and one woman married for life, producing offspring and raising them in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

The second responsibility of preaching is to take life and explain it in light of Scripture. Today, and in the messages yet to come, I'm hoping to accomplish both purposes.

Please turn to Psalm 46. This song, written by the sons of Korah, is set in the context of catastrophic chaos, troublesome times, and unparalleled uncertainty. The writer's world was crumbling all around him. Some commentators believe the setting of the Psalm comes from the time King Hezekiah was surrounded by the army of Sennacherib, King of Assyria. Forty-six towns and villages in Judah had been overthrown, and at least 185,000 troops encircled Jerusalem (sounds like world headlines this week, doesn't it?).

This Psalm was written with the nation of Israel in mind, but it certainly applies to us today. I want to use it as a "launching off point" for this mini-series regarding the relationship between what is occurring in Ukraine and what I see is a gradual movement of the entire world toward the end-time and the arrival of the one who will be multiplied thousands of times more evil than all the despots the world has ever known...that man called Antichrist.

Before we get into the text of the Psalm, I want us to see the word "Selah" after verse 3, verse 7, and verse 11. This word is used 74 times in the Old Testament: 71 times in Psalms and three times in Habakkuk.

Most versions of the Bible do not attempt to translate "Selah" but simply transliterate the word straight from the Hebrew. We know from the title of this Psalm, "To the choirmaster...a song," that it was designed to be sung. It is likely it refers to a musical rest, in which singers stopped singing to take a breath so only the musical instruments could be heard. According to one Bible dictionary, it can also signify a musical crescendo followed by silent reflection.

The Septuagint, which is the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates "Selah" as "intermission." The New Living Translation picks up on this by using the word, "interlude." The idea is to get us to take a breath in order to reflect and remember. I like how the Amplified Version renders it: "Pause and calmly think about that."

In addition, “Selah” is thought to be rendered from two Hebrew words translated as: “to praise” and “to lift up.” Perhaps the singers paused to think about what they had just sung in praise to God. It’s in the imperative, meaning this is something we’re commanded to do. This seems to be how the word is used in Habakkuk 3 where we’re urged to consider the weightiness of what we’ve just read or heard.

The best way to think of “Selah” is a combination of all these meanings. We could say it like this: No matter what happens, we can rest in God’s promise, presence, and power. Because the word “Selah” appears three times in this passage, we’ll follow this natural outline by reflecting, remembering, and resting each time we come across it.

Listen now to God’s holy, inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word.

***Psalm 46:1-7 New King James Version***

***God the Refuge of His People and Conqueror of the Nations***

***To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of the sons of Korah. A Song for Alamoth.***

***God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.***

***2 Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed,***

***And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;***

***3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah***

***4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.***

***5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.***

***6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.***

***7 The Lord of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah***

The words God speaks in Psalm 46:10-11 can be likened to the words of a caring mother to her fearful child. The language is simple, the words are few, the impact is instant, the result is profound.

We will continue to examine the situation in Ukraine and its relevance to biblical prophecy next week...

Let us pray...