



Sounds Alarming

On a visit back to the city where I was brought up – London, England, I found myself in an old Anderson shelter. These constructions had appeared all over the place during the Second World War as when the bombs fell they provided shelter and protection during the raids.

This shelter was different however. It looked the same inside and out as there was nothing in it but two plain wooden benches standing on an earthen floor. But instead of it being at the back of a London garden it had been rebuilt as part of an exhibition about the London blitz.

The dim light when they shut the door made it very hard to see but that wasn't the worst thing. It wasn't long before the noises started. They would have been frightening to anyone, but for me they were particularly unpleasant. The whole experience brought back disturbing memories of my childhood in London during the Second World War. What I heard were the terrifying noises of an air raid during the blitz. Of course there were



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no real German bombers overhead but I still felt scared and anxiously waited for the all clear signal to sound.

The most upsetting noise of all was the air raid siren. I remembered that awful sound which had been used to warn Londoners that a wave of bombers was coming. As soon as people heard the siren they had to take shelter without delay. However even though the air raid alarms were very upsetting, they had been life-savers during the war – if you responded to them.

In the made-up shelter I remembered what it had been like to be a small child wakened up from a nice warm bed and shoved, half asleep and protesting, into a red siren suit. This was a kind of zipped up dressing gown.





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Once inside the suit my parents would then rush outside into the cold night air to find shelter from the bombs.

There were only a few minutes to spare, made more pressing by having to find the dog who always hid when he heard the noise. Later on in the war things got far worse when the V2 rockets and 'buzz bombs' were used. These would come without warning at any time of day. If one of those was being aimed at your street there was little, if any, opportunity to take shelter.

Alarm signals have been used all through history to alert people of danger to come. The Old Testament tells the history of the fall of Jericho when the Israelites blew rams horns each day as they encircled the city walls.





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They were warning Jericho of the judgement that was to come to the city.

How terrified the inhabitants must have been as they watched the Israelite army marching around the city day after day. How frightening to hear the horns blowing and the marching of hundreds of feet!

Only Rahab and her relatives had a secure place to take refuge. Rahab had hidden the Israelite spies from the Jericho soldiers. Because of her loyalty and help she had been given instructions about what to do when the battle commenced. She was told to stay within her house and hang a scarlet thread from the window. This would be a sign to the Israelite soldiers when they came to attack. Rahab's house and anyone within it would be spared. Rahab obeyed the instructions and her household was the only one rescued from the destruction of the city.





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The Bible is full of alarms for us today. These don't come as air raid sirens, nor as rams' horn trumpets. These alarms are the words of God himself. They do not alert us to the destruction of a city like London or Jericho but they do warn us of something much more lasting. They warn us of a destruction that will never end.

For example, the writer to the Hebrews alerts us with these words, 'How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?' (Hebrews 2:3).

But it's not all doom and gloom. These words come with a message of hope and absolute security if we do obey them. Even a strong air raid shelter in London would not protect a family if it suffered a direct hit by a bomb. All it could do would be to protect its occupants from falling bricks, broken glass and fire. But God's protection is complete and secure for those who respond. His word urges us to flee to Christ for refuge. The sin that will bring on us eternal destruction can be cancelled and forgiven when we come to Christ for forgiveness. Sheltering under the blood of Christ we are completely safe for time and eternity.

Bible Reading Read the story of Jericho in Joshua chapter 6.

