

IGNORING THE ALARMS

The Winter 1991 issue of the *University of Pacific Review* offered a chilling description of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

There were two electrical engineers in the control room that night, and the best thing that could be said for what they were doing is they were “playing around” with the machine. They were performing what the Soviets later described as an unauthorized experiment. They were trying to see how long a turbine would “freewheel” when they took the power off it.

Taking the power off that kind of a nuclear reactor is a difficult, dangerous thing to do, because these reactors are very unstable in their lower ranges, experts said. In order to get the reactor down to that kind of power, where they could perform the test they were interested in conducting, they had to override manually six separate computer-driven alarm systems.

One by one, the computers would come up and say, “Stop! Dangerous! Go no further!” And one by one, rather than shutting off the experiment, the engineers shut off the alarms and kept going. The tragic consequences:

An explosion and fire released large quantities of radioactive contamination into the atmosphere, which spread over much of the Western Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and Europe. The toll on human life: 31 deaths directly attributable to the accident, all among the reactor staff and emergency workers, and a Russian publication, *Chernobyl*, concludes that 985,000 excess deaths occurred between 1986 and 2004 as a result of radioactive contamination.

The instructions and warnings in Scripture are just as clear. We ignore them at our own peril, and tragically, at the peril of innocent others. The Bible contains messages of love and hope, and how to experience abundant living through obedience. But for the disobedient, it forecasts a reckoning on Judgment Day.

For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account (Hebrews 4:12-13).

– Beecher Hunter

