

Conclusion

American Christians are facing a dilemma that centers on our core identity and its source, which affects who or what we look to for our significance – our sense of life and hope.

We must continue to be loyal citizens of the United States of America. But we have also declared ourselves to be citizens in the Kingdom of God. It is the primacy which each has in our heart, mind and soul that is now being brought to the forefront.

We would always have said that we are Christian first and American second, but honestly, haven't our everyday lives demonstrated a greater sense of the latter than the former?

It is possible that as the core values of our nation change we may need to increasingly think of ourselves as Christian-Americans? Of the two, whose life and culture will most shape our own as America continues to change? What changes will need to come in our personal identity and our relationship with God as change continues to come to the core of America?

My belief is that this has happened because we have been too concerned about living the American dream and have not given enough attention to what it means to be citizens of the Kingdom of God. We have allowed Satan to turn God's blessing of opportunity and freedom against its intended purpose. Instead of serving Him it has evolved into something which draws us away from Him.

There is a very real way in which **blessing follows obedience** . The moral and spiritual laws and principles which our nation was founded upon produce the freedom and opportunity that we have historically known. But their abandonment also bears fruit. God does not particularly need to declare judgment upon us – we have brought it upon ourselves as the natural consequence of our abandoning those moral and spiritual laws!

There is something to be said for the serious warnings of both the Old and New Testaments regarding difficult days for God's people. We want to be careful about saying "this, is that," but at the same time we must take instruction and correction from them. We must also keep in mind our potential to be so in agape-love with the world that we miss the shaking of our day or deny its meaning. We need to remember the words of Jesus in Luke 21:28 (NLB), *So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!*

I believe that **because of His patient mercy** God has held back the flood of troubles that our actions deserve, but that the day is fast approaching when it will be released upon us. This, coupled with the global nature of economic and other issues, creates the setting in which previously unimaginable events can take place. Many will be confused, but the Cosmic Battle, the contest between God and Satan, will become increasingly visible to those who have eyes to see it.

These are exciting days in history! We live in a time of opportunity to be a part of what God is doing in making His light shine brighter as the darkness around us increases. And it will.

In one hand we hold opportunities and resources which still exist for us as Americans, and in the other we hold the power to choose what we will do with them. Bringing those two together in humble surrender to God is "opportunity defined," but I fear that many will miss it because both of their hands will grip the good life as we have known it. As they see it slipping from their hands, some will turn toward God and others against Him. That's a choice that Christian-Americans need to start to think about.

If the Church wakes up and gets serious, it could have a positive effect on the future of our nation. However, this is in somewhat the same vein as our motive for giving. We don't give to get, but we cherish the principle that as we give it produces a return to us. Same here. We would not repent in order to turn judgment away from our land. We would repent because we want to become more genuinely the people of God; loving Him and representing Him to the ends of the earth. A product of that might be that our nation would be healed, but if that is our motive for repenting then we'll only change enough to try to get by. It won't be heart repentance.

If we don't soon wake up we'll be in very serious trouble, both as Americans and as Christians. As I said in the Introduction: Here's a bottom-line thought that I hope prevails in your mind as you read. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by viewing current events as a wake-up call which moves us toward becoming the people of God in the way He always wanted us to be. If American-Christians were to take these thoughts to heart it would lead to repentance and new life in the church. This new life could extend the time of God's grace upon America; or empower us to stand through difficulties that will come as His grace is lifted because of our sin; or some combination of the two. Either way, we win.

I am personally confident of **the return of Jesus to take us home** to be with Him forever. However, I would like to pose this question. Is it possible that our passionate anticipation of the rapture could dull our sense of the need to prepare for serious troubles? That is, do we think that we can go on being good enough to go to heaven when we die, and if troubles come to our world before then, Jesus will whisk us away so we don't get hurt?

The Last Word

Isaiah 26:3, 4 - You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you. 4 Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD, the LORD, is the Rock eternal.

John 1:12, 13 - Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 16:33 - I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

II Corinthians 6:14 - 7:1 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 15 What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people. 17 Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. 18 I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty." 1 Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

Ephesians 3:14-21 - For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. 20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Hebrews 4:14-16 - Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as

we are—yet was without sin. 16 Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 10:19-23 - Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 12:1-3 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Revelation 21:1-8 - Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." 5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." 6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Revelation 22:12, 13 - Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.