

### **Restoring the Original American Dream**

In volume I of "The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah" by Dr. Alfred Edersheim he writes of the Jewish people and their worship: "Around this Temple gathered the sacred memories of the past; to it clung the yet brighter hopes of the future. The history of Israel and all their prospects were intertwined with their religion; so that it may be said that without their religion they had no history, and without their history no religion (emphasis added). Thus, history, patriotism, religion, and hope alike pointed to Jerusalem and the Temple as the center of Israel's unity."

While crossing the Atlantic in 1630, Governor John Winthrop wrote and delivered a sermon entitled, "A Model of Christian Charity."

In his sermon he likened his fellow Puritans, founders of a Christian society who should be like the pilgrim nation of Israel leaving Egypt and choosing the new life which is blessed of God (Deuteronomy 30:19). Toward the end of the address, he laid down for America the original American dream taken from the inspiration of Jesus: "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world." Through the years presidents of the United States have quoted these words, Ronald Reagan being the latest one to do so. Russ Walton in his book, "One Nation Under God" said, "America took God up on what even Israel turned God down on." Israel demanded to have a king like the other nations, God said in I Samuel 8:7, "*And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.*" In this country, our forefathers decided to have a country by the people, for the people, under God. The actual battle cry of our patriots as they went into battle was, "No King but Jesus!" To quote the words of Edersheim concerning Israel, "... without their religion they had no history, and without their history no religion." We can say the same of America! Without our faith, we would have no history and without our history no faith."

As we face critical issues in this election year, will we continue our "slide toward Gomorrah" as Judge Robert Bork questioned? Will we continue to consider the lives of our weakest, the unborn an option to take? Will we move from the safe, God-blessed union of man and woman to the embracing of that which God calls an abomination? Will we continue down the slippery slope of trusting government rather than God as our source of provision? Will we turn our back on Israel, that people whom the Lord said, if we bless them God will bless us? (Genesis 12:3).

Today, just days before our next presidential election would be a great day for the people of America to begin an Exodus back from this fast approaching darkness to once again become that bright and shining "City on a Hill." The world is watching; more importantly, God is watching. Jesus said, "*Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*" (Matthew 5:14). Where do we start? How does America once again become that light reflecting the glory of God?

### **1. We start with ourselves.**

Gypsy Smith, the great evangelist of yesteryear said the way to have a revival is to go home, take a piece of chalk, draw a circle, then stand inside that circle and say, "Lord, send a revival in this circle."

Jesus warned, quoting from Isaiah said, "*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me*" (Matthew 15:7,8). If we discover we are simply going through the motions and not really putting our heart into it, it's time to change.

Have you ever been on a trip and you begin to sense you have taken the wrong turn or wrong road and things don't seem right. What do you finally do? You pull over, turn on the map light and unfold the map and find out where you are. Then the next step is simple. Find out where you need to go from where you are and proceed in the right direction.

### **2. We tend to our families.**

In a real sense a family is a city unto itself. You have the executive branch in Dad and Mom, you have laws, you have penalties for breaking the laws, you have incentives and rewards for doing right. Above all, it is the place where a girl or boy is taught to believe on and love the Lord Jesus Christ and it is where we are taught to live out the Christian experience.

The eloquent orator and editor of The Atlanta Constitution, Henry Grady made a speech in which he spoke while standing on the grounds of the Capitol in Washington D.C., "Here is the most important place on earth. For here is where the laws are made that govern this great country."

In the rise of Henry Grady's popularity, the young man reared by his widowed, godly mother had drifted from the holy lifestyle in which he was reared. Under deep conviction, he made his way back to his old unassuming country home where his precious old-fashioned mother lived and said to her, "Mother, once again, could I be a boy? And once again, would you speak to me of the things of God and the story of Christ and fortify and renew me?"

Soon after Grady returned to Atlanta, he wrote an editorial correcting his former thoughts, "At one time I said while standing on the capitol grounds of Washington, 'Here was the greatest place on earth. For it is here where the laws are made that govern this great country.' I no longer believe this, for the greatest

place on earth is home, for it is here where the people are made who make the laws that govern our great country." I would add one slight variation and say, more specifically, the most important place on earth is the Christian home.

Today, God is looking for some Abrahams of whom He said, "*For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment...*" (Genesis 18:19).

### **3. We return to church being the church.**

For a couple of decades it seems there has been a campaign to secularize the church. At times it has been subtle, other times, not so subtle. You can see it in her message; the cry has been, "Don't preach to me and please don't make me feel uncomfortable. And whatever you do, don't embarrass me if I bring my unchurched friends to our services - and oh, by the way, don't make them feel uncomfortable either." Yet the Bible says, "*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe*" (I Corinthians 1:21). And as far as adjusting our message to make it comfortable and more palatable, hear the Word of God: "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine*" (II Timothy 4:2). You can see it in the church's music. The demand has been, let my music sound like everything else on the radio and sadly this is what has happened. I began to see the directional drift when one of my friends brought to my attention these words of a song he had just heard, "I love Jesus and He saved my soul, but I still like to listen to my rock-n-roll." Now many churches rock with the best of them. We no longer hear testimonies like a George Beverly Shea who turned down a lucrative secular music contract with the song, "I'd Rather Have Jesus." Now the philosophy of many a Christian recording artist is "sound, act and be just like the world in the way we sing and play our music and the highest honor is to become a crossover artist (one who successfully markets their music to the secular as well as the Christian world)." The defense is, we will have an opportunity through our ministry to encourage the world to embrace Christianity. It seems however, we may have been more successful in encouraging Christians to embrace the world.

It is time that Christians wake up and return to the message and music that above everything else brings glory to God. God's glory should be our goal, not maintaining our comfort zone. Instead of preoccupation in becoming successful in crossover, let us take up our "cross" and bring the world "over" to Christ and a lifestyle that is so much better than anything the secular world has to offer. We are to be the light in contrast, not in compliment to the darkness around us.

-Pastor Pope-

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