

July 4, 2020

Hello Brethren,

This weekend is the traditional time marking when the colonies that became the United States of America declared independence from Great Brittan, some 244 years ago. The colonies were little more than a gathering of independent-minded territories who wanted freedom from the king, but weren't entirely sure they wanted unity with each other! But of course God had something in mind for this ragtag group of people, and over the course of the next 15 years a cohesive nation was born.

It may not seem like this to us today, but for more than half of its history the US had little power or influence on the world scene. With the 1898 Treaty of Paris, which ended the Spanish-American War, a transformation in world powers began. Spain ceded Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines to the US, and American overnight became a colonial power.

United States power and influence grew through the time of WWI (making it through the hardship of the Great Depression) until the terrible Second World War. As the war ended, the US was virtually the only country to emerge from that war in strong economic and military shape. It is at this point that most historians see the United States of America becoming a world Superpower.

For the last 75 or so years, this nation has been dominant on the world scene. What has been called the Long Peace, or the "Pax Americana" (American Peace) has dominated not only the western hemisphere, but to a large degree around the globe. These have been the "golden years" of America, but as we look around today, so very much has changed. I believe this year is going to be a deeply subdued Independence Day weekend for a number of reasons.

It seems to me that now the rest of the world is watching the US with a mixture of glee and horror. Those who look to America as a beacon of hope and stability, a nation capable of projecting economic, political and military power enough to help nearly anywhere, are now deeply concerned where their help will come from in the future. If the US is not capable of filling the role it has for more than 70 years, they wonder who will.

And those who have been envious of America's power and position in the world must be delighted to see an implosion on almost a national scale. Riots and unrest, attempts to rewrite history and a people so angry and deeply divided, can only serve to make the country weaker (Mark 3:25). The news seems filled with one shameful and deeply embarrassing event followed by another. And the world watches.

Earlier this week I read a "prayer for America" penned by a protestant minister. In an insightful comment he wrote "No great empire or humble province lasts forever." He then quoted Acts 17:26 which affirms the Creator God alone sets up nations and determines how long they will exist. He seemed to be acknowledging the blatantly obvious – this country is in a steady and rapid disintegration cycle.

A few paragraphs later this man dogmatically wrote: “We repent!” Unfortunately, as sincere as he may be, and as needful as national repentance is, I’m not sure he understands what repentance really is. And even if he does, he is not able to repent for the entire country. For our rapid national decline is to be turned around, people all across the land would have to truly humbly repent and change.

A musical piece I’ve loved for many years is titled “If My People Will Pray”, composed by Jimmy Owens. I’ve heard it performed as a solo, duet and chorale piece. It is taken from II Chronicles 7:14. After Solomon dedicated the temple, God appeared to him in a dream. He knew the people would eventually begin to turn their backs on Him, and as a result they would have more and more serious problems.

But God *promised* “*If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.*” Sadly, prophecy does not indicate mankind will be willing to repent (Revelation 9:21; 16:9; 16:10).

Men will only come to a point of humble repentance after God administers the sternest of punishments during what the Bible refers to as the Day of the Lord. We understand that to be the final year of the 3 ½ year period of the Great Tribulation. At the very end of that time, in a final act of rebellion, the armies of the world will be gathered to actually fight against the returning Jesus Christ (Revelation 17:14; 19:11-21), and then finally repentance and peace will come.

We don’t know how long this world has before we enter into the time of tribulation in earnest. But meanwhile there is still a great work to be done in preaching the Gospel to the world, and spiritually strengthening the people of God (Matthew 24:14; John 21:17). So it seems more important now than ever that we follow Paul’s admonition in II Timothy 2:1-2 and pray for the leadership of this country.

This country (and the entire world) is in deep trouble and seems to have completely turned its collective back on the God who has so greatly blessed us. We need to pray for peace and ability to complete the Work God has given His Church to do. And pray for the swift return of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Tomorrow my family and I will be in Van Buren and then travel up to Bentonville for afternoon services. On Sunday we leave for a week’s vacation with Mary’s family. We will travel to north-central Alabama to meet up with most of her family. We will return home the following Sunday, July 12<sup>th</sup>. However, I will have both cell phone and email access, so if you need to reach me please do not hesitate to call or send me a message. I’ll get back to you as quickly as I can.

Best regards,

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