

The Coming Darkness

By Geoff Arnold

Part One

To all biblically literate Christians, the title of this treatise should come as no surprise. It is something we have known from the beginning would be coming upon the world.

What is most distressing to many is that it is happening here, now, in our lifetime.

But the deeper problem facing the Christian Church is just how few actually know the truth about this inevitable Darkness, foretold in scripture two millennia ago.

It is well known that Bill Hybels, the pastor of Willow Creek Church outside Chicago, Illinois, created the concept of "seeker sensitive" as it applies to appealing to those outside Christianity in a way that is neither condemning or offensive. The goal was to create an inviting environment into which a 'seeker' could enter to learn about Jesus. This involved removing all objectionable language from sermons, removing discussions about judgment and hell, sin and consequences.

What remains is a gospel message without flavour or substance (**Matt. 5:13**). What was presented is a philosophy of acceptance and inclusion without the uncomfortable discussions about the fallen state of man, that man's spirit is dead before God so long as he remains in his sin, that no man is "good", that all have sinned, all are worthy of death. There is no discussion of God's righteous judgment and justice, which must prevail and cannot be assuaged, except through the atoning sacrifice of Christ Jesus upon the cross.

Never mind that by 2007, Bill Hybels confessed that the "seeker sensitive" concept was a categorical failure, *even a mistake*. But did he return to the full gospel message of the Bible? No. Instead, he embraced Rick Warren's Purpose Driven philosophy – born of Peter Drucker's business marketing strategies for growth and borrowing elements of Hybels' own ineffective seeker sensitive approach. He didn't change direction at all, but simply shifted to a model that was "successful", not biblical.

Many churches today have become a place you can come and be welcomed, accepted and affirmed in whatever you believe. The Church today is slowly embracing the ecumenical approach, that all religions, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, even Wicca and other “faiths”, have the 'right' to salvation by virtue of faithfully following the tenets of their own religious doctrines and writings.

Nobody needs reject the world system, false religious beliefs, or change anything in their lives. They just need to be 'good people' and do unto others as they would have them do unto themselves. Treat people well and you are on the path to heaven.

The problem is that this completely contradicts everything the Bible teaches, whether through prophet, psalmist or Jesus Himself.

The popular notion about the End Times 'darkness', that evil will descend upon the earth through the world system, while correct in that respect, ignores the warnings given in scripture that people *from within our own church family* would rise up and introduce false doctrines and practices into the creeds, covenants, tenets, teachings and doctrines (**2 Peter 2:1-3**). A quite insidious form of darkness is being established from within the Church itself, championed by the very shepherds, teachers, so-called prophets, authors and councils charged with leading us to the light of salvation (**2 Cor. 11:13**).

Matt. 6:22: "The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light.

23: "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

As a building with dirty windows will not allow the full light of the sun to enter, so the person who does not know, or will not see and accept the whole truth, will cling to, even be shrouded in darkness, both mentally, emotionally and more importantly, spiritually.

And a pastor that removes the uncomfortable lessons in the Bible from consideration will be condemned for their selfish and destructive decision (**Ezek 34**). Withhold the truth - particularly as a teacher - and you will be brought to account for your actions. Just read **Matthew 23** and you will see Jesus in direct conflict with the teachers and leaders of the Synagogues and the Temple. He exposes these vile men for teaching false ideas and holding false beliefs about the Law. And He condemned them in every aspect of their corruption of the sacred Word of God.

John 7:18: "He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory..."

Gal. 6:8: For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life.

Do the leaders of contemporary Christianity, regardless of their faith, sincerely believe they are shedding the light of Truth into the Darkness, exposing sin and depravity by denying the very essence of the Law? They teach from extra-biblical ideology and topics based on feelings and experiences rather than from the foundational lessons of

biblical History. Do they honestly believe what they teach will save anyone from the judgment to come?

We must remember, too, that we are charged with examining anything that is introduced to the congregation. It is an individual responsibility to test the material, weigh it against the scriptures.

If we accept that the Bible is the inerrant, irrefutable and true word of God, then it is without error and always correct, and anything – **anything** – which contradicts, overturns, adds to or in any way distorts and perverts the Scriptures must be rejected in its entirety – along with the teacher(s) who introduce it!

Acts 17:11: Now these (the Bereans)...received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, *to see* whether these things were so.

Today's church leaders are themselves as guilty as the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day in how they twist and distort the message, how they withhold critical knowledge and understanding from their charges – all of which plunges the faithful, the seeker – everyone – into the abyss called ignorance. So they fall into darkness by fiat, because our pastors, evangelists, preachers and so-called prophets speak lies and treachery, pleasantries and platitudes, all wrapped in a veneer of "love" and "acceptance", even a message of prosperity and celebration, victory and conquest.

Anyone who goes into a typical church looking for answers will no longer be warned they are sinners before an angry God. They will not be warned that judgment awaits all who reject the saving grace of Christ Jesus.

They will not be told that salvation comes by faith alone in Christ alone – and no other person, philosophy, belief, science or mysticism. They will not be told these things in clear, direct, unambiguous terms. And they will leave with a skewed idea of what true Christianity is all about because the truth they needed to hear will have been ***deliberately withheld*** from them.

They came shrouded in darkness, and they leave even worse off because the teachers of contemporary Christianity refuse to speak plainly the things of the Bible, for fear of offending the newly saved, the unbelievers, chasing away the seekers, even raising the ire of the community that surrounds them.

The Great Commission is not about sharing a squishy, touchy-feely, feel good, comfortable, easy message. But if our leaders insist on redefining, even tearing down Christianity and creating a 'new' Christianity, but without the power and authority of

God, it is no longer Christianity, but something far different - malevolent, evil, leading only to destruction.

We are entering a time the world has never, *never seen or experienced*. Jesus said the time of the End would be "...as in the days of Noah..." Read the story of Noah (**Gen. 6 - 8**) for yourself. If you look around you will see quite clearly that the world is increasingly rebellious in their behaviour, turning to their own devices and ways, rejecting the God of the Bible and the warnings that are given about such conduct in very much the same fashion as "...in the days of Noah..." (**Matt. 24:37-39**).

Yet, there is more to what Jesus said than just that people would be living and carrying on as in those days. When you read the prophecies of Jesus, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, John and the rest, you get a very clear indication that the events of these approaching Last Days are quite a bit *worse* than the days of Noah. While the Flood decimated the earth, wiping out all but the eight people and the animals on the Ark, the coming times spoken of in the prophecies make that end almost preferable to what we now face.

Matt. 24:21: "...for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall."

James 4:4: You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.

The adultery of the Christian community is that they are abandoning their faith and doctrines in favour of a relativism that permits any and all beliefs to be seen as "within acceptable practices" for believers. And this compromise will result in calamity for them that retreat from biblical truth.

Paul warn against revisiting sin:

Rom. 6:1: What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase?

2: May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?

6: ...knowing this, that our old self was crucified with *Him*, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...

Yet, Christians are abandoning the principles of the Law, the foundations of our faith, in favour of a kind of buffet style religious devotion that permits the sinful desserts of the flesh to be indulged without guilt, without consequence – at least insofar as what is being taught from the contemporary pulpit in most churches.

1 Tim. 4:1: But the Spirit explicitly says that in the latter times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons, by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron...

2 Tim. 4:3: For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;

4: and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

And just what kind of doctrines? And what sort of myths? Who are the liars they listen to? The list is very long, and we've already mentioned Bill Hybels and Rick Warren as two prime examples of the heresy that is consuming the Church today. So, let's mention just one other example...

Rob Bell wrote a book called "Love Wins..." In this book, if he doesn't outright declare it, he certainly suggests that those who die in their sin may not be lost forever to the Lake of Fire and eternal damnation. It is a nice thought, a "kind" thought, even a desire we may all share – that we do not wish for anyone to suffer eternal separation from God. Even the Lord does not wish it (**Ezek. 18:32**).

Bell contends the possibility exists that those who die in their sin may, at some point while in Hell, come to recognize their "error", their sinfulness, and become truly remorseful and sorry for the life they lead while on earth, and so then cry out to God, to Jesus, for mercy and forgiveness. God, in His infinite mercy and love, will hear them from Heaven and draw them to Himself and forgive all their evil and grant them pardon, and entrance into Heaven.

Like I said, it's a nice thought, one we would all like to believe, even hope to be true. But this idea stems from the Roman Catholic idea of Purgatory, a place those who die, who aren't quite good enough to enter heaven go, and for whom we who are yet alive pray that the mercy of God may cover their sins and they be pardoned and allowed into heaven.

But the scriptures are very clear; Jesus is very clear. People who reject God and are judged and sentenced to the Lake of Fire, "hell", have no escape, ever.

Matt. 7:21: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven..."

22: "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name...?'"

23: "And then I will declare to them 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey (believe) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 15:6: "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

Ps. 9:5: Thou hast rebuked the nations; Thou hast destroyed the wicked; Thou hast blotted out their name forever and ever.

The nature of these statements is declarative, defining that there is an eternal consequence for disbelieving ("...I *never* knew you..."; blotted out... their names **forever and ever**), for false belief and faithless devotion. There is no suggestion in anything these or any other scriptures that tell us that there will be a period of punishment for the rebellious, but after which there will come repentance and eventual acceptance into the heavenly presence of God.

You see, perfect Justice demands perfect justice. We may see it as cruel. But God is not cruel, He is Righteous, Just and Perfect in all His ways.

Ps. 9:8: (And) He will judge the world in righteousness; He will execute judgment for the peoples with equity.

So if even God sees the need to mete out His justice, which is not false, misguided or in any way less than perfect, then we cannot argue that such a sentence for the rebellious, unrepentant, and faithless is somehow lacking compassion and mercy as part of the consideration in God's will.

As America declines as a nation, as Americans turn more and more away from the God of the Bible and to their own self-interest, do you not find it interesting that the rest of the world has begun to descend into even greater tumult than they have already experienced over the last twenty to thirty years? Violence is on the increase and lawlessness is running rampant. Europe, long sliding into secular humanism, has begun to experience unrest not seen since World War II. The stability of the European Union is faltering, and violence among the people is increasing as a result of their policies,

beliefs and practices – far removed from the overall calm and peace that existed in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Around the world, nations descend into chaos and emerge worse for their changes. This cannot be coincidence. If America, now in decline, was once a great nation, even a standard bearer for freedom and liberty, preserver of peace, it has begun, through moral and spiritual decay, to lose all influence and become an object of ridicule among our enemies of old, and new emerging enemies who were once allies.

Ez. 14:13: "Son of man, if a country sin against Me by committing unfaithfulness, and I stretch out My hand against it, destroy its supply of bread, send famine against it, and cut off from it both man and beast,

14: "even *though* these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job were in its midst, by their *own* righteousness they could *only* deliver themselves," declares the Lord God.

Matt. 12:25: ..."Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and any city or house divided against itself shall not stand,

26: "And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand? (see also **Mark 3: 23-26**)

The absolute truth is that the message of Jesus Christ runs counter to what the world, and now sadly much of evangelicalism, expects or wants God to be like. Jesus calls us out of the world to walk the *opposite way* as the rest of the people are going. Remember now, Romans 12:18 says — *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all* (emphasis mine). As I have pointed out before, just by the way the sentence is written, you know it will not always *be* possible to avoid offending someone.

It comes with the commitment to a true Christian life; and Jesus has already told us it would! Now there is a choice that has appeared before us today with crystalline clarity in the Christian community — no matter what flavor you might consider yourself. We can listen to weak-kneed people-pleasers, of the sort as those I mentioned earlier; or, we can listen to our Lord and Master Jesus Christ:

John 15:18: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before *it* hated you.

19: "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

20: "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also.

21: "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me."

Pretty clear, don't you think?

We are charged with telling the world the truth about what rebellion against God means, just as much as we should tell them what devotion to and acceptance of the salvation gift of Jesus means, how our lives will be enhanced, be more abundant (not necessarily wealthy, and certainly not always free of struggle or suffering), fulfilling and filled with love. And for the *full gospel message*, properly shared, the world will hate us.

Why we seem to be insisting on trying to make the world love us is beyond me. Such efforts only compromise the full truth God has given us to share, undiluted, complete, and without apology.

Part Two

While we make no claims as being a prophet or having special knowledge (gnosticism), we do read the scriptures and recognize the warnings in both Old and New Testaments about the coming 'latter end', 'end of days', and End Times that tell of the events that presage the return of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus.

Matt. 16:3b: "Do you know how to discern the appearance (face) of the sky, but cannot *discern* the signs of the times?"

In the news you will read more and more of a polarization that is occurring all over the world. Some will characterize it as a form of class warfare, pitting the rich against the poor. Others will claim it is a war of reason against madness. Whatever the characterization one may use, it is obvious that the world is responding in fear to the uncertainty in the global financial system, the geo-political and social turmoil that is happening in many countries once thought quite stable, including the United States.

In the United States, indeed in much of the world, a more critical kind of change, at first of a very subtle nature, has been occurring over the past half century. It has only been in the last twenty years that the nature of that change has become increasingly more apparent, to the point that now it is clear and obvious what these changes have wrought upon Western society.

The God of the Bible is becoming the enemy of the people.

The most disturbing aspect of this statement is to whom it applies. It isn't just pointing to the fact that the world is becoming more hostile towards Christianity, but it speaks also about God's own people, the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in Europe, and even here in the United States.

Because modern pastors and preachers are espousing spurious doctrinal positions, embracing false interpretations of scripture, even twisting the actual meaning of the Word of God out of all proportion, they demonstrate their contempt - yes **contempt** - for not only the scriptures, but God Himself. Observe:

Ps. 106:35: ...they mingled with the nations, and learned their practices (works and/or ways),

36: And served their idols, which became a snare to them.

The next statement I am going to make will enrage many Christians. I don't care because the truth needs to be spoken, it needs to be said out loud.

If there is darkness coming upon the United States, and in the West as a whole, it is because Christians have abandoned their faith, the Law, beliefs, doctrines and tenets, and their God. The above passage from Psalm 106 articulates the primary reason. I said it in Part One, and it bears repeating again and again.

The pastors, teachers and authors of endless and bankrupt "Christian" literature have so polluted the message of the Bible with erroneous ideas, bringing worldly concepts and philosophical beliefs – even fantastic flights of wishful thinking – into God's sanctuary, that they have, in essence, "mingled with the nations and learned their practices..." They now serve the idols of the flesh, the selfish, soulish desires of our base nature (See also **Ezekiel 8** for a further idea of what has been happening).

Christians are as responsible for the coming Darkness as the enemies of God because, as was done in ancient Israel, where God had instructed His people that they should not be joined to foreign brides, nor to their pagan, idol worshipping practices (see **Ezra 9**), this is precisely what the Church has done – is doing even now. They have allowed false doctrine, "new" ideas, re-imagining of the gospel accounts and message, heretical writings and more into the canon of what is considered acceptable and useful material and approaches (biblically speaking), which shake up the traditional message and ignore the clear warnings in scripture that such things have no place in our midst.

These things, "...their idols", have become a snare unto the people of God.

And as was done in ancient Israel, so shall it happen to the Church: God sent His judgment upon the people of God in those days, often allowing them to be conquered and carried away into exile, into captivity to the land of their enemies. What this means today is that the Church is being destroyed by their enemies, from within and from without, exiled and carried away into a captivity of doctrinal heresy and false beliefs, all rooted in the idea that we, the people of God today, accept that the "old ways" need to be thrown by the wayside to make room for new and improved ideologies and doctrines, borne in the mind of man and based in his own knowledge and wisdom, but without the guidance and correction afforded through the Holy Spirit.

God has said of the End Times Church:

Rev. 3:15: I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot.

16: So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit (vomit) you out of My mouth.

17: Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked...

It is clear, today's Christian leadership believes they are capable of independently "running" Christ's Church. They have begun to believe their own propaganda, their own hype, that today's Church needs to be different, full of new and bold ideas. They want to pursue a course apart from what is outlined in the scriptures, one that says "Yes" to the unbelievers and welcomes them, sin and all, into the sanctuary of almighty God, but without the necessity of shedding the sin life, the "old man sin nature", without the need for true repentance. They just need to believe in Jesus and everything will be fine.

"All you need is Love.... Love is all you need." (Lennon/McCartney)

But God has said He cannot abide sin in His presence. Therefore, many of these churches are literally standing on their own, having been abandoned by the Holy Spirit and the Author of Life. And like ancient Israel, they are engaged in pursuing "...what [is] right in their own eyes."

There is an underlying and *deliberate design* to become friends with the world, to show the world that Christians are good people, and that we only want to reach out and love everyone, regardless of their beliefs, regardless of their sin state. These shepherds want us to believe sin doesn't matter because we're all God's children and everyone should be able to come into the house of the Lord and worship in their own way, according to their own beliefs, and without having to change or sacrifice anything.

They insist we just have to do good deeds, treat people well and love everyone. Sin is no longer sin, but honest error, a natural human desire or (genetic) trait. And God will look down from heaven and smile that we are being so inclusive and getting along so well.

Such a church does not require anyone to change anything about their character, morality or ethics. People coming into this kind of church are finding they don't have to confront any "issues" about their lives to be welcomed, accepted and affirmed by the pastors and members of the congregation. All they need is to believe in Jesus, at least insofar as He was a good shepherd and presented some good lessons we can draw from. We don't have to agree with everything in the Bible. *We don't even need to believe in the divinity of Jesus.*

I challenge anyone in such a church to show me where in the Bible it is stated that this is all we have to do. Nor do I find anywhere in scripture the statement I have heard more than one Christian quote: "God helps those who help themselves."

If this were true, why then do we need God? What was the purpose of Jesus' life and sacrifice upon the cross? If we can help ourselves through our own "good works", why bother with any of it, let alone teach the truth of the Bible?

And so the Church has helped to create the wretched condition into which the world is sliding ever deeper. The world was never a "friendly" place. Absent Christ, a people will turn to their own devices and construct their own beliefs that rely upon nothing more than what they desire in the moment. Tomorrow, that may change. There is no consistency, nothing is absolutely true and unchanging in such a society. What is acceptable today may become abhorrent and an abomination tomorrow.

How do you cope in such a world as that? Without Jesus, you compromise everything every day because it is the nature of such a society to warp and distort whatever truth they adhere to, depending upon the mood of the current leader over them. Tomorrow, the current truth may become the lie and the enemy of "the People". This is no way to live.

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There's no way we're not going down this road, this path that leads to Darkness.

John 9:4: "We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."

Is. 55:6: Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near.

Look at the language used here. "...night is coming...", "...while He may be found... while He is near." We are being warned openly that the Lord is going to withdraw His protections, His support, even His presence.

It doesn't matter who gets elected to Congress, who becomes our next President, what corporations do, what other nations do. It's a very sad thing to have to watch, but we all must, as Christians, face the truth if we are going to say we believe what the Bible says about the End Times period. If we are going to say that we believe the End Times are coming, perhaps even in our lifetime, or shortly thereafter, then we cannot escape the reality that the world will not become a better place, but a more hostile place, toward people of faith in general and toward Christians in particular.

Now, before you go off on me, I am not suggesting the Lord is going to abandon His people. That isn't what these passages are saying, directly. For them who are faithful and devoted followers, they have no need to worry. While they may experience persecution, imprisonment and torture, even death, the Lord has promised to be with them "...even unto the end of the Age" (**Matt. 28:20b**).

It is the rest of the world that needs to be concerned. When the Lord removes His grace from a place or over a situation, things go bad very quickly; darkness descends upon everything and everyone in those places and situations, and madness reigns.

You may be wondering why this has to be so. Why does the world have to descend into Darkness?

Well, it doesn't. But, unfortunately, it is not realistic to think that everybody will wake up from their personal madness and begin to see with clear eyes, and to hear with clear understanding, that they are sinners in need of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

In the twentieth century, it can be clearly seen how the Church has, little by little, released or lost to government the responsibility for the poor, the downtrodden, the sick and the disenfranchised. The realm in which the Church traditionally reigned and operated was slowly co opted by government, or seized entirely, as in the case of the Soviet Union, literally taking all control and usurping all services into their hands; the State became the provider of all needs for all the people of Russia and the Soviet Bloc nations under their control. The same thing occurred in China.

In both nations, the God of the Bible was denigrated and removed from society as a belief to be abandoned. While the Russian Orthodox Church remained, the Elders in the church decided to co operate with Lenin, and later Stalin, in order to survive. As a result, they became a de facto informant source for the government against citizens. And it was the only state sanctioned religious organization. True Christians and faithful Jews were imprisoned, and even executed, for their adherence that God reigns supreme, even over governments.

In China the state supported church is a sham and a farce. God is irrelevant, State programs and tenets are taught as virtues to admire and adopt. Jesus is a servant to the State in both cases which, of course, is anathema to what scripture actually teaches.

While Catholicism does exist in China, the cardinals are appointed by the State, not the Vatican. You can decide what that indicates. And true Christians are persecuted, arrested, imprisoned, tortured and even executed because they will not bow to the State authority over them in matters of faith.

The warnings abound in scripture as to what will happen to a people who abandon or reject God as sovereign.

Deut. 30:17: "But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them,

18a: I declare to you today that you shall surely perish."

John 3:36: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey (believe) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

It cannot be denied that across the Western world, people are abandoning the God of the Bible. Europe and the United States, even Canada, have progressed deeper into a condition of avoidance, at the very least, and in some cases (Canada) prosecution of certain Christian tenets as hate speech – even reaching into the church pulpit to arrest pastors and preachers "caught" teaching these biblical beliefs that are part of the foundation of Christian doctrine. Rest assured, such a reach of government will intrude into the Church in the United States, under the guise of fighting "hate crimes and speech".

Yet, Muslims can stand in their mosques – even here in America – and preach the destruction of the West as a whole, even encouraging violent jihad (code for unrelenting violence) against all who resist Islam.

In certain instances, a single person's views trump the majority opinion when lawsuits are raised to remove Christian symbols and related materials from schools, public buildings, public spaces, war memorials, and even the place where you work. In many of these cases, we find that the majority people don't care if the symbols are there. They are not offended by them. But one person's objection is becoming sufficient reason (even an excuse) to have them removed. And Christians are mostly silent.

As we proceed deeper into the throes of a godless society, the enmity toward the people of God grows. The cause of their enmity can be multi-fold. Yet, the most important points to focus upon are but few in number, as the primary reason for such growing hatred of God.

First, there is the **exclusivity claim** in Christianity that Jesus is the only way to salvation and entrance into heaven. Of all the criticism, this ranks as foremost in the minds of many unbelievers. How can we be certain of this belief in a world filled with uncertainty? The very question exposes the heart of the matter, that these people live in a belief that absolute truth is not possible – even though they insist that there are absolutes in the field of science, based on empirical data derived from various

experiments and observation. But in the realm of the religious belief, for the unbeliever, no such absolutes are allowed.

Second, the rejection of the claim "**all have sinned...**" and are inclined to evil when left to their own devices. Most people in the world insist they are good people (and sadly, so do many who believe in God). They point to their deeds, their accomplishments. Yes, they'll say there are bad people – but mankind is generally *good*.

Third, the "gotcha" argument: "**How can a loving God allow so much injustice..., how can He allow such evil to continue?**" The answer is not popular, and they will reject it regardless of how well it is presented. See point two, above. We are sinners. The evil that exists in the world is of our own making, a product of our own choices.

God does not want automatons to bow to His every whim. We have a degree of free will to do as we please. Some choose evil. Throughout History, God has allowed evil to flourish, that men of good conscience may rise up, even be forged under the oppression of this evil, and fight to destroy such cancers that arise.

There's always a reason, an excuse, for evil, except when religion is involved. We get the "religion is responsible for some of the worst atrocities in history" argument as a corollary "gotcha" reason for rejection of God. But in the twentieth century alone, two godless nations, China and the Soviet Union, slaughtered over 100 million of their own people in the span of 70 years, not including the wars fought against foreign powers. But socialism, even communism, remains a "viable" option for many in the West. We are seeing the rise of socialist ideas even in the United States, with the best example being the Affordable Care Act, which forces participation of all citizens, passed by Congress in 2010. Everybody is covered by this government program; we pay in, they take care of us. The Nanny State comes of age.

The simple reality is that the world is growing darker and darker, even as our leaders insist brighter days lie ahead, that prosperity is coming. These are the words of every despot and tyrant ever unleashed upon the people of the nations of the world. And it is a darkened world that is rising, taking shape right before our eyes.

Part Three

We now turn to what Christians must do as we see the world descend deeper into the darkness of the times that lie ahead.

As the scriptures say, "...two will be in the field (working), and one will be taken, the other left..." (**Luke 17:36; Matt 24:40**)

While this scripture speaks of the coming resurrection/rapture, the deeper point is what I am concerned with: both the one taken and the one left are *working right up to that moment*.

Christians cannot allow themselves to become ambivalent, even passive observers, during the increasingly troubling times in which we find ourselves. Christian stewardship, even in these End Times – given that we accept this is truly that time – is not to be abdicated for the sake of "hurrying along" the coming of the end, the rise of Antichrist. Pulling back from engaging the world is the *exact opposite* of the instructions we've been given. The scriptures are clear: this is *not* the time to relax.

It is time to rise up and be heard.

If we fall silent, if we shirk our duty to "spread the Gospel" message, we stand in rebellion against the command of our Lord and Saviour to do the work in which we have been entrusted to accomplish. Don't think that someone else will come along, in your circle, your part of the world. You are the one occupying that place; it falls on you and me to be the voice, the light, the beacon, the herald, the ambassador, the defender of the faith.

If the Lord is pledged to help us navigate through this world, to help us overcome sin and to live a faithful and faith filled life, it stands to reason that He will also provide a means and a venue in which we can share the Gospel message with those around us.

The Church is working to become more acceptable to the world, adopting a more ecumenical position, even embracing universalism, that each of the major religions teaches truth and so become one of many paths to heaven.

The Church is distancing themselves from any discussion of the End Times, and moving toward and embracing one or another version of dominion theology. The shepherds of

God's people are ignoring the deeper and extremely important aspects of the "imminence" doctrine that has historically been a part of all healthy congregations.

What do I mean by this?

If we read through the Gospels and the letters of the Apostles, we can clearly see an expectation in their writings. While it was fully understood that the time of the End was not going to happen quickly, in their lifetime, and Paul cautioned against falling prey to false teachings that the time of the End was already upon them (**2 Thes. 2:1-3**), the prevailing wisdom was clear, it was important to have a sense that Christ's return could be at any time, and so considered a healthy doctrinal position – and further reason to remain pure in spirit, keeping to the faith and teachings (**Col. 3:5-8**).

Look, the imminence doctrine is more about your personal life and mortality than the soon return, at least it has been up until the present time. We can see in the scriptures that certain important events have to take place prior to Jesus' return. Throughout history since the time of the Apostles, it has been clearly understood the End Times were still a way off in the future. Again, from **2 Thessalonians**:

2 Thes. 2:3: Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction.

One look around you and it is pretty plainly evident that the Apostasy about which Paul spoke had not happened in his day and age but which, in our present day and age, is ***already begun***, has been in play for decades – not as a singular event, which some teach is the case – but as a slow rolling, increasing wave, engulfing more and more people as it matures. So we know that the End cannot be far off, because this and other events, like Israel being reborn as a nation, give clear indication that this time is different than previous periods in history when people thought the End was upon us.

And the appearance of "the man of lawlessness", which must be revealed, has not happened yet, either. This second statement suggests that the End doesn't begin until he is clearly known to those who understand the scriptures, Christians.

However, in our personal lives, we cannot say, and do not know, when the Lord will come for us. We do not know at what point our life will end, that we will die. So the idea of keeping mindful regarding our own mortality, that we might die tonight (as in the tale of the man who sought to build new and better barns for his crops, told in **Luke 12:16-21**), becomes a critical aspect of our faith walk. Imminence is a daily active disposition!

And if it is true of we who believe, what of them who do not believe?

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Consider the following:

In the Old Testament of the Bible, we see the nation of Israel born. We see her pass through periods of great blessing and prosperity. We see her pass through periods in which she went her own way, left the counsel of the Lord, fell into sin and judgment, even captivity in a foreign land.

Look to the world stage, the rise of nations, the fall of nations. It is the way things are in this fallen and corrupt world. A nation may aspire to righteousness and justice, as has been the case historically for America. But every nation has fallen into sin and judgment; America is no exception.

And them that have so fallen, have also to some degree climbed back out of that condemnation, perhaps cyclically falling into and climbing out of sin, much as with historical Israel. Others have never recovered.

It is said that in history, every nation which has had a democratic form of government, and abandoned it (for whatever reason), has never returned to a fully democratic society. Put another way, any nation whose people lived free, but which then fell into dictatorship or tyranny, has never recovered that liberty and freedom. While they may enjoy a degree of liberty, close examination will show that it is limited far short of the historic liberty and freedoms once enjoyed.

And here in America our freedoms, as provided through the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, are in danger as never before. We stand on the brink of losing it all because of we have allowed the God of the Bible to be removed as part of our daily lives, personally, spiritually, publicly and nationally.

Why would we believe the United States is somehow immune from this? Because we have our Constitution? Our Bill of Rights? Because we have been a Christian nation? These do not guarantee a perpetual protection against and from tyrants and despots – and Israel is the proof of this; they believed in God, were the "chosen people" of God, even had the Temple. But that was not enough to save them from judgment when they fell into sin.

Look around you, listen to the news. America is fragmenting into "special interest" groups. Racism is being fomented, not just in white quarters, but in black quarters, too, by people such as Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton (both supposedly Christians). Our elected leaders are divided; they fan the flames of class warfare – all the while claiming to be operating in the "best interest" of the people.

All despots and tyrants say the same thing as they grab power and remove individual rights of the citizenry – in the best interest of the people.

And for that, we should all be very, very alarmed.

It is but one indication that the America is not only in jeopardy, but in grave danger. Our precious liberties and freedoms are being eroded every day, to the point that one day, we will all wake up in a totalitarian land wondering how it is we fell so far from grace – and we the people are accommodating and even supporting this, to a lesser or greater degree, by our inaction and ambivalence, our apathy.

While I have maintained that this must happen, that even the United States will descend into despotism, sin, depravity and godless idol worship as a general way of life for the people – and we can see it all around us, it is enveloping us as we speak – I have also insisted that true Christians must rise up and proclaim with even more determination the Gospel message, the truth of God. And we must do this in spite of the possible – and eventual – consequences to our persons.

We must be willing to pledge our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honour to stand firm in the faith, to refuse to abandon the biblical model for life, liberty and our Saviour, Christ Jesus, come what may. And whoever will not do so must cease saying they are Christian, cease the lie that they follow Christ, and they must leave the fellowship of the faithful – now.

I am not advocating a witch hunt.

What I am advocating is something "radical" (a word the Emerging/Emergent sect of Christianity loves to bandy about in describing themselves, though they are in fact rebellious, not radical). I am saying we must return to applying the principles Jesus laid out in how we address sinful conduct within ourselves and within our midst.

Here is what Jesus said...

Matt. 18:15: "And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother.

16: But if he does not listen *to you*, take one or two more with you, so that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed.' (see **Deut. 19:15**)

17: And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer."

Read **Ezekiel 3: 18-21** for further reason why.

Do churches even do anything like this anymore?

A number of years ago I heard in a news report about a church that practiced this teaching. In one case, it came to the "tell it to the church" stage in a matter, because the person involved was insistent they were "innocent", though there were witnesses and factual proofs to the contrary.

The "offended" parishioner turned around and sued the church for libel and slander, because they resented being exposed in their sin, because the church did what Jesus said we must do to keep ourselves holy unto the Lord.

The radical thing I propose is to return to this practice again. Unfortunately, what this could mean is that half a given church congregation could end up leaving, in part because of embarrassment, in part due to being "offended", or perhaps to avoid the sin charge(s) altogether.

But better a lean congregation of true believers than a fat congregation of unrepentant, sinful pseudo-Christian people.

As Jesus said, "...better to enter life (the kingdom of God) crippled, with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into the fiery hell." (**Matt. 18: 8-9** composite)

Peter is no less concerned:

1 Pet. 3:17: For *it is* time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if *it begins* with us first, what *will be* the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

And Jesus' words again:

Matt. 5:20: "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

If you want your congregation to be found in good standing before the Lord, then clean house. Rout out the people who are of the "fair weather" faithful, or Christians "in name only", first asking them to repent – giving them the opportunity. Failing that, they must be asked to leave.

If a pastor is teaching extra-biblical lessons that contradict the scriptures, go to them afterward and tell them your problem with the "lesson". Show them the reason you have a problem with it. If they brush you off, find a witness and return to them again, explain it again. If they still reject the correction, bring it to the whole congregation. And, if required, remove these teachers from their position.

A pastor should not be above what Jesus taught we are to do with sinful, wayward believers. They, too, need to be brought to account by people willing to stand in the faith, stand on the scriptures and reject perverted interpretations being taught to the congregation. I've done this and the pastors involved did not like it one bit. They hate when they are challenged. Very few are humble enough to accept correction, even in a private setting with no "embarrassing" exposure to the greater body.

God will hold His people to a higher standard when judgment comes – is already coming – upon the world. And, as Peter indicates, God will begin within the house of God, not the outside world. Are we prepared to endure His judgment?

* * * * *

As the Darkness spreads across the earth, Christians will be targeted for being resistant to the "group mind", the prevailing wisdom of the world. We know their way is the way of death (**Prov. 14:12**). But we have the way to life, and that more abundantly. Why should we be persuaded away from that simply because we are afraid of controversy, conflict and losing the love of our neighbours?

We know, because Jesus told us, the world will hate us (**John 15:18**). If we are unwilling or unable to endure the persecution and worse from the world, our faith is empty and false. If we need to be loved, even willingly compromise our core beliefs for the sake of being acceptable to others, our faith is null and void.

If we clean our own house, first removing the log from our own eye (**Matt. 7:3-5**), all our efforts will still be viewed as hypocrisy and evil by a world consumed in darkness. And while we will be seen as evil, already this is happening, we shouldn't add to their evidences and proofs with conduct contrary to our doctrine, tenets and scriptural

commands. When they accused Jesus, He answered with the truth, scriptures and humiliated His detractors – all the while knowing they would not cease their scoffing and lying, their disbelief in what He said.

We must likewise seek to answer all charges, all slander and libel from a place of love, precisely because they want us to become like them in our behaviour, so as to condemn us all the more – for being exactly like them!

If you give your enemies the satisfaction they seek, they will destroy you. We cannot allow that in our lives, our churches, our biblical consistency in living out our faith. We live well only with the help of God through His Holy Spirit, and the scriptures, in how best to avoid the pitfalls of our flesh nature.

John 4:23: “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”

Believe it!

And unless we fully embrace this simple truth, we will struggle every day in the smallest of things as we strive to live in and for God in Christ.

The Emerging Church people claim to be radical, even saying they are trying to return to a "first century" faith, but which really embrace and accept people where they live, sin and all, with no requirements placed upon them. They prefer to invent a "new Christianity", one devoid of the requirements God demands of anyone who would desire to be saved from eternal separation from Him and the consequences of that separation.

True believers must actually be radical by literally living as the New Testament scriptures describe, in deed, following what Jesus taught – particularly as regards the "litmus test" of faithful living – and return to the high standard set by Jesus. He raised the bar, He did not lower it. He restored the bar to where it was originally intended to be.

* * * * *

Because today's church has lowered the standard so far, anyone can come in and see no need, nor receive an invitation, to change anything about their character, behaviour and beliefs. It's only necessary to "love Jesus, and do what you will", whatever that means to

you, and with no requirement to "conform" to the biblical model. Truth is relative, and the way you live out your belief is nobody's business but your own.

But Jesus rejected such ideas. So should we. And we should demand a higher standard for God's people – particularly His shepherds (as mentioned before). Otherwise, if we act, behave, talk and live like everyone else outside the faith, they will look at us and say, "So, you act, live and do the same things as me. The only difference I see is that you believe in Jesus. Tell me, why do I need Jesus?"

Though the world sees no need for Jesus, we know the world needs Jesus, needs salvation, and absent that salvation, is headed for eternal judgment and condemnation, and an eternity in the Lake of Fire.

Choose the wide road or choose the narrow path. You know the difference, and you know the one is easy, and the other will be difficult. The burden will be light, but the responsibility will not be non-existent; and neither will the accountability.

We cannot escape the fact that as the world descends deeper into their carnal, self-centered, fleshly ways, the need for God's people to be distinct and separate in outlook, behaviour, belief and demeanour becomes even more pronounced, more important.

Like it or not, we are standard bearers. And that means we must live our professed beliefs, not arrogantly so as to be seen by men, but humbly, so as to be shown approved by God. Our light must shine because the Light of Christ shines from within us. And we must be that beacon – the standard – that draws the lost out of darkness and into the light of salvation – by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Until then, look to the heavens, and know, that as you see the signs of the times and seasons, the time of our Lord's soon return draws ever closer.

You can contact me here: comments@askministries.org