

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

A common consensus among many believers is that USA has been in a steady moral and spiritual decline for the last 60 years.

I have personally been engaged in ministering in USA during the last 40 years. I entered the ministry believing that the pivot of spiritual mature believers would grow and could change this moral and spiritual decline. So many of my colleagues and friends rolled up our sleeves and put our hands to the plow and didn't look back. Many of these friends and colleagues are members of DSBC.

What I have personally learned after 40 years is that the pivot has actually shrunk during this period in spite of a lot of outreach and evangelism and teaching of milk and meat bible doctrines.

[Today there is great danger in thinking that if we watered down the gospel or did not teach so much bible doctrine that we could grow the pivot. I personally do not believe this to be the answer. I like many of you came from this type of philosophy.]

You might ask then what is the answer? I am often asked if I am discouraged. My answer is no! But I have had to change my expectations and approach to ministry amidst a volitionally declining nation and church.

This lesson will study five aspects of Christians being Lights in the World no matter how dark it gets.
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1. Today I am convinced more than ever that our primary job is to be faithful and leave the changing to God (Phil.2:14-16 [phoster, givers of light] (2.Cor.4:4).

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim.4:7)

“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.” (2 Tim.2:13)

“However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

When I have those moments of questioning my ministry methods, I find encouragement by Noah's ministry:

“By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.” (Heb.11:7; Gen.6:5)

2. When working with the declining nation of Israel, Jesus Christ found a similar experience as we have found (John 19:25-26).

For example, when He pushed the spectacular of ministry to the background and brought the teaching of the truth of the word of God to the forefront, the pivot shrunk – “But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, ‘Does this cause you to stumble?’” (John 6:61)

“As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew, and were not walking with Him anymore.” (John 6:66)

As the head and high priest of the Church, we have someone who knows how to deal with our experiences of living and ministering in a declining nation (Heb.4:15-16; 1 Pet.2:9).

3. It is important that we be oriented correctly to our biblical dispensation and civilization in order to understand our role in human history and apply the word of God properly.

We need to understand the four biblical dispensations and three biblical civilizations in human history.

Four Dispensations (Eph.1:10; 3:9)

- Gentile age Fall of Adam to Abraham Covenant
- Jewish age Abraham Covenant to First Coming of Jesus Christ
- Church age First Coming of Jesus Christ (Pentecost) to Rapture of Second Coming
- Millennium age Second Coming of Jesus Christ to Great White Throne Judgment

Each dispensation has a special divine agency that is the custodian of evangelism and the word of God (2 Tim.3:15; Acts 1:8).

Three Civilizations (2 Pet.2:5; 3:6-7; Rev.20)

- Antediluvian Adam to Noah (flood)
- Postdiluvian Noahic flood to Second Coming of Jesus Christ
- Millennium Second Coming to end of human history (1000 years)

We live in the Church age and Postdiluvian civilization. The church is the divine agency with a set revelation of the New Covenant (1 Cor.11:24-25).

4. The Jewish age was interrupted by the Church age with 7 years still necessary to complete Jewish age. This last 7 years is known as the Tribulation (Rev.4-19).

The priest-nation of Israel was put under the 5th cycle of divine discipline until the Rapture of the church (1 Thess.4:13-18; 1 Cor.15:51-58). This temporarily removed Israel as the priest nation and the divine agency and the Jewish age (Lev.26 and Deut.28).

Today we have only Gentile nations. This is known as the “Times of the Gentiles” and the Time of Jacob’s Troubles” (Luke 21:24; Jer.30::7; Dan.9:24-27; Rom.11:25-27).

5. Gentile nations can be used by God as client nations in the plan of God (Gen.10-11; Ps.75:7; Rom.13:1).

For example in the Jewish age, client nations were used to protect Israel (Egypt) and to discipline Israel (Assyria and Babylon and Rome) (Jer.50:18; Luke 1:52; John 19:10-11).

In the church age, client nations are used in similar ways. The United States of America has been a protector for both Israel and the church (1 Tim.2:1-4; 1 Pet.2:13-17; Rom.13:1-7).

Client nations, as well as the church are targets in the angelic conflict (Eph.6:10-17; Rev.20:3).

In the church age, Jesus Christ controls human history, nations, client nations, as well as the church. (Col.1:15-17). This is what we must always remember when we read the newspaper about current events.

Christians are to obey the laws of the nation unless they conflict with the word of God. (Mark 12:17; Acts 4:17-20; 5:25-32).

The church is a spiritual and not political power in the world (John 3:16; Rom.5:8). As Christians, we must remember that we have dual citizenship (Phil.3:20; 2 Cor.5:20; John 18:35-36).