

Christians in a Secular Age: Part I
Introduction
Colossians 2:4-10

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** We are involved in a great spiritual warfare in which we are all soldiers.

Rev. 12:17: *“And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”*

A. This war began in the Garden of Eden with Satan as man’s archenemy (Gen. 3).

B. Satan is relentless in his efforts to draw us away from God (1 Pet. 5:8).

C. Satan is crafty, we must be ever ready to engage him and his minions in battle (Eph. 6:10-18).

2. Satan’s weapons are varied and powerful:

A. In the first century Satan employed physical persecution to his great advantage (e.g., Acts 14:19; Heb. 10:33; 2 Thess. 1:4-6; Rev. 6:9).

B. ****** Today, at least in our culture, Satan has changed tactics and his attacks are far more subtle, but nevertheless, very effective.

C. His attacks are mainly through the modern philosophies of man:

Col. 2:8: *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”*

D. Our society is descending into an abyss of immorality and ungodliness unimaginable even a few decades ago:

(1) Abortion: Since 1973 >61 M (45 M, CDC) babies have been murdered “legally” in the U.S.

(a) New abortion laws are sweeping our land as the “culture of death” fears the possibility that *Roe v. Wade* will be overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court.

(b) For example, a recent law in New York was passed (*Reproductive Health Act*) that essentially legalizes infanticide (A similar bill has been introduced in the Virginia state legislature)(explain).

(c) Such laws will become commonplace in states where the Democratic Party dominates state governments.

(d) Such laws are merely an echo of the depravity on this issue that is sweeping our nation (e.g., “Shout Your Abortion” movement; explain; **Rom. 1:31:** *“without natural affection”*; Strong: “hard-hearted towards kindred”).

(2) Homosexuality: same-sex marriage is now the law of the land (*Obergefell v. Hodges*, 2015).

(a) Transgenderism is ruining the lives of many (e.g., minors having mastectomies, undergoing hormonal treatment, etc.; restroom issue, women’s athletics).

(b) If one believes what the Bible teaches on homosexuality you are labeled a “homophobe,” etc. (Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9-10)

(3) Political correctness: Nearly every day there is some controversy that creates a wave of “faux moral outrage,” “virtue signaling” (i.e., “moral preening”), and “shaming” (e.g., the recent “Covington Catholic” incident).

(a) People’s reputations are impugned, calls are made for people to be stigmatized, castigated and forever banished from “polite society.” (Gal. 5:15)

- (b) Some even call for people to be killed!
 - (c) If one disagrees in any way with the sociopolitical paradigm of the Left (i.e., media, academia, entertainment industry, etc.) they are falsely labeled as racist, misogynistic, homophobic, xenophobic, etc., etc.
 - (d) **3** By many, Christianity is considered so odious/awful that anyone claiming to be a Christian does not deserve to be the recipient of any form of tolerance (1 Cor. 4:13).
 - ☛ I recently read an article on *Salon* (on-line very liberal magazine) which claimed “scientists” now link religious fundamentalism with brain damage.
 - ☛ In the comment section several called for essentially stamping out all forms of religion, including (and especially!) Christianity.
 - ☛ ******Christianity is considered so terrible Christians don’t deserve to be heard or be members of “polite society.” So much for the “tolerance” of the Left!
 - (e) ****** Don’t dismiss such attitudes and beliefs as simply the “lunatic fringe.”
 - (f) To do so is foolish! Such views are held by more and more in our society.
 - (g) Just look at the results of our recent elections (BTW: Some politicians want “In God We Trust” removed from our currency & similar words from oaths of office!).
 - (h) I am not trying to make this all about politics, because it is not.
 - (i) ****** Our sociopolitical upheaval is only one “wile” Satan uses “to make war with” those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17).
3. Even though Satan’s weapons change; in reality, it is nothing new:
- 2 Cor. 4:3-4:** “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, 4 whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.”
4. **4** In this series of lessons I want to explore the general theme of how we as Christians deal with life in an increasingly secular society dominated by this new sociopolitical paradigm.

II. DISCUSSION:

As we contemplate living in an increasingly secular society; we must never forget we will be...

1. **5** Victorious in Christ:

- A. There is plenty of “awfulness” in our world to make a Christian sad and despondent.
 - (1) However, we cannot let these negative things get us down and tempt us to quit.
 - (2) We know how this battle is going to end!
 - (3) Theme of the Book of Revelation can be summed very simply: God wins! Rev. 19:11-21
- B. ****** Jesus has already won the victory:
 - 1 Jn. 5:4-5:** “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. 5 Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”
 - 1 Jn. 4:4:** “...because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”
- C. Paul describes our victory:
 - 2 Cor. 2:14-16:** “Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ

among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. *16 To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things?*"

D. ** It is so important that we not lose sight of this fact!

- (1) God's side has always won and will always win!
- (2) Early Christians overcame the oppression/persecution of Judaism and the Roman Empire.
- (3) So, regardless of how wicked our society becomes, how much Satan throws at us; we will be victorious "in Christ"!

1 Pet. 1:6-9: "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, *7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith — the salvation of your souls.*"

2 Pet. 3:13: "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

As we think about the current state of affairs, we must realize...

2. **6** Satan changes his tactics:

A. Satan's overall strategy was the same in the garden of Eden, in the days of Noah, in the days of Moses, in the days of ancient Israel, in the first century and now in the 21st century:

1 Jn. 2:15-17: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. *16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.*"

(1) ** The three avenues of temptation don't change:

- ① "the lust of the flesh"
- ② "the lust of the eyes"
- ③ "the pride of life"

(2) However, Satan does change his tactics.

(3) Satan changes his tactics to best deceive the most people in any given period of time.

B. For example, denominationalism has changed greatly from the early 20th century to today.

(1) In former times denominationalists tenaciously adhered to their doctrines that distinguished them from one another (i.e., held their creeds firmly).

(2) They forcefully preached their creeds and defended them vigorously in debate.

(3) Now, the typical denominationalist is ignorant of their own creed; and, they certainly are not willing to defend them.

(4) Even though they still have a creed, they really do not follow it (i.e., only a historical connection to their creeds; today pretty much anything goes!).

(a) For example, most denominational creeds forbid immorality such as homosexuality, abortion, easy divorce and remarriage, etc.

(b) However, most denominations don't blink an eye over allowing those sins today.

- (c) Many even go so far as to deny: the inspiration of the Scriptures, miracles, virgin birth, resurrection of Christ, etc., etc.
- C. ** You see, Satan has adjusted his message to appeal to the 21st century attitudes and tastes our social upheaval has produced over the past half century.
- (1) The earthly conflict between good and evil is constantly in a state of flux and change.
 - (2) Satan's old lies and methods of deception merely arise with a fresh coat of paint.
- D. ** However, God's truth is stable, universal, and unchanging because it is eternal:
- I Pet. 1:23:** *"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever."*

We must be careful not to confuse true Christianity with...

3. 7 Nationalism and American exceptionalism:

- A. Many "Christians" blur nationalism and American exceptionalism with Christianity.
- (1) They essentially wrap the gospel in the American flag.
 - (2) One cannot tell where Christianity ends and national patriotism begins.
 - (3) Some Christians believe America is "God's country," as if our nation alone has some unique place in God's divine purposes.
 - (4) And, as a result of this divine relationship we are exceptional above all other nations.
"Religious people who believe in American exceptionalism and manifest destiny act as if the United State occupies a special relationship with God that other governments do not have; it is the new Israel of God!" (Willis, p.7)
- B. ** I don't want to give anyone the wrong impression.
- (1) I'm thankful I was born in the U.S. and have the privilege to be a U.S. citizen.
 - (2) I'm proud to be an American and I firmly believe we have a great country (e.g., nation built on equality under the law, in WWII helped save the world from Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, beacon of freedom, significant contributions to science and medicine, etc.).
 - (3) But our nation is not perfect (i.e., current moral climate, different laws for the elite than the common man, treatment of American Indians, slavery, Jim Crow, KKK, etc.).
 - (4) True New Testament Christianity gets a bad rap because many claiming to be Christians blend their brand of Christianity so closely with nationalism and American exceptionalism that many non-believers simply assume that all Christians are national zealots.
 - (5) ** Even though we are proud to be Americans, as a Christian our first allegiance is not to our country it is to God!

Phil. 3:20: *"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,"*

Eph. 2:19: *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,"*

Heb. 11:13-16: *"...confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them."*

- (6) ****** In all of human history, God selected only one nation with whom He entered into a special relationship: Israel (not the modern state of Israel, but ancient Israel of the Bible).
- (7) **8** In Genesis (e.g., Gen. 12:1-3, 7), God made very specific promises to Abraham:
- ☛ Greatly multiply his descendants and make them a great nation (Ex.),
 - ☛ Give them a land in which to dwell (Josh. 21:43),
 - ☛ Through them all the nations of the earth would be blessed (Gal. 3:16, 29).
- (8) God never entered into such a special relationship with any other nation.
- (9) We err if we think God has such a relationship with ours or any other modern nation.
- (10) ****** Israel consistently rebelled against God and ultimately rejected God's Messiah, thus, He terminated this unique relationship with Israel (AD 70 destruction of Jerusalem).

Matt. 23:31-38: *“Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. 33 Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? 34 Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, 35 that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. 37 ‘O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See! Your house is left to you desolate;” (cf. Matt. 24)*

- (11) ****** The descriptions that had been applied to Israel's special covenant relationship with God are now applied to the church, not to a political entity (nation) like the USA.

Ex. 19:5-6: *“Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”*

1 Pet. 2:5-10: *“you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture,*

*‘Behold, I lay in Zion
A chief cornerstone, elect, precious,
And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.’*

7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient,

*‘The stone which the builders rejected
Has become the chief cornerstone,’*

8 and

*‘A stone of stumbling
And a rock of offense.’*

They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who

once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (**Eph. 2:21-22**: “holy temple...habitation of God”)

- C. 9 As Christians, we need to realize God deals with the U.S. exactly as He deals with every other nation. Allow me to explain:
- (1) ** God ordains the existence of civil governments (Rom. 13:1-7).
 - (2) The criteria with which God judges nations is not their form of government (e.g., monarchy, dictatorship, democratic-republic, etc.).
 - (3) God’s criteria:
Prov. 14:34: “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people.”
 - (4) God is sovereign over all nations:
Dan. 4:17: “...the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will, and sets over it the lowest of men.” (Recall Larry Hafley’s comment: “Sometimes God gives us the government we deserve, not the government we want.”).
 - (5) ** When nations become evil and exhaust God’s longsuffering, He brings national judgment against them.
 - (a) How evil does a nation have to get before God judges it?
 - (b) I don’t rightly know (e.g., In Genesis 18 God agreed not to destroy Sodom if ten righteous people could be found. Evidently 10 could not be found! Chap. 19).
 - (6) For example, the judgments of the ancient nations foretold in Isaiah (at least 12):

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| ☛ Judah and Jerusalem (chap. 3), | ☛ Syria (chap. 17), |
| ☛ Samaria (chap. 9), | ☛ Ethiopia (chap. 18), |
| ☛ Assyria (chap. 10), | ☛ Egypt (chap. 19), |
| ☛ Babylon (chap. 13, 14, 21), | ☛ Edom (chap. 21), |
| ☛ Philistia (chap. 14), | ☛ Arabia (chap. 21), |
| ☛ Moab (chaps. 15, 16), | ☛ Tyre (chap. 23), |
 - (7) We can add to these Persia, Greece, Ptolemaic, Seleucid, and Roman empires.
 - (8) ** In fact, God ultimately judges and brings down all nations because all nations invariably become wicked. For example:
 - ☛ God raised up Assyria to bring judgment against Israel (Isa. 10:5-12).
 - ☛ God raised up Babylon to bring judgment against Judah (Hab. 1:5-13).
 - ☛ Both Israel and Judah were perplexed that God used nations even more wicked than they were to judge them. However, God ultimately judged Assyria and Babylon.
 - (a) Assyria was overthrown by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (612 B.C.).
 - (b) Babylon was overthrown by the Medo-Persian Empire: recall Belshazzar:
Dan. 5:27-28: “...You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; 28 Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.”
- D. Since the first century no new revelation has been given (Jn. 16:13; Jude 3), but make no mistake, God still judges nations: Vikings, Goths, Mongolia, China, Spain, Portugal, France, Russia, Germany, Japan, Great Britain, etc.

E. **10** Someday the USA will exhaust the longsuffering of God and He will judge our nation too.

- (1) ****** I would never propose to “whittle on God’s end of the stick,” but I see the downfall of our nation as a virtual certainty.
- (2) For example, our nation has “legally” murdered >61 M babies since 1973. Concerning king Manasseh of Judah:
2 Kgs. 24:4: “and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon.”
- (3) Certainly, Manasseh did not murder >61 M innocents, thus, his crimes pale in comparison to those of our country. Yet, “the LORD would not pardon.”
- (4) That being the case, what expectation can we possibly hold for our national pardon?
- (5) When and how far will the USA fall? I don’t have a clue! (explain when and how)
- (6) ****** Jeremiah expressed God’s dealing with the nations:

Jer. 18:5-10: “Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: 6 ‘O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter?’ says the LORD. ‘Look, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel! 7 The instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, 8 if that nation against whom I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it. 9 And the instant I speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, 10 if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will relent concerning the good with which I said I would benefit it.’”

- (7) ****** Let me bring this point to a close with a quote by brother Mike Willis (p. 9):

“Israel’s prosperity was dependent upon her obedience to the Lord (see Deut. 28-29). God preserved a righteous remnant of Israel in order to accomplish His purposes in bringing the Messiah into the world. But that was not true for other nations. Where are the remnants of the Hittites, Amorites, Moabites, Jebusites, etc.? As painful as it may be for patriotic Americans to think in such terms, the fact remains that God’s principles of the moral government of the world apply to our United States just as certainly as they have to all other nations of people. God is not bound to a covenant to save a remnant of Americans and restore the former glory of our kingdom.” (*Christians in a Secular Age*)

A final question comes to mind...

4. **11** Is America a Christian nation?

A. The word “Christian” is used only three times in the Bible (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16).

Acts 11:26: “And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

Acts 26:28: “Then Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You almost persuade me to become a Christian.’”

1 Pet. 4:16: “but if (a man suffer) as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name.” (ASV)

- (1) Note that in each case “Christian” is used as a noun; it is used to describe a person who believes in Christ, has repented of their sins, confessed Christ as their Lord, and been immersed (baptized) in water to receive the remission of their sins (Acts 2:37-37; 8:37-37; 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27).
- (2) The word “Christian” is never used in Scripture to refer to a business, school, publication, missionary agency, town, state, or nation.
- (3) ****** In this sense, America never was and never could have been Christian.

- (4) If it cannot be baptized into Christ, it cannot be a Christian!
- B. However, it is clear, if one reads the writings of our “founding fathers” that America was founded on principles consistent with the Bible and the religion of Jesus Christ.
- (1) Our nation was founded on a moral code and principles consistent with Christianity.
- (2) In this use of the English word “Christian,” there is a time when America could be called a “Christian nation.”
- ****“It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible.” —George Washington
- “God who gave us life, gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God?” —Thomas Jefferson
- “The Declaration of Independence laid the cornerstone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity.” —John Quincy Adams
- C. ****** But times have drastically changed since the founding of our nation.
- (1) Sometimes Israel was faithful to God, other times (most of the time!) she was unfaithful.
- (2) What was true of Israel is true of all nations—nations are never constant.
- (3) Righteous nations become unrighteous, unrighteous nations (rarely!) become righteous.
- (4) In recent years, America has made a consistent move away from principles, beliefs and values consist with the Bible to those based on secular thought.
- (5) The purpose of our study will be to examine the secularization of America and how we as Christians deal with it.

III. CONCLUSION: 12

1. Our beloved country has no unique relationship with God that makes it exceptional.
 - A. In God’s eyes we are just like all other nations.
 - B. America will be blessed/cursed on God’s standard of righteousness (Prov. 14:34; Jer. 18:5-10).
2. My generation has lived through a transition from a value system founded on Biblical principles to a predominately secular value system.
 - A. The secular value system is destroying our families, devaluing life, and debasing our culture.
 - B. I fully expect this trend to continue; hopefully something will arise to slow and/or reverse it.
 - C. Secular values have replaced Christianity in America and will be the topic of our study.
3. What can you and I do to save America?
 - A. The solution to America’s problems is moral and spiritual, not political.
 - B. The very best thing we can do is live our lives as faithful Christians (cf. Gen. 18).
4. Regardless of the future, Christians are assured eternal victory in Jesus Christ! Phil. 3:7-21

Phil. 3:13-14: “...but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind;”
5. Invitation.