

Examining Crisis and Defining Sin: Relevant or Redundant?

**This resource was used to aid a regional solemn-assembly prayer meeting in Buffalo, NY in 2014.*

Standing in intercession for a people or nation requires that we are honest with God about both His desire to cover and bless and the impact and separation that willful sin brings. This resource provides a glimpse into the nature of America's trouble so that we can understand what is taking place in our land and bring these issues before the Lord as a watchmen people.

There is a theology both settling and settled in the understanding of many in the church today that would see the address of sin as a redundant expression of an out-dated dispensation of graceless rule-keeping. Many, in what some have termed as the "Hyper-Grace" movement would see the Jesus of the gospel record as the updated replacement to the rigid, unbending rule of dictatorship outlined throughout the course of the Old Covenant Scriptures. But, when it comes to God's dealing with the sin of sinful man, the New Testament boldly and clearly asserts the need for addressing and repenting of sin as the necessary pre-requisites for entry into the kingdom of Heaven.

In keeping with this truth, God has linked the release of great spiritual awakening to the act of personal and corporate repentance.

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord." Ac.3:19

The purpose of this short study is not to treat the subject of repentance text relating to revival promise, but rather to offer a concise introduction into what the scripture provides as the four primary categories of global sin at the end of the age. Recognizing the emerging influence of these sins aids in both understanding their pervasiveness in our culture and preparing to respond to them in a biblical way.

DEFINING THE CRISIS IN AMERICA: UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Premise: God will publicly confront and oppose a willfully unrepentant America because she has forsaken Him to become a worldwide pioneer and influencer in the realm of sin. This is significant primarily because of America's willful shift from it's fundamental historical Judeo-Christian foundations. Because God loves every

nation, He confronts sin and crushes the pride of the arrogant while simultaneously extending His hand in mercy to all of those who resist Him (Is.13:11).

“He who has ears, let Him hear what the Spirit says.” Mt.13:9

I. Financial/Economic -Many leaders in America and around the Earth are warning of an impending economic collapse with a destabilizing impact greater than anything that we can imagine. In recent years many Americans in both the private and corporate sectors have experienced significant financial loss in the arenas of investment and income including many churches and para-church ministries as a result of the 2008-2009 Global Financial Crisis which sent the economic world reeling and ripe for still further disaster should there not be miraculous intervention.

The globalization of economies creates the need for policies and practices that harmonize international economic agenda. America’s economy is not autonomous. It is subject to the trending of international instabilities. This puts our nation and many other nations in a tension to develop solutions to global problem through means of war or political cooperation and compromise.

The prophet Haggai predicts a global end-time shaking that will affect the financial stability of every nation on earth (Hag.2:7-8) and lead many nations to shift their economic and political policies in order to participate in a financial system ultimately governed, or at least, strongly influenced, by the anti-christ (Rev.13:16-17). While we do not know with certainty all of the details surrounding this event we do know that currently there are evolving trends which can very easily set the stage for such a development. This is as much a spiritual crisis for our nation as a political/financial one. Our loyalties are to lie with Jesus and His plans for the nations. At some point, and I believe we are already approaching such a place, our nation may find itself engaged in an epic struggle to resist the pull to compromise our national sovereignty in order to reconcile the fallout of the global economy.

GOD PLACES THE SIN OF MANKIND AT THE END OF THE AGE INTO FOUR MAIN CATEGORIES:

“And they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”
Rev.9:21

I.Murder/Abortion -In the U.S. alone, There have been over 50,000,000 children ripped from the safety of their mother's womb and brutally murdered since 1973. The scripture terms this the "shedding of innocent blood" and "practicing violence" (Jer.22:17; Deut.19:10; Rev.2:20). This action, now legalized and protected by the highest courts in our land, incurs the guilt of and the penalty for bloodshed on an entire nation. God clearly defines the penalty for the shedding of innocent blood as death (Deut.19:11-13).

Random acts of terror have increased in America beyond anything we could have imagined even 5 and 10 years ago. Home, school, campus and business place terrorism have become commonplace. Murderous rampages that engulf marriages, families and neighborhood communities deck the headlines of major news networks on a near daily basis.

Many of our children and young adults live saturated in a culture of murder through access to games, movies and music that not only glorify murder and death but make it interactive and fun while providing detailed instructions for walking it out on their own.

II.Immorality (Num.31:16):Perversion/Homosexuality- The levels of perversion have reached epidemic proportions in our nation. Multitudes of kindergarten and elementary age students undergo hyper-sexualization training in their schools, much of this mandated and protected by law. Music, movies, television, fashion, sports and technology, namely the internet, have become mass transit systems for preaching the gospel of immorality and for grooming disciples to reach even further into depravity than the previous generation becoming consumed with a rampant, insatiable, and increasingly normative appetite for sexual perversion.

The "right" for men and women of the same sex to co-habitate, marry, and publicly parade a perverse lifestyle without experiencing any shame or opposition is fiercely guarded by legislation and "moral" activists from every strata of society.

III.Theft/Idolatry/Greed (Num.31:16)-

"Don't be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshipping the things of this world." Col.3:5 (NLT) The NKJV translates "greedy" as "covetousness".

A. Covetousness and greed mark a generation when we give ourselves to the pursuit of that which we covet. We do this mainly with our time, money, energy and natural strengths. We pour our lives into the pursuit of those things which we covet, or lust after. Greed, or covetousness, is the principle motivator for the majority of our actions and beliefs in the free world. This is what the Holy Spirit defines as idolatry. We worship the

objects of our fascination by pouring out our very lives as a sacrifice on the altar of desire in order to obtain them.

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask.” James 4:1-2

B. Greed, or idolatry, is the principle driving factor for theft. There are a number of ways that theft is rooted in the American culture. Deliberate failure to report taxable income, unjust billing for services rendered, deceitful marketing and overtaking name just a few. Many times a government or business will change it's policies and enact laws in order to regulate and justify their theft. God charged believers that refuse to pay their tithe's as thieves (Mal.3:8-9).

“Given the ongoing nature of the crisis, many complicated explanations will surface in the years to come. Yet the root of the economic depression might very well lie in one fundamental human instinct: greed.”

-YaleGlobal Online 2015

C. A gospel of idolatry. Throughout prophetic literature and beyond God strongly condemns idol worship and all forms of idolatry. Today the church in America understands the concept that idol worship is wrong. But was it simply prostrating oneself in front of a carved image that God opposed (Ex.20:4-5)? The prophet Hosea outlines for us the central underlying issue that is the driving force behind idol worship.

“...for [Israel] said, ‘I will go after my lovers, who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.’” Hos.2:5

The driving force behind idol worship was and is obtaining what the worshipper wants. In large part today this message of “getting what the worshipper wants” is preached, many times unwittingly, as the foundational tenet of the gospel message. In many ways it is stated that, “If we acknowledge Jesus as God and participate in some manner of praise and obedience than we can get what we really want.” We can have a better life, better health, better relationships, increased finances, freedom from trouble and then at the end of the day, salvation from hell and eternal bliss in heaven. While the promises and power offered to us in Jesus are glorious and in fullness beyond the scope of anything our imagination can conceive of, Jesus is not simply the means to our end. He is the end. Attempting to use God as a stepping stone to get what we want tragically

undermines the full import of the Biblical message of costly discipleship, true grace and God's inheritance in the saints.

IV.Sorceries/Drug Use- We derive our English word "pharmacy" from the Greek word "pharmakeía" often translated in the scripture as 'sorcery [ies]' (Mic.5:12, Nah.3:4; Gal.5:20; Rev.9:21,18:23 etc.). Biblical perspective includes both sorcery and drug use in its understanding and usage of "pharmakeia, pharmakon, pharmakos, pharmakeuō etc." Sorceries include using and seeking to manipulate the spiritual world for the cursing of one's enemies or for the benefit of oneself through a wide variety of means. There are a wide number of practices that employ methodologies to this end. Many cultures and nations have engaged in sorcery for centuries and beyond. In the last decades America has experienced a hyper-influx of demonic spiritualization through avenues such as blatant occult worship, psychics and mediums, new age beliefs and practices etc. Many of us personally know others who participate and even lead in these things. This creates the context for a culture that is ripe for deception as demonic activity increases including demonically energized signs and wonders (2 Thess.2:9; Rev.13:13,14, 16:14, 19:20).

The World Health Organization (WHO) released a study that found America to have the highest consumption rate of illegal drugs in the world. America also has the highest number of tobacco users. Here is a direct quote from the researchers, *"The use of drugs seems to be a feature of more affluent countries. The U.S., which has been driving much of the world's drug research and drug policy agenda, stands out with higher levels of use of alcohol, cocaine, and cannabis, despite punitive illegal drug policies, as well as (in many U.S. states), a higher minimum legal alcohol drinking age than many comparable developed countries."* This study predates the now legal usability of marijuana in many states. The World Drug Report 2014 found that on average Americans consume more illicit pharmaceutical grade drugs than any other nation. It is estimated that, according to multiple studies, within the last 10 years the increase of painkilling drugs having been prescribed by doctors has skyrocketed upward some 400-600%.

The biblical understanding of drug use corresponds in large part to religious practices that often involved the invoking of powers, blessings or curses and the manipulation of the senses. Illicit drug-use alone is an epidemic but when combined with the desire to achieve heightened spiritual awareness, superhuman power and abilities and increase the pleasure of sinful activities we see that the cultural atmosphere becomes ripe for a radical increase of demonic activity and deception. Though it is unpopular to say, the atmosphere created at many venues that host musical gatherings, including clubs and bars, often transforms into a drug-induced worship meeting.

"Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit." Ez.16:49-50

