Thus far in the series *The Death of a Nation* we established that nations are like people in that they will die in the end. In the second lesson we examined that the length of life of these nations are directly linked to the natural blessings and consequences in following or ignoring the truths found in God's word. In lesson three we covered the negative side of that equation concerning the immorality involved in falling nations. In this lesson we will more closely identify the lifecycle pattern of nations, from birth to death. Perhaps if we can better identify the stages of past nations, then we can better see where we might be in our own.

Part 4) The Life-Cycle of Nations

Sir John Bagot Glubb (1897-1987), a highly honored British general and historian, wrote about the collapsed empires of the past. In his 1978 book *The Fate of Empires and the Search for Survival*, he described a common pattern fitting the history of fallen empires. He observed that nations experience a common life-cycle pattern from infancy to death. They are as follows:

The Seven Stages of a Nation's Life-Cycle

- 1) The Age of Outburst
- 2) The Age of Conquests
- 3) The Age of Commerce
- 4) The Age of Affluence
- 5) The Age of Intellect
- 6) The Age of Decadence
- 7) The Age of Decline and Collapse

The observation is simple. Over the course of time the beliefs of the nation's citizens change. Through time the military, religious, economic and political events alter the national mindset of the people. Over time the pattern is simply repeated over and over again.

1) The Age of Outburst

In this stage the people yearn with a common vision that leads them to mutually take great risks in pursuit of such. More often than not the core thrust of this stage is anchored in religious conviction. For the people of Israel, they shared the vision to take the Promised Land which was promised by God. With God's help they departed Egypt in search of a new life in a new land (Exodus14).

2) The Age of Conquests

This is the stage where the nation will conquer the lands with which they will reside. Most of the Book of Joshua dealt with this. The Israelites were to go in and wipe out the enemy, dispossessing them from the land (Joshua 1:11).



3) The Age of Commerce

This is the stage when a nation is opening up trade with other nations on a high level. They are viable in their currency, industry and production. Israel experienced great times of commerce with neighboring countries. The wars of David and the passing of the kingdom to Solomon led to national peace in the land. As a result Solomon was world famous for his powerful commerce.

4) The Age of Affluence

This is the stage where great commerce brings riches to the people. Great works of architecture are built as a demonstration of that wealth. Solomon built a large palace and the first Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 4-12). Archaeology reveals he built great stables and other architecture, some of which remains today. It is also during this time that wealth trickles into the hands of a few.

5) The Age of Intellect

It is during this stage that a shift takes place from practical application to the "New and Improved" forms of knowledge. This generation typically is harsh on the religious and tested values of the forefathers. It is also during this stage of a nation that welfare and many handouts are distributed to the populace. Many of the kings which followed the reign of Solomon became "wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight." (Is 5:21). They abandoned time-tested policy.

6) The Age of Decadence

In this stage of the life-cycle the generation which sets up a new intellectual basis begins to redefine morality. People tend to do what is "right in the own eyes" as they seek to build upon their false logic. There also tends to be a greater hostility against the old traditions, religion and morality. When Israel reached this stage of her history during the days of Manasseh, immorality was at a new high (2 Chronicles 33:1-9). It was also during that time that God condemned the nation to face destruction for they had passed the point of no return. There was no turning back from His wrath.

7) The Age of Decline and Collapse

In this end stage of the life-cycle, the nation has already reached the tipping point. The downfall of a nation in this stage will either be from within, without or a combination of the two. In Israel's case, they were deteriorated morally and economically from within. Being unable to unite in their narcissistic chaos, they were destroyed from without by Babylon, being carried away into captivity (2 Chronicles 36:10-ff).

Glubb discusses that nation after nation exhibited this pattern of the life-cycle leading to their death. We know many other nations from the Bible that experienced the same. As it says in

Hebrews 8:5, "Behold the pattern..." It would behoove us to study the United States on the backdrop of this pattern to see where we are at and where we are headed.

The United States of America

1) The Age of Outburst

Our nation was founded primarily on the pursuit of freedom and above all religious freedom. The early settlers in this nation were victims of persecution laid out by European royalty. William Bradford, the leader of a movement called the Pilgrims, wrote this about the religious persecution dealt to them prior to their departure to America.

"But after these things they could not long continue in any peaceable condition, but were hunted & persecuted on every side, so as their former afflictions were but as flea-bitings in comparison of these which now came upon them. For some were taken & clapt up in prison, others had their houses besett & watcht night and day, & hardly escaped their hands; and ye most were faine to flie & leave their howses & habitations, and the means of their livelehood."

They were on the cusp of the age of outburst in pursuit of the freedom to worship the God of the Bible in the best way they saw fit. Many others came from Europe over the next couple of centuries in search of this freedom. They sought to use the Bible as the primary text of education and churches were built throughout the land. This freedom of religion to worship the God of the Bible can be seen throughout our early nation.

- Of the 55 delegates to the 1787 Constitutional Convention, 49 were Protestants, and two were Roman Catholics (D. Carroll, and Fitzsimons). Among the Protestant delegates to the Constitutional Convention, 28 were Church of England (or Episcopalian, after the American Revolutionary War was won), eight were Presbyterians, seven were Congregationalists, two were Lutherans, two were Dutch Reformed, and two were Methodists.
- The Declaration of Independence contains five references to God —
 God as supreme Lawmaker, God as Creator of all men, God as the
 Source of all rights, God as the world's supreme Judge, and God as
 our Protector on whom we can rely.
- The First Amendment to the Constitution sets out to guarantee us freedom of religion.
- The Northwest Ordinance, a requirement of every state admitted into the Union, required Christianity to be taught in every school.
- 197 of the first 200 colleges were founded by churches.

- One was required to have a theological degree before they could obtain a law degree, for law was based on the "law of nature and of nature's God".
- We were a Christian nation founded upon Christian principles.

2) The Age of Conquests

Land was fought, purchased and negotiated for. As colonies and states were added to the Union, Christianity spread throughout. The laws that were written were based in the Bible. The people were expected to uphold the morality of the Bible. Men like George Washington, Patrick Henry, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton and Samuel Adams influenced the nation in ways of righteousness. Their words and actions were orchestrated with the God of the Bible in mind.

3) The Age of Commerce

With the shackles of Imperialism broken apart through the Revolutionary war, commerce among the young nation thrived. We became a country of mass production of natural resources, inventory and invention. Economic freedom combined with a biblical work ethic led us to be a major exporter to the entire world. Farming was still the number one industry and personal land ownership was higher than anywhere else in the world.

To be noted: Around this time a French historian named Alexis de Tocqueville came to our country studied American democracy for five years. He wanted to observe our government and understand how this new country could be as great as it was. He wrote that "America is great because she is good. If America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great." He could see the morality of the people and a national strength in how it was carried out. He also warned that "When the taste for physical gratifications among them has grown more rapidly than their education . . . the time will come when men are carried away and lose all self-restraint It is not necessary to do violence to such a people in order to strip them of the rights they enjoy; they themselves willingly loosen their hold. . . . they neglect their chief business which is to remain their own masters."

4) The Age of Affluence

Though America was becoming a shining light among the nations of the world, she still had faults to contend with. The Southern states expanded slavery largely do the need to have cheap labor to work the land for the prospering plantation owners. The Civil War stalled the nation for some time, but in the prosperity returned shortly thereafter.

With the emergence of great commerce came an expansion of the upper and lower classes. Many of the great industrialists appeared on the scene during this time period. Men like Carnegie in steel, Rockefeller in oil, J.P Morgan in banking, Ford in the

automobile and Vanderbilt in shipping and rail, became rich beyond their imagination. At the same time many others became poor at their expense. This was further exacerbated in the Great Depression. It was also at this time that great structures like the Chrysler and Empire State Building were reaching new heights among the expanding cities. Our influence on the world was great.

5) The Age of Intellect

Around the same time the intellectual approach taken by our nation began to change. The control of the public schools was taken away from the churches in 1895. Men like John Dewey influenced the schools to learn the ways of Humanism. Evolution was being taught in place of Creationism. The colleges began to teach us to question authority and tradition. Prayer was being taken out of the public schools in 1964 through these efforts.

Every year the national trend was higher divorce rates, higher unwed pregnancy rates, higher abortion rates, higher crime rates and lower test scores in the areas that count like math and science. Because all those things lead to higher poverty, more welfare and assistance programs were needed. The government determined it was going to fight an all out war against poverty, but in the end they only made it worse. It seems the country had more problems with the "new way of thinking", void of the original belief structure of the early nation like hard work, honesty, strong families and morality.

6) The Age of Decadence

Glubb wrote in his publication that you can tell a lot about a nation by the heroes that they hold. If that is true, then we are in serious trouble. Fifty years ago our nation honored men like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Patrick Henry, Christopher Columbus, Thomas Jefferson, Betsy Ross and Daniel Boone. Today our culture honors unprincipled Hollywood actors, immoral athletes, filthy-mouth singers and dishonest politicians as their idols.

More than that, we have become a nation of materialists, immoral sexual deviants, narcissistic radicals hell-bent on walking over the top of others just to prosper our own appetites. We have a nation of fools warring against our Christian traditions like marriage, the Bible, loving our neighbor and yes, even Christmas. We do not value unborn human life or the aged as precious from God, but an inconvenience to be disposed of. The following article from one month ago should explain where we are at in this age of decadence.

Planned Parenthood Black Friday

Are you on a budget? No problem! If you are in Southern Florida, you could have received a smokin' Black Friday abortion deal!

Planned Parenthood of South Florida and the Treasure Coast offered the special, saying, "Visit our West Palm Beach or Kendall Health Center for special after Thanksgiving savings on Friday, November 23rd." It appears you would have been able to save \$10 on the murder of your unborn child.

This is just the tip of the iceberg because it will get worse if we follow the pattern of all the other nations that met their death.

7) The Age of Decline and Collapse

As mentioned before, as the morality falls and narcissism takes over, the nation will die. This is because there is no national glue to hold that nation together. We are broke morally and financially. Exactly what Alexis de Tocqueville predicted; Just like the historians have taught us; Just like the Bible has confirmed to us over thousands of years, we are in the age of decline and collapse.

How will this happen to our nation. Perhaps we will be consumed from within with our immorality and debt? Perhaps we will be unable to fund the military and be overrun by an enemy? Perhaps we will end up electing horrible leaders that will just take us off the cliff in their blindness?

How long does our nation have left?

Only God knows for sure, but the handwriting is on the wall. History is clear; we cannot continue the way we have and it simply go away on its own. I did not cover this topic to make you feel bad, but make you aware of your surroundings. I want to offer you a message of hope, not of despair. There are steps that we can take which will help not only you, your family and the church family, but also the nation itself. We will be covering this in our final lesson entitled: "The Death of a Nation: What can we do?"

There are those whom might be here today and were hoping to have a nice, fluffy warm sermon on Christmas. You might be disappointed, but please do not be. Let's end on this thought.

There were Christians around 90 AD that lived under the reign of Emperor Domitian. He was putting them through a horrible time of persecution and God announced in the Book of Revelation that the Empire's days were coming to an end. Throughout the letter Jesus provided many encouraging thoughts to the readers of this writing. One of those occurred in Revelation 12:5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. This was a reference to Matthew 1:23 "BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL," which translated means, "GOD WITH US."

In other words, Jesus was born in the flesh, lived in the flesh, was persecuted in the flesh and died in the flesh. There is nothing that anyone on earth has gone through that Jesus cannot understand and come to our aid, for He was human in every way as we are. Hebrews 4:15-16 For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

As sure as Jesus was born in the flesh to a woman so many centuries ago, He is going to help all Christians to weather whatever national storm that we will face. He will get us through. Put that in your Christmas stocking and celebrate this week. It is the gift that keeps giving.