

“The Coping Christian in One Nation Under Satan”

by Doug Hamilton

X) Complete Darkness In One Nation Under Satan.

We are nearing the end of this exhaustive series on *The Coping Christian in One Nation Under Satan*. The Bible says quite a bit concerning the living conditions of a nation which is about to fall. Throughout the period of the early church, perilous times developed which appeared to the Christians to indicate the end of time. Christians among any declining nation are often referred to it as “last days” or something similar (Hebrews 1:2; 2 Peter 3:3-4; 1 John 2:18; Jude 17).

The point is that every generation of Christians over the past two thousand years have referred to the moral decline of the culture as "the last days". When civilizations war with worldly values against the people of God, it will always seem to the Christian as if it is "*the last days*". The purpose for establishing this is not to engage in an eschatological discussion, but to better recognize this last stage of a dying nation. The apostle Paul wrote to his protégé Timothy in his second letter of record about the moral decline of a civilization, he used the term "in the last days".

2 Timothy 3:1-5 But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ² For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵ holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these.

There is one word that describes such behavior better than any other; it is NARCISSISM. This is the *inordinate fascination with oneself; excessive self-love; vanity* (Merriam-Webster's). When one person in a society becomes narcissistic, it is unfortunate for him. When the majority of the people of a society becomes narcissistic, it spells disaster. We are told in Proverbs 14:34, “*Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.*” Nations who abandon God’s sound principles must fall through the natural consequences.

The Problem of Narcissism and Nations

A nation cannot be strong when the majority of the populace cannot embrace common value of "*Love Your Neighbor*" (Matthew 22:39). When people are doing "*What is right in their own eyes*" (Judges 21:25) instead "*Doing unto others as you would have done unto you*" (Luke 6:31), there cannot be unity among the people. The society will begin to morally implode.

Remember the Destruction of Jerusalem.

Jesus referenced the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24. He listed the reasons in Matthew 23 why it would occur. They are an indictment against the culture on the charge of narcissism. They were...

- A Culture of Condemnation (13) They made religion void in the lives of the people. Israel’s leaders weighed heavy burdens on others, yet would not even keep it themselves.

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- A Culture of Cruelty (14) Only men could own property in the nation. When a widow without with male heirs faced this situation, the leaders of Jesus' day were notorious about foreclosing on the property for their own.
- A Culture of Contamination (15) They were not trying to make disciples of God, but more evil men than themselves. The next generation would be worse than the last.
- A Culture of Deception (16,17, 22) The leaders were well-known for swearing false oaths before the people. They actually felt they would be okay in God's eyes as long as they did not "swear to God" that something was true.
- A Culture of Neglect (23-24) The leaders would make the sacrifices, but failed to live for God with the principles of justice, mercy and faithfulness. Justice for the poor was unheard of.
- A Culture of Materialism (25-26) They were engaged in self-indulgence, doing what they wanted and when they could. Their god was their appetite and in their glory there was no shame (Philippians 3:19).
- A Culture of Unrighteousness (27-28) They put on quite a show for the populace, but they were nothing more than hypocrites and law-breakers.
- A Culture of Persecution (29-33) They were no different than their forefathers in persecuting the righteous among the nation. Jesus was righteous, yet they wanted him dead. The apostles were sent out with message of hope, but were executed.

Jesus confirmed that the nation had taken a narcissistic approach. One generation from His prophecy, in September, 70 AD, over one million Jews died at the hand of General Titus and Rome. They reaped what they sowed.

Narcissism in Our Culture Today

In the publication *Monitor on Psychology* (February 2011) there was an article (page 64) by Sadie F. Dingfelder titled *Reflecting on Narcissism*. In it she wrote the following:

Imagine a country where everyone acts like a reality show contestant — obsessed with power, status and appearance, and is comfortable manipulating others for their personal gain. “I’m here to win, not make friends,” would be the national motto.

This society would have high crime rates — white collar and violent — as people take whatever they feel entitled to, says Christopher Barry, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of Southern Mississippi and lead editor of “Narcissism and Machiavellianism in Youth” (APA, 2010). Cosmetic surgery would be routine, materialism rampant, and everyone would seek fame or notoriety, he adds. It would also be a place with high rates of anxiety and depression. That’s because narcissists — people with an inflated sense of their importance and abilities —

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have trouble keeping friends, even though they are good at making them, Barry's found. “A narcissistic society would be a deeply lonely place,” he says.

According to some researchers, that is precisely where America is heading. Self-esteem is on the rise, with 80 percent of middle-school students scoring higher in self-esteem in 2006 than the average middle-school student in 1988 (in the *Review of General Psychology*, Vol. 14, No. 3). Among college students, subclinical levels of narcissism have steadily risen since the 1970s, other studies suggest. And though the diagnosis may be dropped from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (see Narcissism and the DSM), young people are much more likely than older adults to have ever experienced Narcissistic Personality Disorder, according to a large-scale epidemiological study published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* (Vol. 67, No. 7).

Welcome to the United States of America

We have forgotten our identity in Christ and sought out individualistic principles to make us the center of our universe. As Dr. Jim Taylor, a psychology professor at the University of San Francisco, stated in his article...

It's one thing to see that there is a growing number of narcissists in America today. But the real concern is not the individual narcissists among us, but when our society embraces and *accepts* narcissism as the norm. And that time may have arrived. That's when we have to start asking the next question, which is far scarier: What effect will this increasingly normalized culture of narcissism have on our society?...The answer that came most readily to my mind, and an apocryphal one at that, is a gradual yet inexorable tear in the fabric of our society. Think of all the qualities that enable us to form a functioning and vital nation -- respect, compassion, tolerance, selflessness -- and you will see that they don't exist in the narcissistic personality (or culture)...The indifference, egotism, disrespect and lack of consideration that are central to narcissism are also reflective of the increasingly polarized and vitriolic tone of our current body politic, recent unethical corporate behavior, the rise in cheating among students in school and the gamut of bad behavior among professional athletes. As Pogo noted so famously, "We have met the enemy, and he is us." (Narcissism on the Rise in America? Posted 5/28/11)

If the core values of God's word are adopted by a nation, then the natural blessings will be upon them. The nation will be a better place for all to live and the country will be strong. If the core values of narcissism are in place, then there shall be no value in anyone's life. That nation will implode on itself and life as they know it will cease. What remains is immoral chaos that nobody will want to be a part of in the end.

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Application:

Do not be shocked in what you see in the news, for it all boils down to prevailing narcissism taking over the culture. On the other hand, we as Christians are called to be the opposite of narcissists. What do Christians do in response to the narcissists loving themselves? Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, “*Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*” The word for *perfect* which Jesus used does not refer to without sin, rather doing our very best to represent God. If we back up a few verses to the beginning of the section, we find out how to be *perfect*.

Matthew 5:43–47 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven...”⁴⁶ “For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”⁴⁷ “If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?”

Loving Our Neighbor to the extent of praying for our enemies is the epitome of God’s perfection. If we demonstrate our love in the midst of a narcissistic world, then we exemplify perfection in God’s eyes. When we show *Love Your Neighbor* in these declining times, we will win over the hearts of many. That is how we shine as lights in the midst of the crooked and perverse generation. Go and show a selfless love to win over a narcissistic world!

Closing Story

A truly humble man is hard to find, yet God delights to honor such selfless people. Booker T. Washington, the renowned black educator, was an outstanding example of this truth. Shortly after he took over the presidency of Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, he was walking in an exclusive section of town when he was stopped by a wealthy white woman. Not knowing the famous Mr. Washington by sight, she asked if he would like to earn a few dollars by chopping wood for her. Because he had no pressing business at the moment, Professor Washington smiled, rolled up his sleeves, and proceeded to do the humble chore she had requested. When he was finished, he carried the logs into the house and stacked them by the fireplace. A little girl recognized him and later revealed his identity to the lady.

The next morning the embarrassed woman went to see Mr. Washington in his office at the Institute and apologized profusely. “It’s perfectly all right, Madam,” he replied. “Occasionally I enjoy a little manual labor. Besides, it’s always a delight to do something for a friend.”

She shook his hand warmly and assured him that his meek and gracious attitude had endeared him and his work to her heart. Not long afterward she showed her admiration by persuading some wealthy acquaintances to join her in donating thousands of dollars to the Tuskegee Institute. -*Our Daily Bread*