

DON'T ALIGN YOURSELF WITH MAN

2 ²²Stop [looking] to man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for how much does he count?

3 See now, the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, is about to take away from Jerusalem and Judah both supply and support; the whole supply of bread and the whole supply of water. ²[He is about to remove] the hero and the warrior, the judge and the prophet, the soothsayer and the elder, ³the captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the expert craftsman and the skillful enchanter. ⁴I will make boys to be their officials; mere children will govern them. ⁵The people will oppress each other—man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The youth will treat the elderly with disrespect and the ignoble [will be disrespectful] towards the honorable man. ⁶When a man seizes his brother in his father's house and says to him, You have a cloak, you be our ruler. Take charge of this heap of ruins! ⁷that man will cry out, I will not be your healer! I have neither food nor clothing in my house. You will not make me the ruler of these people! ⁸[Such will be the case] because Jerusalem will be ruined and Judah will fall; because their words and their deeds are in opposition to Jehovah, provoking the eyes of his glory.

⁹The look on their faces testifies against them; they display their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought calamity upon themselves. ¹⁰Tell the righteous that it will be well for them, they shall enjoy the fruit of their deeds. ¹¹But woe to the wicked! It will go badly for him, what his hands have done shall be done to him. ¹²O my people! Youths are their oppressors and women rule over them. O my people, those who lead you cause you to go astray and they destroy the way [in which you should go]. ¹³Jehovah stands up to contend, he rises to judge the peoples. ¹⁴Jehovah will enter into judgment against the elders of his people and against their princes. It is you who have devoured the vineyard! The plunder you have taken from the poor is in your houses! ¹⁵What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor [into the ground]? declares the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.

¹⁶Furthermore, Jehovah declares, Because the daughters of Zion are arrogant, and walk around with heads held high and seductive eyes, and go about with mincing steps as ornaments jingle from their ankles, ¹⁷therefore the Lord will afflict the scalp of the daughters of Zion with scabs and Jehovah will expose the private parts [of their bodies]. ¹⁸On that day the Lord will take away all that makes them beautiful: the bangles and headbands and crescent necklaces, ¹⁹the earrings and bracelets and veils, ²⁰the headdresses and ankle chains and sashes, the perfume bottles and magic charms, ²¹the signet rings and nose rings, ²²the fine robes and the capes and cloaks, the purses ²³and the mirrors, the linen garments and the tiaras and the shawls. ²⁴Instead of a sweet fragrance, there will be stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of a beautiful hairdo, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding. ²⁵Your men will fall by the sword, your warriors will be slain in battle. ²⁶The gates [of Jerusalem] will lament and mourn; and being left desolate, she shall sit on the ground.

4 In that day seven women will take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own food and provide our own clothing; only allow us to be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!

²On that day the Branch of Jehovah will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. ³He who is left in Zion and he who remains in Jerusalem will be called holy—all those who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴[This will be] when the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and has cleansed the bloodstains from Jerusalem by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of fire. ⁵Then Jehovah will create over all of Mount Zion, and over those who assemble there, a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; for over everything the glory [will be spread] as a covering. ⁶There will be a shelter to provide shade from the heat of the day, and to be a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain. (Isa. 2:22-4:6)

Introduction

On the morning of April 12, 1912, a magnificent new luxury liner, christened, *Titanic*, set sail on its maiden voyage from Liverpool, England; its destination was New York. *Titanic* represented the culmination of 19th century human progress; the ship offered the ultimate in luxury and comfort, and featured the latest advances in technology and safety. The great ship was advertised as being “unsinkable;” the designer of this great luxury liner boasted, “Not even God could sink *Titanic*!”

Titanic was more than a great luxury liner; it was really the embodiment of a vision. As *Titanic* was launched on its maiden voyage in the early years of the 20th century, it really epitomized secular man himself: launching out into the “uncharted waters” of the 20th century, full of optimism, hope, and self-confidence.

On the night of April 14, 1912, somewhere in the dark frigid waters of the North Atlantic, this great luxury liner, *Titanic*, struck an ice burg, ripping a three hundred foot gash in the right side of the hull. At first, the passengers and crew felt there was little cause for alarm; they believed the publicity, and had confidence in the technological ability of man: *Titanic* was unsinkable. At 2:20 a.m. on the morning of April 15, 1912, the great luxury liner *Titanic* sank.

Men had put their confidence in *Titanic* and all it represented: it embodied the epitome of 19th century technology and luxury; it embodied the hopes of secular man for the 20th century; but in the early morning hours of April 15, 1912, *Titanic* went down to the ocean floor.

In Isaiah 2:22 the Word of God exhorts us, “*Stop looking to man!*” That is to say, don’t put your confidence in man; don’t adopt his thinking and outlook; don’t follow his agenda; don’t identify yourself with his kingdom. In a word, Don’t Align Yourself with Man.

This present passage of Scripture alerts us to the fact that even those who identify themselves as God’s people may in actuality be aligning themselves with man rather than with God. As Christians, we must consciously align ourselves with the LORD in our thinking and conduct, not with secular mankind.

I. Don't Align Yourself with Man, ...Because He Cannot Withstand God (Isa. 2:22-3:7; 3:16-4:1)

Isaiah 2:22 exhorts us to *“Stop looking to man,”* then proceeds to describe man as the one *“whose breath is in his nostrils,”* and then asks the question, *“For how much does he count?”* We are being reminded here that man is frail and transitory—his life is dependent upon his breath, and his breath is dependent upon God. Note Genesis 2:7, *“And Jehovah God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.”* Note, too, Genesis 6:13, 7:21-22,

Then God said to Noah, I have determined to bring all mankind to an end, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; surely, I will destroy them together with the earth ... ²¹Every living thing that moved on the earth perished—birds, livestock, wild animals, all the creatures that swarm over the earth, and all mankind. ²²Everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died. (Gen. 6:13, 7:21-22)

Modern medical technology may give us the illusion of immortality, but the fact is that life and death are ultimately in the hands of God. Thus the exhortation of Scripture is that we *“stop looking to man”*—i.e.; that we not put our confidence in man, and that we not align ourselves with man in his thinking, his hopes, and the building of his secular kingdom.

In Isaiah 3:1 the prophet announces that the LORD of hosts is about to remove the nation's *“supply and support.”* The Hebrew term, *מִשְׁעָן*, from the root word *שָׁעַן*, meaning “to lean upon,” or “to rely upon,” is repeated here in two different forms; the point being made is that the LORD of hosts is about to remove everything that contributes to the making of a secure and stable society.

The LORD's dismantling of the society is outlined for us in verses 1b-3. He is about to take away *“the whole supply of bread, and the whole supply of water”* (vs. 1b.) The LORD is able to do so by means of drought and other natural calamities; or, He can allow man himself to do so by means of foolish and greedy misuse of the environment.

Verses 2-3 describe how the nation is about to be deprived of its stable government. The LORD is going to remove *“the judge, the prophet, the soothsayer, the elder”*—the civil and religious leaders, the spiritual and moral conscience of the nation—because, as the inclusion of *“the soothsayer”* indicates, they have become spiritually and morally corrupt. The LORD is going to remove *“the captain of fifty”*—the forces responsible for internal law and order. He is going to remove *“the expert craftsman”*—there is a deterioration in the quality of craftsmanship and pride in workmanship as the conscience and the spirit of the nation decline.

As verse 4 reports, once the nation has been stripped of its experienced and venerated leadership, the LORD will *"make boys (or, youths) to be their officials;"* i.e.; those who lack experience and maturity, wisdom and discernment. Then *"mere children will govern them."* What is described here is a capricious rule; an aimless, selfish, arbitrary, unpredictable rule, for such are childish ways. The nation becomes like a rudderless ship driven about by the winds and whims of self-seeking and self-gratifying men, men who have little experience in governing, and even less concern for the welfare of the society. By way of contemporary example, consider this commentary on the American national government in the closing decade of the twentieth-century:

Just like people, institutions can lose it. And organizational psychologists say Congress is flashing all the danger signs. "Like people, you have dysfunctional neurotic organizations," said Karin Klenke, an industrial psychologist at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies at the University of Richmond in Virginia. "I think the House (of Representatives) is a perfect example of a neurotic organization. It has all the signs." The signs, she said, are ineffective leadership, loss of moral authority, lack of accountability, the absence of a sense of purpose and an every-man-for-himself ethic. (Is Congress on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown? *The Sheboygan Press*, 5/21/92, p.1)

What effect will all this have upon the life of the nation? The result will be oppression, *"the people will oppress each other—man against man, neighbor against neighbor"* (vs. 5a)—there will no longer be any sense of community. Furthermore, insolent behavior will become characteristic of the society: *"the youth will treat the elderly with disrespect and the ignoble [or, the base fellow; the man who is morally worthless] will be disrespectful towards the honorable man* (vs. 5b.)

Isaiah 3:18-4:1 goes on to speak about the devastating effects of war, which the LORD will bring upon the once secure and stable society; this society that has departed from Him and become secular. Prosperity is replaced by the awful ravages of war. What Isaiah describes in 3:24 is poverty: *"instead of a sash [a feature of glamorous apparel], they will use a rope;* humiliation: *"instead of a beautiful hairdo, there will be baldness;"* mourning: *"instead of fine clothing, they will wear sackcloth;"* and enslavement: *"instead of beauty, there will be branding"* (the mark of slavery.) In chapter four he adds destitution: *"seven women will take hold of one man, saying, 'We will eat our own food and provide our own clothing [i.e.; we will support ourselves], only allow us be called by your name. Take away our disgrace!"* These women have lost their families because of the war and now suffer the fate of solitary widowhood

Let us not align ourselves with man: placing our confidence in him; ... adopting his thinking; ... entertaining his secular hopes and dreams; ... promoting his secular agenda; ... identifying ourselves with his secular kingdom; because he

cannot withstand God, the LORD of hosts. The picture presented to us in this passage is that of the LORD rising in righteous judgment against a nation that has forsaken Him and given itself over to secularism, and that nation is powerless to withstand the LORD's righteous assault against it.

II. Don't Align Yourself with Man, ...Because His Ways will be Judged by God (Isa. 3:8-16)

Isaiah 3:8 explains that the city/nation is ruined "*because their words* [i.e.; their speech, the ideas they express] *and their deeds are in opposition to Jehovah, provoking the eyes of his glory.*" By way of example, if you were to remove the Ten Commandments from the walls of public school buildings for fear that someone might read them and decide to obey them, would such thinking not incite the LORD to righteous indignation, would such an act not "*provoke the eyes of his glory*"? Yet, this is precisely what has taken place within the United States:

According to *Stone v. Graham* (a U.S. Supreme Court decision), "If posted copies of the Ten Commandments are to have any effect at all it will be to induce the schoolchildren to read, meditate upon, perhaps venerate and obey the commandments; this is not a permissible objective." (David T. Moore, *Five Lies of the Century*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. Wheaton IL, 1995, pp.27-28)

In verse 9 the prophet Isaiah personifies the nation in its present moral and spiritual state. "*The look on their faces testifies against them.*" In other words, their expression of defiance testifies to the truth presented in verse 8; theirs is not an ignorance of the law of God, rather it is a conscious rejection of it and hostility against it. "*They display their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it.*" When there is still some remnant of the fear of God, men seek to conceal their sins out of a sense of shame and guilt. But described here is a people who have become so steeped in sin and so defiant of God that, like Sodom, they practice their sins openly without any trace of guilt or shame. "*Woe to them! They have brought calamity upon themselves.*" We may take note of the testimony of the wisdom of God as recorded in Proverbs 8:36; "*whoever sins against me harms his own soul; all who hate me love death.*"

In verses 12-15 the society that has departed from God is described as being characterized by misrule by both its governmental as well as religious leaders. The political leaders are described as "*oppressors*" who act like self-centered, malicious, thoughtless children. The leaders point the people in a godless direction and conceal, or destroy, the former pathways of godliness: "*those who lead you cause you to go astray and they destroy [or, swallow up] the way [in which you should go]* (vs. 12b.)

Verses 16-23 depict the vanity, conceit, and superficiality of this society as it is especially exemplified in the lifestyle of its women. "*The daughters of Zion are*

arrogant—they are proud, vain, conceited. They “*walk around with heads held high*”—an outward display of their arrogance—“*and seductive eyes*”—in their haughtiness they disregard God’s commandments relating to moral purity. They “*go about with mincing steps as ornaments jingle from their ankles*”—they walk with short, dainty steps so as to emphasize their sophistication. Verses 18-23 describe an incredible amount of ornate and superficial beauty; what is described here is in striking contrast to the admonition of 1 Peter 3:3-4,

May [your beauty] not [merely] be the external beauty of having elaborately braided hair and wearing gold jewelry or dressing in exquisite garments; rather, may it be the inner beauty of the heart, consisting in the imperishable beauty of a humble and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.
(1 Pet. 3:3-4)

Let us not align ourselves with man—imitating his ways as he defies the LORD, and as he exhibits a lifestyle of arrogance and pride—because his ways will be judged by God.

III. Don’t Align Yourself with Man, ..Look, rather, to the Kingdom of God (Isa. 4:2-6)

Isaiah 4:2 depicts the nation of Israel (as it has identified itself with the secular society of man and become such a society itself) as a tree that has been chopped down. But from that stump the LORD causes there to sprout up the branch (or, shoot) of a new creation; a branch that becomes spiritually beautiful and glorious.

What is depicted here is the kingdom of God as it shall be inherited by those who are redeemed by the cleansing, purifying work of the Holy Spirit (who is here identified as “*the Spirit of judgment*” and “*the Spirit of fire.*”) Here is an Old Testament picture of the promise presented in Revelation 11:15, “*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he will reign forever and ever.*”

Verses 5-6 now describe the LORD and His redeemed and what their life will be like together. First, there shall be the experience of the LORD’s own wonderful presence: “*Then Jehovah will create over all of Mount Zion, and over those who assemble there, a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night*” (vs. 5a.) Here is a symbol of the LORD’s presence as He manifested Himself at the time of the Exodus: “*And Jehovah went before them by day in a pillar of cloud ... and by night in a pillar of fire*” (Ex. 13:21.) Second, there shall be the experience of the LORD’s divine glory: “*over everything the glory [will be spread as] a covering*” (vs. 5b.) Third, there shall be the experience of the LORD’s blessing: “*There will be a shelter to provide shade from the heat of the day, and to be a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain*” (vs. 6.)

Let us not align ourselves with man—joining his cause of building a secular society with man at the center to the exclusion of God; rather, let us look to the kingdom of God. Let us be conscious of our Christian identity as citizens of the kingdom of God. Let us not be ashamed to allow our allegiance to Christ our Lord be made known. Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom even as we are instructed to do in the Lord's Prayer.

Conclusion

Let us not be like Old Testament Israel who identified themselves as the people of God, but had become thoroughly secular in their outlook and behavior, and incurred the LORD's judgment because of it. Let us be sure to align ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and let us seek to be consciously and consistently Christian (Christ-like) in our thinking and conduct.