

5 Reasons the US Will Not Fall Like Rome?

From the one-day-late news department: scientists have used 3-D mapping to reveal the actual face of St. Valentine. They took photos of his skull, which is kept in Rome's Basilica of Santa Maria of Cosmedin, then reconstructed his facial features. The linked image shows what the patron saint of Hallmark cards apparently looked like.

From one facial extreme to the other: a 25-year-old Hitler lookalike has been arrested in Austria. The man, who calls himself Harald Hitler, is charged with glorifying the Nazi era, which is a crime in that country.

I wish this were the only troubling news in today's news. But it's not.

The New York Times is reporting today that a science panel has approved editing human embryos to prevent disease or disability. Is this the start of eugenics? Since 2011, the number of violent incidents at churches has doubled. Louisville, Kentucky recently dealt with 151 calls about drug overdoses in a four-day period.

You could be forgiven for wondering if our country is following the fate of so many fallen empires before us. However, writer and filmmaker Paul Ratner disagrees. He has given us "5 Reasons Why America Will Not Collapse Like the Roman Empire." Here's his list:

1. Political instability is here, but the U.S. is still a republic.
2. The economy needs work but is in no danger of a collapse.
3. The military situation is vastly different.
4. The U.S. is not in a cultural and social decline.
5. Technology, not politics, will transform the U.S. (and the

world).

Ratner admits that his fourth assertion is “certainly debatable, as some would argue the U.S. is undergoing a weakening of its values.” “Some” is a very large understatement—according to Gallup, 72 percent of Americans say the state of morality in our country is “getting worse.”

A nation’s security is not based on its political stability, economy, military or technology. Job said of God: “He increases the nations and destroys them; He enlarges the nations and guides them” (Job 12:23). On what basis? “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

Few of us are as immoral as a Hitler look-alike or as saintly as St. Valentine. But one sin is enough to make us sinners separated from a holy God. One sin is enough to require repentance and contrition before our Father.

It is therefore vital that, as the Puritans said, we “keep short accounts with God.” Here’s the standard He requires: “‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:16, citing Lev. 11:44). Of course, none of us can achieve this standard with any consistency. That’s why we need to ask the Spirit to control and empower us daily (Eph. 5:18), repent when we fail (Matt. 4:17) and trust God’s forgiving and restoring grace (1 John 1:9).

My point is not that we must try harder to do better. It is that we must accept nothing less than holiness as God’s will for us. In this connection, C. S. Lewis’ wisdom in *The Weight of Glory* is relevant: “Failures will be forgiven; it is acquiescence that is fatal, the permitted, regularized presence of an area in ourselves which we still claim for our own.”

Would Jesus say he is Lord of all of you today? {eoa}