

Has Ezekiel 22:30 Come to Pass in America?

Thirty-five years ago, I shared impressions with my friend and songwriter, Mark Altrogge, to capture something prophetic for a new song. "I Have a Destiny" became a signature piece for our network of churches, People of Destiny International.

Recently, a Nashville artist, Ben Patterson, handed me his new CD, "Candle in My Soul", featuring the song. He was stunned when I told him the history behind it. He was clueless but grateful to know its origin as we sang it in our church lobby.

"I have a destiny I know I shall fulfill. I have a destiny in that city on a hill. I have a destiny and it's not an empty wish, for I know I was born for such a time as this."

God's purpose in creation and redemption is to bring people into a dynamic relationship with Him where we're "predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Rom. 8:29b). Additionally, His plan is for each person to fulfill a unique destiny He prepared for us in our generation.

As we approach Father's Day, we have a wonderful opportunity to freshly examine God's destiny for men contrasted to cultural counterfeits. As Ed Cole challenged us, "You're male by birth but man by choice."

Crisis of American Manhood

"I sought for a man among them who would build up the hedge and stand in the gap before Me for the land so that I would not destroy it, but I found no one" ().

May our situation today reveal a different response. God is calling for men to rise up to fulfill our destinies as authentic men aligned with His master plan for true manliness.

Today, families are in crisis. Fatherlessness is epidemic. Along with it is a parallel problem: a crisis of American manhood.

On college campuses, we even have classes called “Rethink Masculinity” pushed by leftists and feminists to eradicate what they call “toxic masculinity.” Proponents don’t present a positive alternative of manly virtue focused on faith, family and female love and protection, but rather neuter men until real masculinity is air-brushed away. Gullible guys become men without chests, resembling the weird “Pat” character of by-gone *Saturday Night Live* comedy skits.

As Chuck Swindoll has written, “Masculinity is vanishing. Throughout the land, fathers have lost their way to true manhood and have thrown responsibility to the wind. Sex roles are blurring, masculine leadership is disappearing and, like dominoes, homes and marriages are collapsing.

Dr. James Dobson says, “The Western world stands at a great crossroads in its history. It is my opinion that our very survival as a people will depend on the presence or absence of masculine leadership in millions of homes.”

So what does it mean to be a man, husband and father? Our society seems clueless. Having rejected biblical absolutes, it can’t produce a clear alternative. Consequently, three “fake” models of manhood have emerged amidst the confusion. They represent a grotesque distortion of what God intends in true manhood.

Three Cultural Counterfeits

1. Macho Man

Many men have embraced what in Spanish is termed “machismo”. Here masculinity is expressed by a strong, silent, tough-guy exterior. A parent instills in sons that a real man doesn’t show emotions. He’s independent, headstrong, and unemotional.

These contemporary conquistadors boast of biceps and sexual prowess, suppressing fear and vulnerability. They “dress and drive, walk and talk, curse and chew, fight and fornicate” before foolish, fawning females. They’re a legend in their own minds.

2. Marshmallow Man

Unfortunately, this individual doesn’t understand what it means to be tough and tender, balanced in God’s image. He’s “Mr. Nice Guy,” a couch potato, passive wimp. In actuality he’s a renegade, having reneged on his duty to be a man’s man, reflecting the image of Christ.

This guy is more of a responder than an activator. He rarely takes initiative or makes the decisions God intends him to make. He procrastinates by putting off until tomorrow what he’s already put off until today, He lacks conviction, courage and character. When pressures mount, he abandons his woman and children selfishly and cowardly abdicates his role and responsibilities as a man.

3. Mixed-up Man

Having adopted a unisex gender-blender identity, this mish-mash of a man is a sad specimen. He’s the “girly man” embodying feminine and masculine traits. He may be a homosexual or projects a “metrosexual” image. Some succumb to the seduction of being transgender and attire themselves in an effeminate persona.

Whenever I see pictures of those in this category, I wonder what shape-shifted them into the androgynous persons they’ve become. I pray for them in their brokenness and ask God to deliver them from deception.

Man of Steel and Velvet

Exposing the counterfeits, it’s imperative we embrace a

biblically-informed understanding of manhood. This fourth alternative is designed by our Creator and modeled by his magnificent Son.

4. Man of God

Against the backdrop of our confused culture, God's clarion call stands out in bold contrast. This is the destiny to which God points men in a society spiraling off center.

Manhood and Christlikeness are synonymous. Our model is none other than Jesus Himself.

Unfortunately, the person of Jesus in artwork often conjures up images of a poker-faced, wimpy killjoy who never smiled, appeared somewhat emaciated and had chubby little cherubs floating about his haloed head. This meek, mild, milquetoast image of Jesus is a distortion of the Son of God.

Although we aren't told much about the appearance of Jesus in scripture, there's evidence He not only embodied character traits of servanthood, meekness, (not weakness), compassion and generosity but physical strength as well.

- Imagine what 20 years of carpentry work did for His muscular development.
- He walked miles in the grueling sun and then ministered to crowds of thousands, addressing them without amplification.
- Visualize Jesus grabbing a whip, overturned tables and driving out money changers from the temple.
- Picture those "boys on the dock," burly fishermen dropping their nets to follow Him.
- Use your sanctified imagination to ponder His horrific flogging and the way He endured the infamous crucifixion, depicted vividly in Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ*.

Scores have engendered an anemic view of Christian manhood. It's resulted in churches where women outnumber men two, three even five to one.

"We have a weak nation because we have weak churches. We have weak churches because we have weak families. We have weak families because we have weak men never challenged with the true biblical standard." –Bill Gothard

Here's the deal: Amidst our culture adrift with macho, marshmallow and mixed-up men, let's consecrate ourselves to model God's ideal of authentic Christian manhood this Father's Day. And may virtuous women and trailblazing sons and daughters pray and support us as we lead the way.

"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be bold like men, and be strong. Let all that you do be done with love (1 -14).

Are you a candidate?

Happy Father's Day!