

Discerning the Times

Editor's Note: The following word is part 35 from a series of messages by prophetic minister Rick Joyner about discerning the times we are living in. You can view the preceding and subsequent messages on his Web site at <http://www.rickjoyner.com>.

Newsweek magazine recently boasted that Christianity in  America is dead. This slap in the face to the American church served only to wake it up. Believers took the comment and held it up before the Lord as Hezekiah did with the boasts of the Assyrian general against the Lord (see 2 Kings 19:15-19).

It is encouraging to see Christians responding to the continuous assault from those who hate or reject God. Many of them are arising to proclaim that this is not a post-Christian America but a pre-Christian America because we are going to have a revival in our nation that eclipses all others.

True Christianity does thrive under persecution, but it was hard to imagine just a few months ago how fast Christians in America would unite and mobilize. And that was only in preparation for persecution. When real persecution comes, we can expect an even greater awakening. It is encouraging to see evidence that the body of Christ in America is responding in the right way to the actions against it—resolving to stand with courage and boldness against the rising darkness of the times. In the past, we have had visions of a coming great awakening in America, and now we are seeing proof that there are strong foundations for it to be built on.

It is now possible to perceive that America will not only recover her freedoms and basic moral fabric but also emerge from these times stronger and much wiser than ever before. The church in America is awakening from her slumber, and it is going to get exciting, but we must also expect many to fall

away during this time and not be discouraged about it.

The emerging battle over religious liberty and freedom of speech in America is going to be won or lost by Christians, but as in any war, there are likely to be some defeats before victory. George Washington led an army that had been defeated time and again for almost six years, but he and his men did not give up. They remained ready to take bold action when the opportunity came to win the ultimate victory.

In a similar way, we must resolve to fight for the worthy cause regardless of whether we are suffering defeats or winning victories. It is not only about victory or defeat but also about the cause for which we are fighting. If it is a worthy cause, we must resolve never to surrender and never to give up the fight until there is victory. Therefore, clearly defining the cause is one of the most important issues right now.

The ultimate purpose of the church at the end of this age is to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom throughout the world. Jesus said the end of this age could not come until it had been preached in every place. Spreading the good news is what we must resolve to do regardless of the opposition.

Just as the first apostles did when the government of their time demanded that they stop preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus, we must declare that we will obey God rather than men—as we must always do when the two are in conflict. We must settle this issue in our hearts right now. If we are not willing to pay the price required to be faithful and obedient to the Lord, then as the Lord Himself taught, we are not worthy of Him.

For the last few decades, the most prolific message in the church in America has been about how the Lord would bless us—mostly with money or possessions. This emphasis must change. It is now time for courage and sacrifice for the sake

of His gospel. It is time for an emphasis on the words of Jesus, such as those we read in the following Scriptures:

“‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds'” (Matt. 16:24-27, NASB).

“‘Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it'” (Matt. 10:34-39).

We will find our lives if we will lose them for His sake. Even if our physical lives are taken, a better life awaits. Christians should not only die better than other people but also live with the hope of eternity so that we live the life of the cross, a truly sacrificial life that does all things for the sake of the gospel. The church in America now has one of the greatest opportunities to do this that we have ever had. Do not miss out on it.

About the author: Rick Joyner is the founder and executive director of MorningStar Publications and Ministries () based in Charlotte, North Carolina. He is also the author of numerous books, including the best-selling *The Final Quest* and a recently updated version of *Overcoming Evil in the Last Days*

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