

Your Place on the Wall

God's Call to His People to Guard a Nation

By Dave Kubal

What does the future hold for the United States of America? Last year was full of political turmoil, civil unrest, and continued moral decline. Now the national elections are history, the country has a new president, both the House and Senate show new faces, and believers are poised for new possibilities.



Many Christians are taking stock and perhaps evaluating where intercessory prayer will fit into the Church's strategy in 2017. How are we to watch and pray?

God Holds Nations Accountable

Israel's history during Isaiah's prophetic ministry offers us biblical lessons for our own day. The spiritual climate of Judah (the nation of Israel's Southern Kingdom) during Isaiah's early life was good. Kings Uzziah and Jotham both led Judah to follow God. As a nation, Judah remained true to Yahweh for a period, but everything changed with King Ahaz.

Ahaz committed terrible atrocities before the Lord. He defiled the temple, placed altars on street corners, and lived in open rebellion toward God. Ultimately Judah was taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar and spent 70 years in Babylonian captivity.

Isaiah's ministry took place in the midst of moral, spiritual, and cultural decline. In his early ministry (Isa. 1), the nation is accused accurately and justly, based upon the laws of God. Then Judah's idolatry is described with judicial precision (Isa. 2–5), stating the case in a manner that can only lead to one verdict: "Guilty." Isaiah was faithful to warn Judah and prophesy God's message even though God told him his ministry would not be outwardly successful (Isa. 6:8–12). Isaiah was called to speak the truth; the people were accountable for their rejection of the message.

What could be a more timely and relevant scene than this for today's intercessors? After a brief interlude, Isaiah's prophetic judgments continue in chapters 10–34, this time not against God's people but against surrounding nations.

This is particularly important for Christians in America to understand. I have found few American Christians who have a clear sense of our collective standing before God. Many define their identity as, "my personal relationship with Christ," or "I go to a good church." This is as far as it goes.

Understanding that we have both an individual standing before God and a collective standing before God is vital to keeping a proper, honest, and God-sanctioned loyalty to both connections, giving each what is due. Returning to the examples in Isaiah's day, the principle of all nations' accountability before God is clear. God says, "I will take vengeance in anger and wrath on the nations that have not obeyed me" (Micah 5:15, emphasis added).

God is justified in doing this because He is God. Romans 1 declares that all mankind has a sense of the Creator's existence and His standards. He will punish nations. It does not matter if they are ruled by dictators, kings, parliaments, or Congress.

We must be aware and accept that God holds nations accountable

for their collective actions. He will bless or hold a nation accountable based upon His laws. He is justified in doing this relying on the principle of general revelation we read about in Romans, that all of us have a sense of our Creator's desires. (See Romans 1:18–23.) God will punish the nations and the world for its evil.

Isaiah prophesies against godless nations that surround him, including Assyria, Babylon, Moab, and Egypt. These are nations that bear the guilt of their collective decisions. Isaiah records the following judgments:

- Assyria: “I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes” (10:12).
- Babylon: “See, the day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it” (13:9).
- Moab: “We have heard of Moab’s pride—how great is her arrogance!” (16:6).
- Egypt: “The Egyptians will lose heart, and I will bring their plans to nothing; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead, the mediums and the spiritists” (19:3).
- All: “The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt” (24:5–6).

The point? We should do all we can to keep watch, including prayer for those in authority. And why do we do that? So that the Church can continue to preach the gospel, knowing God “wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim. 2:1–4).

Our Sin Is Great

We are mistaken if we believe that God does not deal with

nations for their collective action. Whether they are ruled by dictators or by Congress—God holds nations accountable. As Americans we typically have a very individualistic approach to life: “As long as I am walking in obedience, I’m good. I don’t have responsibility for the nation I live in. And I certainly will not reap any negative effects because of ungodly politicians.”

These typical points of view are not biblical. We are called to walk with the Lord as individuals, but we as a nation also have a standing before God. Christians cannot be blind to the fact that God sees us as a nation of people. He holds our nation responsible for the laws and decisions of our country, positioning us for either His blessing or His judgment.

The sin of our nation is great. We have killed nearly 60 million innocent babies. In 2015 the Supreme Court used its power to “redefine” the institution of marriage, which God created to be the building block of humanity. Pornography is prolific. And in some jurisdictions, a male may walk into a women’s restroom if he feels like a female, thus threatening the modesty, privacy, and security of women and young girls.

The list of offenses against logic, wisdom, and Almighty God goes on and on. We are guilty. We call wrong, right. In arrogance our leaders devise wickedness while decreeing that anything pertaining to God is not welcome in the public arena.

Yet only 12 percent of American Christians regularly pray for our government officials.¹

Watchmen Will Repent

Instead of expecting revival, we Christians should be expecting divine discipline. We cry out, “Bless us, oh, Lord,” while we should be, instead, prostrating ourselves, crying out in repentance. We expect God to bring revival, even when we do not value His truth. We read the promises of God and expect

Him to fulfill them today, instead of weeping over the judgments of Scripture that match our very condition.

We cry out, "Where are you, God?" when 30 percent of all Internet searches every day are for porn. One porn site gets four billion page views in one month!²

Perhaps God has not brought revival to our country for the very reason that we expect it. There is no remorse. We are not sorry in a way that matches the level of our collective guilt. We don't need intercessors for America as much as we need mourners for America.

As Isaiah looked at his nation, he understood the depths of the depravity of his day. He didn't cry out, "Lord, bring Your blessing." He cried out, "Woe to me! . . . I am ruined!" (Isa. 6:5).

He was able to look into the heart of God and see God's extreme holiness compared with his utter brokenness. He was unable to ask for a blessing because he saw a holy God "high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. . . . and [the seraphim] were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory'" (Isa. 6:1-3). Isaiah was shaken to his core with the sight of God's holiness and his own brokenness. His only response: "I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty" (6:5).

Is it possible that God has not brought revival to our country because we expect Him to do so, as though we were entitled to that grace? Perhaps God is waiting for His people to show greater remorse and repentance on behalf of the nation. The larger Church also appears to lack deep contrition. Historically, intercession has included a sense of mourning over our personal and collective sins.

Blessings Released through Watchful Prayer

Isaiah's vision of a holy God led to one conclusion: his nation was doomed. Yet out of the ashes of debauchery, God raised up King Hezekiah—a very different man than his father Ahaz. Hezekiah dedicated the priesthood to holiness, reinstated the sacrificial system, and reintroduced praise to the temple. Holiness, sacrifice, and praise—a good prescription for proper orientation to the Lord.

But Hezekiah was not unchallenged. We read in Isaiah 37 about the potential attack from Sennacherib, king of Assyria. Hezekiah went to the temple and laid this impending crisis before the Lord. Then we read in Isaiah 37:21 one of the most encouraging passages in Scripture about our calling to pray: “Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: ‘This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Because you have prayed to me. . . . ’”

The passage then goes on to describe in prophetic detail the blessings God promised His people because Hezekiah prayed.

Can you imagine what would happen in this country if the Church came together with holy hands, sacrificial fasting, and the worship of God in a way that brought unity and a desire only for God's glory? This is what it takes for a nation to be healed. Watchful, desperate prayer is what it will take for certain blessings to be released.

Our nation has been through so much over the past year. Let us remember that God holds nations accountable. And let's approach Him with an accurate understanding of our guilt before Him, realizing He desires us to join Him in shaping history through prayer.

¹Max Lucado, *Lifeway Survey*, christianitytoday.com, (October 2014).

²The Huffington Post, huffingtonpost.com, (May 4, 2013).

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