



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

FEBRUARY 1995

FROM US TO YOU

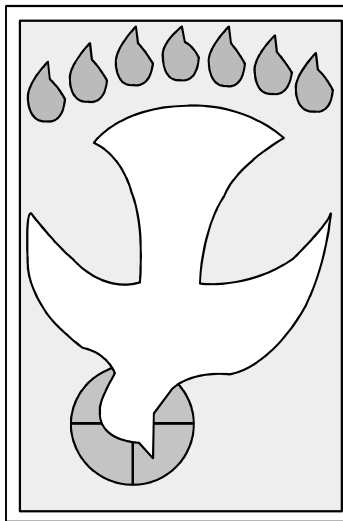
As we prepare this newsletter it's cold outside! The holiday season is over and, if you're like most people, you're probably feeling the winter woes right now. It's normal for the world to feel this way, but those of us who love and serve Jesus Christ are not supposed to be like the world. We are the light that shines in the darkness and illuminates the hope and joy of Christ (Matthew 5:14)! What is Christian joy? It is the warm glow of Jesus (Acts 2:3) placed inside each of His servants through God's Holy Spirit. It's an unquenchable fire of faith that rises above the earth's darkness and sets us apart as the children of God! (See John 1:12-13.) For such, there will come a time when *"The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end"* (Isaiah 60:19-20 NIV). That will occur at the end of this age, after God has destroyed this planet (Matthew 24:35, 2 Peter 3:10-13) and created *"...a new Heaven and a new Earth: for the first Heaven and the first Earth were passed away; and there was no more sea"* (Revelation 21:1 KJV).

There really will be a time when joy, love, and peace rule globally, and we're going to be there! We hope you will be too! Prophets of God have known about this special time since the days of Job. For it was he who declared, *"I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see Him with my own eyes--I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"* (Job 19:25-27 NIV). Job was referring to the fact that God has promised all of His children glorified bodies someday (Romans 8:11, 1 Corinthians 15:35-56, 1 Thessalonians 4:14 thru 5:6). They will be the same type as the one that Jesus received after He rose from the dead (see Philippians 3:20-21). Right now, we're living in the last days before the return of Christ and, true to the Lord's predictions (Matt. 24:6-8), this world is not a joyful place. However, for those who love and serve Jesus, all the pain and sorrow will eventually end. *"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb [Jesus] which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes"* (Revelation 7:16-17 KJV). *"And He [Jesus] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more"* (Isaiah 2:4 KJV).

Yes, Jesus is coming back to "clean house" and to separate the "wheat from the chaff" (Matthew 3:11-12 & 13:24-30). At that time, He will reign as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16) for a thousand years (Revelation 20:6). As a result,

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 11:6-7 KJV). The world believes that someday mankind will be able to achieve total utopia on Earth. However, the Bible tells us that mortals cannot do this because of sin. Satan is currently running this planet. Originally God gave Adam the authority over this world system. However, Adam sinned against God, thus allowing Satan to gain control of this world. That's why all of us have been born with this awful disease of sin. We inherited it from our forefather Adam. Nevertheless, God gave us a "new Adam" to take his place (1 Corinthians 15:45). Through Christ, we can be Born Again (John 3:3), not of the sin of the first Adam, but of the cleansing power and blood of Jesus, God's own Son!

This world system is swiftly moving toward its final destructive end, but thanks be to God, *"...No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him-- but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. ...No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words"* (1 Cor. 2:9-13 NIV). Great things await the true child of God. That's why we are told to *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"*



(1 John 2:15-17 KJV). This may all seem very far in the future, but while the political, geographic, and social climate of this world will not change until Jesus comes back to Earth as a mighty conqueror (Rev. 19:11-16), those of us who love and serve Christ can still have His peace, love, and joy in our hearts right now, through His Holy Baptism (Matt. 3:11, Acts 11:16, 19:1-6). *"For our 'God is a consuming fire'"* (Hebrews 12:29 NIV). The Holy Flame (Acts 2:3) that Jesus sent upon the early church (John 15:26) has never died out. That Flame is the Holy Spirit, our Comforter, Counselor, and Strength in the midst of a planet set on a collision course against God (James 4:4, 1 John 2:15-17).

In closing we would like to thank all our contributors. During 1994, your encouragement and support have made it possible for us to distribute 10,253 Bibles, 4,016 New Testaments, 2,631 role model books, 9,883 Bible booklets, 4,272 Gospels of John, and 4,000 tracts in 306 prisons nationwide. This is in addition to the 22,837 newsletters we send out monthly.

In His love, we remain, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

Politics Versus The Word Of God

By Anne Kaestner

With all the recent media hype about politics, I have felt reminded of a conversation that took place thousands of years ago between God and His prophet Samuel. Since the earliest of civilizations, we humans have always desired a strong, noble leader. However, there was a time when God, our Creator, personally ruled a people on Earth. Between the period that God delivered the Hebrews out of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 13:18), right up until the time of Samuel, God alone ruled Israel. For they were the only race, in those days, who served the one true God. However, there came a time when Samuel grew old, and his sons did not love the Lord or serve Him as their father had. So the people went to Samuel and told him that they wanted a human king. Until then, God had made His ways known through His prophets. *“And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken Me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee”* (1 Samuel 8:7-8 KJV). Even today, the hearts of people are so far from God that humans reign over nations in place of our creator. Nevertheless, those of us who love and serve Jesus Christ, are not to become entangled with corrupt human politics. We are to be the “Light of the World” (Matthew 5:14), that illuminates all the sin around us. The Light that shines forth from us is not our light, but a reflection of the Light of Christ (John 8:12). Just as a mirror reflects the sun, we are to reflect the Son of God! (See Revelation 1:16.) But light cannot fellowship with darkness! So we are not to negotiate with evil. This is where the policies of so many Western governments, including the United States, have run amok. Whether it’s a domestic matter or a foreign crisis, there are those who always want to compromise on issues. However, our God is not a God of compromise! He will not compete for attention with any other “gods” or idols (Exodus 34:14). He wants His people to be pure and Holy unto Himself (1 Peter 1:15-16)! Satan will fill your head with all kinds of lies and propaganda, but, *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might **destroy** the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God”* (1 John 3:7-9 KJV).

One of the biggest problems the church faces today is the tremendous amount of false doctrine, not just on theological, but also on political issues as well. Doctrines of demons (1 Timothy 4:1) are usually promoted by the twisted scripture approach. That’s where one verse is taken out of context and its meaning is totally changed. This has been used as a tool of Satan to manipulate Christians for years. You hear someone quote scripture and assume that they must love the Lord. People, Satan knows the Bible very well! He doesn’t just quote it easily, but he is an expert at perverting it. He even used this technique on Jesus in Luke 4:10-11 (also, see Psalm 91:12). Therefore, before I get started explaining why Liberal (man-made) philosophies don’t work, I want to say a few words to all those who have fallen into Satan’s **other** trap by drifting too far in the opposite direction politically. God wants you to go back to the Cross! For Satan is a master of deception, and if he can’t reach you in one way, he will always try another. He runs this whole world system in the spirit world, and

manipulates those who are not totally controlled by Christ. So if you go the way of so many politically minded Christians these days, and drift too far to the right, that can also be your undoing! The devil doesn’t have a tiny corner of the world system. He and his demons control everything that is not firmly anchored at Calvary’s cross! The problem with human politics is that Liberals won’t go **to** the Cross at all, for they believe the answers to human misery lie in Secular Humanism. However, Christians often swing too far in the other direction and go **beyond** the cross into doctrinal error, cultism, Religious Humanism (yes there is such a thing) and the occult (which includes aspects of psychology). Secular Humanism is based on Atheism, but Christianity teaches us that mankind has a disease known as sin, and that only God has the antidote for it. *“Therefore, if anyone is **in** Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”* (2 Corinthians 5:17 NIV). The key word here is **in**. We need to remain **in** Jesus. As branches need to cling to the vine, we need to remain in the Vine of Christ (John 15:1-8). Religious Humanism is when people, including Christians, believe that **they** need to solve mankind’s problems **for** God, instead of allowing Him to do His work **in** them. We are to be open channels to the Lord. Important decisions should be taken to God in prayer, with the desire to seek **His** will and His direction in the matter. When Moses went forth to deliver the Jews



from Egypt, it was God who called the shots, not Moses! Moses was just the open vessel that God chose to work through! Jonah was also chosen by God. He was told to go to Nineveh and preach the gospel there, but Jonah disobeyed God. Like many Christian Conservatives today, Jonah decided that the people of Nineveh were too wicked to be saved. He felt that they needed to be punished, and hoped that God would bring judgment upon them. Yet salvation in Christ is not for the righteous, but for sinners (Luke 5:31-32).

Paul stated, *“For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh”* (Philippians 3:3 NIV). Paul was speaking of **spiritual** circumcision to Christ! Jonah judged the people of Nineveh, but Jesus said, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged”* (Matthew 7:1 KJV). Many backslidden Christians have made the same mistake. Some even preach doctrines of hate and violence. However, Paul stated, *“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you”* (1 Corinthians 5:12-13 NIV). *“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God...”* (1 Peter 4:17 NIV). Interestingly, the “Judge not lest ye be judged” scripture has been used frequently in churches nationwide by those who manipulate the Bible to ward off criticism against themselves. But they will be the first to pass judgment on sinners who have never come to the knowledge and love of Christ! When, for instance, did a politically active Conservative minister use Matthew 7:1 to defend a Liberal who didn’t know any better? When did you ever hear it quoted in defense of the President or the First Lady? Yet just about every false prophet whose face has appeared on a supermarket tabloid has responded to the Christian community by saying, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged.”* You won’t hear him quoting 1 Timothy 3:2-7, but Matthew 7:1 will be his favorite scripture! Yet read down further in Matthew chapter 7, and you will discover that in the same paragraph Jesus also states, *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits...”* (Matt. 7:15-16

KJV). So why would Jesus tell you to “beware of false prophets” if He doesn’t want you to judge anyone? Why would He say, “you will know them by their fruit” if you’re not to determine their spiritual worth? Notice the similarity between Secular Humanism (Liberal theology) and Religious Humanism. Karl Marx, Lenin, and Stalin would all be Secular Humanists. However, Adolph Hitler, Ayatollah Khomeini, and numerous high profile religious leaders in this country fall into the second category of Religious Humanism. This is especially true of those who kill secretaries and doctors working at abortion clinics. (See Matthew 26:52, John 3:17, & 12:47.) It involves the “I’ll do this for God, and He’ll bless me” attitude, which I call the sin of Cain (Genesis 4:1-14. Also see Eph. 2:8-9). True Christianity means faith in and obedience to Christ so that **He can do the good works He chooses through us!** The fruit of Religious Humanism (Matthew 7:15-23 & Galatians 5:14-26) is fierce hatred toward those who do not accept its views! It’s easy for Christians to notice this evil in non-Christian terrorists who claim to be doing their deeds in God’s name. However, it’s harder for God’s people to see the bad fruit when a preacher, politician, or media personality defends his hatred by quoting (or misquoting) the Bible out of context. Such proponents of violence usually wrap their rhetoric up in a warm blanket of popular issues such as morality or tougher crime legislation. Christians, wake up! The Moslems, Hindus, and Buddhists all believe in morality and safe streets! But they leave Christ out! So do numerous Conservative activists who have huge crowds of Born Again Christians following them all the way to the spiritual slaughterhouse! Their leaders may give Jesus lip-service, but they’re only using His name as a marketing strategy in order to acquire money or influence (see Mark 7:6-7). If you love Jesus, put your faith and trust in Him, not politics!

One of Earth’s earliest rulers was Nimrod. He was known to be a “*Mighty hunter before the Lord... And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel and... Nineveh...*” (Genesis 10:9-11 KJV). Babel, also called Babylon, incorporates a lot of parallels and some interesting ironies when compared with the United States today. For just as America has become a melting pot for people from all nations and cultures worldwide, God did the reverse in Babylon, and dispersed the world’s population all over the Earth, causing people to speak different languages (Genesis 11:1-9). Could it be that the prophesied Babylon of Revelation chapter 18 is the United States? Many Bible scholars think so! Today we hear a great deal about “A New World Order.” Television shows like “Star Trek” have helped to promote the fantasy that human beings will eventually, without Christ, be able to adopt a total one world ideal of unity and utopia on Earth. Both Karl Marx, the architect of Communism, as well as his Nazi counterpart, Adolph Hitler, had the same idea! Hitler’s book “Mein Kampf,” was published just prior to World War II. In it he outlined everything he planned to do, much of which he later accomplished as ruler of Germany. Marx and Hitler were polar caps apart in their politics, but they were brothers spiritually! Both men were controlled by powerful demon spirits, who were fulfilling the will of their father, Satan (see John 8:44). That’s why it’s so important that we Christians look toward Christ as our constant source of strength and direction. It is God who built up America and made her strong. Therefore, He wants the credit for it, however, for decades, this has not occurred. In fact, all too often, American “relief workers” help to promote the national idolatry of the people they assist, under the heading of “preserving the ethnic culture of the nation.” The Bible warns us against this, for any nation not founded on the Word of God is under God’s wrath (John 3:36, Romans 1:18).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should

perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9 KJV). However, even God draws the line somewhere! Despite this, America’s social elite have come to rely on their own ideas of good and evil, instead of obeying the simple laws of God! (See 1 Samuel 15 and Deuteronomy 7:2-5.) This means bringing His gospel to third world nations that will accept Him, and ignoring those nations that reject Him (see Luke 9:5 and 2 Corinthians 6:14), especially when numerous godly missionaries have been murdered or attacked in those lands! In some cases, even U.S. diplomats have been assaulted and spat upon! Americans were so surprised at the hatred shown to United States military personnel who have been killed during peace missions in foreign countries. Don’t be surprised! This may sound harsh in contrast to decades of Liberal media and “educational” rhetoric, but it doesn’t matter what continent or nation is involved, if the people have fallen into demonic religious practices and, unlike Nineveh (Matthew 12:41), have rejected true missionaries, we should not be offering them assistance or help of any kind, no matter how much they may need it! [True Christian missionaries are those who have gone over to other nations in the primary hope of teaching the natives about Jesus Christ, and His way to salvation, as opposed to secular or religious groups who are only interested in feeding and providing medical care for starving pagans, and helping them return to their idolatry and the preservation of their demonic “heritage”.] If they have rejected God continually, and His plan of atonement through Christ, His Son, and are hell-bent on worshipping the devil, they are receiving the devil’s wages (Romans 6:23). Therefore, if we continue to take the blessings and wealth that God has given us (which we have inherited from our forefathers who founded this country on Christian ideals) and give

them over to idol worshippers, aiding and abetting them in their sin, not only will our efforts become fruitless, but we will also bring the wrath of God on ourselves and our children! Moreover, we will be repeating the sin of Adam, who took the blessings of God and handed them over to Satan. For the devil will manipulate, deceive, and utilize all those choosing to live under his control!

In Old Testament times, the entire world was filled with idol worshippers except for the nation of Israel. Frequently, she too, would rebel against God. The Lord viewed Himself as Israel’s future husband (Isaiah 54:5), the way all those who truly love and serve Jesus are today considered the Bride of Christ (Matthew 25:1-12 and 2 Corinthians 11:2). Yet, whenever Israel entered into a friendship with a pagan nation, especially one that God had told her to destroy, she would once again become seduced by the idols of that nation. Over time, no matter how innocent these friendships began, all types of horrendous acts of wickedness resulted from them (Judges 3:5-8 and 1 Kings 11:7-10). God sometimes ended up destroying thousands of Israelites due to their idolatry (Exodus 32:28, Lamentations & Hosea chapters 2). Then He would start from scratch with the pure, uncontaminated remnant that remained. Often God’s people would turn to Him in repentance after they had spent a considerable amount of time worshipping other gods. In effect, God would often tell them, “This generation hasn’t loved or obeyed Me. You have committed terrible wickedness due to your love affair with pagan idols. Now let them get you out of the mess you have gotten yourselves into. You have rejected Me. Why should I help you now? Go to your ‘new lovers’ for help.” (See Jeremiah 2:23-37.) These days the United States has fallen into this same sin. For too many times, U.S. foreign policy has not been concerned with pleasing God according to His laws, but rather in assisting those who have already rejected Him, to become strong again, even in their idolatry and occult practices. American society has been brainwashed on a steady diet of humanistic philosophies that have undermined the

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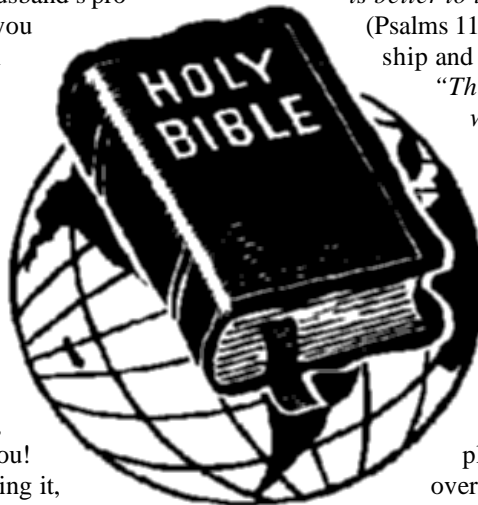


very foundation of the Christian faith! Only the spiritually naive are shocked to see old women and children from rebellious, pagan cultures throwing rocks at U.S. Marines and trying to kill them, or kicking and spitting at the corpses of dead American soldiers! Their hatred comes from Satan, for *“Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles”* (Romans 1:22-23 NIV). They hate Americans because we are a nation that has received tremendous Light (John 8:12) and blessings from God. His Holy Gospel has been taken throughout the world by American missionaries and satellites that beam forth the Word of God into the darkest places on Earth. Yet Satan runs those kingdoms of darkness for he is the *“...prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience”* (Ephesians 2:2 KJV). When light falls on darkness, it destroys the darkness thereof. *“...For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?”* (2 Corinthians 6:14 KJV). Therefore, Satan isn't very happy with America. For our technology and the faith and commitment of the righteous has done his kingdom much harm.

The devil cannot attack those under God's protection, unless the Lord allows it (as in Acts 5:40-41). So his strategy is to bring the Lord's Bride (Isaiah 54:5) out from under her Husband's protection, and entice her into sin. The moment you take your eyes off of Christ, Satan will bring all kinds of “forbidden fruit” to your attention! Reason it out with your own mind, and it will seem highly desirable (Genesis 3:6). Complying with Satan's logic will sound like the “wise” and “compassionate” thing to do. Guilt, one of Satan's favorite tools of manipulation, will suddenly enter into your reasoning. Consequently, you will decide that it is “God's will” for you to help hungry and starving people, even if they despise God and hate His people. You will have entered into the sin of Cain (see Genesis 4:3-5) by offering your own fruit to God, instead of allowing God to grow good fruit in you! In the most subtle of ways, without even realizing it, you will have succumbed to the god of this world, Satan (see Matthew 4:8-10)! Many ruthless dictators down through history, have used similar techniques on their own people in order to become rich and powerful. On the surface they seemed so concerned for the unfortunate and the downtrodden. Lenin and Stalin are two prime examples of oppressive, ruthless rulers. They told the poor and hungry Russian people that they could be rich and powerful, and have a utopia on Earth. But it wasn't the people who gained control over their nation. It was their rulers who gained control over them (2 Timothy 3:13)! When I was a schoolgirl, George Orwell's book “Animal Farm,” was required reading. It wasn't written from a Christian perspective, but it does contain great wisdom regarding Communism and human nature. The problem with Liberal philosophies is that they are based on the elevation of mankind instead of the elevation of Jesus Christ! Liberals believe that no matter what crimes a person has committed, deep down inside, people are basically good, and that if the offending person is shown enough love and given the tools of success, i.e., housing, education, and a job, that he or she will turn out to be an upstanding citizen and asset to their community. That position is fundamentally in error, for our Creator has stated categorically that, *“All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away”* (Isaiah 64:6 NIV). That's why Liberal policies don't work. It's because

those seeking to use them to promote a utopia on Earth are totally ignoring the disease of sin! Mankind's misery is not caused by poverty, lack of education, parental neglect, etc. The misery is caused by sin! **All these other factors are not the cause of the problem but the symptoms of it!** That's why socialistic reforms haven't worked. It's because, far from being basically good, the *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9 KJV).

Those who believe in the philosophy that people are basically good on the inside, generally expand their politics to foreign policy as well. Neville Chamberlain took this approach just prior to World War II. He was the Prime Minister of England. He felt that Adolph Hitler could be reasoned with, so he arranged a meeting with Hitler and signed a treaty with him. He came back to England feeling triumphant and holding up the signed document. He is famous for stating, *“Peace in our time!”* Not long after that Hitler invaded Poland, and England went to war against Nazi Germany in 1939. Then Adolph Hitler became famous for making a statement of his own. He said, *“A treaty is just a piece of paper.”* A few years later America came into the war. At the time that Japan was getting ready to attack Pearl Harbor, Japanese diplomats were still in the United States negotiating peace (1 Thessalonians 5:3). Failed foreign policies are just a larger offshoot of failed domestic policies. For the basic premise is the same. Those who trust in mankind will always be disappointed. That's why *“It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man”* (Psalms 118:8 NIV). Liberal policies are based on the worship and wisdom of mankind, instead of God. Therefore,



“This is what the LORD says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him’” (Jeremiah 17:5-7 NIV). What man-made doctrines fail to understand is that there is a God in Heaven who is quite aware of what is going on here on planet Earth, but He has given mankind free will over his own destiny. He has also given us a “manufacturer's handbook,” the Holy Bible, in which we can receive direction from our Creator in how to live. If we follow His laws, we will do very well, perhaps not immediately, but over a span of a lifetime God's blessings will flow. (See Psalms 37.) He will also bless the children and grandchildren of those who love and fear Him (Exodus 20:5-6). God has loved us enough to allow His only begotten Son to die in our place, for our sins, but if we choose to rebel from Him, and go off in our own direction, as individuals or as a nation, we will suffer the awful consequence of our disobedience. The Lord has given us the right directions, but if we do not listen to God, it will be to our destruction. We receive God's blessings if we obey Him. *“For He does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the children of men”* (Lamentations 3:33 NIV), but God does bless or curse according to the obedience or disobedience of mankind. Liberal policies and Religious Humanism don't work because they are man-centered instead of Christ centered! And as much as the human race may puff itself up with pride and assumptions of wisdom, we have very little control over our ultimate life span or circumstances. *“Who can speak and have it happen if the Lord has not decreed it? Is it not from the mouth of the Most High that both calamities and good things come? Why should any living man complain when punished for his sins? Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD”* (Lamentations 3:37-40 NIV).