

## U.S.A. ON THE HORNS OF DILEMMA

Deuteronomy 30:19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

Joshua 24:15: "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

TEXT: I Kings 18:21: "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

One of the most famous Bible stories is the dramatic occasion of the prophet Elijah defeating the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. As I have been studying this episode, I am intrigued at some of the similarities we are experiencing today. We are blessed in America. We have a legacy of faith in our foundation and a long list of heroes and heroines that have fought to preserve these freedoms. Woven in the warp and woof of our basic national fabric is belief in a freedom to love and worship God, to love our neighbors and live a life that is a beacon of light in a dark world.

Matthew 5:14 was cited at the end of Puritan John Winthrop's treatise, "[A Model of Christian Charity](#)" delivered on March 21, 1630 at [Holyrood Church](#) in [Southampton](#), before his first group of Massachusetts Bay Colonists embarked on the ship [Arbella](#) (originally named "Eagle") to settle Boston. And here's the ending of his speech:

"For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill. The eyes of all people are upon us. So that if we shall deal falsely with our God in this work we have undertaken, and so cause Him to withdraw His present help from us, we shall be made a story and a by-word through the world. We shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God, and all professors for God's sake. We shall shame the faces of many of God's worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till we be consumed out of the good land whither we are going.

"And to shut this discourse with that exhortation of Moses, that faithful servant of the Lord, in his last farewell to Israel, Deuteronomy 30. 'Beloved, there is now set before us life and death, good and evil,' in that we are commanded this day to love the Lord our God, and to love one another, to walk in his ways and to keep his Commandments and his ordinance and his laws, and the articles of our Covenant with Him, that we may live and be multiplied, and that the Lord our God may bless us in the land whither we go to possess it. But if our hearts shall turn away, so that we will not obey, but shall be seduced, and worship other gods, our pleasure and profits, and serve them; it is propounded unto us this day, we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it. Therefore let us choose life, that we and our seed may live, by obeying His voice and cleaving to Him, for He is our life and our prosperity."

Winthrop's message conforms with Psalm 33:12: "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance." Proverbs 14:34: Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people." Psalm 9:17: "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God."

America is on the horns of dilemma. In light of our need, let us examine the people and events surrounding the Mount Carmel experience:

#### 1. THERE WAS LEADERSHIP THAT REJECTED GOD'S MESSAGE.

I Kings 16:30,31; I Kings 18:4, 13; I Kings 18:22

#### 2. THE NATION THAT REJECTS GOD AND LIFE ACCEPTS CULT WORSHIP AND DEATH.

I Kings 16:32-I Kings 17:1; James 5:17

The Pilgrim Study Bible teaches, "Baalism was the worship of the powers of creation practiced by the Canaanite race. Thus, it was significant that Ahab and his subjects abandoned God to the sole influence of this worship of nature, which resulted in the entire destruction of animal and vegetable life" (I Kings 18:5). Baalism was a religion that was given over to gross immorality and they sacrificed their babies, which "...was intended to produce economic prosperity by prompting Baal to bring rain for the fertility of 'mother earth'" (Matt Barber). This is reflected in Hiel and the sad fulfillment of Joshua's prophecy five hundred years earlier (I Kings 16:34; Joshua 6:26).

The parallel with America is chilling. There is a radical environmentalism in our country that is pushing rejecting of that which is sacred for a "reconnecting" to nature. The leadership of this cult demands earth first, not God first; He is not even invited. This is not new; it is explained in Romans 1:21-27.

Dr. Natalia Kanem gave a lecture entitled *Bodily Autonomy – a fundamental right*. She said, "Bodily autonomy means my body is for me; my body is my own. It's about power, and it's about agency. It's about choice, and it's about dignity." There is no independence of life apart from God. Genesis 1:27: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." God forms and fashions each man and woman (Psalm 139:13-16). God forbids the premeditated taking of a person's life. Exodus 20:13: "Thou shalt not kill." We are living among many in this society that are appalled at tapping into our natural resources to maintain human life as a crime and at the same time see nothing wrong in taking the life of their unborn if they are considered to be in their way. It is sad when one of the foundational platforms of one of the political parties in America is called "Reproductive Rights." What a lie! We believe in reproduction, but what they are really saying is the demand for the right to take life.

#### 3. THE LORD DEFINES THE PROBLEM.

I Kings 18:17, 18

#### 4. THE CHALLENGE IS MADE.

I Kings 18:19-25

#### 5. THE CONTEST BEGINS.

I Kings 18:26-30

6. THE ALTAR OF THE LORD IS REPAIRED.

I Kings 18:30-37

7. THE FIRE FALLS AND SO DOES THE RAIN.

I KINGS 18:38-46

It has been a long time since America has seen a weeping, sweeping revival. We need revival! Joseph Lanphier gave up a job as a merchant and became a city missionary for his church in New York City. Little was happening, few results came from his visitation. In his personal prayer time, the Lord touched his heart to invite everyone to a prayer meeting at his home church on Fulton Street. The first noon meeting began Wednesday, September 23, 1857. Only six showed up to pray. The next Wednesday, twenty showed up and the following Wednesday, 40 joined in. "Lanphier decided to make the meeting a daily event in a larger room. That very week—on Wednesday, October 14—the nation was staggered by the worst financial panic in its history. Banks closed, men were out of work, families went hungry. The crash no doubt had something to do with the astonishing growth of Lanphier's noon meeting (by now called "the Fulton Street Prayer Meeting"). In a short time the Fulton Street meeting had taken over the whole building with crowds of more than 3,000. Lawyers and physicians, merchants and clerks, bankers and brokers, manufacturers and mechanics, porters and messenger boys—all came. Draymen would drive up to the curb, tie up their horses and come in for a few minutes" (From *America's Great Revivals*, Bethany House Publishers).

The prayer meeting went from church to church, then city to city. Within a year the entire nation was in the throes of prayer and revival. It is estimated that 50,000 per week were converted. Within one year it is estimated that one million people were saved."

-Pastor Pope-