

PROPHETIC

Your message burns in my heart and bones, and I cannot keep silent. (Jeremiah 20:9)

The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10c)

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Where Is Your Loyalty? (Observation)

Any church that touches the political realm and is associated with it, has left its holy place, and has LOST its testimony; there is no doubt about it. T. Austin-Sparks

Before sharing what's on my mind—first: other than Trump, I make it a rule to avoid mentioning people by name; I have no interest in drawing special attention to them, even if it might be obvious to whom I am referring. Second: I refer to the church, evangelicals, and Christians in the manner that the world views them and not as to what they mean spiritually (i.e., *church* as called-out community in Christ; *evangelicals* as ones who truly hold to the good news of scripture, which is the new creation in Christ [my definition]; *Christians* as ones who truly abide in Christ [Christ-abiders], trusting and obeying Him). Frankly, I would prefer to do away with all such labels, for labels box people into camps that serve to divide the Lord's people along many lines (e.g., doctrines, systematic theologies, distorted gospel messages, emphases, even people or leaders their followers consider pillars of the faith). If the cross were truly active amongst the Lord's people, there would be no boxes; they would all be smashed to bits, which is what the cross does best. It divides all that is of the world from all that is of God's Son. When the boxes are all smashed, there is only one thing remaining, and it is not a thing or an idea or an interpretation; it is a person and His name is ***Jesus***.

Now, about the above quote: I am not sure when Sparks stated this, but obviously, it was prior to his death in 1973. Is it not a prophetic word that applies to our day as we observe parts of the "church" once again aligning itself with the political system? The last time we saw a thrust of this magnitude in this direction was in the days of the so-called *moral majority*. Today, a like-minded movement has manifested among so-called *evangelicals* as Christians rally behind Donald Trump, to the point of him being some cultish savior riding on a white horse, coming to save Christians and prop up their causes.

For clarity, some of these causes include religious freedom, pro-life justices on the Supreme Court, second amendment rights (i.e., right to bear arms), and a whole host of moral issues that are being denied and legislated away by an amoral system aimed at destroying the image of God in humanity. Mind you; some of these causes are quite noteworthy, but this is not the point.

Riding on this evangelical popularity, Trump has begun a campaign for president billed as *Evangelicals for Trump*, with two well-known pastors front-and-center advocates of the campaign—one from the camp of the prosperity gospel (which is no gospel) and another from the camp of the heaven-hell gospel (which is no gospel). This is all political theater for votes, something all politicians do to get elected—nothing new here since politicians of both parties have regularly sought out the Christian vote.

You probably recall that there was at least one person out there (or: perhaps several) who predicted Trump would be president even before he announced his run for president. This person became an instant prophet who worked the Christian circuit. Since then, others have gotten on the band-wagon, so to speak, saying Trump is God's man of the hour and others touting him as the modern-day Cyrus who supports modern-day Israel and the Jews as God's chosen people who will rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and

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begin offering animal sacrifices once again (that is, re-instituting what the Lord destroyed in 70 AD; **thereby trampling underfoot the Son of God and denying the new creation covenant**). But let me be abundantly clear: as Christians, we are to love the Jews as we would love any other ethnic group in the world and desire for them, as we do for all people groups, to come to the knowledge of the truth of Messiah Jesus (Yeshua). As Paul wrote: *God wills that all humanity be rescued and come to the knowledge of the truth, fixing their hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all humanity.*

Now, lately, there have been a number of articles posted on the internet in which the writers (some being Christians) raise serious concerns over the rise of this Christian political movement for Trump. I too am concerned, although perhaps for other reasons. As I see it, this movement compromises what it means to be **a Christ-abider seated in the heavenlies with King Jesus**. Those in this movement have aligned themselves, not with the kingdom of Christ, but with the kingdom of men or of the world that is fashioned after the elements of the world that is a beast system, even an antichrist, unrighteous system, with mammon (money), power, and control seated on the throne. Instead of being aligned with only one cause, and that is King Jesus, the king of righteousness, who is on the throne of not only the earth but the whole universe, they have aligned themselves with certain causes, some of which, to be sure, are good and righteous ones, but they are nonetheless causes.

In my view, most of the fighting for causes in our day is nothing more than putting a bandage on an infected wound without going after the infection itself, metaphorically speaking. The very source of humanity's infection deals with **the heart and the mind**, and what we are witnessing across the globe is a humanity with a diseased heart and mind that has *lost all moral sensitivity* (Ephesians 4:19). Of the two, according to scripture, the heart (referenced seven times more than the mind) is the most vital part of what it means to be human, for it speaks to who we are, our inner being. Jeremiah tells us that *the Lord sees the mind and the heart* (20:12) and also says *the heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick. Who can understand it* (17:9)? Well, God can and does. God knows the problem and has given us the antidote for it. The **antidote is Jesus and the new creation that He is**. All who are in Christ are a new creation in Christ, and this new creation has a new spirit, a new heart, and a new (or: renewed) mind. We must turn from anything that compromises our place in King Jesus and compromises the good news of new creation that has been inaugurated through His death and glorious resurrection. Paul tells us: ***You must be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and you must put on the new humanity, which is being created the way God intended it, displaying justice and genuine holiness*** (Ephesians 4:23b-24 NTW-KNT).

Just in case you wonder what gospel message I am referring to, here are a few verses.

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that ***Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared*** to Cephas, then to the twelve. (1 Corinthians 15:1-5 ESV [bold italic added])

Therefore, ***if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation***. The old has passed away; behold, ***the new has come***. (2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV [bold italic added])

But it's unthinkable that I could ever brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. ***By his cross my relationship to the world and its relationship to me have been crucified***. Certainly,

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it doesn't matter whether a person is circumcised or not. Rather, ***what matters is being a new creation***. Peace and mercy will come to rest on all those who conform to this principle. ***They are the Israel of God***. (Galatians 6:14-16 GW [bold italic added])

With this said; I recognize that there are camps out there that see things totally different from what I have just shared. They see Christians infiltrating the governments and institutions of the world in order to change them with their Christian worldview (one that varies amongst the Lord's people). Years ago, the Lord spoke a word to me that ***we don't change these things, we come out of them***. Much like in Paul's day, ***these are wicked times we live in*** (Ephesians 5:16b), so we must be on guard in the spirit.

To be sure, we must be a positive influence in the world-at-large, all the way from the top down to our local communities, but are we to have our hearts planted in it to the point of becoming part of it, even joining its causes? The challenge is to be in the world (really no choice) but not be of it (definite choice of the heart), meaning we do not lose our identity in Christ but rather express His life in love, grace, mercy, peace, righteousness, etc.; and this requires we hold fast to our head and not compromise with the world and lose contact with our head. In a twist of words, we are to lose our heads so that we lay hold of the Head. As Paul tells us: ***So grow up in everything into him—that is, into the king who is the head. So don't be foolish; rather, understand what the will of the Lord is*** (Ephesians 4:15; 5:17 NTW-KNT).

Our influence is based on the cross and dying to self (self-will, self-interest, self-determination, self-centered)—a dying that expresses the sacrificial love of God—not on bolstering the self-centered, humanistic nature that rules the world's beast system and is inherent in fallen humanity. Are we to compromise with the world, being blind to its carnal, amoral state because it gives us some level of favor? Are we to excuse our compromise with our proclamation that 'we are all sinners', so we must overlook harmful behavior in others, as long as they support our causes, when in fact we are now new creations and our standard is no longer earthly but rather heavenly (i.e., spiritual)? More precisely, our standard is Jesus! Are we to support the world system because it gives us *religious freedom* when scripture clearly tells us that we should not expect such favor from the world (i.e., beast system) that rejects God's king? Are we willing to suffer with Christ so that we may be glorified with Him? Are we willing to come outside the camp to Him? Are we willing to be different from the world to the point of standing out in such a way that the world doesn't see anything of itself in us? Are we to join with ecumenical movements that join secular and religious forces together to fight causes such as social injustice, bullying, hate speech, etc. when, using the previous metaphor, such moves are nothing more than bandages on an infected wound, for they do not go to the heart of the matter and the remedy that only comes through the cross and resurrection into a new creation? Are we willing to have our thinking changed, to live by the mind of Christ? Has the organized system of the world been crucified to us and we to it?

It is time for us Christians to stand for the truth, which is none other than King Jesus Himself. The political realm is not His realm, which is of an entirely different nature built on righteousness—that is, doing what is right in the eyes of God. Who enters the kingdom of the heavens—that is, the reign of God? The one who does the will of God the Father who is in heaven! It is time to quit compromising just to protect our interests and bolster our (or: others') causes, even if they are good ones. Our loyalty is to the King of all kings.

Again, consider Paul's word to the Galatians, only this time as presented in Jonathan Mitchell's translation; take it slowly for there is a lot packed in these few verses.

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Now may it not happen to me (or: in me) — to take up the practice of boasting, except within the cross (the execution stake) of our Lord, Jesus Christ, through Whom the organized system (or: the world; = their culture and religion) has been, and continues being, crucified (executed on the stake) in me (or: to me; for me; by me), and I by (to; in) the organized system (the world; = their culture and religion). For [some MSS +: within Christ Jesus] neither circumcision nor uncircumcision continues being anything, but rather: a new creation (a founding with a new character; a new act of framing). So as many as are habitually advancing [other MSS: will advance; may advance] in line by ranks, corresponding to this measuring rod (or: continue belonging to the rank living in conformity to this rule; or: shall in this standard observe the rudimentary elements or elementary principles), Peace [= shalom] and Mercy [are continually] upon them—even upon the Israel whose origin and source is God (or: God's Israel). (Galatians 6:14-16 JM-NT)

O, dear people of God, if Paul were here today would he cry out: *O foolish Galatians (add a name)! Who has bewitched you* (Galatians 3:1)?

I cannot speak for the rest of the world, but, to some degree, I can for the western world, especially America: We have lost our testimony in this world that is now described by some as *post-Christian* and *post-truth* because we have fallen away from our center and our all—Jesus. As Jesus exhorted the Ephesian church of the 1st century, we have left our first love, and, in so doing, we have strayed from the good news of new creation and God's love for all.

Now, to add to this matter, let us pivot a bit to something that was recently said by a very well-known conservative radio commentator who was nearly bragging about the strength of the United States as the world's only super power and its ability to force any nation on earth to comply with its will. Since Iran was hot in the news, he was saying that they won't go to war with us because they know our military power could destroy them. He went on to say that we have bombs that can destroy anything 200 feet underground and other weaponry of mass destruction.

Is it any wonder that some states have passed laws allowing "churches" to have guns on their premises, leading to "churches" gunning up with concealed-weapons security forces, even encouraging their membership to have concealed weapons on them during services? Of course, this is driven by the insanity of those who commit mass murder. This is a topic all unto itself, so I'll leave it. But the point is that we are becoming just like the rest of the nation. What testimony do we have when we carry guns into worship services? This is an old covenant testimony!

Back to this commentator—essentially, he was saying that the USA is in command of the world and can force its hegemonic will any place it chooses to do so, and the world knows it. (Sounds like bullying! Is it any wonder why we have bullying among our young people?) He even intimated that we are the moral compass of the world. (So, hegemonic power is moral?) With Trump in office, the economy going strong (prosperity) and a formidable military, such thinking implies that the US is invincible and God sanctions all our actions.

This should remind us of a woe in Isaiah about relying on horses and trusting in chariots because they are many and the horsemen are very strong, and because of this they don't trust in the Holy One of Israel, nor seek the Lord (Isaiah 31:1). Translated into modern-day military might: relying on all the high-tech war machinery and the highly trained troops that operate them, trusting in technology and not in the Lord.

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Add to this a word from Jeremiah about prosperity: *I spoke to you in your prosperity; but you said, 'I will not listen!' This has been your practice from your youth, that you have not obeyed My voice (22:21).*

Before proceeding—any negative critique I offer of my nation is not to imply that I am against it. Nothing of the sort! I thank God for being here as I marvel at the great blessings He has bestowed on us as a nation. But it is for this reason I cry out as I do. Our light is dimming. Our testimony as the Lord's people is lost in this so-called *post-truth era*. Why? We have lost sight (if we truly ever had it in this modern, technologically-driven generation) of the glorious good news of Jesus and what He has truly accomplished in inaugurating a new creation with a new humanity fashioned after His image. He is the truth! And, the only way we can countermand a post-truth era is to lift up the one who is truth itself.

Besides, when it comes to nations, we need to be like Abraham, the father of faith, and the rest of those of like-minded faith as commended in Hebrews 11—the ancient ones that ***looked for a city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God***; they looked for ***a better country, a heavenly one***. But ***we have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem***. This is a present reality. We who are victors (conquerors) in Christ are ***New Jerusalem!***

Now, just as I had finished writing this piece, an article appeared on the net that adds to this discussion. It was written by a former member of Congress known for his libertarian views. He wrote about the US assassination of the top Iranian general over Iraqi government objections. The US is in Iraq by invitation, meaning Iraq can ask us to leave at any time. Well, after the assassination, the Iraqi Prime Minister notified the US State Department to enact a US troop withdrawal from Iraq. In other words, Iraq decided to revoke the invitation. What was the US response? No: we will not abide by their request. Why? Because the US military is a "force for good" in the Middle East and it is "our right" to remain in the region. Given the lies about WMDs that led us into a war, a never-ending war in Afghanistan in which soldiers are still dying, drones that don't always discriminate over their targets, boycotts that hurt the common folk of nations just to force our will on their leaders, and repeated attempts to overthrow governments, one has to question the State Department's definition of *good*. Who on earth has given us these so-called *rights*?

We must ask ourselves: Is this the type of system to which we Christians are to give our loyalty? At a recent Trump rally, Christians cheered when Trump mentioned the killing of the Iraqi general. Is this the character of Christ?

It is time for us to awake from our sleep, wipe our eyes, and see the Lord with a clarity beyond anything we have had before. We need to see who and what Jesus is. Who is our king? Is our voice similar to one that went forth in 30-33 AD: *We have no king but Caesar*? There is only one king that God recognizes and He is seated at His right hand of glory right now and no one or thing can or ever will depose Him. We have King Jesus because our lives are hidden with Him in God and He has placed His life in us; consequently, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. Seek above where He is, for we are there in Him!

Let us not move from this truth but come to a greater understanding of what this means, upholding it in our words and actions. Let us be an image of Jesus in this world. When He walked among people, Jesus undoubtedly projected an authority that people could sense and could not challenge. His presence was different from anyone they had ever met. What kind of authority and presence do people sense in us?

Now, back to Trump: Has anyone wondered if Trump is actually a test from God, a test to reveal where our true loyalties lie? The Lord already knows our heart and, if a test, it is to expose the heart of many of

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His people, from the individual with no real affiliation on up to the highly successful (by the world's standards) big names with big ministries. Are we loyal to the world system, that is, the system with a beast nature, or are we loyal to the kingdom of God—not a system but life itself that is aligned with the rule (will) of God, the creator of all? May the Lord test each of our hearts and reveal where we stand in this day!

I leave you with a word from Paul and a final one from Jesus.

Now may it not be mine to be boasting, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. (Galatians 6:14 CLV)

Jesus decidedly replied, "**My kingdom (the realm of My reign) is not (does not exist being) from out of this system (world of organized government, culture, economics or religion) as its source or origin.** If My kingdom was being from out of this system (world), as a source or origin, My subordinates (deputies; those under My orders) would have been progressively contending, struggling and fighting, to the end that I could (or: would) not be given over to the Jews. But now (= as a matter of fact, or, as it is) **My kingdom is not (does not exist being) from that source** (from within this place; thence or hence)." Therefore, Pilate said to Him, "Are you not, then, a king? (or: So, then, you are a king!)" Jesus discerningly replied, "You continue saying that I am a king. Into this I, Myself, have been born, and into this I have come into this system (world and culture) and continue being present: **to the end that I could and should bear witness to Reality (give testimony to the Truth).** Everyone being (or: who is existing) from out of Reality (the Truth) is habitually hearing [and continually obeys] My voice." Pilate then says to Him, "**What is Reality (or: Truth)?**" And saying this, he again goes out to the Jews, and then says to them, "I, myself, continue finding not one cause for accusation (fault, responsibility, or reason for a case) within him. (John 18:36-38 JM-NT [bold italic added])

Jesus says: **I AM the TRUTH!** He is reality itself! This is what we proclaim in a so-called *post-truth era*. May we image this reality. And, may we remain loyal only to God the Father and His Son, King Jesus!

Postscript

Upon completing the above, a lingering thought persisted about Donald Trump. I recently read that someone sees a change for the good in this man. May it be so. We can surely pray along this line. But what came to me was something N.T. Wright wrote in *Surprised By Hope* that God wanted to rescue humans *in order that humans might be his rescuing stewards over creation*. I know this might seem contradictory to all I have written, but I wonder if God is going to rescue Trump so that he might be a rescuing steward over the US? You should know by now; I don't like boxes! God's ways are beyond our ways and thinking, no matter how well-intentioned.

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