



"A Christian never falls asleep in the fire, or in deep waters; but he is likely to grow drowsy in the sunshine."

—W.G. Burns

**08-Nov-02**

## **What Does Election 2002 Mean for America?**

The debates are finished, the commercials are silent, the votes are cast, and all but the dust has settled on Election 2002. Republicans are jubilant to the point of crowing, while the Democrats mope and grumble, looking for someone to blame for their defeat. Pundits and pollsters are searching for the reasons why they missed all the signs pointing to a Republican near-sweep in the voting booth. And just about everyone is wondering what this means for America.

No one is truly objective, but such a viewpoint is what is most necessary in evaluating the situation we find ourselves in today. With objectivity comes the realization that the election results of Tuesday night are not as monumental as the media are making them to be. They are not a "mandate" for George W. Bush. They are not a "shift to the right" or a "repudiation of Democrats." A twenty-four-vote margin in the House and a three-vote margin in the Senate mean nothing so significant. In fact, we can say that the American electorate in large part voted for the status quo. A real lurch to the right would have seen Republicans win a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress, but their majority remains sliver-thin.

We should also not gloss over the fact that the platforms of the Republican and Democrat parties are not all that far apart. Most Democrats support President Bush's policy on Iraq and other foreign matters, while Republicans support traditionally Democrat measures like prescription drug plans, campaign finance reform, and Social Security guarantees. On many social issues, both Democrats and Republicans hug the middle ground for fear of offending some special interest group(s). Maybe the biggest difference between the two parties is their approach to the sluggish economy: The Democrats prefer to increase spending, while Republicans choose to reduce taxes. As has been said many times, "There's not a dime's difference. . . ."

From a long-range viewpoint, this election is a mere blip on the screen. Congressional Democrats ran Washington for five decades through the terms of both Democrat and Republican presidents, and the general trend of the nation was a slow slipping downward in many areas, particularly socially and morally. Once the Republicans took over power, the situation has not reversed but has become entrenched in political correctness and fear. This election will do little or nothing to reverse this trend.

However, there is a tiny bright spot on the horizon. The Republican majority in the Senate makes possible the appointment of more conservative judges to the federal bench. Most of the recent abuses of power and reversals of morality in American law have come at the hands of liberal, humanist, activist judges. More constitutionally conservative judges could—over the long haul—put American law back on a more moral footing.

However, we should not get too excited. Such a transformation would take years of consistent adjudication on matters from abortion to hate crimes to quotas to homosexual marriage, etc. A reversal on any one of these matters could ignite the proverbial "firestorm of protest" on America's streets. Do Republicans have this kind of moral and political courage? Would any of them "stand in the gap" to do what is right ([Ezekiel 22:30](#))?

Time will tell, of course, but it does not appear that the "decline and fall" trend will be bucked by this election. A kind of political mini-revolution may have occurred—if it is not just a reaction to the current bunch of unlikable

Democrat leaders and ideas—but it has not been accompanied by any kind of spiritual revival. As General Douglas MacArthur said from the deck of the *U.S.S. Missouri* after the surrender of Imperial Japan on September 2, 1945:

The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural development of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

This echoes the thought of [Proverbs 14:34](#): "Righteousness exalts a nation, but [sin](#) is a reproach to any people." We can only hope that some of this nation's reproach will be lifted in the weeks and months ahead.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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## From the Archives: Featured Sermon

### [Revelation 2-3 and Works](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

We must avoid distractions and keep our lives focused on God and His Holy Word. The prophetic messages in Revelation 2 and 3 are designed for the end times, shortly before the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. All seven churches—with their unique attitudes—will be extant contemporaneously at the end time. If a message ("he who overcomes," "I know your works") is repeated seven times in two chapters, God must want us to understand these concerns. Nothing is more important than repentance and overcoming, producing mature, committed, loyal disciples displaying exemplary conduct and good works, avoiding the distractions of Satan (Ephesians 6:12) and the allurements of this world (I John 2:15).

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## From the Archives: Featured Article

## [What Sin Is](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

Over the last half-century, sin has gone out of vogue. In the secular public's mind, it is a religious matter and not something of much consequence. But it matters a great deal to God because it is not only the cause of all the misery in the world but also the reason humanity is so far from Him. John Ritenbaugh explains the basics of sin and what God wants us to do about it.

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