

## A Government To Fear (Part Four): Apathy

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Do you remember the movie *Yentl*, in which Yentl so desired to get a higher education denied girls in those days? She disguised herself to be a boy and went anyway. Barbra Streisand sang a song that contained a line about those who saw her in school but never noticed that she was a girl. The line said, "They are blind. They have eyes but cannot see." Her disguise and guile enabled her to get away with this because they were not looking for a girl.

Last week's commentary was my third on this subject of a government to fear. But toward the conclusion, I began to touch on what I feel is one of the greater dangers that we in the church of God have to be alert to at this time. It is apathy. Apathy means, literally, "Without feeling." It is expressed in life as indifference, a lack of interest or concern, impassive, even detached. My concern is because I believe that I witness much of this in the American people in both civil and religious areas of life. Apathetic people are usually not indifferent or impassive about every aspect of life. For example, a person might be apathetic about government or about religion, but on the other hand, really passionate about baseball, dress fashions, or movies.

What concerns me is what I perceive people are apathetic about. How important to life's purpose is baseball, clothing fashions, or movies, as compared to God and one's salvation, or a nation that is rapidly sliding into the septic tank through widespread, rampant immorality? How depressing it is to witness American citizens unable to answer incredibly simple questions about events being reported almost daily in present news broadcasts these people are apathetic about events of far, far greater importance and to the purpose and quality of life. Add to that that Americans are repeatedly proving their biblical ignorance in a nation supposedly founded as a Christian nation.

My thoughts regarding these subjects reminded me of a portion of a speech given by Abraham Lincoln in 1858. He said,

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All the armies of Europe, Asia and Africa, combined with all the treasure of the Earth in their military chest, with a Bonaparte for a commander, could not by force take a drink from the Ohio or make a track on the Blue Ridge in a trial of 1000 years. At what point, then, is the approach to danger to be expected? I answer: If it ever reach us, it must spring up amongst us. It cannot come from abroad. If destruction be our lot, we must ourselves be its author and finisher. As a nation of free men, we must live through all time or die by suicide.

This apathy I see us surrounded by in this nation witnesses to me that we, as a nation, are well on our way to the undertaker by means of a suicidal death. Jesus warns us that when this time comes in our history, the manner of life will be exceedingly deceptive. In fact, at the very beginning of the Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24:4, the very first warning He gave to us is, "Let no one deceive you."

Despite all the warning signs that Christ gave in terms of events like wars, earthquakes, and major upsets in the weather, given so that we would recognize the times we are living in, deception is going to be a major hallmark of the times leading right up to the very moment of Christ's return. Recall that He warned people would be marrying and giving in marriage, even as was done right immediately before the Flood. This illustration indicates that people, though receiving a warning, do not heed the warning. They are apathetic about the times.

Somewhat further down the road time-wise will be the works of deception done through the Beast and the False Prophet. As in *Yentl*, people will live as though they are blind because they have gotten caught up in Satan's guileful, clever disguises. My concern for us is that we not allow ourselves to get caught up in the spirit of the times, with its materialistic, live-for-the-moment focus. If we get caught up in the spirit of the times, we will already be deceived to some degree.

The theme of several of Christ's parables at the conclusion of Matthew 24 on into Matthew 25 is watchfulness—being alert to what is important to our spiritual life in Christ Jesus and not to what is important to this world. In the

parable of the ten virgins, both the foolish and the wise went to sleep. What put them to sleep? Well, within the context of the parable, it was probably tiredness from the preparation for the wedding, and therefore the times themselves which filled the time in which they lived.

The difference between the wise and the foolish is that the wise prepared *before* they went to sleep. The foolish frittered away their time, even though they no doubt also prepared to some degree for our Lord's return. But it was not enough. The wise organized their lives so that their attention was placed first on the most important thing in life for them and they stuck to the course. To them, it was a matter of priority, and they disciplined themselves, making sure that they were not apathetic regarding their responsibility. Their focus was "first things first," without allowing themselves any excuse for distractions.