

The Handwriting Is On The Wall (2017): The Fourth Turning

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 04-Oct-17; Sermon #FT17-01

This sermon opens with a quote from a man who was, I almost wanted to say imported into the United States, but he came here with his mother 50 or 55 years ago. He is now about 60 years old and has risen to a height of prominence in the writing world. The books that he has written, I consider to be top notch, for the kind of subjects that he writes on. He writes about things that are going on in the United States in terms of what is causing the degeneracy in the United States. He is named David Kupelian, and if you ever get anything that is written by David Kupelian, I would urge you to read it because it is logical, it is sensible, and it is plainly written. It is written so people like you and I can really understand it.

Here is what David Kupelian says as the opening statement in an article that appears in the lead article for Whistleblower Magazine, in their latest issue. It came just before the Feast of Tabernacles.

America has changed so drastically in our lifetime that many say they can barely recognize the magnificent nation they once knew and loved. And, also...

This was an additional separate quote, but it is within the same parameters as that opening quote,

And, also, ever since the 1960s, we have lived [He means here in the United States] in a blur.

Time seems to be going so fast. Time really is not going any faster than it ever has since God set the speed way back there in Genesis 1, in getting the earth ready for the appearance of man on earth as God created them. It is not that time is going any faster, rather our minds are so filled with things that are happening all around us. We think about those things, and we spend so much time thinking on what is being presented to the United States in a way of life now, that our time seems to go fast because our mind is on what is happening in the United States. The very obviously biased state of the news reporting toward leftism, politically, and immoral liberality, religiously, should be obvious to us. Whether the unconverted know it or not, we are the targets of what is occurring right now. If time seems to be going fast for you, that is probably a pretty good understanding of why it is going so fast, because you are thinking about what is happening in the United States.

I do not know how many times I have said to the congregation there in Fort Mill that things have changed so much since the time I was a teenager. The nation is hardly recognizable, even to me. There are a couple of other elderlies like me in that congregation and they agreed. They went through the United States of America when they were kids in the Depression as I did, or during the Second World War. Do you know how long ago that was now? It was about 70 years ago that the Second World War took place. The lady who died just within the past couple of months in the Fort Mill congregation told me repeatedly, this is not the same nation it was when she was a child.

I have spoken of some of my experiences as a boy. In the city of Pittsburgh, my family did not live in Pittsburgh, rather we lived in a rural area north of the city of Pittsburgh. My parents were good parents, they were strict parents, but they also trusted me. They also trusted the general behavior of the people in the city of Pittsburgh. By the time that I was twelve years old I had money and I was

always working. I loved the work, but I was always working, and so, I always had a little bit of money from working on farms and things like that around the area.

My parents allowed me to go anywhere in the city of Pittsburgh at any time, and they never worried that I would never return home. I do not think many good parents allow their children to do that anymore in a big city, and I would not do it in Pittsburgh with my kids anymore. It is because the general behavior of the people has changed. That is why David Kupelian, who was born in Armenia, but he grew up as a boy from the age of four or five years old in Chicago. He says virtually the same thing. His parents allowed him to go almost anywhere in the city of Chicago at any time.

We have experienced what is making it seem as though time is going so fast. That it is being burned at both ends as it were, and that we are running out of time. The satanic forces motivating the people who are causing the problems in the United States are first striving to expose those who sincerely desire to worship God despite the lack of purity of their doctrines. They are striving to isolate them from the mainstream of public life, thus exposing them to more intense pressures, and ultimately eliminating their influence in public life altogether.

Here is the path they are following: expose, isolate, and eliminate those who sincerely believe and really do worship the Creator God. That is the pathway that they are successfully following to complete their agenda.

Here is the name of a fairly important, nationally known news personality whose name is not in the news now as much as it was when compared with the media exposure he had before August 1st. I think many of you will recognize this name. His name is Steve Bannon. Before his being with the Trump team in the White House, Mr. Bannon held a high position in the Breitbart news agency. His name was in the news for a very much different reason during the presidential election campaign, because he was Mr. Trump's Chief Election Campaign Strategist. He was hired by the Trump campaign staff, and he became Mr. Trump's strategist.

As you know, they were very successful, because Mr. Trump easily won the election. Bannon then became part, a very important part, of Mr. Trump's closest advisers once Mr. Trump's time in office began. In early August, Mr. Bannon was mysteriously dismissed, and he is now no longer part of Mr. Trump's inner circle. His name is no longer in the news much now, and many speculations arose as to why. Why was Steve Bannon dismissed?

A recent headline quoted Mr. Bannon as saying that he is making war against the Republican Party. He is still a diehard Republican, but he said he is making war against the Republican Party leadership. I do not claim to know precisely why he was dismissed, but I did read a fairly well-informed speculation that appeared on the WorldNetDaily website. That speculation is my subject for this evening.

The WorldNetDaily article was authored by one Thomas Horne. I do not know whether you have ever heard of him, but he is well thought of in conservative circles, and he is also well thought of in religious circles. He writes major books having to do with religion and, incidentally, the most recent one is on the Pope. He quoted the Pope as saying he believes that he, Pope Francis, is going to be the last Pope. Very interesting that something like that should come out of the Vatican. Thomas Horne is a pretty good author on his own, and he frequently posts blogs on the WorldNetDaily site. This was an unusually long article in length for a blog to WorldNetDaily. It contains some insights into perhaps why the dismissal of Steve Bannon occurred.

Apparently, *Mr. Bannon's belief in and support of the prophecies appearing in the Fourth Turning book, during strategy planning sessions for implementation of Trump government policies regarding areas of the international concern*, played a role in Bannon's dismissal. His attempts to persuade others was their concern. Others were afraid that Bannon's beliefs would persuade Mr. Trump to implement policies that would hinder, or even destroy, their agendas for the future of their vision, which was not necessarily the same as Mr. Trump's, and definitely not the same as Mr. Bannon's.

So, these opponents of Bannon worked very hard to undermine him. You might even say they ganged up on him in the presence of the Mr. Trump. One very interesting person whose name popped up urging Mr. Trump to not go any further with Mr. Bannon, was the Pope. It was, "get rid of that man." Well that intensified my interest in the article as I was reading it.

Before we go any further, I want to give you a really a brief background on the prophecies that appear in the Fourth Turning book. I usually begin the Feast of Tabernacles with messages on a biblical prophecy that I have labeled "The Handwriting Is on the Wall." However, this message is somewhat different because this is not directly on a biblical prophecy of God, but a human prophecy, or series of human prophecies, that appear quite interesting.

The title, of course, Handwriting on the Wall comes from Daniel 5 when during a pagan banquet precious instruments that were taken from God's Temple during the Babylonian conquest of Judah, were used by King Belshazzar to serve his guests. Belshazzar was a grandson of the much more famous Nebuchadnezzar. He was well informed of the origin of the precious instruments and was duly charged with impiety against the Creator God for using the instruments with no permission in that setting and with the unholy attitude that he himself possessed. It was then that a hand mysteriously appeared and wrote a disturbing prophecy on the wall in the dining room. I am not interested in what that prophecy said. What I am interested in is the saying that has arisen in our culture thousands of years later but derived from Daniel 5 occasion.

The saying is the "handwriting is on the wall." That does not appear on the wall in Belshazzar's time, but it is part of our culture here in the United States twenty-five hundred years later. This statement means that we should have known better because we were well informed that a particular event, whatever it happens to be, usually a tragedy, was going to happen because we were well informed before it ever happened. This very reason is one of the major purposes of God's prophecies. He reveals information beforehand, usually historical, so we are prepared whenever what He prophesied literally occurs.

The human prophecies I am going to use as the backdrop on this opening night message appeared in public in 1997 with the publishing of the research and analysis of William Strauss and Neil Howe in their coauthored book titled, *The Fourth Turning*. Please understand that I am in no way comparing them to God's prophecies. Strauss and Howe's prophecies have gathered attention because a lot of people read the book, and, because they appear to be unusually accurate, but are generalized where God's are frequently very specific and spectacular, clearly revealing that He is God.

Though Strauss and Howe's prophecies are generalized, they have nonetheless been unusually accurate, especially regarding the general timelines they also set. They not only said this is going to happen, they said, not virtually when it would happen, but in the ballpark. I mean, within just a few years. I will give you the book's subtitle to help you grasp the theme of the book. The Fourth Turning's subtitle is, quote, "What the cycles of history tell us about America's next rendezvous with destiny."

The key word in that subtitle is cycles. A cycle is a regular repeating pattern. The engine that empowers the automobile that takes you where you wish to go is a 4-cycle one. Those four cycles are intake, compression, explosion, and exhaust occurring in each cylinder thousands of times per minute, in order to turn the automobiles transmission and then the wheels. Now remember that number, four.

I was given the book as a gift by our oldest daughter who said in a note that she thought that I would find I would find the content pretty interesting. I did, but I do not live by it. I did find it intriguing, so that it stuck in my mind since I read it, which I believe was in 1999. The book's theme is literally stated on a page at the very beginning of the book, before any other content appears. Strauss and Howe did it for the purpose of drawing direct attention to the book's theme. When I began to realize the book's purpose, that page seemed to me almost like it was purposely blowing a trumpet to draw attention. This announcement page was given to Ecclesiastes 3:15, and I want you to turn there, because in one sense, the whole book is built on this theme. The announcement page was given to Ecclesiastes 3: 15 all to itself. Nothing else was on the page except this.

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is has already been, and what is to be has already been; and God requires an account of what is past.

We are going to read through that again, a little bit more slowly, with a little bit of additional words from me to help explain. Okay, here goes.

Ecclesiastes 3:15 That which is . . .

That is, the history happening right now,

Ecclesiastes 3:15 has already been . . .

That is, these things have happened before,

Ecclesiastes 3:15 and what is to be . . .

That is, is going to happen again in the future,

Ecclesiastes 3:15 has also already been, and God requires an account of what is past.

The book is built around that theme, and I thought it was so interesting that theme was pulled right out of the Bible. Ecclesiastes 3:15 is literally the concluding verse in one of the best-known sections of Ecclesiastes. It is that section where Solomon writes there is a time for this, and there is a time for that. Mark that well in your mind, because that verse indicates what? It indicates a repetitious rhythm or cycle of historical occurrences. That came out of the mind of God, and Solomon picked up on it. Without further expounding his explanation, what Solomon is saying, is that under God's sovereignty over the earth, there exists rhythmic patterns in which even mankind's histories show history continues repeating itself.

He is not saying that history exactly repeats itself, just generally. For example, names, dates, and locations always change in historical circumstances, and in the records, giving each event as it occurs

a sort of newness as they appear to those in the present. It actually happened generations before. The reality is that that over the long periods of time what is happening now happened before, and at some time in the future, they will happen again.

Believe it or not, this is the second time this appeared in the book of Ecclesiastes, so turn to Ecclesiastes 1. God wants to get this as a part of our thinking. Solomon writes it this way.

Ecclesiastes 1:9 That which has been is what will be, that which is done is what will be done.

The verse here is expressing a similar concept, but the content is specifically different. What is happening now is only new to those living now. If that is not true, there would be no purpose for recording histories. Histories are written to inform, so those presently living are given understanding. The Bible is a major history book, and the unique quality of it is that it is always accurate and always an accurate recording of what happened. Who did what and how it was resolved, if ever. It can be trusted because God is the Author of the Bible. Of Himself, in order to differentiate Himself from what is happening under man, God says,

Malachi 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.

Practically everything in life changes, but God does not. God also shows us Satan never changes in his enmity against God, and the carnal nature of mankind never loses its self-centeredness, because it is largely derived from association with Satan. This and more tends to point out why history is repetitious almost to an extreme. Strauss and Howe picked up on this. Not that they got it out of the Bible. As far as I know, they did not get the idea from the Bible, but they did find some proof in the Bible that their thinking was right on in some way.

I did not realize it when I first read through *The Fourth Turning*, but that verse, though it is not the very best way it can be understood, Strauss and Howe's use is still nonetheless appropriate because it does encapsulate the overall theme they wrote on for hundreds of pages and based their predictions on. Both men had previously authored books independently of each other whose general themes had to do with generational characteristics. That is going to become a keyword, generational characteristics of the American public.

Here is a brief statement of what the book provides evidence supporting. This may be a little bit tangled to you. I just could not find any way in my mind to make it any simpler. It is really not a difficult process, but it took these men a long time to do the research on this. Even as an individual person's characteristics will gradually adjust over time as we proceed from childhood, to young adulthood, to middle age, and into old age, the characteristics of an entire generation will adjust. Well, that happens to individuals.

Now what these men looked into was there are whole generations of people who are changing at the same time. The characteristics of an entire generation will also adjust, and the history of this nation records the adjustments. This is what they discovered that it was being recorded unbeknownst to them, until they began to look at it. Clear examples of our common knowledge, is that people in the 1890s named that period of time, the gay 90s. Why did they do that? Because they recognized it was the characteristic, the dominant characteristic of the age. Strauss and Howe did not do that. The people living in the 90s did that and named it.

We have another one that is also well known, the roaring 20s. Another period of time in the United States when it seemed like everybody was going in the same direction, at the same time. Well, very large numbers of people were doing that. That is what they did in their research, they found out this was happening to every generation in the United States of America. It was not isolated to the roaring 20s or the gay 90s at all.

The Fourth Turning is the only work Strauss and Howe coauthored. Both men discovered independently, not only for their own satisfaction, that not only does history repeat itself, they also rediscovered a human application some ancients had delved into on their own. I mean, this was thousands of years ago. People were already looking into this. This is, that like the four seasons pertaining to the weather, that is spring, summer, fall, and winter, each season has a singular, dominant, characteristic that makes it distinct from the other three.

For instance, obvious examples are that summer is hot and winter is cold. That is something easily seen, the dominant characteristic that a season has. Also, generational characteristics of humans occur, and they discovered four to a set. But each set containing four living generations is not one year long, but consistently, over centuries of time, roughly eighty to one hundred years.

The ancients called this period of eighty to one hundred years containing four living generations, a saecula id. Each generation of humans has collectively, in that generation, a distinctive characteristic. Just like summer has a characteristic of being hot, winter has the characteristic of being cold, they began to discover, and they have proved it to an awful lot of people now, that each generation, four generations, an eighty to one-hundred-year period, and each one of those generations has a characteristic that is driving the whole system. That is what is breathtaking.

This is what their prophecies became built upon, because they could see there was a regular pattern of four distinct characteristics. Each characteristic lasted for a period of twenty to twenty-five years, and then that characteristic gradually changed and became a different driving characteristic. Four times in roughly one hundred years, that was the cycle. Now, who put that cycle to work? It was God who put the cycle to work, and Strauss and Howe searched out the history that proved the generational characteristics.

These authors are so confident they challenged their readers to disbelieve their bold claim that the generational change cannot be stopped. Can anybody think of why it cannot be stopped? Because we age. And you know you are not the same person that you were when you were seven or eight years old. An awful lot has happened between the time that you were seven or eight until now, you are seventy or eighty, and you have changed. What they discovered is that a whole generation will be changing at virtually the same rate of speed at the same times. God does that, not us. He put that cycle together, just like the four seasons throughout the year, there are four major generational characteristics that drive what is happening within a nation, and they gradually change.

Strauss and Howe named the change of influence of a generation a *turning*, four to one hundred years, roughly. That is a turning from one dominant characteristic to another that will become the dominant influence, and they named the first turning, *the high*. Okay, you older folks, maybe you are my age. I am 84 years old. Maybe you are a little bit younger than that but listen. Listen while I describe this generation. I lived through it, and I can look back on it now understanding a great deal more.

This *high* is a generation of great accomplishment within the nation of enthusiastic, collective strengthening, of the community, of the sharing of the community work loads, and the building of unity within the nation. Friendly, wholesome cooperation within the culture is perhaps its outstanding, notable characteristic. In this nation the last first turning began in the Depression in the 1930s and included World War II. This *high* was the hallmark of what is now called in the United States, the greatest generation ever in this nation.

These men did not know that when they were looking it up. But when they began to see the characteristics of that generation and what they accomplished, they agreed with Tom Brokaw, this was the greatest generation. That is when I was a boy. That is when Evelyn was a girl. We can remember those were the times my parents allowed me to wander all over the city of Pittsburgh. It was because of the quality of the people who were living there then. This fairly closely corresponds with spring in the seasonal cycles.

The second turning also has a secondary name. It is, how Strauss and Howe named it, the *awakening*. This is comparable to summer. This is my and Evelyn's generation. The *awakening* generation builds on the energies, accomplishments, and liberties produced by the *high*. However, it also does not have the necessary certitude to the *high* generation. This generation tends to build wealth. What did Evelyn and my generation do? Boy, they built the United States into the wealthiest nation ever on the face of the earth.

This generation builds, it just cannot get along with each other very well. Its energies for building unity within communities wanes, and its desire is for introspection. We have a tendency to look inward and for spiritual expression, and that generation began looking more and more outside of its already pre-determined standards set in the high. Now in the United States of America cultural things began to change, and undergo serious change. When was it? In the 50s.

In the United States of America this generation's period of strong influence began in the mid-50s. And for those of you who lived through it, I want you to think about how movies and music began changing in the 50s. Rock and roll came along. Things were headed downhill from the high that existed during the Depression and the First World War. By its end, the second generation turning produced the rowdy and tumultuous 60s, and a dead president, by the way; assassinated. Things are going downhill. They have started.

The third turning they termed as the *unraveling*. By now we are well into the 70s, 80s, and into the beginning of the 90s. This generation's influence built on the ungodly spiritual tolerance that was built during the generation of the *awakening*. By the time this period began, God and the Bible had been kicked out of the schools. That was during my generation. We were waking up the spiritual things, but they were not good, and we were beginning to implement them and passing on to our children. By the time this period began, God and the Bible had been kicked out of schools, abortion was a fact of life, drugs were an everyday reality, and the president had been assassinated.

The Baby Boomers dominate the *unravelling*. That is *The Fourth Turning* name. The Baby Boomers dominate the *unraveling* in spades. That generation has been vilified by others, not Strauss and Howe by the way, as the most self-centered generation in American history. Ronald Reagan and the older Bush, mark this, were the last presidents in the United States born into and reared as a child in the first turning *high*. Those men had reasonably good character. Maybe Reagan particularly. Clinton, the younger Bush, and Obama were all boomers. And, as a nation by this time we are starting to

come apart at the seams, as a result of their ineffective governance. The American communities as a whole were losing their unity, and the cultural forces were right on the edge of almost fully embracing “doing your own thing.”

The Fourth Turning was published in 1997, as this third turning was ending, and the fourth turning was beginning. The fourth turning they call the *crisis*, and it conforms to winter. This is the time that we are living right now. We are in the midst of the fourth turning. Remember the period is going to last usually, historically, 20 to 25 years. It began right around Clintons. The beginning of Clinton’s administration, the strength of Reagan and his administration is gone. All of that wealth produced by our generation is just about gone.

I will give you now a very shortened version of what they predicted. Remember this book was published in 1997, four years before there was even a 9/11 event. You will not think any of these things as being especially startling because we are already living within *The Fourth Turning*’s events, and we kind of adjust to them at least a little bit. The times, with its events, added to the fact that we are aging, are impacting on us as well.

The first thing they predicted would be a period of governmental, economic, distress, but not a depression. We went over the edge after Reagan. We went over the edge, and it became impossible to control the economy of the United States of America. Remember, they are predicting this. We have never recovered, and now all they do in an attempt to balance things is kicked the can down the road. They are unwilling to issue the directives requiring a great deal of character on the part of the American people to solve the crisis. We are beyond being able to solve the crisis.

This economic crisis they predicted would be more than just normal fiscal difficulty with the government laying claim to greater federal tax monies, federal marshals enforcing orders, tax rebellions, and the beginnings of a constitutional crisis. These are already underway. It takes a long time for a government to move, but what they predicted are already underway.

The second thing they predicted is a terror attack on the United States of America involving an airliner and a building or increase of the number of the international military responses by the nation. Everywhere you turned in these 15 or 20 years the United States had troops in which they were fighting a war in another nation. Remember, this was before this all happened. But in this period of time, they are saying they would begin to intensify, and the United States will not be able to extract themselves from it, because of the quality of the people in office. They do not have the will to do it. Many of these things are the natural result of the breaking down of trust in each other, and what the first turning group established the fourth turning tears down.

Now, third in their prediction is a real economic disaster involving Wall Street institutions, and a federal budget impasse that results in a stalemate. Do not forget 2008 and the crash that took place then. We almost did not even get out of that. They predicted this 10 or 15 years before it actually happened, and it came right within the time parameters that they suggested.

The fourth is an eco-environmental malaise with the Centers for Disease Control announcing the spread of the new communicable viruses with quarantines and relocation. Are you people reading the Health Ranger? What is going on with the vaccines in the United States of America? They are in the planning stages of the making virtually everybody get vaccines containing mercury, and whatever

else, in order to stop what the CDC at least partly sees is heading this way in the way of a flood of sickness in the United States of America, because of the poor handling of our health problems. This one, it is just beginning to build, and it is building tremendously, rapidly.

The fifth takes us outside the borders and into international affairs, with growing anxiety regarding anarchy throughout the former Soviet Republics. Guess who is in the news now? This was twenty years before United States is having trouble with Russia. Now, whether it is real, I do not know, but they are in the news as though they are the big bugaboo, and that is just exactly what they said men would say. It would be Russia again. They suggested also a Russian alliance with Iran, soaring gold and silver prices, which are on their way, and global military responses, which are getting more and more.

It is right here that Bannon appears to have met his Rubicon, because Bannon wants America to strengthen itself the way *The Fourth Turning* says and go it alone, as it were, in the world. The rest of the world, including the Pope, does not want that at all. They, along with the leftists right in America, are globalists, and frankly, they want the world prepared for the rise of the Beast, because that is where their hearts are. I think we ought to understand regarding the Pope, the Beast is going to be his man he is going to support, and these globalists are afraid a too strong America would be uncontrollable by them. They do not want the swamp cleaned out. They want their agenda continued, and Satan is, of course, very persuasive. The Beast is the Pope's man, as it were.

We have a couple of Brits in the audience out there, and I did not say a thing about Britain yet. Do you know what Strauss and Howe discovered in their studies? This is really interesting. They did not study Britain with the diligence they did the United States, because they concentrated on this nation, but they said they found enough to know that the Brits are on exactly the same cycle as the United States of America.

Well, this is interesting because in their researches Strauss and Howe concluded positively that Britain and America are timewise and generationally walking to the beat of the same drummer. And apparently the brotherly relationship leaks through without Strauss and Howe even being aware of the biblical relationship. Our histories through our general attitudes, are to Strauss and Howe, are in them lockstep with us.

It appears that Mr. Trump, who has been proclaiming America first as his rallying cry, strongly became convinced by the globalists' arguments to tone things down, because their future is better for him. Did you hear what I said? He said that he came to the conclusion that their future, the globalists' future, is better for him, that is Trump and his presidency, than Steve Bannon's vision of the future in America going it alone. Bannon recently stated it this way. He said the swamp will never be cleaned out. He put it more directly several days later, by saying there are too many Republicans in the swamp. The way to make peace is to just bend in their direction.

Strauss and Howe also forecast that they could not foresee any positive resolution to these current internal problems until about 2022 and 2023. That would be the generation that would produce the next *high*. And this will surprise some of you for this nation. It would be those that we call today the Millennials, all the Snowflakes. They believe that they are going to recover themselves because they are going to rally around, this is another prediction, a man that he just called, the grey ghost or something like that, who is an old, graying, but highly respected leader, who is a boomer. The playboy has a repentance. Very interesting that they will choose to follow him into battle to liberate the United States from the malaise that it is in right now. We will have to see.

However, this news regarding the possible reasons for Bannon's firing by Trump gives us a bit of insight, because right now it looks as though, because of what Trump is beginning to lean toward, there will be no repentance led by an American leader who seems to know where he is going politically and morally. Rather, if he was ever free of them, he is now firmly in the grasp of the globalists. I say, from what we have experienced, that the rise of the Beast is right on track.