

# ***The Messenger***

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**Malachi 3:1** "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me."

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## ***America's Top 10 Sins***

### **Part 1 of 10 ~ "PRIDE"**

By Rob Winters

Attempting to live the American dream has become a nightmare for many. The pursuit of happiness is not only a narcissistic ideal that is rooted in pride and vainglory, but also a key contributor to the downfall of America. Indeed, America's pride is known worldwide. We have forgotten that the favor and blessings our nation has experienced throughout our history are chiefly due to our worship of and devotion to Jesus Christ. In our arrogance we have been deceived into believing and trusting in our own greatness. Most assuredly, unless we corporately humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, America will continue to decline.

### **The Root Sin of Pride**

From the day he was created, Lucifer was perfect in all his ways. However, when iniquity was later found in this anointed cherub, his sin was none other than pride. Lucifer was created as an instrument of worship, but gradually he viewed himself as an object of worship. His narcissism and vainglorious ways eventually led to his revolt against Jehovah, resulting in his demotion, expulsion from heaven, and eternal damnation. Therefore, pride is considered by many to be the root of all sin (Ezekiel 28:14-15).

Pride germinates when one begins to rely on one's own knowledge, beauty, talents or resources, instead of the Creator - from whom every good and perfect gift originates. The proud have a "know it all" attitude, are critical of others, are unwilling to admit their faults, and have difficulty submitting to authority. Esteeming themselves better than others, the proud vainly exalt and selfishly serve only themselves. The vanity of the proud is characterized by narcissism, which in essence is the worship of self. (I Corinthians 8:1-2, Proverbs 8:13, 11:2, 29:23, James 4:6).

## **Pride Precedes Deception**

The prophet Obadiah's prediction of judgment on the nation of Edom, which was made almost 3690 years ago, has a parallel, prophetic application to the United States of America.

Obadiah 1:2-4 "Behold, I will make you small among the nations; you shall be greatly despised. The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; You who say in your heart, 'Who will bring me down to the ground?' Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down,' says the Lord."

In the preceding passage, references made to the eagle, which is our national symbol, and stars, represented on our nation's flag, are not a mere coincidence. Indeed, American's vanity and arrogance have warped our self-perception – economically, socially, and spiritually. For nearly fifty years, the Lord has prophetically warned the Church in America regarding our likeness to the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Laodicean church. The Laodiceans took pride in their wealth and self-sufficiency to the point where they felt they needed nothing from nobody – not even God. Sound familiar? The pride of the Laodicean Christians blinded them from realizing their own pitiful, bankrupt, and backslidden spiritual condition.

Revelation 3:17 NIV "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked."

Deception is a cardinal fruit of those bound by a spiritual root of pride. In our arrogance, we have placed our faith in our six figure salaries, 401K accounts, gold bullion, stock market, life insurance and real estate. Regrettably, when economic, environmental or ecological crisis strike, we will come to an abrupt realization that our wealth will not deliver us. In our time of need, many Americans will come to understand that only those who dwell in the secret place of Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty and find refuge under His wings (Psalm 91).

## **Pride Precedes Demotion**

Some attribute America's decline to the judgment of God. In reality, we Americans have no one to blame but ourselves for reaping the demotion and destruction that our arrogance has afforded us. The spiritual law of sin and death is in operation continuously and America is simply yielding a harvest commensurate with the seeds of pride we have sown and watered over the past several decades (Romans 8:1-2).

Luke 14:11 "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

American pride has produced a measurable decline in all aspects of our culture – economically, educationally and spiritually. The statistics don't lie. Regarding our wealth, the United States was ranked number one in the world in average wealth per adult in 2000, but fell to seventh in 2010. Regarding our economy, manufacturing represented 28% of America's total economic output in 1959. In 2008, that percentage plunged to a meager 11.5%. Since 2001, America has lost an average of 50,000 manufacturing jobs per month. Regarding our reliance on foreign oil, the United States imported 37% of its oil in 1980, compared to 60% in 2010. Regarding unemployment, one-third of American men were unemployed in 2010 - an unprecedented high. Moreover, the average duration of unemployment for American job seekers was eight weeks in 1970, compared to thirty-nine weeks in 2011. Regarding our dependence on government provided healthcare, only one out of fifty Americans was on Medicaid in 1965, compared to one out of six in 2011.

Over the past few decades our students' educational performance has also plummeted, while college tuition has sky-rocketed. In 2010, American 15-year-olds failed to rank in the top half of all advanced nations in math and science proficiency. Once having the highest percentage of young adults with post-secondary degrees in the world, the United States had fallen to 12<sup>th</sup> in 2010. In 2011, seventeen million college graduates were employed in jobs that did not even require a college degree. Ironically, the cost of college tuition in the United States has increased by over 900% since 1978.

In our arrogance we Americans over the past several decades have depended less on God and more on self. Consequently, the number of those who identify themselves as Christians has dropped significantly. In 1948, 91% of American adults claimed to be Christians, compared to 78% in 2009.

### **Pride Precedes Destruction**

Pride is a spiritual disease that has plagued many empires throughout history. When pride characterizes a city or nation, destruction ultimately is the outcome. For instance, the city of Sodom was destroyed not only on account of rampant sexual perversion, but also because of pride (Proverbs 16:18-19).

Ezekiel 16:49-50 "Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride . . . and they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit."

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, 1912, the largest luxury passenger liner in the world, Britain's Titanic, sank when it hit an iceberg in the North Atlantic Ocean while making its maiden journey from Southampton to New York City. Britain's Titanic was a symbol of their wealth, and presumed invincibility. Indeed, as a nation, Britain believed that nothing

could sink their rising economy, influence and worldwide domination. Equipped with only a third of the necessary lifeboats to save those aboard, Britain's arrogant presumption was evidenced by the Titanic's insufficient life-saving provisions. As a result, 1517 people, over two-thirds of those aboard, drowned.

Proverbs 16:18 "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling."

The sinking of the Titanic served as a prophetic warning to Britain to repent of their national and spiritual pride. Nevertheless, Britain did not respond to the Lord's call to repentance. Therefore, a few years later, they found themselves to be not only no longer a dominant, world power, but also in the midst of a world war. The sinking of the Titanic should also have served as an object lesson to the budding nation of America, warning us of what can happen to a nation given over to pride and spiritual complacency.

Unfortunately, over the past fifty years, Americans have demonstrated an increasing measure of pride, primarily evidenced by our departure from the living God. Many consider June 25, 1962 as the beginning of America's journey down the pathway of pride and spiritual decline, when prayer in public schools was deemed illegal and therefore removed by the United States Supreme Court. Other such blatant departures from the faith include the legalization of abortion in 1973, and of same-sex marriage in six states, beginning in 2004.

Over the past several decades, the Lord through His messengers has pled with America to return to Him and has warned us of impending judgment. However, our cup of iniquity is now filled to the brim, and judgment, death and destruction have begun to spill over. Indeed, the pride sown by Americans has yielded a harvest of economic and environmental destruction in recent years. Nevertheless, the Lord continually offers us His prescription for pride – a potent remedy for this curable spiritual disease.

### **The Prescription for Pride**

God hates pride and therefore resists and humbles the proud. As we have discovered, pride only begets poverty, shame, and destruction. Humility, on the other hand, is the antithesis of pride. Therefore, the Lord prescribes humility as the antidote for individuals and nations bound by pride (I Peter 5:5).

The humble are neither ambitious nor conceited, and esteem others above themselves. They are selfless servants – completely submitted and obedient to the Master. Jesus, in total surrender to the will of the Father, laid down His life for all mankind and became for us the personification of humility. In like manner, John the Baptist's declaration regarding his relationship with Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease", has become the motto of many seeking to walk in Christ-like humility. Moreover, Jesus considered those who humbled themselves as little children to be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Philippians 2:3-9, John 3:30, Matthew 18:4).

Humility produces riches, honor, and life. Furthermore, the Lord exalts and promotes those who walk before Him with a broken and contrite heart. Therefore, walking in genuine humility should be one of the primary spiritual goals of every Christian person and nation (Proverbs 22:4).

For nearly fifty years, the Lord has issued a simple, yet comprehensive, corporate prescription for America's pride – one that has been heralded from pulpits throughout our nation. This prescription is summarized in the following passage of scripture.

II Chronicles 7:14 "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Given that the future of America is in the hands of the Church, it is crucial that we, as a nation, humble ourselves now through prayer. Indeed, prayer is one of the greatest acts of humility. Through prayer we acknowledge our inability to accomplish anything righteous or meaningful without divine assistance. Moreover, this divine prescription specifies the type of prayer we are to engage in – seeking the face of God. Regrettably, most Americans have been conditioned to seek the hand of God. Indeed, like the prophet Isaiah, it is only when we see the Lord face to face that we are confronted with and convicted of our sin. Genuine conviction of sin produces sincere confession and thorough cleansing of sin, which results in not only personal forgiveness, but also the healing of our land (Isaiah 6:1-8).

America is at a crossroads. Will we continue down the path of arrogance, pride and vanity, and repeatedly fall into the ditches of deception, demotion and destruction? Or will we choose to take the straight and narrow highway of humility, holiness, and the fear of the Lord, leading to truth, promotion and prosperity? Surely, if we will humble ourselves, the Lord, in His great mercy, will grant us repentance, hear our prayers from heaven, forgive our sin, and heal our land. The future of America is worth fighting for. Therefore, it is high time for Christians throughout our great nation to arise and answer our divine summons to repentance.

***Prayer:*** *Father, we humble ourselves under Your mighty hand, and ask You to forgive us for the narcissism, vanity, arrogance and pride that has deceived, demoted and destroyed us as a nation. Grant us repentance that we might acknowledge the truth regarding our spiritual blindness and poverty. Hear us from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

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