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What Is Important

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Read the accompanying [Newsletter for August 2012](#)



What is important in this world? We can know what is important to individuals. We can also know what is important to groups and institutions. We can also know what is important to nations. But what each of these consider to be important is probably different than you have realized. This article will discuss what is important to organizations, nations, individuals, and what should be important to you as a believer in Christ.

I have written previously about what is important to organizations. The same factors apply also to entire nations and empires. When organizations fail to achieve the primary goal of survival and continuation, they begin to diminish and collapse and other organizations either take over the empire or nation, or it breaks up and borders are changed. All this comes from God through Christ (John 1:10, Acts 17:24). Nations are composed of individual sons and daughters of Adam, similar to living organisms, just as a body is made up of many and different kinds of cells. Those organisms are born, live, and die, just like the individuals who make up human corporate organizations. Look again at those factors.

What Is Important to All Organizations?

In my May 22, 2002 Commentary, "[The Decline of the Churches](#)," I gave four priorities of every organization. I feel a fifth category, a fifth priority, must be added.¹ These priorities extend down from the largest human organizations, the nation of China, to the smallest level of human organization, which is a 2-person family.

- (1) The **First Priority** of *EVERY* organization — whether a government, a corporation, or a religious denomination — is the continued survival, health, and growth of the organization. Some organizations must grow or they wither or die. Others grow, plateau, and then have a slow decline. Every organization, great or small, has its own life history. While it lives it must look to its continuation as its primary function.

¹ In "[The Decline of the Churches](#)" I focused on the Roman Catholic Church, its difficulties, its survival, and even its likely future collapse as an institution. Yet these priorities are applicable to any organization or institution, even down to the level of a human family.

- (2) The **Second Priority** of EVERY organization is to maintain the flow of income, which is the life-blood of every human organization, so the organization can function or grow.²
- (3) The **Third Priority** of EVERY organization is to appear to serve the interests of the citizens, customers, or members (employees and volunteers) as defined by that organization.
- (4) The **Fourth Priority** of EVERY organization is to hold true to the ideals of the organization.
- (5) The **Fifth Priority** of EVERY organization — is to tell the truth.

Consider every organization you have ever dealt with or heard of and you will note that they operate according to this hierarchy of priorities (**Priority 1** being highest). It does not matter whether the organization is a business (small, large, or international), a government, a government service, an educational institution (private or public), a religious organization (local, national, or international), whatever — they all operate with these priorities in mind. And it is normal human nature to do so. Every human endeavor, including a small family, operates to fulfill these normal human priorities.

As you can see, organizations find it easier to forego, ignore, or contradict lower priorities to serve higher priorities. This is not morally ideal, but it is reality. For example, truth will be sacrificed to ideals, even if it is necessary to lie, cheat, steal, or kill to maintain the stated (but not actual) ideals of the organization, yet maintain that those ideals are being upheld. Totalitarian regimes such as Fascist, Nazi, communist, and other dictatorial regimes throughout history have been especially infamous for doing this very thing.

Governments seem to lie all the time, but in fact they only lie most of the time, unless forced to do otherwise. Governments tell the truth about other governments more often than they do about their own regimes.³ This is intentional. Religion has been used by governments to promote lies since ancient times, probably since the first city-state was begun after Babel (Genesis 11:1–9).⁴

I will not address organizations called political parties. We all know the value of their truthfulness.

So what happens if the funds to fulfill **Priority 2** are drastically and irreversibly reduced? The result is that the organization focuses upon **Priority 1**, usually in desperation, and it tries mightily to reestablish **Priority 2**, often to the detriment of **Priorities 3, 4, and 5**. When that happens, the organization may react in unpredictable ways and go in directions no one can imagine. I apologize for being so theoretical, but organizations are also inhuman things operated by humans.

Let me give another example. The maintenance of power by a dictator is more important to him than the income his government collects. History tells us that dictators are most willing, if allowed by their subjects and other nations, to kill as many of their own people as necessary to stay in power.

Look back at your own life experience and I think you will see that every organization you ever had dealings with has exercised its influence, authority, or power according to these priorities. Only when indi-

² Some may deny that this is different from the first priority. Dr. George Friedman in his book *The Next Decade: Where We've Been ... and Where We're Going* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), p. 25, declares that for the United States:

“America’s fundamental interests are [1] the physical security of the United States and [2] a relatively untrammelled international economic system.” [bracketed numbers are mine, DWS]

To be “untrammelled” means to be free from hindrance, impediment, or restraint. Therefore, without knowing it, Dr. Friedman distinguishes **“physical security”** (continued survival and growth, **Priority 1**), from a freely operating **“international economic system”** (corresponding to **Priority 2**). Although they are all very closely connected this is the distinction between **Priority 1** and **Priority 2**.

³ This is kind of “the mote in the eye” situation between nations, just as Jesus described between individuals (Matthew 7:3–5 and Luke 6:41–42).

⁴ See my January 2, 2006 Commentary [“Man’s Lies, God’s Wisdom”](#) which discusses deliberate lying by ancient rulers about the requirements and rules that ancient gods demand of their worshippers. Ancient sources state that these lies were necessary to maintain social control of the masses or lower classes. That is the same reason ancient governments lied about the so-called immortal soul. See my article (inspired by Dr. Martin’s research), [“The Pagan Immortal Soul and ‘Double Doctrine.’”](#) You will be stunned by what you read there.

viduals (acting on behalf of an organization) actively go above and beyond the organizational momentum and policies, and go directly to **Priorities 3, 4 or 5**, do large organizations truly serve the greater good that they profess.

Regarding **Priority 5**, to tell the truth, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, speaking before Parliament during World War II said, **“In war the truth is so precious it must be shielded by a bodyguard of lies.”** He felt that truth, truth to his own people and to the world, must be sacrificed for the ultimate goal of the survival of the government and people of Great Britain (**Priority 1**) in order to defeat Germany. This was of greater importance than the maintenance of income (**Priority 2**), although fighting the war required the maintenance of international trade.⁵

Priority 1 was of greater importance, and rightly so in that case, than serving the short-term interests of their constituency (**Priority 3**). The people were asked to sacrifice, which they did willing to help fight World War II. Unfortunately too many organizations seem to consider themselves to be in a crisis, often likening it to being at war, even when they are not in crisis. The result is that truth suffers.

Whenever you consider any organization, try to keep these five priorities in mind, whether the organization is a church, a government, a political party, a business, or a family. Leaders within organizations enforce the priorities because of self-interest. They are just like you. They gain a benefit by serving or working for the organization. If not, they move on, are forced to leave, or they attempt to overthrow the current leadership. Such is the story of mankind. Little has changed since Adam, when the first violence occurred between first-born son Cain killing Abel (Genesis 4:1–16), because Cain sinned, felt slighted by God, and acting out of rage, he committed murder.

What Is Important to Nations

Note also that each Nation adheres to the five priorities, as do smaller organizations. At this present time in August 2012, the largest country in the world is Communist China with some 1.3 billion people, 1 billion of which live in poverty.⁶ The second most populace country is India with 1.2 billion people, with a similar percentage of its citizens living in poverty.⁷ Both countries exhibit actions that demonstrate they follow the five priorities described above.

There is another participant in the life of nations. It is God. He determines the lifespan and the boundaries of each nation. What nations want and do not want are both subject to God’s will, as the apostle Paul explained at Mars Hill in the city of Athens:

“Besides, He [God] makes out of one every nation of mankind, to be dwelling on all the surface of the earth, specifying the setting of the seasons [how long they flourish] and the bounds of their dwelling, for them to be seeking God, if, consequently, they may surely grope for Him and may be finding Him, though to be sure, not far from each one of us is He inherent, for in Him we are living and moving and are, as some poets of yours also have declared, ‘For of that race also are we.’

The race [from Adam], then, is inherently of God; we ought not to be inferring that the Divine is like gold, or silver, or stone, a sculpture of art and human sentiment. Indeed, then, condoning the times of ignorance, God is now charging mankind that all everywhere are to repent, ...”

• ***Acts 17:26–30, Concordant Version***

The rulers of the nations are subject to His will. In spite of what nations want to do, God determines whether He will allow them to accomplish their desires. “Man proposes; God disposes” is the old saying,

⁵ Great Britain nearly went bankrupt and lost control of the commercial British Empire. It was necessary because of their struggle to defeat the Nazi German menace in World War II.

⁶ See Friedman, *The Next Decade*, p. 8.

⁷ See the Wikipedia article [“Poverty in India.”](#) Poverty percentages there are based on 2009 United Nations figures.

that comes from Thomas à Kempis in his work *The Imitation of Christ*. “**A man’s heart devises his way: but YHWH directs his steps**” (Proverbs 16:9) is the passage Kempis paraphrased.

Paul’s statement in Acts chapter 17 conforms with what Job wrote, again expressing that God is in control even of nations and peoples: “**He increases the nations, and destroys them: he enlarges the nations, and straitens them again** [leads them away, into exile]” (Job 12:23). Moses agrees with Job:

“When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people.”

• *Deuteronomy 32:8*

Just as God determines the time span for nations, He also determines your life span (Job 14:5).

God also determines who the leaders of nations are from moment to moment. Someone asked me how far down the governmental structure does God choose leaders. The answer is: as far down the pyramid of leadership as He chooses to go. I doubt that God operates according to a formula. It could be down to the lowliest public servant. When God decides to raise up a man from servitude (consider Joseph), He can do so very quickly. God is, after all, one who notices details such as the sparrow (Matthew 10:29), the hairs on your head (Matthew 10:30), and the names of the stars (Psalm 147:4). He notices everything.

“YHWH looks from heaven; he beholds all the sons of men [that includes YOU]. **From the place of his habitation he looks upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike; he considers all their works.”**

• *Psalm 33:13–15*

God makes choices about times, seasons, and He chooses among men as leaders:

“And he [God] changes the times and the seasons: he removes kings, and sets up kings: he gives wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: He reveals the deep and secret things: he knows what is in the darkness, and the light dwells with him.”

• *Daniel 2:21–22*

“... that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever he will, and sets up over it the basest of men.”

• *Daniel 4:17*

Why does God do that? Why does God set up the basest of men? He does so because it serves His purposes, like everything He does (Ephesians 1:9–11).

“And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are ...”

• *1 Corinthians 1:28*

What is important to nations? From their human point of view, it is to continue their existence, to thrive, flourish, and grow. It is important for nations to maintain a flow of income, seem to appeal to the interests of the people, to live up to the ideals of their society,⁸ and last comes the telling of the truth to the people in the nation.

What Is Important to the United States

The United States is the most powerful country in the world. In fact, it is the most powerful country the world has ever seen. What is important to the United States? Survival and continued growth of the nation, the government, and its people. It follows the five priorities outlined at the beginning of this article, just as other nations follow those priorities. God’s priorities for those nations are quite different.

⁸ Unfortunately some societies, nations, and peoples have some very evil and disgusting ideals. Consider the Aztec Empire.

The power of the United States is derived from its incredibly abundant God-given natural resources, its secure geographical place on the globe (which are God-given), both of which give the United States political and economic security so its people can have a unique political system.⁹ Such natural benefits and resources are truly the envy of the world. Since World War II, the United States has had an ability to project economic power (backed by military power) practically anywhere in the world.¹⁰ The United States manages a global empire without challengers at this time. This is unique in history.¹¹

That being said, let us keep proper perspective — a perspective from God’s point of view. YHWH through the prophet Isaiah tells King Hezekiah how God values the nations and their powers:

“Behold! [1] All nations are as a drop from a bucket, and [2] as sky dust of the scales are accounted. Behold! The coastlands, [3] as the thinnest gauze, is He transporting; and [4] as spittle are they reckoned. And [5] Lebanon [as an example] is not sufficient to consume, and [6] all its life is not sufficient for an ascent approach [a burnt offering].

And [7] all the nations are as nothing in front of Him. [8] Limited and a chaos are they accounted by Him.”

• *Isaiah 40:15–17, Concordant Version*

It is clear that the power of the nations together is incredibly weak and **“as nothing”** so far as God is concerned.

That being said, when comparing nations with nations at this time in history, the present factors of world hegemonic power operated and controlled by the United States empire¹² will continue unless God decides to do one of three things: [1] diminish the United States as a world power, or [2] have the United States lose its power, or [3] even eliminate the United States entirely as a nation (which would please many people and some nations). Each of those is possible. Many proposals have been made. None are provable from Scripture. So we do not know from Scripture how God considers the United States individually. Therefore it must be considered in the same way as the mass of other unidentified nations in Scripture.

Changes to the status of the American empire could happen by several means,¹³ each of which would also cause the deaths of millions around the world. God might decide to punish the United States or He

⁹ See my article, [“The Power of the United States.”](#) Then read Dr. Martin’s article, [“The Secret of United States Economic Success.”](#)

¹⁰ This ability to project economic and political power is far greater than that of the British Empire of the 1800s. The British Empire was only one of several great powers. It was actually weak on land compared to other European powers. The United States since the end of the Cold War is the preeminent world power — like it or not.

¹¹ It is another preparation for the emergence of the antichrist to come in the Middle East, and from there he will be propelled by other kings to the world stage, and then to world leadership with himself as its king.

¹² Some feel the American empire is a good thing. I tend to agree to the extent that it is probably better than any other form of empire. See Dinesh D’Sousa’s 2002 article [“In Praise of American Empire.”](#) Here is a quote: **“Since the end of the cold war, the US has exercised an unparalleled and largely unrivaled influence throughout the world — economically, politically, culturally, and militarily.”** Feel free to disagree, yet the fact remains, America does have an empire. And no, the United States is **not** either Ephraim or Manasseh, or an Israelite people or nation. The ASK website has numerous articles on this subject.

¹³ For example, the volcanic dome of the Yellowstone Caldera could erupt and probably explode which would devastate much of northern United States and southern Canada, while effectively shutting down the Missouri-Mississippi River Basins, and then causing its ash to spread around the world. It is not unusual to hear estimates that the effect of the ash spread would be 1,000 times greater than the 1980 Mount St. Helens volcanic eruption. I attended lectures and have read articles by volcanologists who greatly fear that a Yellowstone Caldera eruption would cause hundreds of thousands of deaths, perhaps millions, in the United States alone. The cessation of food exports from the United States and Canada would cause the deaths of additional millions around the world. This eruption would cause tremendous amounts of ash that would devastate Europe and cause extreme and sudden cooling worldwide from the blockage of sunlight. See the *Digital Journal* article, [“Yellowstone supervolcano may erupt sooner than expected.”](#) In addition, such an eruption would greatly disrupt and probably destroy the promising shale oil finds, drilling, and production in the central Canadian and mid-United States oil shale basin.

The United States has had 50 years of good growing weather (taking the country as a whole), 70 years if you go back to the dustbowl conditions of the 1930s. This stretch of good weather is almost unheard of in world history. And remember, the agricultural land of the United States is the most productive in the world in size, quality, and technology. Weather patterns are cycli-

might wish to have such a destruction be a witness, an example, of His power and rule. But such a witness is meaningless, unless the world is told about it. I do not think it likely because there are no biblical prophecies that prophesy such an event happening to an unnamed world power before the Day of YHWH's Wrath.

So although the United States is not mentioned individually in prophecy it will possibly be one of the leading nations that will fight against Israel such Zechariah 12:1–9, and certainly on the Day of YHWH's wrath as in Isaiah 34:2. As an American, I hope the United States will not involve itself in those losing wars. It is interesting to note that although the United States is the most powerful nation in the world, it is farther from the Middle East and the land of Israel than any other major nation. In fact, it is as far away as is possible for a major nation to be. The United States is farther from Israel than China.

What is important to the United States? It is important for the United States to continue the current situation of global hegemony in its economic empire that stretches to most of the world. As a nation, that is what its vital national interest is. Continuation of the current economic dominance by the United States is **Priority 1**.

As an economic, political, and military power, the United States is the only nation that can effectively assert its power almost anywhere in the world. It is not all-powerful, but challenges to its power are usually ineffective when the United States asserts its interests on the world stage. With no country able to directly challenge the worldwide power of the United States, it can be confronted only within regions by countries or coalitions of countries.

In my **OPINION**, and with no Scripture to the contrary, that this situation will continue into the end times, unless God intervenes.

The problem other major nations have when confronting the United States today is that most all powerful nations of the world have a considerable portion of their economies dependent upon trade with the United States or its allies. Opposition to United States policies is difficult for that reason. Let me phrase this in another way: in general, major nations need the United States economy more than the United States needs them.

George Friedman wrote four statements that describe the present role of the United States in world affairs. These were originally in one paragraph, but I quote them here in full, but separated into bullet points:

- **What the United States consumes and produces shapes the lives of people around the world.**
- **The economic policies pursued by the United States shape the economic realities of the world.**
- **The United States Navy's control of the seas guarantees the United States economic access to the world and gives it the potential power to deny that access to other countries.**
- **Even if the United States wanted to shrink its economy to a less intrusive size, it is not clear how that would be done.**

• *George Friedman, The Next Decade, p. 9*

While this American dominance is a reality, Dr. Friedman notes that **“the American people have no desire for an empire”** (Friedman, p. 10). I agree. He continues:

“Unlike the Roman or British Empire, the American structure of dominance is informal, but that makes it no less real. The United States controls the oceans, and its economy accounts for more than a quarter of everything produced in the world. If Americans adopt the iPod or a new food fad, factories and farms in China and Latin America reorganize to serve the new mandate.

... The United States is a commercial republic, which means that it lives on trade.”

• *George Friedman, The Next Decade, p. 10*

This describes what is important to the United States in 2012. Barring evidence to the contrary, in the future

cal. We should expect such things to happen.

this American dominance will continue to be important to all the countries in the world as we approach the time of the end. Continuing the present world situation is **Priority 1** to the United States. Its prosperity is also important to the major nations of the world, no matter how much they dislike the situation.

It is my belief that the example of the American commercial republic will be adopted by most countries around the world, albeit modified by individual national cultural changes, after the present financial crisis is dealt with. (And the result may be more intense recession.)

There may be new constitutional monarchies established in many countries around the world. Their purpose will be to bring stability and cohesion to the people of those countries. For the Middle East particularly, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation speak of “kings” who will rule nations around Israel. While the structure or nature of that commercial system will be unique to each country, it will fit into the current Babylonian system, which is best exemplified today by the United States.

This does not mean that this system will benefit every person. Nor does it mean that this will be a moral system of world commerce. One result will be that the economic power of the United States will diminish proportionally as the nations and regions have their economic power increase. The United States will continue to be the catalyst that will “sell” the world what the world wants, making the deals and arranging delivery, insuring and protecting delivery, while continuing to be the world’s leading consumer. I also believe (without biblical information informing me) that it will seem that all nations are rising in prosperity, leading to the eventual acquisition of the world economic system by the antichrist.

Commercial activity will continue to the end of the age. One of the major centers of world financial influence and control will be a revived and rebuilt Babylon. From Scripture it appears that this future great city will eventually be the leading commercial center in the world. Read Revelation chapter 18 where it talks about merchants and commodities (including slaves) being traded. The merchants will be horrified when Babylon is destroyed. This Babylon is not New York or the City of London, it is in Iraq at this present time still waiting to be rebuilt. That will take at least 5 years and probably a full decade to construct the immense infrastructure to build (or rebuild) this major first-class metropolis.¹⁴ This Babylon will be a major commercial power, just as New York City and Tokyo and London are today, but likely even greater.

The religious head will be “mystery Babylon” spoken of in Revelation chapter 17. See Dr. Martin’s article “[Mystery Babylon the Great](#).”

To recap, what is important to the United States? It is to continue its commercial empire through the protection of world trade.¹⁵ This requires that around the world the free flow of money continues, the free flow of shipping continues, and that no one successfully challenges the supremacy of the United States. The other three priorities for the United States follow down the line of the other four priorities. As George Friedman believes, no one will be able to challenge the United States dominance for world hegemon for at least 100 years. We all know that God could change that power equation at any moment. But, if future conditions remain as they are today (always a dangerous assumption, however), the United States will still be the dominant nation in the world until the world-wide acclamation of the antichrist. At that time most every nation will voluntarily yield their sovereignty to him, thinking he is God.

What Is Important to Spirits

The five priorities that I have presented are not limited to human organizations. Spirits follow the same sequence of priorities just as nations do. They have areas of responsibilities and even territories, for example like the spirit being, the King of Tyre of Ezekiel 28:12–19. They have organizations and hierarchies. They

¹⁴ See Dr. Martin’s article, “[The Rebirth of Babylon](#)“ and F.E. Marsh’s 1925 article “[Will Babylon be Rebuilt?](#)“

¹⁵ Surprisingly this is not necessarily a bad thing for the rest of the world. The United States, for its own reasons and interests, protects the sea lanes and flight corridors of the world. All nations benefit from this protection. If the United States suffers a depression, so will the rest of the world and millions will die outside of the United States. This is not likely from a geopolitical viewpoint. On this I agree with Dr. Friedman.

involve spirit organizations such as the **“principalities and powers,”** and rulers in **“heavenly places,”** of **“the darkness of this world [aion, age]”** (Romans 8:38; Ephesians 3:10, 6:12; Colossians 1:16, 2:15).

These non-physical spirit entities seek to retain, protect, and perhaps even hope to expand their limited sovereignty over what God has given to them temporarily to judge and to rule (**Priority 1**). In the past God may have allowed them to conquer portions of the physical heaven in the vast reaches of the universe, and even in heaven itself where God dwells.¹⁶

These entities exist. They are your enemies, and the apostle Paul says we fight against them at this very moment (Ephesians 6:12–20). We fight them by our conduct in our everyday life, moment by moment. These entities are also directly threatened by Christ’s return. They have already lost their legal right to rule by Christ’s resurrection (Colossians 2:15).

“For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And you are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: ... wherein also you are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; ... And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”

• *Colossians 2:9–10, 12–13, 15*

The spirits, like the devil, fully understand that they have only decades left before they will be removed from control of their limited responsibilities, over which they judge unjustly (like the Sons of the Most High in Psalm 82:2–4). Soon, again like the devil, they will strike out with great wrath. Why will do that? It will be because they all know that they too have **“but a short time”** (Revelation 12:12).

God has great and powerful enemies.¹⁷ His enemies are not only among the sons of Adam and the devil. Read the first three verses of Psalm 83:

“O Elohim, let there not be silence on Your part; Do not be silent, and do not be quiet, O El. For behold, Your enemies, they are clamoring, And

[1] **those hating You, they lift up their head.**

[2] **Against Your people are they carrying on deliberation in craftiness, And**

[3] **they are intriguing against Your secluded ones.**

• *Psalm 83:1–3, Concordant Version*

The rest of Psalm 83 goes on to describe those of the 10 nations who are made to attack Israel before the Day of YHWH’s wrath. But who (or what, if spirits are involved) arouses those nations to attack Israel and God’s **“secluded ones”** (or as it says in the King James Version, **“your hidden ones”**). It will be those very same spirit entities that we struggle against right now. We wrestle **“against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places** (Ephesians 6:12). Ephesians 3:10 also tells us where they are: **“principalities and powers in heavenly places.”**

This is what is important to spirits. They want to keep what they have, expand if possible according to their priorities.

What Is Important to God

In this we can be certain: what is important to God is not what is important to the sons of Adam:

¹⁶ Paul mentions **“heavenly places,”** or as it is in Greek **“among the celestials,”** Ephesians 3:10. Note the plurality of the words “places” and “celestials.” And we know that there has been **“war in heaven”** at least one time between Michael and his angels and the dragon and his angels as told in Revelation 12:7–9.

¹⁷ They are powerful only by man’s reckoning, not God’s. Just as the nations are as nothing compared to God, so too the spirits and their fiefdoms are as nothing also.

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says YHWH. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

• *Isaiah 55:8–9*

Righteousness is important to God.

“For not ashamed am I of the evangel, for it is God’s power for salvation to everyone who is believing — to the Jew first, and to the Greek as well. For in it God’s righteousness is being revealed, out of faith for faith, according as it is written: ‘Now the just one by faith shall be living.’”

• *Romans 1:16–17, Concordant Version*

“Yet now, apart from law, a righteousness of God is manifest (being attested by the law and the prophets), yet a righteousness of God through Jesus Christ’s faith, for all, and on all who are believing, for there is no distinction,”

• *Romans 3:21–22, Concordant Version*

To God, righteousness means adherence to His standards of justice and love. Only Christ has fulfilled all God’s requirements in that regard. **“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost [Spirit]”** (Romans 14:17). The righteousness of God is only through Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:11).

What Is Important to Individuals

What is it that people want in life? They want to be happy. Most adults understand that a constant state of happiness will not happen. The entire Book of Ecclesiastes is an extended discussion of what is most important in life.

“I applied my heart to inquiring and exploring by wisdom concerning all that is done under the heavens: it is an experience of evil Elohim has given to the sons of humanity [literally, “the sons of Adam”] to humble them by it. I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun, And behold, the whole [all of it] is vanity and a grazing on wind.”

• *Ecclesiastes 1:13–14, Concordant Version*

“An experience of evil” is what Solomon says about the situation God has designed for every person.¹⁸ Anyone who lives more than a few years soon discovers that the experience of most human beings is not happy. Then at the end, every life ends with death. Nowhere in Scripture does God promise happiness before death. Happiness is an occasional experience. Life is accurately described by Solomon: drudgery in toil, sorrows, all ending in death.

This lot in life has been experienced by the rest of the world throughout history. Solomon goes on to further describe this God-given **“experience of evil”** that every human being experiences:

“For what has man [an *adam*] of all his labor, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he has labored under the sun? For all his days are sorrows, and his travail grief; yea, his heart takes not rest in the night. This is also vanity. [Then comes his advice ...]

¹⁸ This Concordant Version translation of **“an experience of evil”** is accurate, but is influenced by the Septuagint Greek. Here is a dour list of meanings from a sample of translations I respect.

The English translation of the Greek by Brenton translates the phrase as **“an evil trouble.”**

The King James Version translates this Hebrew phrase as **“a sore travail.”**

Young’s Literal Translation considers the phrase to mean **“a sad travail.”**

The Revised Standard Version and the new English Standard Version and the Jewish Tanakh (1985) all render it as **“an unhappy business.”**

The New American Standard translates it as **“a grievous task.”**

The NET Bible has **“a burdensome task.”**

There is nothing better for a man [an *adam*], than that he should eat and drink, and that he should make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it was from the hand of God.

• *Ecclesiastes 2:22–24*

As I wrote above, individuals simply want to be happy. Okay, what are the criteria for happiness? When individuals connect with others to form associations, they begin to live according to the five priorities. Suddenly they become important as part of their extended self.

First, it is continuance — **Priority 1.** You want to continue to exist; you want to continue to live. You want to do that without pain and suffering. You want your loved ones to continue to live without sorrows and travail and grief. You want a sufficient flow of income to thrive — **Priority 2.** You want to provide for your family. And, you want to love and be loved. In other words, while you live, you want to flourish. The other priorities then follow.

What Is Important to You

In general you desire to have a relatively happy existence while you are alive. All people want that. You love yourself, so you desire good things for yourself. Jesus noted this when He stated this sentiment as part of the “second” commandment, in answer to a question:

“Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

Jesus said unto him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’”

• *Matthew 22:36–40*

This sentiment is expressed several times in different ways throughout Scripture: Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:43, 22:39; Mark 12:31, 33; Luke 10:27. Of course, the apostle Paul agreed:

“For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

• *Romans 13:9–10*

Paul repeats this in Galatians 5:14, as does James, the half-brother of Jesus, in James 2:8.

Okay, we love ourselves. Loving oneself means that you want to do what is best for you and your “extended self”: your family, your friends, your employer, your employees, club members, church members, etc., and all those you are responsible for and those you are responsible to. It also means doing what is best for others you meet in your life. This is what is important to individuals — believers and unbelievers. Only love can satisfy.

In spite of what Solomon describes you can be happy, even though most of mankind lives a life of drudgery and hopelessness:

“Yet to him who is not working, yet is believing on Him Who is justifying the irreverent, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. Even as David also is telling of the HAPPINESS of the man to whom God is reckoning righteousness apart from acts:

HAPPY they whose lawlessnesses were pardoned and whose sins were covered over!

HAPPY the man to whom the Lord by no means should be reckoning sin!

This HAPPINESS, then, is it for the Circumcision, or for the Uncircumcision also? For we are saying, ‘To Abraham faith is reckoned for righteousness.’¹⁹

• **Romans 4:4–9, Concordant Version**

You are a believer in Christ. I assume you are, or you likely would not be reading this. Do you know that you are actually **“not of this world”**? When Jesus was challenged by the Pharisees at the Temple in Jerusalem (John 8:13), He told them they were of the world, the *kosmos*, in Greek:

“And he said unto them, You are from beneath; I am from above: you are of this world; I am not of this world.”

• **John 8:23**

Later, in an extended monologue in prayer to God His Father, Jesus discusses the world (John 17:9–18). Jesus states that His disciples were not of this world, this *kosmos*:

“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth.”

• **John 17:16–17**

Furthermore, you are not part of the wisdom of this world. I certainly hope you do not want to be:

“For it is written, I shall be destroying the wisdom of the wise, and the understanding of the intelligent shall I be repudiating.²⁰ Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the discussor of this eon?

Does not God make stupid the wisdom of this WORLD? For since, in fact, in the wisdom of God, the WORLD through wisdom knew not God, God delights, through the stupidity of the heralding [the heralding of the Gospel], to save those who are believing, ...”

• **1 Corinthians 1:19–21, Concordant Version**

The word “world” in Greek in the two places I capitalized above is the word “*kosmos*” which literally means “system.” The term *kosmos*, is used some 58 times in the Gospel of John alone, more than any other New Testament book. Jesus’ opposition to the world, the system in which we live, the system that God put us in, was complete and total. It is the system which God has created with its physical and spiritual laws and operations (John 1:10; Acts 17:24), all of which have consequences upon the children of Adam.

As I said, you are not part of this world. In fact, you represent God to the world through your actions. While you are by no means a mediator between God and the world, you are a representative, similar to an ambassador without portfolio.

Indeed, to even be friends with this world is to be an enemy of God. James likens it to spiritual adultery:

“You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”

• **James 4:4**

Being friends with the world leads us to bring misguided requests to God, requests that try to relate to the “system,” the world. This is why our improper worldly requests do not bring satisfaction; God does not answer such requests: **“You are requesting and not obtaining, because you are requesting evilly, that you should be spending it on your gratifications”** (James 4:3, Concordant Version).

Remember that the world does not care about you. It does not even know you. It did not know Jesus either (1 John 3:1). If the world even acknowledges you, it hates you (1 John 3:13).

¹⁹ The words “happy,” “happiness” in the King James Version are translated “blessed” and “blessedness.” But what do “blessed” and “blessedness” mean? They focus on God’s act of blessing, not on the result, which is happiness. That happiness, that blessedness, can give hope and contentment and peace and patience for the future, whatever your current situation may be.

²⁰ This is a quote from LXX of Isaiah 29:14.

“If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

• *John 15:18–19*

“I have given them your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

• *John 17:14*

We were enslaved by the world (Galatians 4:3), which is bound in corruption by lust (2 Peter 1:4). Before we were believers we were once in the situation:

“That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”

• *Ephesians 2:12*

Therefore we should not be **“in the world”** any longer if we have God’s Spirit to help us. This world will afflict us, but we are to have courage because Christ has conquered the world (John 16:33).

As I said, Jesus was **“not of this world”** (John 8:23), **“the world was made by him, and the world knew Him not”** (John 1:10) and His Kingdom was **“not of this world”** (John 18:36). We should not be **“of this world”** either. Jesus was born to be a king. It was one of the reasons He came into the world, to testify to the truth (John 18:37). The scheme of this world is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31). The world to us is not important. The elements of this world are not in accord with Christ (Colossians 2:8) and nothing from the world will continue with us after our death (1 Timothy 6:7).

As believers, the spirit we have obtained is God’s gift to us. It is of a different nature than the spirit of the world:

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.”

• *1 Corinthians 2:12*

Our task is to learn those things given to us freely, and we are to exhibit those things to the world. To do that, we **“ought to come out of the world.”** (1 Corinthians 5:10, Concordant Version). In due time God in Christ will reconcile the world to Himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). Paul tells us how we should act in the world:

“All be doing without murmurings and reasonings, that you may become blameless and artless, children of God, flawless, in the midst of a generation crooked and perverse among whom you are appearing as luminaries in the world.”

• *Philippians 2:15, Concordant Version*

Note that we are to live **“without murmurings and reasonings,” “blameless and artless,”** as flawless children, so that we will be **“as luminaries in the world.”** If we fail to do that we will suffer loss.

“For if, while fleeing from the defilements of the world by the recognition of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, yet, being again involved in these [the defilements], they are being discomfited, their last state has become worse than the first.”

• *2 Peter 2:20, Concordant Version*

“Be not loving the world, neither that which is in the world. If ever anyone is loving the world, the love of the Father is not in him, for everything that is in the world, the desire of the flesh, and the desire of the eyes, and the ostentation of living, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing by, and its desire, yet he who is doing the will of God is remaining for the eon.”

• *1 John 2:15–17, Concordant Version*

When John wrote the phrase, **“remaining for the eon,”** he meant you will be granted entrance by God to serve in the Kingdom of God during the millennium. Later John continued to mention the world.

“You are out of God, little children, and you have conquered them [the spirit of antichrist], for greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world. They are out of the world; therefore they are speaking out of the world, and the world is hearing them. We are out of God. He who knows God is hearing us. He who is not out of God is not hearing us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.

... In this was manifested the love of God among us, that God has dispatched His only-begotten Son into the world that we should be living through Him. In this is love, not that we love God, but that He loves us, and dispatches His Son, a propitiatory shelter concerned with our sins.”

• 1 John 4:4–6, 9–10, Concordant Version

“For thus God loves the world, so that He gives His only-begotten Son, that everyone who is believing in Him should not be perishing, but may be having life eonian. For God does not dispatch His Son into the world that He should be judging the world, but that the world may be saved through Him.”

• John 3:16–17, Concordant Version

Therefore, “Beloved, if thus God loves us, we also ought to be loving one another” (1 John 4:11, Concordant Version). Our faith (which we received from Christ) conquers the world.

“For all that is begotten of God is conquering the world. And this is the conquest that conquers the world: our faith. Now who is he who is conquering the world if not he who is believing that Jesus is the Son of God?”

• 1 John 5:4–5, Concordant Version

Jesus was the light of the world (John 8:12, 9:5, 12:46).

“It was the true light — which is enlightening every man — coming into the world. In the world He was, and the world came into being through Him, and the world knew Him not.”

• John 1:9–10, Concordant Version

“Now this is the judging: that the light has come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, for their acts were wicked. For everyone who is committing bad things is hating the light and is not coming to the light, lest his acts may be exposed.”

• John 3:19–20, Concordant Version

What Should be Important in Your Life

What is important in your life? And what should be important in your life? Those two questions probably will yield two different answers. The answer is actually quite simple, “Jesus said unto him [Thomas], **I am** [1] **the way**, [2] **the truth**, and [3] **the life**: **no man comes unto the Father, but by me**” (John 14:6). So, what is the opposite of what Jesus said? It is to be off the path, to be off [1] “**the way**.”

Jesus also is [2] “**the truth**.” The opposite of truth is lies, it is to believe lies:

“... **the spirit of truth, which the world cannot get** [the world cannot receive truth], **for it is not beholding it** [the world cannot recognize truth], **neither is knowing it** [the world cannot understand truth]. **Yet you know it, for it is remaining with you and will be in you.**”

• John 14:17, Concordant Version

Jesus is also [3] “the life.” He is “**the resurrection and the life**” (John 11:25). Jesus gave, as He says “**my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**” (John 6:51). This was done at the crucifixion and it was finished with His death.²¹ The apostle Paul also tells us what should be important to you in your everyday

²¹ The apostle John says this about Jesus being “the life.” 1 John 1:2:

“For **the life** was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal [eonian] **life**, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.”

life. Most of you know this passage, so I give it to you in the Concordant version for a fresh understanding of the verse:

“Do not worry about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, and the peace of God, that is superior to every frame of mind, shall be garrisoning your hearts and your apprehensions in Christ Jesus. For the rest, brethren,

**whatever is true,
whatever is grave,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is agreeable,
whatever is renowned**

— if there is any virtue, and if any applause, be taking these into account. What you learned also, and accepted and hear and perceived in me, these be putting into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.”

• *Philippians 4:6–9, Concordant Version*

Paul’s words to Timothy should be an encouragement to us also:

“Now you, O man of God, flee from these things: yet pursue righteousness, devoutness, faith, love, with endurance, suffering, and meekness.”

• *1 Timothy 6:11, Concordant Version*

Remember, righteousness is important to God. It determines whether you are “**of God**” or not. You and I can only be righteous if we are “in Christ” because He was and is righteous, and His righteousness becomes ours.

“In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever does not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loves not his brother.”

• *1 John 3:10*

What is important? In actuality, you are. You are a child of God, legally seated with Christ at this moment. He is not of this world; you are not of this world because you are “**in Christ**.” He has saved this world already. Those of the world will be told about that salvation later. When God’s plan is completed the “world,” the *kosmos* as we know it, will cease so “**that God may be all in all**” (1 Corinthians 15:28). Embrace life, embrace Christ, embrace God our Father, and not the world.

David Sielaff, August 2012

1 John 5:12:

He that has the Son has [the] life; [and] he that has not the Son of God has not [the] life.”

In this verse the Greek has definite articles before each of the two occurrences of “life.” The text should read “**the life**.” The apostle Paul gives additional reasons why the Gentiles, the nations, cannot understand the way, the truth, and the life, Ephesians 4:17–18, Concordant Version:

“This, then, I am saying and attesting in the Lord: By no means are you still to be walking according as those of the nations also are walking, in the vanity of their mind, their comprehension being darkened, being estranged from THE LIFE of God [why?] because of [1] the ignorance that is in them, because of [2] the callousness of their hearts.”