

Church Billboards

by Tom Gray

11/9/01

I have always gotten a kick out of the billboards and signs posted outside of churches. I think it's safe to assume that the signage is indicative of the theology espoused by the members of that church, or at least the pastor or whoever is responsible for changing the lettering from time to time. I like the humorous ones, but every so often I see one that makes me wonder what is being taught in that church. I passed one the other day that made me cringe. It stated, "Pray America. No weapon forged against you will prevail. Isaiah 54:17". Reading that sign as it is written gives me the opinion that they believe that no weapon forged against America will prevail. God is on our side! When I read that passage in Isaiah I get something very different from it. For starters it was written to God's chosen people under the Old Covenant, the Israelites. Earlier within the same chapter it says, "For a brief moment I abandoned you, but with deep compassion I will bring you back. In a surge of anger I hid my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting kindness I will have compassion on you," says the LORD your Redeemer". To paraphrase the whole chapter, after having given up on the children of Israel for a while, God states that when He calls them back, no weapon will prevail against them.

I know there are many that are looking at the good 'ol USA right now as a geographical entity that has a covenant with God in it's pocket. Since the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and WTC last September, many have thought that America was a "godly" nation, and that America is the "good" that challenges the "evil". Since our money is imprinted with "In God We Trust", we sing songs like "God Bless America", and our pledge of allegiance states, "...one nation, under God...", many of us believe that America has a Biblical "favored nation" status, and that words written for the nation (geographical, familial, and societal) of Israel are applicable to us as well. But...is it Biblical? When we read through the Old Testament and glean this "wisdom" aren't we assuming a lot when we believe that this applies to America?

If we read a little further on (ch. 55) we see; "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. **"Hear me, that your soul may live"** really jumps out at me in that passage. God is not as concerned with our corruptible bodies as he is with our souls. With that in mind, is God more interested in the souls of Americans than with the souls of Afghani's, or Koreans, or Chinese, or Mexicans? Aren't we putting God in a little red, white, and blue box when we believe He favors us (as Americans) more than any other people groups in the world? He did create them too, you know?

If we believe that America has a special covenant with God, what are we to do with passages of scripture like the following found in Acts ch:10? "Then Peter began to speak: 'I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right' ". The passages from Isaiah, if considered prophetic, apply to the new nation of Israel, the figurative children of Abraham, the body of Christ, not citizens of the USA.

Indeed, God bless America. God bless us with the wisdom to see the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus with new eyes. Help us to see that salvation through Christ is not the end all, but that we are to take up our crosses daily and follow Him, that the world may come to know Him through our cross bearing and our witness. God, while you're at it, please bless China, Russia, India, South America, Indonesia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Libya, Egypt, Australia, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Poland, Zimbabwe, Crete, Cuba, the Philippines, and on, and on, and on, and on.

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