

**New Year, Same God ...  
“Choose You this Day Whom You Will Serve”  
[Joshua 24:1-15]**

**Intro.** ... I was actually assigned to preach on this date over a month ago. Since I would be preaching only one message [i.e. not a series], and in light of the extraordinary events of the times in which we are living, ... I felt compelled to address, from a biblical perspective, the political and spiritual crisis of our time [i.e. How are we, as Christians to view/understand this present crisis? How did our country arrive at this point? And, how are we to live in the midst of such a divided world and in such conflict? – all the hostility and anger? ... And then, on Wednesday, January 6, a new crisis arose as we witnessed our nation’s capitol besieged by protesters [“rioters”]. – Since the protesters in this case were not the usual left-wing [Antifa - BLM] variety [although some are suggesting that elements of these left-wing radical groups were behind the planning of even this event]; ... but largely the constituency were right wing nationalists, many of whom were Christians, ... At any rate, when this happened, it became immediately apparent to me that I must first address this issue – in order that I might not sound like I was in support of this event! –

Most evangelical leaders are [rightfully] condemning this event, but they are also being blamed for it. ... My desire is to speak against this wrong response, but then to address the question of how we got to this point in which frustration and anger were allowed to be expressed in such an inappropriate way? – Then, I would like to point out some of the foundational historical influences that have brought us to this point [especially in the visible church]. And I hope to conclude with words of comfort, hope and encouragement [for Christians] from God’s Word, the bible!

### A Proper Response to the Capitol Riots

I would like to read a response to the Capitol riots by Neil Patel, who is co-founder of the *Daily Caller* (a conservative news outlet) ...

“Patriots enlist and defend their country. They work hard, do their best, raise good families. They help their neighbors. They perform civic duties. They grit their teeth and pay their taxes. Then they show up and vote. They compete, they win or lose, but they do both with grace. These are some of the things patriots **do**. Patriots do not storm their own Capitol over a lost election. They **do not** bum-rush members of Congress. They **do not** assault strangers. They do not push and shove police officers and trash federal buildings. These are things criminals do, and criminals of any political stripe deserve one thing: the rule of law.”

**Dr. Jim Denison** cited this quote this in his daily article, and added these words: “... [He - Neil Patel] is exactly right.

Now substitute “disciples of Jesus” for “patriots,” and you’ll be right as well.

There were some who sought to blame Antifa, but eyewitness reports seem to at least confirm the presence of many Christians. One such eyewitness report said: ... “rioters who breached Capitol Hill [were] carrying Christian flags. ...

‘Jesus is my Savior. Trump is my president.’ Others waved ‘Jesus Saves’ banners. One of the first rioters to enter the Senate chamber was carrying a Christian flag. A flag reading ‘Proud American Christian’ with an American flag inside an ichthus—an ancient Christian symbol—.”

The sad fact is that, even though many/most evangelicals are now condemning this event, they are also being blamed for it! ...

The Washington Post headlined: “Trump’s evangelicals were complicit in the desecration of our democracy.”

The Atlantic called the riots “**a Christian insurrection**” and added, “Many of those who mobbed the Capitol on Wednesday claimed to be enacting God’s will.” *Religion News Service* stated, “Evangelicals must denounce the Christian nationalism in Capitol riots.” –

## “Put your sword back into its place”

### **Dr. Jim Dennison added these words:**

“The Capitol riots had *nothing* to do with Jesus. No one who assaulted the Capitol was following the teachings of Jesus. To the contrary, these attacks deeply grieved him and are bringing shame on his true followers.

**When soldiers came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane**, “*Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant and cut off his right ear*” (John 18:10). Jesus healed the man’s ear (Luke 22:51) and then said to Peter, “*Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword*” (Matthew 26:52). “

In John 18:36, when Jesus stood before the Roman ruler, Pilate, He said: “*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But, ... my kingdom is from another place.*”

“Jesus taught us, ‘*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God*’ (Matthew 5:9). We are told to ‘be subject to the governing authorities’ (Romans 13:1) and to pray for ‘all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way’ (1 Timothy 2:2).

**This does ‘not’ mean that we ‘agree’ with everything our leaders say and do. ... But, ...when we do not, we work through our democratic system for the change we seek. We engage with members of Congress—we do not attack them.”**

## **But, the question is ...”WHY?” ... What led up to all this?**

Now, having addressed the wrongness of the Capitol riots, I want to turn to the question of what brought about the great frustration and anger that was driving these protesters [many of whom were otherwise well-meaning Christians] ... who vented and expressed their frustration and anger so totally inappropriately [even to the point of people being killed in this event]. ... So, what led up to all this? What was behind this frustration and this anger? – > **i.e. From a biblical, “Christian” point of view ...**

### **But First ... A look back at a similar time in the Old Testament, ... the period of the Judges ...**

I am not trying to say here that there is an exact parallel between the Old Testament nation of Israel and the USA today. ... Israel was a “Theocracy” [the law of the land was “the Ten Commandments” and the Law of Moses]. This is not true of the USA! However, it is undeniably true that when the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were drafted, these documents upon which our nation was built were heavily influenced by the Judeo-Christian ethic [Many inscriptions on national monuments in Washington D.C. attest to this; as well as the writings of many of our founding fathers]. There was “freedom of Religion” from the beginning, but, **there was the ‘prevailing’ influence of the bible and its God; ... the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob, ... the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; was the bedrock, the foundation that was acknowledged and confessed as the sovereign God who gave our nation its good success.** It was overwhelmingly acknowledged that our nation cried out to this God in times of trouble, for help and deliverance. ... **Christians would argue that this is the chief reason God has blessed this nation from its inception; - AND – that the chief reason for our downward demise at the present time is our nation’s turning away from its former commitment to the one true God!**

But the passage of time has seen great change and departure from this nation’s original position. **The frustration of those Americans who hold to the original values and the Sovereign God of the bible has grown**

and, although **this does not excuse the event itself**, it explains much of the strong [misdirected] emotion behind it.

**The Old Testament period of the Judges** – even though not precisely parallel, nevertheless, -has **some lessons that relate to this situation we face today**. ...

1) The God of Israel [the God of Abraham] **is** the **Maker** and **Creator** of all things [including the nations and the people of the world]. As such, He has a right to ask for and expect supreme and exclusive allegiance from all the people of the world! He called out Abraham [*“the father of all who believe”* – Rom. 4:11] to abandon the idolatry of his ancestors and to follow the one true God. ... After Abraham, God’s people in the world have always been those to acknowledge the one true God and seek to follow him alone [**Isa. 46:9-11**]. When God gave His Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai, He said: “*The Lord your God is a jealous God, ... Thou shalt have no other gods before me*” [Ex. 20:3-5].

The teaching of the bible is that, even though God has allowed the nations to deny Him and invent their own gods, ... He has revealed that a day of reckoning is coming in which all of mankind who have denied and rejected Him, the one and only true God, will suffer His wrath upon them [**Acts 17:31**].

2) When Joshua [in his old age] reminded Israel of all their God had done for them [i.e. the Exodus, the Passover, their victories in Caanan, etc.], ... in the light of all this, he said to them: “*Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods you fathers worshiped beyond the river, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve*, ... but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.” [Josh. 24:14-15] ... AND, since the “LORD” of whom Joshua spoke is the only true God and the Creator and Maker of all things in heaven and on earth, ... what Joshua said to O.T. Israel is applicable, ultimately, to all people, everywhere on earth! ... The bible teaches that ‘the creation alone’ is sufficient evidence [proof] of an intelligent Creator, for anyone to reject him makes them “without excuse” [Rom. 1:20].

3) In **Judges 21:25** [the last verse in this book] we read these words, which describe the prevailing mindset [world-view] of the people of those days: “**In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit.**” This statement suggests what’s at the foundation of all the frustration for many [perhaps most] of those who stormed

our nation's capitol. It is not so much the fact that many in the USA have demonstrated their rejection and denial of the one true God; ... rather, it is the realization that this has now become the prevailing view among the people of the USA, and that it is resulting in further movement away from the one true God and all that He represents. ... It is a frustration among a people who began in a position of privilege and favor before the one true God, and has now blatantly and openly sought to abandon Him! Rather than a general concensus that we ought to fear the one true God, “everyone does as he sees fit.”

4) The one final lesson from Joshua during this O.T. period was **his charge to the people:** ““*Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods you fathers worshiped beyond the river, and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,* ... but as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” [Josh. 24:14-15].

And this is the true task of every true Christian living in the USA today! It is not to storm the capitol and take the law into our own hands. It is to ‘warn’ people who are rebellious and defiant towards the one true God, and to charge them to “choose,” whom they will serve with their lives; ... teaching about the coming final Day of judgment and accountability of all mankind before the one true God [Acts. 17:31].

### **Spiritual Implications of the Cultural War Between Liberals and Conservatives ...**

Here, I am not seeking to approach the subject of the distinction between ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’ in “political” and “social” terms, ... rather, **I am strictly interested in the biblical and spiritual aspects of this distinction [mainly the corruption that has been initiated from within the church itself!]!** ... For example, ... in general, the liberal ‘world view’ suggests that the explanation for the existence of life and the cosmos [the material universe] can be reduced to a set of scientific laws and principles that somehow initiated [usually through a “Big Bang” Theory] the existence of matter; ... and then a naturally occurring “evolutionary” process which eventually [after millions and billions of years – through a random process] resulted in the earth upon which we live, along with all the forms of life, order and beauty that exist in this world.

This ‘theory’ [world-view] does not require the existence of an intelligent designer [God!], although a large number of people attempt to combine this theory with the existence of God. – According to this liberal world-

view, ... a “religious” world-view that believes in God is “tolerated” [though less and less as time goes by – such is even considered to be an “undesirable” thing; ... a source of bigotry and judgmentalism].

The liberal world-view boasts in its high view of “science.” ... Science is its supreme “god.” ... This, for the liberal, does away with anything that violates the laws of nature [i.e. “the supernatural”]. Thus, the liberal denies the Incarnation and the deity of Christ [a very dangerous position to take in light of **John 8:24**]. And, it is of enormous significance that the liberal view, therefore, not only rejects the clear testimony of the Creation – regarding an intelligent designer [**cf. Rom. 1:20**] –; it also rejects the authority of the bible as the inspired Word of God! – [**cf. II Tim. 3:16; II Pet. 1:20-21; Matt. 24:35**]. For this reason liberals feel free to deny and contradict any teaching of the bible which they find to be ‘inconvenient’ [or distasteful] for them [abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, cohabitation; etc. – **cf. I Cor. 6:9-12**].

## **So, where did the liberal [“Progressive”] world-view come from? And, how did it come to have such an enormous influence in our own time?**

The historical background of ‘modern liberalism’ can be traced back to the so called “**Period of Enlightenment**” in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe. The “Enlightenment” was centered around the idea that human reason is the primary source of authority and legitimacy. The three main [central] concepts of the Enlightenment were the use of reason, the scientific method, and “progress.” The rationalistic and naturalistic philosophy of the Enlightenment did not reach its peak until the development of so called “liberalism” that became the prevalent philosophy of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

\*>The “buzzword” in the nineteenth-century in the realm of theoretical thought was the word “**evolution**” [referring, of course to the writings of **Charles Darwin**]. The idea of evolution was applied not only to biology, but also to other fields of inquiry. Political theory, for example, saw the application of **Herbert Spencer’s** “Social Darwinianism.” ... R.C. Sproul commented: “It is important to realize that evolution encompasses chiefly a theory of history whereby not only biological entities undergo a progressive development from the simple to the complex, but also other entities undergo a similar sort of progressive change.” The growing school of liberal theology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became known as “**The Religious Historical School**.” Like the other disciplines, this liberal school of theology came to teach that all ‘religions’ go through evolutionary stages of

development. A 19<sup>th</sup> century scholar named **Julius Wellhausen** applied this theory to the Old Testament. The idea was that the Israelite religion ‘evolved’ through four distinct stages: animism, polytheism, henotheism and monotheism [with monotheism being the highest form]. > [Baal, Dagon, Asheroth … re henotheism …]

\*> Another significant development in this time of the emergence of liberal theology was **its desire to be rid of the supernatural:** R.C. Sproul commented: “Nineteenth-century liberalism sought a Christian faith that is desupernaturalized and essentially immanentistic in its outlook [i.e. “naturalistic”: i.e., can be entirely explained in natural terms, apart from the supernatural].” Elements of the miraculous [such as Christ’s feeding of the 5,000] were simply rejected by 19<sup>th</sup> century liberal theologians like **David Friedrich Strauss** and **William Wrede.** Their interpretation of such N.T. passages reduced Jesus to a clever magician and a charlatan.

\*> Also central to this liberal ‘reconstruction of the Christian faith’ was the emphasis on ethics! ... Albrecht Ritschl, for example, saw the essence of Jesus’ teaching **not** as supernatural redemption [accomplished by grace through faith] but as ethical and moral values. [R.C. Sproul quote >] “For these liberal theologians, Jesus became ‘**the supreme teacher of ethics** rather than as the incarnate Son of God who was born of a virgin, who died an atoning death of cosmic significance, and who was raised bodily from the dead and ascended into heaven.” **Rudolf Bultmann** and others openly denied the literal bodily resurrection of Christ, as well as His miracles

**R.C. Sproul** comments: “These ‘supernatural’ elements of the biblical portrait were rejected and in their place was substituted the moralist Jew who advocated a kingdom of values and social responsibility.” Thus, the Jesus of the bible was redefined and remolded to suit the liberal theories. ... Also, what is known as “**The Social Gospel**” [promoted by liberal protestant ministers, such as Walter Rauscherbush, grew out of this school of thought. – [The Social Gospel was a **social** movement within Protestantism that applied Christian ethics to **social** problems, especially issues of **social** justice such as economic inequality, poverty, alcoholism, crime, racial tensions, slums, unclean environment, child labor, lack of unionization, poor schools, and the dangers of war ...] – i.e. This was the application of the teachings of Jesus by individuals who denied Jesus’ deity and the saving efficacy of His death, burial and resurrection.

**Albert Schweitzer’s “The Quest for the Historical Jesus.”**

In 1906, **Albert Schweitzer** wrote what R.C. Sproul called “**a watershed book**” [an event marking a unique or important historical change of course or one on which important developments depend.] The book was titled: “**The Quest for the Historical Jesus.**”

Albert Schweitzer was **a polymath** [an individual whose knowledge spans a substantial number of subjects]. He was a theologian, organist, writer, humanitarian, philosopher, and physician.

Albert Schweitzer embraced much of the thought of **Johannes Weiss**; and, ... Weiss had attached Albrecht Ritschl's interpretation of Christ as merely and ethical teacher whose teaching could be understood from a naturalistic, evolutionary standpoint completely apart from the supernatural. Herman Ridderbos said of Johannes Weiss: “... he argued that Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom of God can only be understood in the light of and against the background of the world of thought of his time, ... especially the late Jewish **apocalyptic** writings.” [i.e. Jesus, in his preaching, constantly referred to the Kingdom of God as something that is “transcendent” and “supernatural”, and that it exists outside this world, and at some point will be openly manifested to the world [the word “apocalyptic” means “unveiling”]]; Johannes Weiss referred to it as a future eschatological event that will usher in the end of the world. Therefore, **Jesus view of the future coming of the kingdom of God was transcendent and catastrophic!**

Albert Schweitzer adopted this line of thinking in his book. He argued that according to Jesus’ teaching, the kingdom of God is **not something that emerges through evolutionary development, but a future event that is brought on suddenly from above, a supernatural intrusion that will invade our natural world.** ...

[Schweitzer had some novel, “unorthodox” views of Jesus’ expectation of how and when this kingdom will come; ... but in his book he refuted the prevailing “historical-critical”/evolutionary view of his contemporary theologians and succeeded in turning much of the mainstream of theological thought in a different direction regarding the **transcendent, supernatural character of Christ and his Gospel.**]

**“Liberal” Christianity is still “alive and well on planet earth!**

In the recent vice-presidential debates, [probably during the discussion of abortion] the liberal candidate turned to the evangelical conservative candidate and said: “We are also people of faith.” – But, in light of all we have just discussed, the question must be asked: “What kind of faith?” Faith in who? [If “Jesus” which Jesus?]

Then there was the prayer that was offered by liberal Representative [who is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church], **Emanuel Cleaver, when he was asked to deliver the prayer to open the 117th Congress on Sunday [Jan. 3, 2021]**. At one point in Cleavers' prayer, he said: '**We ask it in the name of the monotheistic God, Brahma, and "god" known by many names by many different faiths.'**

Obviously, this reflects the on-going effort to completely blot out the ***traditional, historical, foundational American ... public acknowledgment of the Judeo-Christian God; ... the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The effort [among liberals] is to replace this 'traditional faith' with a polytheistic, non-specific reference to all the gods of the world. [or even a "secular"/ "atheistic" view completely devoid of any kind of 'religious thought'].***

**An Important Question:** ... How can we account for this "liberal" mindset having such a huge impact on our culture? [i.e. taking over the majority in the U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives, ... controlling the media, ... impacting our children, etc., etc.???

**Dr. John Ellis** wrote a very significant book titled: "**The Breakdown of Higher Education.**" ... Dr John Ellis is distinguished Professor Emeritus of German Literature, University of California, Santa Cruz. He is Chairman of the California Association of Scholars.

Dr Ellis provides very 'specific,' 'documented' evidence of the direct impact of "Liberal" Higher education on our culture and our society....

**ELLIS commented – [in an interview - about his findings ...]:** "Well, you've had a very long campaign of converting the universities into one party campuses. I mean, if you go back 50 years, ... a study by a county commission in 1969, there were three left of center professors to two right of center professors ["liberal" – "conservative"].

[But] ..., by the end of the century in 1999, another study finds that ratio of three to two, ... which is very mild – [that's consistent with a very healthy debate between the left and the right on campus]. ...

**"But,... by the end of the century, 1999, a study shows 'five to one,' so you got a very great concentration building up. ... By another five to six years later, it's gone to 'eight to one,' and the current studies being done coming out now, [show] something like '13 to one.'**

"Now, there's every reason to believe that that's getting more extreme all the time because one of these studies look[ed] to 'the junior ranks,' – [let's say the recent appointees -- assistant professors, associate professors ]-- had found that the ratio there, left to right is '**48 to one.**'

**So, in other words, the hiring being done now is at the rate of about 50 to one,** not five to one or eight to one. So you're going to wind up with a complete monoculture within a short period of time.

"Now, everyone can see, anyone with a brain can see that's very unhealthy.  
You can't have a serious debate about the issues of the day when one party is missing."

## **Concluding observations and remarks:**

**So, how are we as biblical, evangelical Christians to view all of this? And how are we to respond?**

**1. We must realize that none of this has taken God by surprise, ...**

God is sovereign – Psa 103:12 he has established his trone in heaven and his kingdom rules over all

- Isa; 46:9-10 He is in the process of carrying out his purposes, which cannot fail
- II Tim 3:1-5 – He foretold the end-times as a period in which mankind would grow more and more evil and corrupt
- I Jn. 4:1 “*Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out in the world.*”
- (Remember) what we have described I this message is the evil and corruption inside the visible church on earth! ... Besides this there is all of the evil and corruption in the world that is being caused by atheists and agnostics!

**2. Certainly, we are to act and to do all that we can to impact and influence the decaying culture around us [i.e. act as the “*salt and light of the world;*” [Matt. 5:13-16]; act to carry out our Lord’s Great Commission [Matt. 28:18-20].**

**3. We must realize [be aware] that according to biblical prophecy we can expect this corruption to continue right up to the end of world history, ... at which time the bible teaches [Rev. 19 & 20] that the nations [“armies,” - peoples] of this world will gather to make war against God! – At that time the climax of world history will consist of the return of Jesus “*in flaming fire, with his holy angels, to punish those who do not know God*”– II Thess. 1:7-10; Rev. 19:19 & 20:7-9] –**

**4. Most importantly, we must have implicit faith that Jesus will return to take back this creation and to create new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells [Rev. 21:1-8]. – **a transcendent, apocalyptic, catastrophic event!****

Those who have, by faith, embraced the one true Savior and Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ are ‘those who have come out of the Great Tribulation’ – i.e. the church! [**Rev. 7 & 14**] = They will live and reign with Christ forever!

