

## How Far From God Will We Go?

By Brooks A. Harris, O.D.

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Throughout Israel's history, as recorded in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible, their people went through several cycles of obedience and disobedience to their God resulting in Israel's rise and fall many times. The cycle went generally like this: when the people worshipped, praised, prayed to and offered sacrifices to God, God would protect them and provide for them. But after awhile they began to take their prosperity and protection for granted and therefore slacked off on their attention to God. They put more and more attention on their idols (anything which they gave more attention to than God) such as their love for money, power, possessions, control and worship of man-made gods. As they turned their backs on God, God turned His back on them. Without God's protection, provisions and guidance, they were left to the consequences of their sin-filled lifestyles as greed, dishonesty, wickedness and the loss of their freedom with the absence of God.

Often without God's protection, outside nations and powers would influence and corrupt the Israelites and often, within time, other nations would invade and capture them. This is when the Israelites would finally realize that they had messed up by turning away from God. Once they, as a people, truly repented (recognized and apologized to God for their sinful lifestyle, asked God for forgiveness and turned their ways back to the ways of God), God would turn back to them to protect, provide for, guide and eventually allow prosperity for them. As long as the Israelites were appreciative of God, thanked God and worshipped God, God provided for their needs. God instructed Israel in 2Chronicles 7:14 that when hardship came, "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."

Now, how does this relate to today's time? Do these cycles still continue? If so, where are we today? As in Bible times, falling away from God is a gradual thing, a slow decline from Godliness to Worldliness. Over time, less and less people put their faith in God – they fail to recognize God's presence in their lives, they fail to appreciate or even thank God for what God has done for them. They rely more and more on the accomplishments of people (themselves and others) without involving God in their lives. Societies slowly turn away from God by doubting His abilities or even His existence, then they just ignore Him by no longer praying to Him or even thinking about Him.

I believe that when God sees that a society no longer wants God in their lives, He slowly removes His provisions and protection and societies eventually have to suffer the consequences of relying on other unreliable sources. I foresee more and more previously strong Christian societies, as the United States of America, falling to non-Christian powers – first from within and possibly eventually from another country. The USA has become arrogant, believing we are too powerful and too intelligent to be overrun by foreign powers, but time will tell.

It is obvious that our society is turning farther and farther away from God, but how far will we go before we repent and turn back to God? Can we cut our cycle short, or are we going to wait for disaster to strike our society? Well, it all starts with the people of God (not the godless people in our society). As in 2Chronicles 7:14, it states that "If My people who are called by My name" will repent, then God will heal their land. Therefore, it is up to Christians and Jews to stand up for Godly values and teachings against the sin-filled ways of our society. It is up to us to live according to God's ways as commanded in the Bible and to reach out to others to make disciples of non-believers. Otherwise, if we become content to conform ourselves to an ever-growing sinful society, we will definitely see our society fall further and further from God.

Therefore, if you are ready to see our society turn back to God so we can enjoy His protection, provisions and guidance again, do as 2Chronicles 7:14 commands – humble yourself and pray regularly, turn to God in all your ways and turn from your wicked ways.