

The Key to Ending Chaos

There are very real causes to the chaos we see in the world around us as well as in our own lives. There is also a very real solution for those who are willing to do what's required!

by Gary Petty

Have you wished someone could help you find some answers to the chaos we see around us? You can. But it will mean taking a hard look at the real, under-lying causes of our political, social, racial and economic problems. In the process you can discover the only solution for a nation, and a world, that is tearing itself apart. We live in a world where no one can solve the problems because no human society truly acknowledges the Creator. This isn't the world God designed for us. If this isn't the world He designed, what political agenda should you embrace to bring change to a troubled world? The answer has to do with *what motivates your citizenship*.

The United States, and the world, is divided over who is to blame for the political confusion, hatred, violence, inter-national health crisis, racial conflict, economic distress and ever-present anxiety that fills the news cycle and plagues our mental health. It seems everyone is finger-pointing and angrily shouting at those they believe are responsible.

You can pick your side to blame—Democrats, Republicans, the Chinese, the Russians, a secret society of billionaires trying to rule the world, Internet conspiracy theorists, Millennials, Gen Z, GenXers, Baby Boomers, the deep state, capitalists, communists, socialists, the medical profession, racists, anarchists, Google, Facebook, you name it. Many have their own list of who is responsible.

And just who is responsible? We're going to answer that question.

Where is God?

First let's ask an even more provocative question: How would you describe God's dealing with humanity? Where is God in this mess?

It would seem that of all people, Christians should be able to explain God's solutions. But in reality, those who identify as Christians are deeply divided over the answers to how God wants us to solve the problems of poverty, governance, racial relationships and injustice throughout the world.

The starting point to finding answers is found in Psalm 103:19: "The Lord has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all." The right and true answer to all questions begins with accepting the God of the Bible as the Creator and Ruler over all the earth. But it also means you have to have a clear definition of your true citizenship.

Is God at fault by allowing a corrupt world?

God's sovereignty doesn't mean He created this violent, self-destructing, dysfunctional human condition. The story of Adam and Eve isn't a nice fairy-tale about how to understand good and evil. Their story is the reality of how evil became part of the human experience. Our first parents lived in perfect peace and happiness as long as they followed God's instructions. Then Satan came into their lives and everything changed.

It is necessary to understand that Satan is a real being. He was one of many angelic beings created by God before the creation of the physical universe. He rebelled against God and now desires to destroy God's purpose for humanity—and thus God's purpose for you. Satan influenced our first parents and they became separated from God. According to the apostle Paul, from that point forward their descendants have been spiritually blinded by "the god of this age" (2 Corinthians 4:3-4).

That means all human history has been a sad, dysfunctional experiment in forming religions, governments and social systems to ensure fairness, equality and safety. It also means that the god of this age, the author of evil, has manipulated people and the course of human history through spiritual blindness. *This spiritual blindness is at the root of human inability to govern ourselves without conflict, injustice and violence.*

Understand this: God still reigns over the universe. And He is still involved with human beings. But He has allowed wayward humanity a specific length of time to experiment with every kind of government, systems of justice and economic theories we can devise to see that none of it will work apart from Him.

God continues to intervene

God has a plan for humanity, which includes a personal plan for your life. You can discover God's designed purpose for you—and it has to do with your citizenship. God isn't far off, ignoring what is happening in this mess. He is acting amidst this human tragedy to carry out His destiny for humanity.

A past example of God's intervention is found in Isaiah 45:1: "Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held . . ."

Cyrus was a famous king of Persia. Here is what is interesting about this verse. Isaiah wrote this prophecy *a century before Cyrus was even born*. Early in his reign Cyrus issued a decree sending Jews who had been scattered by the Babylonian captivity back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (2 Chronicles 36:22-23). The Jews returned, and years later Jesus the Messiah came into this world as a Jew exactly as the prophecies said He would. Cyrus was used by God to make sure Jesus was born in Judea.

God's intervention in human history doesn't mean He controls all human actions. He is allowing us, under the malevolent influences of the god of this age, to create religions, governments and social systems. None of which produces peace, justice, prosperity for all, or shines light through the spiritual blindness of war, crime, hatred, anxiety, suffering and broken lives.

Where is your citizenship?

You live in a world where humanity can't solve its problems because no human society or government is submitted to the rule of God. If this isn't the world God designed for us, then what political agenda should we embrace to bring change to a troubled world?

To answer that question you have to first answer this question: *How do I define my citizenship?*

Here is how the apostle Paul defines Christian citizenship: "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Philippians 3:20).

Paul had been a prominent leader in the Jewish religious establishment. He was also by birth a citizen of the Roman Empire. But his *primary* citizenship was in the Kingdom of God, who reigns from heaven.

No political or social movement can solve the human condition. The real problem lies in the mind and heart of each of us. Since the core problem is inside the human heart, only God can supply the solution. This means that the solutions to society's problems begin with God actively working in your life and bringing about a fundamental change in the inner person. And God will do so. This is part of the gospel message—the good news.

We can keep trying to change other people, or change the government, or change the culture, but until we submit to God and His power to change our inner person, we'll always end up with the same problems. You can't change someone else, but God can change you.

Where does our allegiance lie?

We all must humbly realize that as long as Satan is the god of this age, no human effort will free humanity from its spiritual blindness. God is seeking those who wish to come out of the darkness and participate in the only real hope for humanity. God is seeking those who will submit to His rule while living in an age of spiritual darkness.

When you embrace God's call to citizenship in His higher Kingdom, there is a fundamental change in your allegiance. This isn't an easy calling. It means more than "accepting Jesus," singing religious songs and going to church. To become a citizen of the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom the prophet Daniel foretold many centuries ago would destroy all human governments, you must accept the values and laws of God's Kingdom *in your life right now*. That means you must become, in a real sense, a spiritual stranger in a strange land.

Hebrews 11:13-16 describes the lives of great men and women of faith who died waiting for the restoration of God's Kingdom on earth:

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country [that is, a transformed world under the rule of God]. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them"—the New Jerusalem, which will come from heaven to the earth (Revelation 21-22).

The reality of true Christianity is to be a stranger and pilgrim on the earth. It is to seek a different "homeland" and to understand that all human attempts to create utopia are doomed to failure. It means embracing a lifelong journey towards the return of Jesus Christ.

The transformation of becoming a citizen of the Kingdom of God

How does being a citizen of the Kingdom of God change your life? It changes everything, because being a citizen of God's Kingdom is based on accepting not only the sovereignty of God over all humanity, but His ownership of your life right now. It is complete submission to His mission in your life. It is absolute allegiance to Jesus Christ as Saviour, Master and King of Kings. This citizenship supersedes all other forms of allegiance and patriotism.

When you give total allegiance to God, and your citizenship is in heaven, you will be transformed by God's direct intervention in your life. Here's what you will begin to experience:

You begin to seek God's purpose and goals in your life.

God has a purpose for your life. That purpose has a goal. Remember what Paul wrote, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ . . ." Jesus Christ is returning to earth to tear down all human governments and restore God's rule over His creation.

When you seek God's future He has designed for you, you in turn must accept His directions toward that future. This may be the most difficult thing for human beings to do. All of us want to be our own masters. We want to control our immediate environment and everyone else around us so we can feel secure and happy.

At the foundation of faith is to give leadership of your life over to God as a loving Father. You can only give up the need to control if you trust in God's involvement in your life now and look forward to His promised future. You must pray to God and let Him lead your life.

You begin to change your priorities.

How do you spend your time? Time is a great gift God has given to each of us. When we allow God to set our priorities, the consuming desire to make money and own things is replaced with a consuming desire to live as a devoted son or daughter of God.

The need for status is replaced with the need to love others. The search for self-determination is replaced with seeking God's way of life. The desire for constant entertainment and immediate gratification is replaced with a peaceful understanding of what is really valuable in life—having a relationship with God as His child and showing His love to others.

You begin to change how you spend your mental and emotional energy.

We waste so much of our lives in resentment, selfishness, envy and other destructive thoughts and emotions. But notice what God wants to produce in your life: "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness [and] self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). This can only happen when you acknowledge that you need God's rule in your life and accept your absolute inability to heal your spiritual blindness.

You begin to obey God's commandments.

You must accept the right of the Creator to have dominion over His creation—part of which is *you*. Just as there are physical laws like gravity that govern the universe, there are spiritual laws that govern your relationship with God and your relationships with others. It is meaningless to "confess Jesus" and at the same time ignore His directions because that means our citizenship is *not* in the Kingdom He proclaimed.

How do citizens of God's Kingdom interact with civil governments?

Dedicating your life to being a citizen of the Kingdom of God naturally raises this question: How are Christians to interact with the civil government where they live?

The apostle Peter addressed this question to the early Christians who lived under the heavy foot of the Roman Empire: "Dear friends, I warn you as 'temporary residents and foreigners' to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbours. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honourable behaviour, and they will give honour to God when he judges the world.

"For the Lord's sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honour those who do right. It is God's will that your honourable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you. For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. Respect everyone, and love the family of believers. Fear God, and respect the king" (1 Peter 2:11-17, New Living Translation).

Notice that Peter, like the writer of Hebrews, addresses the followers of Jesus as "temporary residents and foreigners." They may have been citizens of a particular region, or even a citizen of the Roman Empire, but they were intensely aware that their *primary* citizenship was in the Kingdom of God. Peter instructs them to submit to the civil authorities so that "even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honourable behaviour, and they will give honour to God when he judges the world."

Christians were persecuted by the Romans for their allegiance to God the Father and to Jesus as their King. Still Peter tells them to obey the laws of the land so that when Jesus returns the civil leaders will know that His followers were among them. Obviously, Peter doesn't mean that Christians are to follow civil leaders if they tell them to disobey God (see Acts 5:29). Every Christian's primary allegiance is to God and His laws, but the followers of Christ should also be known for their respect for authorities, peacefulness and care for others.

During Jesus' ministry, He was confronted by a group of Herodians, essentially a political party, with the question of whether Jews should pay taxes to the Romans. This was a trick question. If Jesus answered that they were to pay taxes to the Romans, He could be accused of supporting the evil empire and lose support among the Jewish people. If He said they weren't to pay taxes, He could be accused of sedition and arrested by the Roman authorities.

Jesus asked for a coin and then asked the Herodians whose inscription was on it. They answered that it was Caesar's. Jesus responded, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:15 -21).

Here Jesus explains the tension of being a citizen of an earthly kingdom and at the same time a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The coin bore the image of Caesar, showing it belonged to him. But what bears the image of *God*, showing *God's* ownership? Human beings who are made in God's image! Jesus' point, then, is that all of us must give ourselves wholly to God

.Christians must live in allegiance to God and the laws and values of His Kingdom. And this includes compliance with the laws of human governments as long as the human laws don't conflict with allegiance to God. Jesus, Peter and Paul all instructed Christians to be good citizens of the countries where they lived. Yet all three of them chose loyalty to God's Kingdom as their first allegiance and were killed for it.

Focusing your life

We opened here with a partial list of groups accused of causing the chaos in our world. Who is actually to blame? All of those listed play a part. So do you and I if we are not first and foremost citizens of the Kingdom of God. And don't forget the god of this age. Satan does his most effective work in chaos. Chaos is the breeding ground for evil. When Jesus returns, He must first remove Satan from being able to influence human beings. Only then will all people be able to experience true freedom and happiness for the first time since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden.

All of us should be aware of what is happening in our world. We are all distressed by the chaos, suffering and evil. It helps to always keep this in mind: The sovereign Ruler over the universe has already foretold the failure of all human efforts to try and live outside His Kingdom.

This isn't the world God designed for us. He is sending Jesus Christ to replace the worn-out, dysfunctional world of this age by restoring God's Kingdom on earth. The more you focus your life on the chaos, the more you become part of the problem. Instead, focus your thoughts, actions and energy on the hope, salvation and unity Jesus Christ will bring to all humanity when He returns.

God is going to create a new world. He is calling all those who want to be part of that great movement to come out of this world and become citizens of His Kingdom!

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