

WHERE ARE WE HEADING? (PART 2)

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In last week's article, it was noted that the historical tendency of nations is towards an ever increasing departure from God and righteousness. This happened to many Gentile nations of the Old Testament, such as the Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18:20-21). The world in Noah's time became so wicked that every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually (Gen 6:5). Over the course of several centuries, the iniquity of the Amorites became "full" (Gen 15:12-16). Israel herself then became like those nations, and even worse (Isa 1:1-10; Jer 18:11-12). As seen with these examples, and many others like it, God's pattern is "to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy" nations who descend into the depths of wickedness (Jer 18:1-10). Even history since Bible times is littered with examples of this, and we would be foolish to think it is not still happening. So what about the United States of America? A nation who justified her very existence with a declaration about the inalienable rights endowed upon all men by their Creator is truly on a slippery slope. Last week, we reviewed the eroding value for the sanctity of life that is evident all around us in recent years. Another measure of the rapid drift of our nation away from God is what is happening to marriage and the family.

The sanctity of marriage and the family: divorce

In the beginning, God created man and woman, and established the basis for marriage and the family in Genesis 2:22-25: one man together with one woman for life. Marriage and the family is thus the first institution that God ordained for mankind on this earth. And God did not include the dissolution of the marriage covenant by divorce in His plan for mankind. He *allowed* Israel to practice divorce by their civil law (Deut 24:1-4), because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt 19:8). Yet He *hated* the practice and refused to accept the offerings of those who "dealt treacherously" against "the wife of their covenant" by divorcing them (Mal 2:13-16). The Pharisees in Jesus' time were still trying to justify divorce, but Christ re-established what God had ordained in the beginning. The Lord said, "*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*" (Matt 19:6). Christ's command for the world is clear: "*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery*" (Matt 19:9). In short, divorce is *never* commanded. It is only approved by God in one case, for an innocent person whose spouse has committed fornication. Divorce and remarriage under any other circumstance is *adultery*. Yet, what we currently see in the United States and around the world is a lot of hard-heartedness. Prior to

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1970, every state in America required one of the parties to a marriage to prove *fault* on the part of their spouse in order for a divorce to be granted. True, “fault” was a much looser standard than Christ’s, and included abandonment, criminal acts, and other things depending upon the state. On January 1, 1970, California became the first state with a “no-fault” divorce law, requiring no showing of wrongdoing by either party. In other words, divorce would be granted for any reason or none at all, other than one party simply desiring it. By 1977, nine states had no-fault divorce. Today, all 50 states and the District of Columbia have no-fault divorce laws on the books. These laws are a mere reflection of the attitude of society towards marriage. As recently as 1965, the number of divorces per 1,000 Americans was 2.5. That rate had almost doubled by 1992. Around 50% of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. Clearly, the idea of “till death do us part” is no longer in vogue.

The sanctity of marriage and the family: homosexuality

Sadly, in our modern society, there is now confusion about the issue of *gender* in marriage. In the beginning (again, Genesis 2:22-25), God established marriage as between a man and a woman. He never authorized so-called “same-sex marriage,” and He never will. God has always defined homosexuality as sinful and abominable (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10; Jude 7). The practice of homosexuality is a *behavior*, a vital point which is conveniently ignored by those who try to equate “gay rights” with other “civil rights” that belong to people of all races and ethnicities. How we are *born* is one thing, but how we *behave* is another. To make such wicked behavior on equal to the honorable institution of marriage between man and woman is truly an abomination. Nevertheless, on November 18, 2003, the State Supreme Court of Massachusetts forced that state to become the first in our nation to legalize same-sex marriage. Between 2003 and 2012, Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and the District of Columbia legalized “gay marriage.” On Election Day, November 7, 2012, Maine, Maryland, and Washington joined this ever-growing group of states. This issue is about to go Federal. The United States Supreme Court announced on Friday, December 9, that it would review during its current term the constitutionality of two major cases involving gay marriage. One of those cases is the 1996 “Defense of Marriage Act,” signed into U.S. law by President Clinton, which says the federal government would not recognize state-sanctioned same-sex unions. It seems only a matter of time before this law will be overturned, along with the constitutional amendments of thirty-one states that currently prohibit gay marriage.