

**Articles and Sermons :: A Time of Maturity For The Saints****A Time of Maturity For The Saints - posted by AbideinHim (), on: 2013/6/12 23:35**

A TIME OF MATURITY FOR THE SAINTS

Sam Soleyn - April 2013

The world and the church are reeling and on the brink of panic. Shocking events of both national and international scope have been occurring with a sickening monotony. Disorder and chaos have taken strange new forms and have come suddenly upon all nations—from the pervasive lawlessness practiced by governmental regimes and private citizens alike to the unconscionable murders of innocents. The lack of restraint has come to characterize human society.

To those who have eyes to see, signs indicating that mankind has entered a season defined by the removal of restraints abound. A new kind of lawlessness has entered the world. It is increasingly showing itself as the removal of any standard related to godliness. In its place is an active competition for preeminence between social, political, economic, and religious agendas for which the ends justify even the most unscrupulous means. This time may be characterized as one in which everyone is doing what is right in their own eyes, resulting in the formation of new constituencies with no discernible, overarching standards, powered by headline grabbing activities and the use of any means to advance a particular set of ideas. These competing ideas have no eternal value as their bases, and their moral underpinnings are free from any sense of accountability to God that might otherwise restrain them.

This state is the result of humans' general failure to retain God in their knowledge. The mind of man appears unrestrained by any reference to the righteousness of God. Yet, the God-given abilities to create and explore remain.

However, uninfluenced by godly restraint, mankind has become actively engaged in exploring the unthinkable and the unimaginable and seems intent upon basing their ideas for a new society upon these concepts and ideas that are the product of a reprobate mind. Rom 1:28 KJV (‘‘And even as they did not like to retain God in knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient’’).

This climate of lawlessness is resulting in two consequences. The first is the removal of the Restrainer, and the second is creating the climate for the emergence of ‘‘the man of lawlessness.’’ 2 Thes 2:3

All over the world, old forms of restraint, based in traditions and symbolic observations of biblical principles, are breaking down. The Spirit of God used these forms of restraint to keep nations from chaos even when they did not acknowledge His existence. But, the one who restrains has been taken out of the way.

When the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to

destruction. . . . And now you know what is holding him back, so that

he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 2 Thes 2:3-8 NIV.

## The REMOVAL OF RESTRAINT

In past centuries, national churches influenced their empires in biblical restraint. Even though they primarily served political empires, God used them as a form of restraint upon the nations, being presented through the systems by which nations were governed. God used these systems to restrain nations, permitting a time for the gospel of the Kingdom to be preached throughout the world.

However, these influences could not forever withstand people's desire to act according to their own will. More than five years ago, the prophetic sound within the Body of Christ announced a new season. The previous season of the dependence of the Church upon its acceptance by the nations had come to an end.

Although the systems served to restrain human activity, they did not promote godliness within the societies they served. Human culture within these nations was largely co-opted by the influence of church traditions, but over the centuries a slow, but persistent, erosion of these social consensuses had taken place. This erosion accelerated with the advent of global communication, and a new culture emerged. This culture replaced the former tradition-based culture, resulting in a complete breakdown of social consensus, nation by nation, across the earth. The first traditional systems affected were those related to public morality and spiritual conviction. The collapse of other systems, including financial and governmental systems, soon followed. For the last five years, the uncertainty that has arisen as a result of the collapse of these systems has shaken both human society and the Church to their cores.

This was a season in which many of these influences had reached their maturity and were being put on display for all to see, bringing with it a new global culture. Even though the collapse of these systems appeared to have occurred suddenly, the stage was set centuries ago for this result. However, the modern church seemed entirely unaware of the connections between history and these new realities that are its present fruit. Although the Church exerted influence in conjunction with its service to empires, the cultures of many nations were informed by church traditions and an awareness that even nations should respect God's sovereignty. The decline of the Church's influence became a casualty of the emergence of a more deeply secular culture and the loss of even the forms of godliness that the institutional and state churches advocated. More than seventeen centuries have passed since the sowing of this seed, in some cases. Although the fruit that is being born presently seemed to have appeared abruptly in our time, from heaven's viewpoint, the timing was accurate and flawless. Its appearance has made clear the widening gulf between the waning influence of traditional church culture and the growing stridency of a new global culture that has been eagerly casting off prior restraints. By holding on to these prior traditions and aligning itself with those factions in society that lament the passing of these times, the institutional church has become defined as opposing progress and is generally viewed as being out of step with society. Now, the contrast is stark and evident on all fronts, and it is too obvious to be missed.

The thoughts and desires expressed through this new culture are unaffected by the things of God. Having thrown off the restraint of the views of previous generations, the current generation does not believe that it is necessary to have a defined standard of truth. Instead, it has rejected God, the Scriptures, and church traditions—the restraints upon society. This generation feels justified in taking this view, because it considers the belief systems and practices of previous generations to have been generally hypocritical, self-serving, and exclusive, favoring certain segments of society while ignoring the plight of the vast majority of humanity. It has acquiesced to a view of God popularized by famous public icons from arts and entertainment, politics, religion, and financial spheres who personify the apogee of this culture in these areas. It does not help that the conduct of famous church leaders often parallel or exceed the misconduct of their secular contemporaries, further stripping the Church of any distinct moral or ethical high ground and leaving the way clear for this new culture to take root without being opposed by any viable contrasting alternative.

Worldwide, these trends are evident in the socio-economic upheaval and governmental uncertainty that defines daily life. In the United States, prior to the recent Presidential election, a historic storm struck at financial, political, religious, and entertainment centers within the nation. This storm served notice that the national house is built upon the sand. Matt 7:24-28 NIV (“ . . . But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”). The indication was that it did not matter who ended up leading the nation. The changes to come are as inexorable as the rain and winds that erode the sandy foundation.

Across Europe, in the shadows of its cathedrals and other religious monuments, an entire generation has arisen that has no connection to God or to the religious past of their nations. Instead, they spend their days trying to survive economically and to entertain themselves.

The Middle East is churning with religious and political chaos. The resulting uncertainty has come to be the defining factor of daily life.

The Indian sub-continent is being forced to come to grips with the deep divisions within its social structure. The religion of reincarnation has permitted centuries of inactivity in regards to redressing profound social inequities at all levels of national life. Suddenly, the time of urgent confrontation between these forces has come.

China is a nation divided against itself. It has been held together by the resolve of its communist government. Now, the government itself has been forced to confront the corruption rampant among its “princelings” who form the central core of governmental authority. The new Premier, in a public speech, acknowledged that if the government fails at the task of reforming itself, it will have lost the legitimacy to govern the nation. There is no possibility that the government can succeed at this task, since the descendants of the leaders of modern China have become steeped in the culture of entitlement. Political altruism is no match for the depravity of unconscionable greed.

Africa's emergence as a global supplier of natural resources is being derailed by tribal and governmental strife. While the common people continue to wait for the benefits to be derived from the processing of their natural resources, old tribal and new governmental power struggles continue to fuel bloodshed and impoverishment. Corruption is so endemic that the progress that would otherwise lift these societies out of the abyss of their colonial past is used to entrap them. Often the combination of greed, political ambition, and callous disregard for human life is at the center of new governmental forms that have replaced the brutal oppression of previous colonial governments.

The Restrainer has chosen this time to withdraw himself, because the cup of human iniquity is full. Cf. Gen 15:16 KJV; Rev 18:5-6 KJV. A population has arisen that does not retain God in its knowledge, and any notion of the fear of the Lord has largely disappeared from among them. This trend is evident in polls from the last election cycle, indicating that young people have significantly different views than their parents' generation on almost every social issue, and there is almost no discernible difference in the views of secular people and those raised in church. Whereas older generations were influenced by the teachings of Scripture on issues such as abortion, homosexuality, cohabitation, and the acquisition and concentration of wealth, the present generation has largely subscribed to completely different views. The previous generation thought of the larger issues of life against the background of their mortality and a sense of final accountability to God. The present generation, on the other hand, does not hold Scripture or notions of accountability to God as either authoritative or restraining. Instead, it accepts a view of God shaped by a socially derived perception that, for God to be acceptable to society, He must be tolerant of whatever the society defines as love. As the human collective continues aggressively to throw off the restraint of godliness, this phenomenon has become crystalized in a generation that accepts no other standard than its own preferences.

The evidence of the removal of the Restrainer is a global reality. These effects will continue, resulting in further breakdown and greater human tragedy. Nations are under the judgment of God for the continuing pattern of ignoring and rejecting even the measures of righteousness to which they have been exposed historically.

This present judgment is neither punishment from God for mankind's misdeeds nor evidence of His displeasure. Instead, this form of judgment is simply the removal of restraint. God has decided to stop inhibiting humans from insisting upon their own way and is letting nations experience the full consequences of their choices. His intent is that, by removing all restraint, humans will arrive sooner to the inevitable consequences of their choices and will conclude that their way of life cannot result in peace and well-being.

There is no alternative if people are to be awakened to their current state of depravity. To continue to entreat mankind through kindness and grace will produce no different fruit. The removal of restraint will give people over to their own thoughts and deeds. Change cannot occur until humans are confronted with the entrenched culture of rebellion against God.

**PEACE! PEACE! WHEN THERE IS NO PEACE**

Already, politicians and citizens are raising the cry for change. Change will come in the short-run, and it will target those who are deemed the enemies of popular opinion. However, the consequences of man's departure from godly restraints will not be remedied by legislative action. The slide into despair will continue until there are no further plausible solutions attainable through human effort.

At that time, two divergent paths will open to the people. The majority will harden their hearts and continue to accept the depravity of the human condition as the new normal and will devote their energies to the art of surviving within that environment. Attempts at legislative solutions will hasten the emergence of a global governmental entity that enthrones lawlessness and legitimizes a culture of rebellion against all forms of godliness. It will redefine godliness in such a manner as to cause it to appear to be the foundation of its policies and practices. It will even have its own version of the miraculous as proof of divine approval:

Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being

gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come. Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God. Don't you remember that when I was with you I used to tell you these things? And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness. 2 Thes 2:1-12 NIV.

When the Spirit of God is no longer a restraint upon human activity, whether directly or by the breakdown of systems through which this restraint has been practiced, the void will be filled by a growing array of demonic activities and influences that will ultimately produce "the man of lawlessness." Because comparisons to the activities of the Spirit of God will be lost, discernment regarding Satan's counterfeits will also disappear, leaving mankind in the condition of being generally unable to tell the difference between the deceptions of Satan and the authentic expressions of the Spirit of God. Until the fruit of this deception reaches the point where there is an undeniable connection between the deception and the result, it will be fruitless for believers to engage in discussions about what is True with the world around them. Most of mankind will simply harden their hearts and continue to try to live by their own strength and ingenuity.

However, a remnant of mankind will begin to cry out to God as they see the hopelessness and despair all around them,

and they will begin to attribute these results to the removal of the standards of God. At that time, the Lord will reveal the existence of His House to them and they will press into it. The Kingdom of God will be established in stark contrast to the acceptance of lawlessness in the global consciousness. The House of God will provide safe haven to all those who choose to remember God when the world settles for the feckless activism of mankind's efforts.

## A TIME OF UNRESTRAINT

The work God has for His house during this time will require restraint when the rest of the world is unrestrained. Those institutions swept along in the turmoil facing the rest of the world will be incapable of restraint. In particular, for the politicized religious institutions, this form of restraint is inconceivable. During this time of disquiet, rather than becoming a stabilizing force, the church, politicized beyond conviction, has settled into a state of disbelief and alienation. The most prominent leaders of the evangelical church endorsed a Mormon for the Presidency, after supporting various Republican candidates who did not make it through the primary selection process. These leaders entreated their constituencies to pray fervently for the success of this candidate and to go to the polls and vote in his support. But, God who is sovereign over the kingdoms of men allowed the people to ratify their choice from four years earlier. (Dan 4:17). Debasing itself for political gain has removed the institutional church from any role it held previously in society's conscience.

The religious church has failed to represent the ways of God. It has largely collapsed internally and has descended into an abyss of greed, corruption, and harlotry. In its bid to reboot itself and to regain its relevance, it has sought to merge politically and ideologically with society in general. Many of its leaders are repositioning themselves away from their previous positions and are embracing "kinder, gentler" postures. They are also redefining their roles on a variety of new issues within this suddenly changed environment.

Despite their efforts to redefine themselves and reposition their institutions, they find themselves falling behind and are having to take more extreme positions than even the society around them has required. While society is still hotly debating the issue of homosexual marriages, for example, some church groups are now being led, at very high levels, either by homosexual clergy or by those who champion the rights of homosexuals to marry. While secular society waits for the appropriate governmental authorities to make these legal decisions, certain church groups have already endorsed and even implemented practices within their institutions that attempt to reposition them ahead of what they perceive to be the social trends, in the hope of being thought of as leading the direction in which the current trend is moving. They have become keenly aware of how anachronistic and even irrelevant they appear to secular society and are undertaking these extreme measures in the hope of being thought of as being relevant again. Their unwillingness to stand for eternal values is the very reason for their irrelevance, while their embrace of secular trends, devoid of godly restraint, will ultimately confirm their irrelevance.

Although God has been removing restraint for some time, the lack of restraint now has become undeniable, and events and circumstances that previously were unthinkable are becoming routine. Mankind does not consciously realize how much it depended on God to hold back events from coming forth and overwhelming the world. It simply accepted God's benevolence as the standard, never recognizing God's role in holding back the natural consequences of mankind's choices.

Those who pursue lawlessness, in the form of each person doing what is right in his or her own eyes, will continue to do so at great personal cost. Similarly, those who claim to speak for God without being authorized to do so will reap harsh and immediate consequence from an unbelieving world. God's emphasis is on the maturing of His house at this time, and those who choose to act outside of this directive will face an unrestrained society.

GO MY PEOPLE, ENTER YOUR ROOMS AND SHUT THE DOORS . . .

To those who have inclined their ears to hear God, the word of the Lord is one of restraint. While the Restrainer is being taken out of human society, His presence will become altogether obvious to His people. The Spirit of God is now saying to the people of God,

Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer. Isa 26:20-21 NIV.

God is directing His children to come into their appointed places within His House and to remain there for this season.

This represents a dramatic shift in direction from the preceding seasons, which were characterized by bold and aggressive confrontation with the world. God permitted this uncharacteristic confrontation to highlight the conditions prevalent in both the world and the Church. Godless choices had to be exposed so that those making them would be forced to do so openly and brazenly. The long history of the church relying upon society's favor for its influence rather than upon its representation of God needed to be equally exposed. In this confrontation, the world finally admitted that its choices were based in its own self-will and can no longer pretend to be accountable to God. The institutional church on the other hand could not speak openly of the standards of truth, and instead it sought to continue to draw people to a consensus based only upon traditional values. The exposure of both positions has produced the present conflict of cultures, showing the bankruptcy of both positions.

Now, God requires his people to enter their rooms and to stop being available to engage the world around them in discussions and debates that only show the hardening of the respective positions. There is nothing more to be said at this time. Doubtless the religious church will continue to seek favor and seek to regain relevance, but the people of God are being separated from religion and are being repositioned in the House of God. They will not be speaking to the world until the time of their reemergence.

This silence will last until the world is ready to seek the council of the House of God, which will happen only when the conditions of earth have become sufficiently desperate as to break the pride and arrogance of mankind. Even then, only a remnant of mankind will seek out the people of God to make serious inquiry into their ways. At that time, God will instruct His people in the precise manner in which to reengage those who are seeking Him.

This time of hiding should not be understood as shrinking back in fear or sitting quietly by as the world around descends into chaos. It will in fact last only for "a little while," giving sufficient time for everything that should be developed to reach its maturity both in the world and among the people of God. Although the body of Christ is entering what may be con

sidered a winter season, in which it is likely to appear to be of no great societal influence, this will be a time of great internal growth and maturity in preparation for its reemergence.

In nature, as the winter season approaches, trees often shed their leaves and appear dead above the ground. At that time, there is almost no discernible activity in the portion of the tree that is visible that would suggest that it is still alive. Its outward glory changes from the vibrant, healthy, green color to a drab brown. To the uninformed observer, the tree is lifeless during these months. However, beneath the surface, critically important things are taking place. The roots are going deeper into the water table to draw nutrients, and at the same time, they are also spreading out to more securely anchor the tree. This beneath-the-surface growth is in anticipation of the change from winter to spring when new growth results from the rising sap. The increased, above ground, activity requires more nourishment in order to put out new leaves, branches, and eventually, blossoms and fruit. All of this must be sustained from the soil, accessed by the root system during winter. This greater bulk provides stronger resistance to the wind and requires greater stability in order to keep from toppling over. Without this invisible growth, during the "dead" season the tree would be at risk when the seasons change.

In this season of winter in which God is calling His house into order, His intent is to prepare for the new growth when the season changes. Those in the world searching for human answers to all the woes and seeming misfortunes that come in the time of unrestraint will not see the activities of the House of God during this time.

#### A TIME OF MATURITY

Growth will occur in our understanding of who God is and the changes that it produces in our understanding of who we are as His sons. In light of that revelation of understanding, much will be transformed in our thoughts and in our outlook. We will begin to see things from God's point of view and experience a transformation in how we view the events in the world around us.

Things will be understood differently from an eternal point of view than from a temporal. This change will go a long way toward reducing or eliminating fear, anxiety, and panic.

Also during this time, our place in a spiritual family and our functioning out of that place should be solidly established. The activities of the Body of Christ will turn to the order of His house: that of a family, arranged around the relationship of spiritual fathers and spiritual sons. God intended that Adam's descendants would be part of the House of God, but Adam's sin before children were born to him separated the House of God from the Father. Although certain fathers and their family lines retained the form of the House of God, the majority of humanity continued on the path that separated it from God. Jesus Christ was the son who came to redeem the House of God. He restored the original intent of God by reconciling God and man. The form of this reconciliation is a spiritual house known as the Body of Christ. The Spirit of God assembles those who are reconciled to God into this spiritual house.

These relationships, in their larger configurations, take the form of spiritual families, households, clans, tribes, and a holy nation. The purpose is to provide an exact representation of the nature of God on the individual level as well as at the level of a nation. The governmental form is designed to bring sons to maturity, resulting in a national showing of the person of God that so contrasts with the depravity in which nations have fallen that it is to be compared to a city of light, established on the highest hill but surrounded by intense darkness. Overall, during this time, God will both form and cause to become functional the outlines of a Holy Nation.



When the House of God reaches the appropriate stage of maturity, sufficient to represent God in the earth accurately, it will be put on display for the world to see. The wisdom, humility, quietness, and restraint of both the leadership and the people of the House of God will be put on display when the season ends. Because the favor of the Lord will attend it, God's House will appear glorious to that portion of humanity seeking Him, while the rest of society will consider it to be its greatest enemy.

The season of being set in order away from public visibility will conclude with a people reemerging clothed with the glory of Christ. John 17:22-23 NIV ("I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."). Their personal maturity together with the order of their corporate governance will stand in stark contrast to the chaos and disorder everywhere.<sup>1</sup>

Many of those raised on the idea of outreach are likely to resist fiercely and even reject this vision of the immediate future outright. Those unfamiliar with the ways of God, whose habit is to use Scripture without understanding, will not accept the value of God's wisdom in removing the Restrainer and hiding His work away from visible observation.

Evangelism will occur not by persuasion of the intellect but in the same manner in which the contrast of light and darkness establishes the superiority of the one to the other. Those seeking God will be drawn to the light of a city upon a hill. For in those days,

the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Isa 2:2-3 NIV

<sup>1</sup> The scriptures are replete with examples of such times of hiding what God has been doing until the need for it calls it forth from obscurity. When the world had become so corrupt that the thoughts and imaginations of the hearts of men were turned continuously toward evil, God gathered up the righteous remnant of the earth and hid them in an ark until it was time to repopulate the earth from righteous stock. Similarly, while the destroyer ravaged the land of Egypt consuming the lives of Egypt's firstborn (analogous to Adam the first born man), God hid a holy remnant behind the blood in their rooms until the danger passed. This was the seed he sent forth to the land of promise. And, while Herod sought to destroy the young Jesus, He was hidden in Egypt for a period of years before he too was called forth. These are a few of the many examples within Scripture of times when God will hide what he is doing while the world around it rejects God and creates its own way of living and being.

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