

Discernment Required
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Part of our purpose of Completion Global is to make the Church aware of the opportunities we have in America to accelerate Jesus' Great Commission. We live in a season where most Bible-believing church-goers are uninformed about what this Commission is. For example, In 2017, only one in six said they could explain the Great Commission, and when given five verses from which to choose, 63% got it wrong.¹

This confusion was the subject of a conversation I had this month with my brother, Russ Allsman. As we related stories of our mutual dismay, he showed me a Facebook post that made me recoil in astonishment: **"If the church doesn't get back in the political arena there will only be an underground church just like in other countries ... the God of the Bible made a covenant with America so we could fulfill the Great Commission. If we are 'cancelled' He will completely remove His hand of blessing on this nation."**

My immediate reaction was to write you, our friends, to encourage you, knowing that Jesus warned against teachers that will arise to lead people astray, if possible, even the elect (Mt. 24:24). False teaching, like the content of this post, is causing confusion and distraction, even among the God's people, so it is important to be alert and clear-minded about this aspect of spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:18).

Paul told Timothy to avoid foolish, ignorant controversies that breed quarrels, correcting opponents with gentleness so they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been captured to do his will (2 Tim. 2:23-26). Discernment is required to see through the subtle deception embedded in such messages, about which I will make three points.

1. There is no Biblical basis for a covenant between God and America. The Great Commission is not going to be fulfilled by a country (like America), but by Jesus' followers, who live all over the world. This Commission is to make disciples among all tribes and people groups (aka "the nations" or "ta ethne" in Greek) befitting their cultural context. It is not about exporting Americanism.
2. God has made us ambassadors and priests of an unshakable Kingdom (Rev. 1:6, Heb. 12:28). No one has the ability to "cancel" the movement of God to bring about the gathering of the nations into His family (Rev. 7:9). The Father is intent to glorify

¹ <https://www.barna.com/research/half-churchgoers-not-heard-great-commission/>

the Son, put down the enemy, and bring his family home. No power in heaven or earth can stop His plan from being fulfilled.

3. The underground or persecuted church is where most of the growth is taking place. In a recent Zoom I participated in, leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America reported people coming to faith at a robust pace, while the report from North America was anemic, characterized by our struggle for power and privilege. This tepid response to the gospel reminded me of the Laodiceans' self-delusion, who believed they were rich, in need of nothing, when actually they were wretched, pitiful, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17). It was a stark reminder that we need to be humble enough to learn from the underground church who is rich in faith (Js. 2:5), repenting of our notion that Americanism is something God wants to replicate around the world.

All this makes me wonder if we as American evangelicals have lost our first love, like the Ephesians (Rev. 2:4-5), who Jesus instructed to, "repent and do the things you did at first." When evangelicals emerged in the 40s and 50s, we were good at reaching to ethnic and loving our neighbors; especially the refugee, the poor, the hungry, and the prisoner (Mt. 25:31-46).

Our first love was to make Jesus known on the earth in a gentle, loving, and confident manner, taking the form of servants, trusting in the grace of God to guide us (Phil. 2:5-11, Jn. 15:5, Jn. 5:19). We didn't yell at the television, spew hatred, or attempt to change the culture by exerting our influence. What we did at first was to have a quiet confidence in an unshakable Kingdom that no one could cancel, trusting God for the outcome.

Discernment is required to see through the ambiguity of a world cloaked in clever imitations. False teaching in social-media posts can be disguised in biblical language and evangelical buzzwords, but that does not mean the messages represent the interests of Jesus. Discernment is required to recognize this "narcigesis" (a combination of narcissism and exegesis), which masquerades error to look like truth.

There is no covenant with America, and no power in heaven or on earth can cancel God's plan for the nations. The Great Commission is being accelerated by those in the underground Church, so we don't have to gnash our teeth in frustration, pursuing an agenda based on wealth and self-reliance. Instead, we can confidently offer quiet, humble service to the poor and oppressed who will change the world by His grace.

We don't need to fear being cancelled. What we should fear is becoming distracted. Discernment is required to see the difference.