
The Clock Runs Out on America's Freedom



YOUR THREE children are loving and obedient, and they often hug you and tell you they love you. One of these children is a robot, programmed to behave; the others have free will.

One day, one of your free-will children misbehaves. You angrily destroy the child. The robot goes on as if nothing happened—but your relationship with the remaining free-will child will never be the same.

God gave us free will. He doesn't want love and obedience that come from either force or fear. That's why He didn't create robots, and that's why He draws us with love instead of scaring us. Free will is a precious gift from God—but freedom's days are numbered in America.

Thoughts to Remember:

- ♦ Perhaps the greatest gift God gave angels and human beings is freedom of choice. Today on earth one nation was founded on principles of freedom—the United States. It has led the way for other nations that want freedom, and its rise was foreseen in Bible prophecy.
- ♦ As we move into the final days of earth's history, one of the greatest issues will be that of freedom, particularly liberty of conscience in religion. "...Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). Jesus, the Lamb, offers freedom of choice. The dragon, as we studied in Revelation 13, uses force. Revelation's final issue is freedom of worship.
- ♦ We've studied the first beast of Revelation 13:1-10. There is a second beast. "Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb and spoke like a dragon" (Revelation 13:11). Who is it? These are its identifying characteristics:
 - It would arise in the correct time period. This second beast arises after the first beast receives its wound, is healed, and is then taken into captivity. The papacy ruled for 1,260 years, then the pope was taken captive in 1798.
 - It would arise at the correct place. Revelation 13:11 says it comes up out of the earth. The first beast came up out of the sea, meaning a populated area; the second beast coming up out of the earth symbolizes an area *without* many people.
 - It would be a new nation. "Then I saw another beast..." It's not one of the European nations. It is a separate entity.
 - It would rise up rapidly. "Then I saw another beast coming up..." says Revelation 13:11. The words "coming up," in the original language, mean "springing up rapidly."
 - It would be a democracy. The text continues, "...Has two horns like a lamb." The crowns on the horns of the first beast represented kingly authority. Horns are a

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prophetic symbol of power, but the second beast has no crowns.

- It would have worldwide influence. "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and causes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (Revelation 13:12).
- It would change its character from a lamb to a dragon. In the Bible, Jesus is called the Lamb of God. He invites people to come freely and worship Him. But the lamb-like freedom that marks the rise of the U.S. changes into coercion. One day, the U.S. will "speak like a dragon," using laws to enforce religious decrees. Countries "speak" through their legislative bodies as officials make laws. "And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence" (Revelation 13:12). The two beasts team up to force people to worship the first beast. "He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Revelation 13:15).

♦ Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote: "The wall of separation between church and state is a metaphor based on bad history, a metaphor which has proved useless as a guide to judging. It should be frankly and explicitly abandoned." The St. Louis *Dispatch* of October 29, 1991, said: "As the second century of the bill of rights draws to a close, the Supreme Court is redefining what religious liberty will mean in the third century...the court's new approach helps conventional religions while hurting unconventional ones." In other words, the majority will have more "freedom" (as long as they go on conforming to the majority), and the minority will have less.

♦ "He [Satan] performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast" (Revelation 13:13, 14). In a time of secularism, declining moral values, rampant crime and violence, war, and natural disasters, Satan can begin a false revival in the churches that will gather momentum and end in unity—the churches will unite on the points they have in common and will come together under one leader. This will allow Satan to begin using government to persecute those who do not unite with the majority.

♦ "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). To save society, church and state will unite, but not on the foundation of God's law; they will unite on human tradition and enforce that. The Christian Coalition is trying to influence the government to enact legislation to enforce morality. Evangelical leader Pat Robertson wrote, "'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy' is a command for the personal benefit of each citizen...Laws in America that mandated a day of rest [remember that the U.S. used to enforce Sundaykeeping laws] have been nullified as a violation of the separation of church and state, as an outright insult to God and his plan..." To bring this nation back to God in this time of crisis, he says, we must unite in worship—Sunday worship.

♦ "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12). Those faithful to God's law were persecuted through history; so also God's followers at the end of time will also be persecuted for keeping God's law.

The "take-home" message for you . . .

♦ God has given you the gift of free choice, and no one can take that away from you. People may try to restrict you or force you, but the freedom to choose will still be yours. No matter what trials and persecutions you encounter for taking a stand for Christ—Jesus will stand with you.

Just between you . . . and God:

♦ Are you being pressured by family, friends, or work? No one else can make this decision for you. Only you can choose. Ask Him for guidance, comfort, and strength, and He will not fail you.

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