

THE GOD WHO REIGNS

By Dr. Steven J. Lawson

We are living in perilous and unprecedented times, both in the United States and around the world. Before our very eyes, we are witnessing an economic meltdown of massive proportions. Wall Street is imploding. Financial institutions, once thought to be rock solid, are dissolving. Large corporations are teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. Unemployment is rising. State governments are plummeting deeper into debt. Abroad, Iran is threatening the destruction of Israel. India has been attacked by terrorists. Militant extremists are threatening more attacks. The Asian financial market is shaking.

Is all this upheaval catching God by surprise? Is everything out of control? How does divine sovereignty relate to national and international affairs? How are His throne rights exercised in world events? What is His relationship to governmental leaders?

To be sure, God “works all things after the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). His absolute sovereignty over the nations is seen in the following ways:

1. Over National Origins

God Himself has sovereignly birthed every nation. He has made “every nation” (Acts 17:26)

from “one man,” Adam. God sovereignly controls the rise and fall of nations and empires (Daniel 2:36-45), bringing them into being for His own purposes.

2. Over Historical Times God has ordained the exact hour when each nation steps onto the stage of human history. God has “determined their appointed times” (Acts 17:26), not only *when* they appear, but for *how long* they remain in power (Daniel 2, 4, 5, 7-12).

3. Over Geographical Boundaries Further, God has “determined” the exact place on the globe where “every nation” exists, having fixed “the boundaries of their habitation” (Acts 17:26). He places each nation precisely where He desires it to be, ordaining its regional neighbors, natural resources, and seasonal climates.

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From the President's Desk

If God is sovereign and omnipotent, how does He reign in the world today between the first and second advents of His Son, Jesus Christ?

The Scriptures provide the answer: He mediates His reign through His ordination of five institutions during this period of biblical history, the church age.

The Apostle Peter in 1 Peter 2:13-15 writes, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, or to governors as sent by Him ... for such is the will of God.” Subjugating oneself to God’s ordained institutions (literally, “for mankind what is created”), states this passage of Scripture, is the will of God.

The implication of Peter’s inspired instruction, then, is one of submission within institutions (1 Peter 2:13-15) as being equated with submission to God Himself. Such, if hard to understand here, is borne out by the many other passages depicting the authority-submission relationships in each institution (Acts 20:28; Romans 13:1-3; Ephesians 5:22-6:9; Colossians 3:18-22; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Titus 3:1; Hebrews 12:5-11; 13:17 and 1 Peter 2:13-18; 5:1-5).

Each of the five institutions has uniquely ordained purposes from on high. Each does what it does best. One cannot expect the church to arrest drug store thieves any more than the state to make disciples. One does not expect businesses to produce good children, etc. Each institution is uniquely gifted and endowed by God.

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From the President's Desk...

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The wise person will heed God's way of manifesting His will in a fallen world.

The following are the five institutions:

1. MARRIAGE: TO MATERIALIZE

God manifests His creational grace through the institution of marriage. The purpose of marriage is to emulate Christ's love for the church (Ephesians 5:24-27), to procreate (Genesis 1:27-28), to provide companionship (Genesis 2:18) and to provide pleasure (Proverbs 5:18-19). The purpose of marriage is wonderful in how God intends for it to be fulfilling—as long as it is conducted in His ways.

2. THE FAMILY: TO CATECHIZE

God manifests His formational grace through the institution of the family. The purpose of the family is to raise a godly heritage—godly children for the growth of the church and Christ's kingdom (Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6; Deuteronomy 4:9)—and to be a blessing (Proverbs 17:6; 31:28). Nonetheless, the fruit of strong families, the first line in disciple-making, is advantageous to every other institution.

3. THE STATE: TO MORALIZE

God manifests His restraining grace through the institution of the state. The purpose of government is the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right (Romans 13:4-7; 1 Peter 2:14-17).

4. COMMERCE: TO ECONOMIZE

God manifests His common grace through the institution of commerce. Because of the curse, labor has always been and will always be difficult (Genesis 3:17-19). Nevertheless, the institution of commerce serves to create sustenance and temporal provisions for man's needs.

5. THE CHURCH: TO EVANGELIZE

God manifests His saving grace through the institution of the church. God's primary purpose for His church is to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). All other institutions ordained by God in the church age are dependent on the health of the church in making disciples who become the illuminators and preservers (Matthew 5:13-14) of all the others.

Herein is how Christ manifests His reign in the world today: these institutions represent His mediated authority in His physical absence. But one day He is coming. What a glorious day that will be! Christ will reign over the whole world. His reign and His manifestation of authority will be perfect—without the stain of sin. Are you ready for His return? Have you bowed the knee to His Lordship in every area of your life? Confess Him today as your Lord and Savior! ■■



Ralph Drollinger is founder and president of Capitol Ministries. The above article is an abridged version of his study titled "Christ's Reign Today: the Critical Importance of Understanding How He Mediates It," available at www.capmin.org.

IT'S NOT FAIR!

By Paul Meinsen

Almost everyone who has children has heard the cry—"IT'S NOT FAIR!" Asaph basically says the same thing in Psalm 73. He spends the first 16 verses singing the blues over what he perceives as disparities between the things he knows about God compared to the things he observes. It almost causes his feet to stumble as he became envious of the arrogance and prosperity of the wicked (v. 2).

So what is the cause of Asaph's dilemma? First of all, it was his understanding of God. In verse 1, he correctly states "Surely God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart!" This truth is a foregone conclusion throughout the Scriptures (Genesis 38-50).

Have you wondered, "Where is God?" or "Is there no justice?" Have you thought God must be sleeping or doesn't care...?

But as Asaph looks around, he notes those living the high life are not "pure in heart." There seems to be no pain in the death of the wicked, and their fat bodies indicate their wealth (Psalm 73:7). They seem to have no troubles even though they are filled with prideful words and actions (vv. 5-8), arrogantly blaspheming God (vv. 9-11). In spite of their wickedness, they continue to increase in ease and treasures.

And then Asaph looks in the mirror. His own life, which he has strived to live with a pure heart (v. 13), is filled only with hardships. Instead of the wicked receiving their due for their evildoing, he feels that he is the one being punished, for he is "stricken all day long" and "chastened every morning" (v. 14). Like the wicked, he is tempted to say things against God, but knows it would be sinful and disheartening to a generation

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RECOMMENDED READING



The Sovereignty of God
by A. W. Pink

Trusting God
by Jerry Bridges

The Invisible Hand
by R. C. Sproul



MAKING DISCIPLES IN ARGENTINA

Capitol Ministries is in the process of launching its first international ministry in Buenos Aires. This exciting new ministry will be led by Argentine native Luciano Bongarra, a man whom God has gifted with the unique abilities, experience and training required to lead this important work.

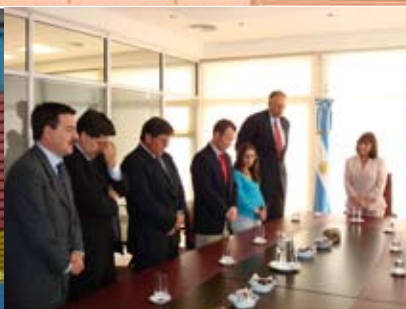
In November, a team from the ministry's headquarters traveled to Argentina to help Luciano begin the process of establishing the new ministry. Luciano and the team met with many influential elected officials, pastors, diplomats and business leaders. The ministry's president and founder, Ralph Drollinger, had opportunity to preach in several prominent churches throughout the country regarding the "Missing Mandate in Modern Missions"—reaching political leaders with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In addition to developing relationships with key people, the team worked with attorneys and accountants to develop the administrative and accountability structures that must be in place before the ministry's official launch.

Ralph Drollinger reports he was amazed at the incredible door of opportunity that exists in Argentina: "From a human standpoint, what has opened this door is the vast political corruption the country has experienced for decades; all those with whom we met were wide open to a heart-change solution via an evangelism and discipleship ministry to their political leaders at all levels of government."

Praise the Lord for opening this door for ministry to political leaders in South America! Please pray for Argentina and the many political leaders who have never heard the gospel. Finally, please pray for Luciano and his family as he labors to establish this new ministry and continues to cultivate strategic relationships. ■

If you would like to read the daily blog posts written by Sean Walentine while he was in Argentina, log onto www.capmin.org/blog or call headquarters at (916) 446-1112.

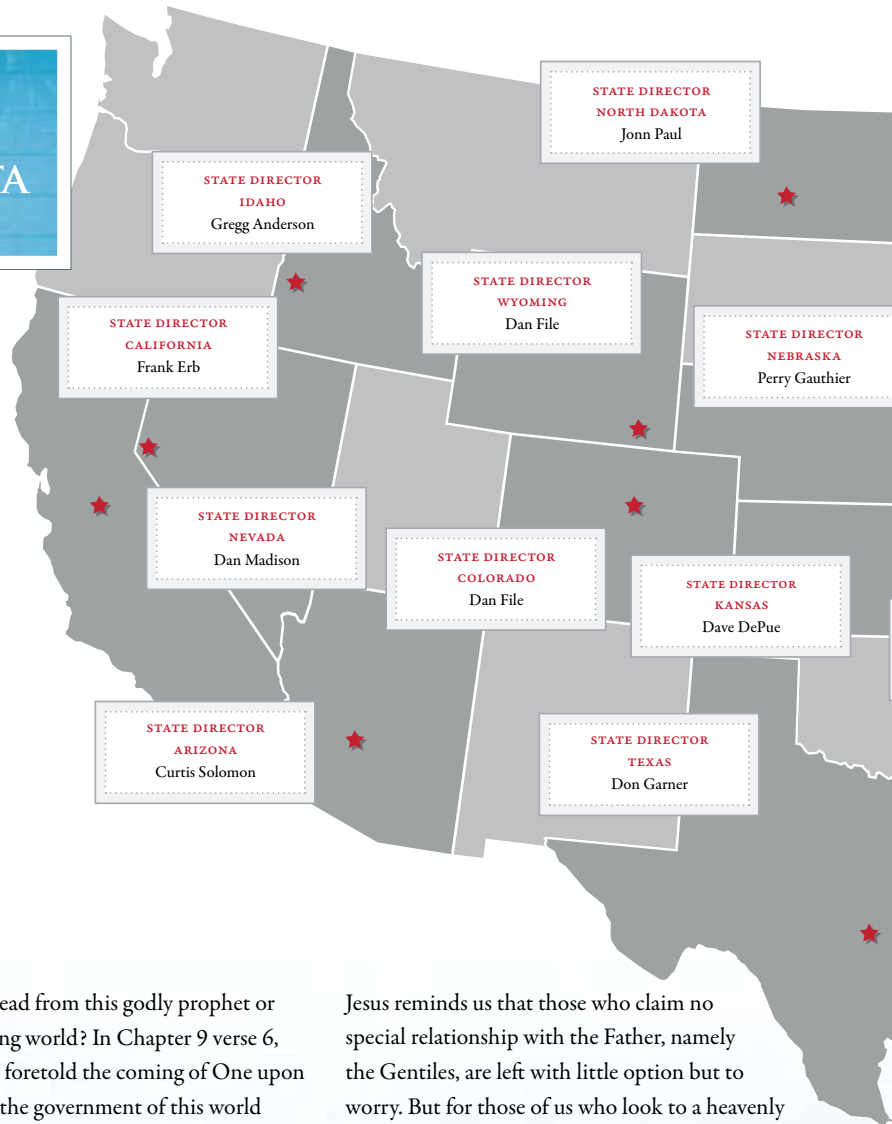


2009 U.S. EXPANSION: ARIZONA AND NORTH DAKOTA

This year we are launching new ministries in the states of Arizona and North Dakota. Curtis Solomon, a recent graduate of The Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, will lead our ministry in Phoenix, Arizona, and Jonn Paul, a North Dakota native who will soon graduate from Dallas Theological Seminary, will lead efforts to make disciples of Jesus Christ in Bismarck, North Dakota.

Please pray for these men and their wives as they prepare to serve their respective capitol communities in the name of Jesus Christ. Pray also that God will open many doors of opportunity for the gospel.

Finally, please pray for our 2009 training class. Our desire is to recruit and train qualified men to serve as state directors who will lead our expansions into several additional states in 2010. If you know someone who has a love for Christ and a passion to proclaim His Word on a full-time basis to the political leaders of his state, please send him our way!



A COOL HEAD IN CALAMITOUS TIMES

By Don Garner

The Dow is down, unemployment is up, foreclosures are frenzied and bankruptcy is booming. Whether the current financial situation is a downturn, a recession or a crisis largely depends on how one puts bread on the table. But even for those who have good paying jobs and some savings, recent economic headlines prompt responses ranging from sober concern to sheer panic.

But how should you and I, as professing Christians, respond? Does our response set us apart from those without Christ—those whose hope is in this world alone?

It was during tumultuous times that the prophet Isaiah spoke words we should find instructive. In Chapter 26 verse 3, Isaiah affirms his confidence in God, “You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You.” These words promise tranquility of mind and heart to those who make God their obsession rather than fleeting earthly circumstances.

Will we take our lead from this godly prophet or from an unbelieving world? In Chapter 9 verse 6, this same prophet foretold the coming of One upon Whose shoulders the government of this world would rest—the Prince of Peace. In the midst of this current financial crisis, are your thoughts ruled by the Prince of Peace or the almighty dollar? Do your thoughts dwell on the earthly things of main street or have you set your mind on the things above?

Isaiah’s words recorded in Chapter 59 declare the fate of those who operate according to this world’s system. In verse 8, we are warned that those who live their lives as though there were no God “shall not know peace.” The prophet’s words at the opening of this chapter remind the reader that God is a reliable source of deliverance no matter how calamitous the times.

Fearful thoughts of an economic meltdown provide telling evidence of misplaced trust. Jesus Christ, in His most famous sermon, preached the folly of worrying about how one will come by food or clothing (Matthew 6:25-34). The Father provides food for our feathered friends and clothing for the flowers of the field. Will He not also provide for His own?

Jesus reminds us that those who claim no special relationship with the Father, namely the Gentiles, are left with little option but to worry. But for those of us who look to a heavenly Father, it is upon His reign that we are to fix our thoughts.

How do we fix our thoughts upon God, His kingdom, and His promises? The Apostle Paul’s practical prescription was to make it a point to pray about everything. Having done so, we are to discipline our minds to think on whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:6-8). If we follow them, the peace that passes all understanding will stand guard over our hearts and minds.

So, what’s it going to be? Will you swell the ranks of those fretting over the future? Or will you inspire steadiness in others as you fix your mind on our Father’s faithfulness? ■



Don Garner serves as Texas state director. For more information about his ministry to the political leaders of Texas, please visit www.capmin.org/TX.

2009 BIBLE STUDY SERIES

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17) Each state director teaches weekly Bible studies in the capitol for the elected leaders of his state or country. All studies written by our state directors are available on our web site www.capmin.org. Our 2009 Bible study series are as follows:

ARGENTINA: Selected Scriptures, *"Spiritual Leadership"*

ARKANSAS: The Book of James, *"James for Busy Leaders"*

ARIZONA: The First Epistle of John, *"Eternal Assurance in Uncertain Times"*

CALIFORNIA: Colossians, *"Everything We Need"*

COLORADO: The Book of James, *"Doers of the Word"*

IDAHO: Second Timothy and Second Thessalonians, *"Faithfulness in Troubling Times"*

ILLINOIS: The Book of Psalms, *"The Book of Worship"*

INDIANA: Gospel of Matthew, *"A Scandalous Ancestry"*

KANSAS: The Epistle to the Colossians, *"Capitol Conduct"*

MARYLAND: The Epistle to the Colossians, *"Becoming a Complete Leader"*

MINNESOTA: The Gospel of Luke, *"Cross-Centered Living"*

MISSOURI: Isaiah, *"God: The Sure Rock in Uncertain Times"*

NEBRASKA: The Book of Jonah, *"People, Prophets, Politics"*

NEVADA: The Epistles of Peter, *"The Life and Letters of the Apostle Peter"*

NORTH CAROLINA: The Gospel of John, *"Discovering the Real Jesus"*

NORTH DAKOTA: The Book of James, *"Faith that Works"*

PENNSYLVANIA: Selected Scriptures, *"Confidence in God's Word"*

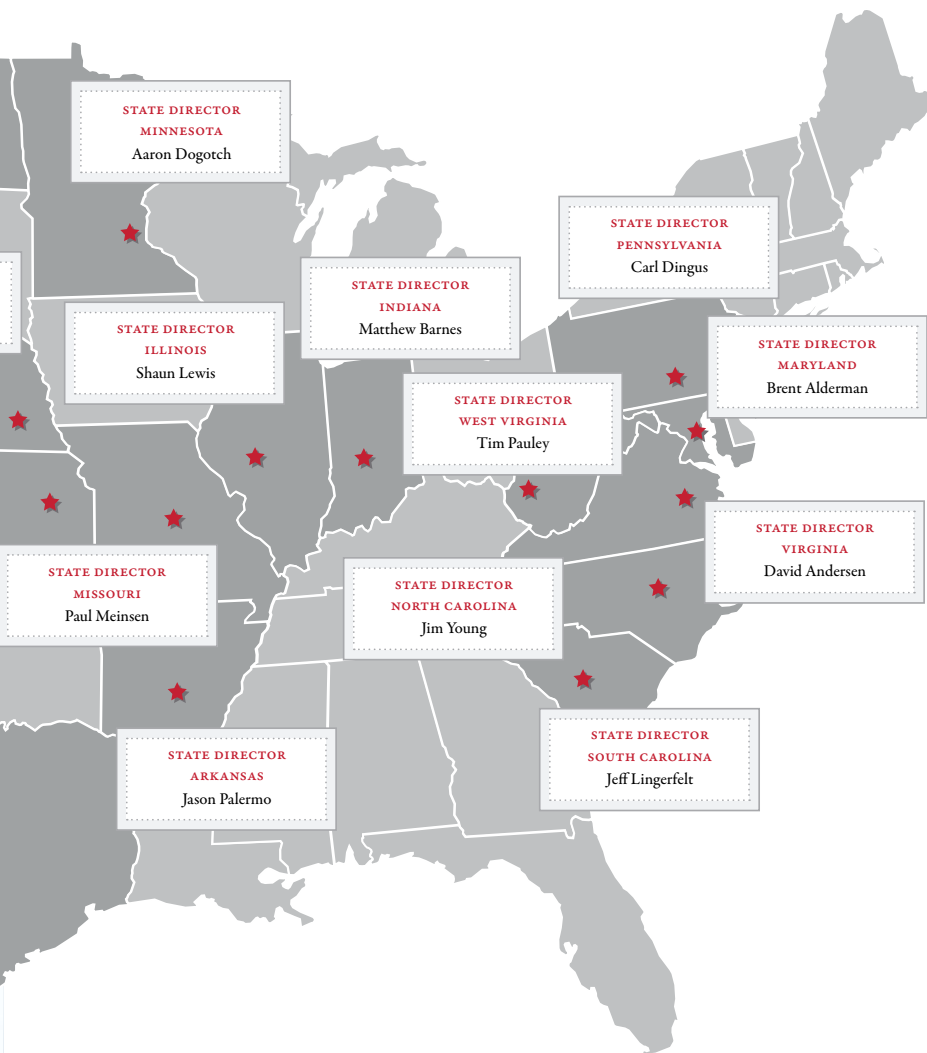
SOUTH CAROLINA: The First Epistle to the Thessalonians, *"Leadership During Difficult Times"*

TEXAS: The First Epistle of John, *"Authentic Christianity at the Capitol"*

VIRGINIA: The Gospel of Matthew, *"Keys to the Kingdom Given to His Leaders"*

WEST VIRGINIA: The Gospel of Matthew, *"The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached"*

WYOMING: The Epistle to the Philippians, *"Joyous Servants of Jesus Christ"*



BRING CAPITOL MINISTRIES TO YOUR STATE

You can help us start a ministry in your state by connecting us with qualified candidates. A successful candidate for state director will be a godly man who is called to full-time ministry and possesses certain qualities, including but not limited to:

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“We want to be known as men who have upset the world... There is a kind of ministry that sets a city on its head and makes Christ the issue of the day.”

- Dr. Steven J. Lawson



From his challenge to the ministry's state directors and staff during the 2008 Vision and Planning meeting, held on the campus of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. Audio recordings of Dr. Lawson's messages are available at www.capmin.org/blog.

The God Who Reigns...

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4. Over Governmental Leaders God raises up political leaders and installs them for “such a time as this” (Esther 4:14). He uses secondary contingencies—national elections, royal lineages, political coups, and, prayer (1 Timothy 2:1-2)—to accomplish His own appointed ends. But it is the invisible hand of God that elevates national rulers to their places of power, whether unbeliever (Isaiah 44:28-45:1) or believer (2 Samuel 5:8). All government leaders are providentially appointed by God (Daniel 4:17, 32), including their length of stay in office (Isaiah 40:23-24).

5. Over Political Authority The authority of government is a delegated power derived from God. Jesus said to Pilate, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). Paul wrote, “There is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” (Romans 13:1). No ruler has jurisdiction except from God.

6. Over Individual Hearts Once they are in office, God sovereignly controls the hearts of leaders. Some He softens; others He hardens. But God directs all leaders “to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur” (Acts 4:28). Clearly, “the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus” (Ezra 1:1), and He “turned the heart of the king of Assyria” (Ezra 6:22). “The king’s heart is like channels of water in the hand of the Lord; He turns it wherever He wishes” (Proverbs 21:1). That is, God governs the hearts of all kings, such as Pharaoh (Exodus 10:1-2), Cyrus (Isaiah 45:1-6), and Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:21), to do His will.

7. Over Personal Agendas What is more, God plants His plans within the minds of world rulers. God “put such a thing as this in the king’s heart” (Ezra 7:27). Regarding earthly kings, “God has put it in their hearts to execute His purpose” (Revelation 17:17). Conversely, He often resists man’s plans.

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It's Not Fair...

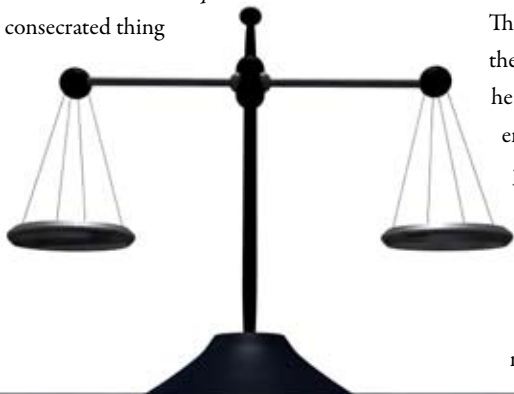
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of God's people (v. 15b). As he is trying to sort through all these realities, he realizes that in his wisdom it doesn't make sense and it hurts (v. 16). In other words, "IT'S NOT FAIR."

Have you been there? Have you wondered, "Where is God?" or "Is there no justice?" Have you thought God must be sleeping or doesn't care when someone gets ahead by doing evil while others who seek to please Him keep getting passed over?

If so, keep reading Psalm 73! The next verse is the key to this songwriter's desperate ballad: *Until I came into the sanctuary of God; then I perceived their end* (v. 17).

The Hebrew word *miqdash* is in reference to a consecrated thing



or place, such as a palace (Amos 7:13), asylum or sanctuary. It was used to describe the place where Yahweh God dwelt among His people (Exodus 25:8; 1 Chronicles 22:19; Ezekiel 5:11). Asaph paints the picture of a man standing on a street corner observing all the mayhem going on around him wondering, "Where is God?" and "What is He doing?" and then turns to enter a house of prayer and finds the answer.

The "sanctuary" does not need to be interpreted in this poetic song as the actual temple, although it could have been the place he entered. It seems best to understand this "sanctuary" as a retreat back into the "presence of God"—that is, back into a time of prayer, meditation on His Word and humble submission before Him (Job 42). It is then that true understanding comes.

The understanding that Asaph discovers is not the answer to why the wicked prosper; instead, he comes to understand their "end." When he enters the sanctuary, he begins to see that these prosperous evildoers are actually standing on "slippery places" (Psalm 73:18) and will be totally swept away by terrors (v. 19). They are not blessed by God, but rather despised by Him (v. 20). Asaph comes to understand not only the death of these wicked people but

their eternal destruction. The prosperous wicked person is not to be envied, for he or she is standing in a precarious position which can be destroyed at any time.

A proper worldview starts with a biblical view of God as its foundation. No amount of human reasoning and intellectual effort will find suitable answers to problems and events in life. Even a right view of God does not guarantee one will find the exact answers sought. But a right view of God will give us a confidence in Him that gives peace when we do not understand His ways.

Therefore, the solution to this dilemma is to draw near to God (vv. 27-28). The work of Jesus Christ has taken away the sins of those who, by faith, are in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). This allows the sinful rebel to draw near, and thus, find Him to be "the strength of [his] heart and [his] portion forever" (Psalm 73:26). ■■



Paul Meinsen serves as Missouri state director and Midwestern regional director. The above article is an abridged version of his January 29, 2008 study available at www.capmin.org/MO.

The God Who Reigns...

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"The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples" (Psalm 33:10). Man proposes, but God disposes—His sovereign plans remain fixed and unchanging (Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 21:30; Isaiah 46:9-11).

8. Over Domestic Conditions Moreover, God is the One Who prospers a nation, or withholds His goodness. He gives good weather (Matthew 5:45), economic prosperity (1 Samuel 2:7), or military victory (Psalm 20:7). "The king is not saved by a mighty army (Psalm 33:16), but by God Himself. Even shortages of natural resources (Amos 4:7) are under His

control. So are unexpected catastrophes (Exodus 15:4; Isaiah 45:7) and devastating defeats (Joshua 7)

9. Over Spiritual Affairs God appoints the salvation of both political leaders and individual citizens. Before time began, God chose His elect (Ephesians 1:4), which includes even kings and rulers. Paul emphatically stated, "As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Thus, the spiritual climate of a nation belongs to the Lord, Who sends (Acts 13:1-4) or withholds His preachers (Amos 8:11), regenerates dead souls (John 3:8), revives His work (Psalm 85:6), and builds His church (Matthew 16:18).

10. Over Final Destinies God will bring this age to a final crescendo in cataclysmic fashion. "For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom" (Matthew 24:7). In the end, "All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (Matthew 25:32). Jesus Christ will be the final Judge and have the last word of history.

In times of national uncertainty, let us put our confidence in God, not man, Who sovereignly rules over national affairs. "The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all" (Psalm 103:19).

Though the earth should shake and kingdoms totter, God "does whatever He pleases" (Psalm 115:3). Let us rejoice: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen" (Romans 11:36). ■■



Dr. Steven J. Lawson is senior pastor of Christ Fellowship Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama, and president of New Reformation Ministries. He serves as a member of the Capitol Ministries pastoral advisory committee.



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Creative Giving Opportunities

{In each edition of our newsletter, we highlight a creative way you can support the work of Capitol Ministries to reach political leaders for Christ.}

Don't sell those golf clubs, that computer, or that digital camera on eBay. It's too much trouble, right? You can donate these kinds of things to Capitol Ministries instead and get a tax deductible receipt!

Thanks to a partnership with Servant Christian Foundation, we can accept nearly anything as a donation to support the work of the ministry and its outreach to our nation's leaders.

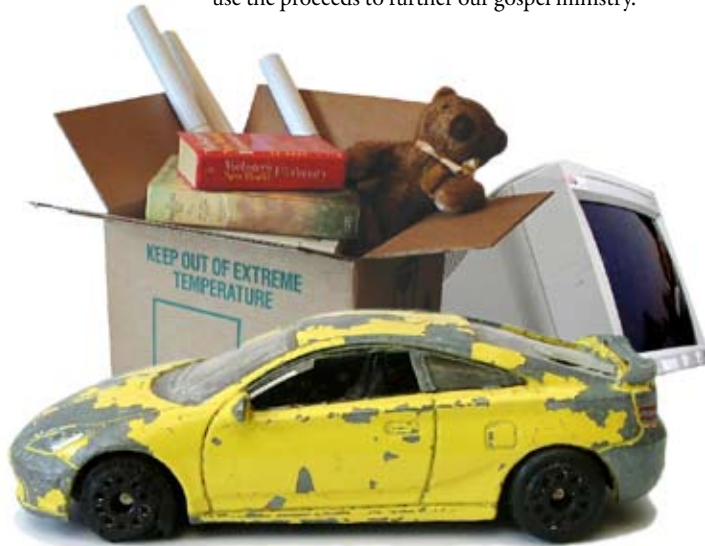
Just call us (or go to the "Donate Your Stuff" link on capmin.org), and we'll pick it up.

Give your ride

Okay, we can't accept trains (they're too heavy), but you can donate just about any other kind of vehicle imaginable, from cars, trucks, vans and buses to RVs, trailers, airplanes, recreational equipment and even farm equipment, like tractors, combines; even heavy duty construction equipment, like backhoes, loaders and dozers.

Give your collectibles

Do you have a valuable collection of some kind: art, coins, stamps, baseball cards or another collection of value? We can receive these kinds of gifts and use the proceeds to further our gospel ministry.



Give your junk

These days, believe it or not, there is even a market for junk, like bulk plastic, steel and other materials. Capitol Ministries has developed a relationship with a liquidator who can turn your junk into income for the ministry. Often, companies pay a lot of money to dispose of junk. Instead of doing that, just call us and we'll come see if we can take it off your hands free of charge. We'll turn that junk into fuel for the Lord's work. Here's one example. A company purchased land

that had a large building on it that was scheduled for demolition. The disposal fee for the junk steel was very costly. Instead, the business decided to donate the junk steel to a Christian ministry. The Christian ministry, working with an expert liquidator, was able to take the steel and liquidate it for a profit. This saved the business the disposal fee and also gave it a tax deduction. Plus, it blessed the ministry. This is just one example.

Give your excess inventory

Many businesses struggle to offload overstock items. Capitol Ministries is working with a liquidator who is finding niche markets for hard-to-sell excess inventory. If your business, or a business you know of, is experiencing this problem, please contact us and we'll help out. The business can donate the inventory to Capitol Ministries.

For further details about how you can aid our resource development efforts, please contact Nora Lynn at 916-446-1112.

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"It has been an encouragement to study and apply the Bible in a bipartisan atmosphere each week while our Legislature is in session. I look forward to seeing the study grow to influence many more of our legislative leaders and others serving in our state offices."

- STATE REPRESENTATIVE
 RUTH SAMUELSON, NORTH CAROLINA



"As legislators, we are under tremendous pressure to compromise our Christian faith, which is why we need to be solidly grounded in God's Word."

- U.S. CONGRESSMAN
 AARON SCHOCK, ILLINOIS

