

# Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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## Living For Another Country

by Dan Trygg

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you.”

John 15:19

“I am no longer in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep them in Your name... <sup>14</sup>I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup>I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup>They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup>Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. <sup>18</sup>As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.”

John 17:11,14-18

“By faith Abraham stayed-as-a-foreigner unto a land of promise, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, co-heirs of the same promise. <sup>10</sup>For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God... <sup>13</sup>These all died in faith without having received the promises, but they saw them from a distance, greeted them, and confessed that they were foreigners and temporary residents on the earth. <sup>14</sup>Now those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a fatherland. <sup>15</sup>If they had been thinking of that land they came from, they would have had opportunity to return. <sup>16</sup>But they now aspire to a better land-- a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.”

Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16

**What do you call “home”?** What is the fatherland that you identify with? **Where do you belong?** **Where are you a citizen?** **Where is your inheritance, your property, your possessions?** What government do you identify with? Who is “your” leader, “your” party? What is “your” political platform? Where and how have you been preparing for your future? Are you a patriot, ...a nationalist? **Where is your focus?**

**These are all questions to help us clarify an important truth: We live *in* this world, but we are no longer *of* this world.** As such, we need to have a clear, mature understanding of the nature of things so that we can live effectively for Christ.

**The Bible teaches us that Satan is the “god of this age”, the “ruler of this world” at this present time** (2 Cor. 4:2; Jn. 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). He deceives the whole world (Rev. 12:9), and the apostle John declared that the whole world lies or is situated in the evil one (1 Jn. 5:19). **He is the spirit that is working in the children of disobedience** (Eph. 2:2). When John wrote that we are not to love the world, nor the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17), he was not referring to the natural world that God had made. He was referring to the evil organized system of spiritual influences that work behind and through the various aspects of our experiences here to draw us away from God and lead us astray. **We were once caught up and entrapped by that swirling soup of propaganda, lies, temptation and manipulation.** We could not see clearly, and were dead in our relation to God. We lived according to the era of this organized worldly system, ...according to the ruler of the authority of the air, ...the spirit who is working in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2). **We were spiritually dead, and blind toward God and the things of God. But God, by His mercy and grace, made us alive in Christ, and by faith we were born from above. He rescued us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, Jesus** (Col. 1:13). We were put to death with Jesus, and raised with Him to a new identity and a new life. That is the basis of our freedom (Rom. 6; Col. 2:12-3:17). Nothing from our past existence has a claim upon our lives now. It is Jesus first, ...preeminent, ...above and before any other claim or allegiance. **Even our citizenship has changed** (Phil. 3:20,21). **We are to see ourselves as aliens and sojourners** (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11), ...**people who are here, but who are on their way to some other place...**, people whose true citizenship is no longer here, but in the kingdom of God.

Acts 17:24-26 declares that **God is the Creator, who made this planet, and all that lives on it. He marks off the arranged times and boundaries of nations.** As we celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup>, as the “birthday of the United States of America”, we can at least conclude that **God made room for us to exist. He has permitted this nation to be formed and to endure these past 245 years.** The same could be said of the Neo-Assyrian empire (912-612 BC), or the rise of Neo-Babylonian empire (626-538 BC), each of which played an important place in biblical history. God made room for them, too. He permitted them to rise to power, expand their influence, conquer other nations, ...and even used them to discipline His people, the Jews! Just because they rose to power, or expanded their influence, or prospered as a civilization, does not mean that they were pleasing to God, or that they honored Him. **Understanding and interpreting history is a complicated and multi-faceted thing. So much depends on your positioning in history, and your perspective.** The Jews certainly did not think of the Assyrians or the Babylonians as “the good guys”, ...and they *weren't*! But God made room for them and used them, in spite of their mixture of good and evil.

The same could be said for the United States. **In spite of the cultural stories that have been taught to us that recount amazing acts of heroism or blessing that can be interpreted as God's intervention and His favor, ...there are also many other aspects of our history that are *not so positive*.** While our Declaration of Independence declared that "we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among them are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness", it was abundantly clear that this did not include women, enslaved or indigenous people. These "self-evident truths" from God were not seen to apply to these people at that time. **Certainly, among all the advances, blessings and positive things that have been accomplished here, and have benefitted people around the world, *there is also an underbelly of injustice, brokenness, abuse of power, sin and evil that has taken place at the same time, ...both at home and abroad.*** Our story is a mixture of good and evil, too. **God has given blessing to many, ...and God will also hold us responsible for how we have handled the blessings and privileges He has entrusted to us.**

**ARE WE a "great nation"? We have been to some. To some, we have also been the source of untold grief and pain.** Let's be honest about it. Let's not ignore the signs of God's blessing, ...but let us not be blind to this other reality. It is part of our story, as well. **Our greatest hope for our country would come through acknowledging our sins, ...getting a change of perception about ourselves and our country, *...and asking for God's mercy and grace to bring us to a place of national repentance and awakening.*** We may be seeing some of that happening right now. Don't be among those who resist bringing the skeletons out of the closet. Don't be among those who want to cover up or hide the sins of the past, or the present. **Ask God for *productive change*.** Anger and outrage by those who have been mistreated should be expected. Be asking God to help us to productively work through that to become a more just and equitable society. **Pray especially for our leaders, that they would have skill from God to broker and promote peace and tranquility** (1 Tim 2:1,2).

**Remember, there are spiritual forces at work behind the people involved. Our place within this society is strategic. In Christ, we have authority to influence the spiritual conflict at every level.** "Our struggle is *not* against flesh and blood, but against rulers, authorities, against world-rulers of darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places." If we are strong in the Lord and the power of His might, and are armored-up in the provision He has made for our protection, we *can stand against* the schemes of the devil (Eph. 6:10-13).

**Having said all of that, it is important to emphasize that the welfare of our nation is *not* the key priority of our lives.** The peace and safety of our world is *not* our ultimate purpose for being here. **We have been chosen *out from the world-system, ...eyes opened and souls set free..., so that we could live in the world in a way that will reveal Jesus to others.*** This world is *not* our home, ...this country, the United States, is *not* our final destination. This entire world, is destined to be destroyed by fire! (2 Pet 3:10) Jesus said that we are set apart, consecrated for His purposes, and we have been sent into the world just like He was sent into the world. **We are living here *for now, ...but we are to be living for eternity while we are here.* What was Jesus thinking about?** What would "living for eternity" look like? **What are we supposed to be accomplishing?** The very next verses clarify that, "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but *for those also who believe in Me through their word; ...so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*" **Jesus has left us here so that we could reveal Him to others, and that they would believe that He was sent by God to save us.** In this passage, in John 17, He mentions three ingredients that will make our witness effective. Our words, our unity, and the "glory", ...the indwelling Holy Spirit revealing Himself through us (vss. 20-23). **We all have different spiritual gifts, and different ways to express that inner radiance of God's Presence, ...but the objective is clear: We are to be a credible witness to people that Jesus was sent from God.** Somehow, how we live, how we serve, how we interact with one another, and the explanations we give will reveal the reality of Jesus to other people.

**People of faith have always known that they are to be living for something beyond their present circumstances. They have always been sojourners, ...people on their way to someplace else. They also have been people who were seen as outsiders. When they were faithful, they carefully guarded those distinctives that made them unique.** When they lost that, ...when they got too comfortable with their present circumstances..., that was usually when they lost their vision, and their families got reabsorbed into the surrounding culture of unbelief. **It is important that we maintain that "sojourner vision".** This world, ...this country, ...this city, ...the places we live in, ... is *not* what we are all about. **We can be grateful for the blessings that surround us, ...all that God has given to us..., but, remember that it is not about the blessings, ...it is about the mission.** It is easy to lose sight of that.

In Hebrews 11, it was said of the patriarchs, "If they had been thinking of that land they came from, they would have had opportunity to return. But they now aspire to a better land-- a heavenly one." **I think that is the key: ...What are we *thinking about*?** If we are thinking of the past, ...we will tend to drift back there. If we are thinking about what others around us are focused on, we can get pulled along with them. **We are to aspire to something better. To a "Fatherland", ...the destination to which we are going. Let us choose to live for that "better country".**