

GNITN

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The Rise of a Judas Spirit: Cancel Culture, Betrayal, and the Last Days

Have You Been Cancelled?

Trust me when I got my first and only strike from YouTube it hit hard at least initially. For those who have YouTube channels you know exactly what this means. Basically, they have community standards and if you violate them by posting something they deem harmful they will ban you from posting for a week. I post daily so it affected me a lot. In my case I posted something about vaccines from an interview and that upset the folks. Now, I knew not to post the interview on YouTube but I accidentally did and boom, I was kicked off. Such is the game social media influencers have to play now, but the type of cancelling I want to address now is much more than this and in a lot of cases, much more hurtful. You see social media can and is a weapon now and it can really cause much more than a word war. It can foment violence against people simply because of a disagreement of views. And it can be the reason some people lose their jobs or sources of income. Yes, the old saying “sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never harm me” doesn’t help now. If you are scorned on social media for either being right or wrong, the effects can be devastating. And in some cases, deadly.

It Is A Problem

When things get out of hand, cancel culture has become both a way to hurt people or cause damage to viewpoints which in some cases is the same thing. You can be the darling of the ball one moment and the wicked witch of the west the next one. It can happen extremely fast these days so we need to take it seriously. I listened to a [sermon](#) by Pastor and Author David Jeremiah on the issues and think it bears repeating. Keep in mind I’m not repeating all he said so be sure to check it out later. But what I will highlight is important. Jeremiah begins by asking some questions:

Does Bible prophecy predict a time when society tries to silence the voices of morality? Is cancel culture a sign of end times culture? How can believers live freely in a world so ready to cancel the message of Christ? Except for 1968 and its riots and assassinations, I cannot remember a more challenging year in my lifetime for America than 2020. Between the pandemic, the flaring of racial tensions after the death of George Floyd, a floundering economy, skyrocketing murder rates, and the impeachment of Donald Trump, people had a lot to argue about, and argue they did. Of course, the US presidential elections added fuel to those fires.

He then transitions to explaining how the word itself has changed:

The word "cancel" once described what we did to magazine or newspaper subscriptions. We canceled them. Or what happened to a faltering television program; we canceled it. Now it's what people do to people. In our society, canceling someone is a punishment for doing something, saying something, or even thinking something that violates a set of unwritten rules currently in play throughout much of the liberal world.

It's A Process

He then details how this cancelling works:

These punishments are typically carried out in three stages. First of all, there's an attempt to publicly humiliate the person by flagrantly exposing the supposed wrong he or she committed. And then once the person has been exposed, he or she is pushed mercilessly to confess and apologize. Whether that person has actually done anything that requires regret is irrelevant.

Simply to be accused means a retraction and an apology is expected. And thirdly, regardless of whether the accused apologizes or not, attempts are made to remove that person from public life and from all public conversation once and for all. As a result, people are fired, mocked, threatened, deplatformed, and delegitimized in every way.

Jeremiah makes the connection to the Bible and for Christians:

In this culture, if it sounds unreasonable to you, even unbiblical, you're absolutely right. Jesus was asked to identify the most important commandment in the Bible, and he replied with a two-for-one special. Do you remember that? He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. But the second is like it. You shall love your neighbor as yourself." And I can think of few things less loving than publicly excoriating random people, even trying to get them fired, shamed, or silenced, all for the sin of daring to disagree with you. Yet, that's what cancel culture demands.

A Telling Example

Dr. Jeremiah then pulls an instance from Scripture that should sound more than vaguely familiar: *It bears noticing that Jesus spent a lot of time with people in his day who had been cancelled, so to speak. Remember the woman at the well? Women were considered second-class citizens in the ancient world, and Samaritans were scorned. Furthermore, this Samaritan woman lived in a state of sexual immorality. Even her own people shunned her, which is why she came alone to draw water from the community well at the heat of the day. Yet Jesus approached her. He spoke kindly to her. He even offered her the water of life, saying, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."*

What Jesus did here was indicative of His whole ministry:

Jesus touched lepers who were untouchable according to the law. He welcomed sinners who were despised. He blessed children when others were trying to push them away because they were a nuisance. He expressed compassion for a woman taken in adultery. He accepted the worship of a woman who was criticized because she poured perfume all over his feet. He touched the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf. He cast demons out of people who were violent. And during his final hours, he comforted a murderer who was nailed to a cross next to him. And after his resurrection, he reassured a doubting disciple and reestablished the disciple who had denied him. Jesus had no place in his heart for the canceled culture. He was wonderful at demonstrating God's love and grace to everyone. And ladies and gentlemen, he still is.

It's Prophetic

Jeremiah makes a good point when he points out one of the end time signs given to us by Jesus: *So, what does this mean? It would be nice to think cancel culture is a temporary phase our world is going through. What we're seeing today reminds me of what Jesus described in **Matthew 24**. Here is the prophecy which is foreshadowing what's happening today. This was our Lord's sermon about the last days and the great tribulation. Leading up to this great tribulation, Jesus predicted a series of signs that would foreshadow the end of the world. In Matthew, he spoke of wars and rumors of wars and famines and earthquakes and pestilences. And then he said this, **"These are the beginning of sorrows. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."** (see [Matthew 24:8-13](#))*

He then explains how cancel culture fits the bill for our day and age:

Read that again because there are several terms in these verses that represent the ethos of cancel culture. First of all, it's a culture of disdain. Jesus talked about how easily people would be

offended in the days leading up to the tribulation. How long before someone sees you reading a Bible on an airplane and feels uncomfortable? When will someone take offense when you wear a t-shirt with the slogan John 3:16 on it? What about the cross around your neck? They might come for that. Jesus linked being easily offended with hating one another and betraying one another. Jesus said society leading up to the end times would be marked by people who actively root up, expose, and betray those around them. Wouldn't you say that kind of betrayal is commonplace in our world today?

And I would have to agree.

A Judas Culture

The most reviled disciple did exactly that to the greatest man who ever lived:

In many ways, cancel culture is dependent on betrayal. We all have mistakes from our past we'd like to forget... All of us have made choices we regret and decisions we would correct if we could get a redo. But in a world fueled by cancel culture, those mistakes are not allowed to remain in the past. People intentionally dig through the histories and biographies and social media posts of others, even those they consider to be friends, in order to drag those mistakes into the present. In his great sermon on the end times, Jesus warned of the rise of many false prophets who would deceive multitudes. That's never been easier than today. Today, we are living in a culture not only of disdain, but of deception.

Jeremiah then details what happens when someone is cancelled:

The next logical step in cancel culture is disconnection. In a culture marked by disdain and deception, people want to withdraw from society. They don't always get pushed out of society, but when you find out people are after you and they're trying to hurt you, what do you do? You go into the castle and you shut it down and don't let anybody near you. You don't talk to anybody. In Matthew 24:12, he says, "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold."

He advises us to surround ourselves with other strong believers to stay hot for God and not grow cold. This cancel culture will only get worse and we need to avoid its cooling affect.

Fighting Back

Now that we see the demonic strategy, what can we do about it. Jeremiah addresses this:

Where do we go from here? Now that we understand more about cancel culture and the dangers that it poses, where do we go from here? What does it take to live in a world like the world we live in? ... Number one, to live in a world like we live in today, it takes wisdom. Jesus told us, "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." True wisdom is the ability to discern what is right, what is good, what is just, and what is proper. Wisdom is doing the right thing without a precedent. In other words, doing the right thing when you can't look back over your shoulder and see, oh, this happened to so-and-so, and it's written about in this book and they did this and this, so I will do that. No.

He expands on the concept of wisdom like this:

Wisdom today is so imperative because we live in an unprecedented time. Most of the stuff that's happening to us now, men and women, it's never happened to us before. We ask God for wisdom, and he's promised to give it to us, to do the right thing, even though there are no precedents for that in anything that we know about or have experienced. [Colossians 4:6](#) says, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one." ... Some Christians have reversed it. Their speech is always with salt seasoned with a little grace. ... The Bible says we're to be gracious people, but we're to have a little saltiness to us.

What does that mean? Don't let people run over you. Don't give up your convictions, but whatever you do, be gracious.

He adds one more adage about being gracious in a more ungracious time:

So the Bible says when we're in the midst of this culture, when people are just killing each other with their words, there should be something different about us. We stand aside from that. We're gracious people. We don't pick fights with those who disagree with us. On the other hand, we don't need to stay silent when our faith is being challenged. When we're gracious and we speak the right words, that's a combination people don't know what to do with.

Don't Run And Hide

Jeremiah then tells to not get out of the arena and hunker down, but to stay in the fight:

Then it takes courage to live in this day and age in the cancel culture. The Bible says, "Be strong and of good courage. Do not fear nor be afraid of them. For the Lord your God, he is the one who goes with you and he will not leave you nor forsake you." (see [Deuteronomy 31:6](#)) You and I need to heed those commands as we live meaningfully as followers of Jesus in a world influenced by cancel culture. In the book of Acts, there's a word that occurs often. It's the word bold. [Acts 4:31](#) is a great verse: "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness." Oh, how I pray that I will always be able to speak the word of God with boldness, never to be ashamed of my Lord or what he has done for me or for you or for this church. Courage is a God-given personality trait that is crucial in critical times. [Psalm 27:14](#) says, "Wait on the Lord. Be of good courage and he will strengthen your heart...It takes wisdom and courage.

The Hardest Thing

He ends with a very important response to being cancelled – forgiveness:

In a world where the mistakes of the past are fair game for the present, there's no room for forgiveness on the part of the cancel culturists. But the Bible offers us a different way. Listen to the Bible. The Bible says, "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. And therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering, bearing with one another and forgiving one another. If anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do."

When we forgive someone who has wronged us, we set them free. But that isn't even the best news. We set ourselves free. Because if you walk around with bitterness towards someone, you're not hurting them. They probably don't even know you're doing it, but you're doing it to yourself. So, you forgive somebody, two great things happen. They get forgiven and you get released from your bitterness. It takes wisdom and courage and forgiveness.

Love, Don't Cancel

He then uses a familiar example of people trying to cancel someone, and Jesus dealt with them perfectly

And finally, it takes love...Do you remember the passage in the gospel where Jesus canceled a young woman? He had been teaching in the temple courts when a group of Pharisees forcibly dragged a girl in front of him. They had caught her in the act of adultery. "Stone her," they said. "Jesus, that is the punishment prescribed by law. She's guilty of sin and she must be permanently removed. She is canceled." Wait a minute. You say, "Pastor, that's not in the Bible." And it isn't. Jesus never said any such thing. And neither do I. Instead of canceling that young woman, Jesus told his accusers, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." You're

going to stone this woman? Let the person in this group who doesn't have any sin be the first person to throw a stone at her. And the scripture says that when that happened, they walked away one by one and left Jesus alone with the woman.

He then reminds us to do the opposite of cancel culture:

And Jesus spoke to that young girl when they had all left and said to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." The goal of those who cancel others is to broadcast their sins from pillar to post and never allow them to be removed or forgotten. But Christ's goal, on the other hand, is love and mercy and grace. In the words of scripture, "Above all things, have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins." I used to think that verse meant that if you love somebody, it would cover your sins. But that's not what it means. It means when you love somebody, you cover their sins. The Bible says as Christians, when someone makes a mistake, you go and you pray with them. You put your arm around them. You forgive them. You help them get on, but you don't broadcast their sin. That's the world's way. That's the devil's way. That's not God's way.

God's Cancel Culture

Jeremiah concludes by pointing out that God has His own cancel strategy:

The Bible says in [Colossians 2:13 and 14](#), "When you were dead in your sins, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness which stood against us and condemned us and has taken it away nailing it to the cross." Jesus has canceled our sin. He canceled it. Now that's a cancel culture I can get into. One day I asked Jesus Christ to forgive me of my sin and I found out that when he had gone to the cross he had paid the penalty for my sin and he canceled it all. He forgave it all. My past sin, my present sin, my future sin, all forgiven by God. No, no, no, Pastor Jeremiah. He forgives your past sin, but you got to deal with the future. Wait a minute. When Jesus died on the cross, all my sin was in the future. He canceled it all. Canceled all my sin. He canceled it. He forgave it.

He then makes an offer you shouldn't refuse:

And what he did for me, he'll do for you. If you'll ask him, we can go to bed tonight knowing with all of our hearts that nothing or no one can ever cancel the one who has canceled our sins. In the midst of all that's going on around us, we must never forget the triumph of the gospel. You want to get involved in the cancel culture? Get involved in the Christian cancel culture where Jesus Christ cancels our sin. Let's don't let what is happening in the world make us bitter and cynical. It's easy for that to happen. Let's become even more men and women of love and grace. And that's an excellent place for an amen!