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October 1, 2009

Gleanings



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Understanding the Times

The stock market is up. Do you feel better?

With the upturn in the market, many people are a bit more upbeat because they derive a sense of well-being from their perceived wealth. It is very tempting to think that if we have money we don't have any needs. Money enables us to take life easy, to live the good life, and to not have to work. With enough money we can do what we want to do, when we want to do it, how we want to do it. Right?

Interestingly, Scripture doesn't agree. Jesus told a parable recorded in Luke 12 about a rich man who based his choices in life and sense of security on tangible wealth. Note God's response:

[The rich man said to himself:] "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry." But God said to him, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you." Luke 12:19–20 NIV

The man thought he was on easy street—but God called him a fool, which suggests that God didn't agree with this man's perspective.

Note also what the professing Christians in Laodicea said about how their wealth would take care of their needs:

You [professing Christians in Laodicea] say, "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. Revelation 3:17 NIV

The professing Christians in Laodicea put their faith in money and based their sense of well-being and security on tangible assets. They thought all was well, but in reality they were in deception. Again, man's perspective is contrary to God's.

May I suggest that today's professing Christians are no different from the people in the above texts? We tend to think that money is the solution to life's problems. Our energy and focus is on accumulating wealth, getting ahead, living the American dream, and retiring as soon as possible. But we are deceived. And since we are in deception, we are unable to see the signs of the times and therefore do not understand what is really happening and where things are going.

We must repent regarding how we view and use money. As long as money is the driver of our lives, we are worshipping money. Instead, we must learn to worship God. And one of the indicators that we are truly worshipping God is that we will view and use money biblically. Only then will we be like the men of Issachar of whom it was said: they "understood the times and knew what Israel should do" (1 Chronicles 12:32 NIV).

Assuming that we are willing to give up the worship of money and worship God alone, then what are the signs of the times?

Much of what I see applies to the world, but I will focus my observations on the United States of America (USA). If you live outside the USA, I think you will be able to see the parallels.

I believe we are in unprecedented times for the USA, but not unprecedented times for the world. There are



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examples of other nations in other times that we can look to for a sense of what is ahead, for example, Nazi Germany and the Roman Empire.

Many people in the USA—including political, educational, and business leaders—are working hard to reject God in every area of life. This includes the ACLU, Move-On.org, the liberal media, atheist organizations, and even the president.

For the first time in history, the USA has a president who professes to be a Christian but seems to embrace virtually nothing associated with Christ. Arguably, he is the first post-modern president in history and he may be a closet Muslim. The sad reality is that the Christian community elected him. Note that 75 percent of Americans profess to be Christians; hence, no one gets elected without significant support from the professing Christian community.

Under the president's leadership, I believe we can expect record annual federal budget deficits, skyrocketing federal debt, continued rejection of biblical values, more regulation, increased entitlements, and higher taxes. I know all of this is no surprise. Please note, however, that these are all symptoms and signs of what is coming.

Political pundits say the average democracy lasts two hundred years and fails because of federal largess associated with all of the above practices. When largess infects a people, it leads to a financial crisis that the federal government cannot solve.

The typical "white knight" to solve this problem is a dictator who promises to restore financial stability. Hence, the end of a democracy is a dictatorship—this is how Hitler came into power in Germany. I believe we will see this happen in the USA within fifty years, if we don't repent.

In the USA, the capital markets will be severely impacted as this plays out. Inflation will accelerate, perhaps to unprecedented levels, the dollar will be devalued, and interest rates will rise because fewer investors want to purchase debt issued by the federal government. Our dependence on foreign energy sources will be used against us. Domestic companies will be unable to compete globally, which means that our long history of trade imbalances will continue. As a result of this deadly confluence of factors, the USA will sink into a third world economy. All of this is rooted in the rejection of God and His principles for the workplace.

Compounding the problem is the wholesale rejection of God's moral laws—for example, support for the gay agenda, no fault divorce, cohabitation, and abortion.

Rejection of biblical values and principles will bring judgment in various ways, such as disease, confusion, lies, deception, drought, storms, mental illnesses, terrorism, social unrest, arson, thievery, murder, lawlessness, apathy, wars, all sorts of evil, and other calamities.

As sin becomes progressively more acceptable and legalized, the ability to manage sin in our culture will be increasingly impaired. Conducting business will be more and more difficult. Productivity will decline. Dependable workers will be in short supply. People will lose the will to work as they focus on lifestyles of sin and self-indulgence. Trustworthy customers who have both the resources and will to pay their bills will be harder to find. Basic services like electricity, health care, and the food supply will become unreliable. The rejection of biblical values and principles will cause the USA to implode just as the Roman Empire did.

Chinese researchers spent twenty years seeking to learn why the USA is the most prosperous nation on earth. They came to the clear conclusion that it is because our forefathers historically accepted Christian values and principles (see *Gleanings*, April 2007). If we abandon the very values that brought us blessings and prosperity, then the rejection of those values will lead to curses and poverty.

Though the outlook is bleak, there is hope. Our hope is in Christ—there is no other hope. Money cannot solve this problem. The only solution is to repent and return to biblical values and principles.

In the event that the American people do not repent, the Christian community needs to be prepared for what is coming. We need a divine strategy to weather the coming storm. Just as God protected Israel from the plagues when they were in captivity in Egypt, there will be a Goshen for the people of God—those who diligently seek the Lord.

The first step in finding our Goshen must surely be to repent and return to biblical values and principles in every area of life. Let's begin with this and see if our obedience doesn't lead to more revelation—I think it will. Then perhaps we can discern the times and know what we are to do.

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