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Cursed or End Times?

February 2009 Commentary

Commentary 1 of 2

Sometimes I research and think through things, and it does not take a lot of words to report my results. I decided, therefore, I will write a few of them down for you since you may have thought about the same subjects too. Although I have not studied these extensively, I think I will share some of the knowledge I do have.

Do you believe God punishes nations? Do you believe he punishes his children when they sin egregiously? Do you believe he will curse or bless a nation if they do or do not live according to his standards?

If you do not believe these to be true, then you do not believe the Bible, for in Deuteronomy 27-30, God says a nation that does not obey his commandments will be cursed and those that do will be blessed. He then spells out the nature of the curses and blessings.

In the rest of the Pentateuch and the major and minor prophets, we read about how the Israeli's harvested the fruit of his promises. God also predicted end times rather

extensively in his word. Much has been written about them, and people have expected them to come ever since Jesus left us and joined the Father. He had promised to come again, and throughout the ages, many have wanted him to hurry up.

Our nation was founded under God and thus shares in the covenant God made with Israel. It has been blessed during most of its existence. From time to time, though, it has suffered the curses. Almost every time things had gone awry, though, there was a return by our nation to a degree of holiness, and we again prospered. These cycles occurred regularly after the great awakening beginning in 1734. God made this possible when he entreated us in Deuteronomy 30 to "Choose life." By this, he meant we should choose to be holy by repenting and asking for forgiveness. Then we can receive the blessings.

Now it is certain the Bible tells us before Jesus returns we will have ultra hard times. All kinds of bad things will happen. Today we have come upon hard times so we have to ask, are we cursed or are we in the end times? In a society that is decadent and highly immoral, we should expect the curses to fall on us. We have dismantled our basic industry, over-spent and accumulated too much personal and corporate debt. We have been remarkably greedy; now we are reaping the consequences of our greed.

We have been sexually immoral. As a result, we have an ever escalating incidence of children born out of wedlock, and an increase in STDs. We have homosexual activists

parading and rioting in the streets. Adultery has become commonplace. Rape is frequent. Kids start their sexual careers at the age of 11 and 12 years. The Matachine society wants pederasty to be legalized. Crime has increased. Alcohol and drugs have contributed to the demoralization of our society. They are part of the cause for the escalation of crime.

In addition to the things mentioned above, there is the sacrifice of our children to the god of self. The philosophy of our society is humanism that has its origin in the Garden of End when Satan told us we could be like gods. We, therefore, do what we want to do. We have aborted 48,000,000 children in the US since Roe vs. Wade because it would be inconvenient to rear them, or as a means of birth control. God has ordered us to be fruitful and multiply and we are not doing it. He also ordered the Hebrews not to sacrifice children to Molech the god of the Ammonites, and also the Philistines and Carthaginians under another name (Leviticus 18:21 and 20:1-5). I am sure that he considers sacrifice to the humanist gods (who are ourselves) just as great an abomination as to Molech. God also demanded that a person be punished if he caused a miscarriage. Finally, he said "You shall not murder," and murder is what abortion is. Life begins at conception so to destroy a fetus is to murder it.

All of this makes some in the Kingdom of God wonder if we are cursed if not in the end times. I wondered too, so I decided to look up some of the statistics that provide evidence. This is what I found.

If we inspect some of the other problems we face in our nation today, we can certainly conclude that we may be cursed. Some of the things that are promised in the curses are happening. First of all, we have weather disasters. Hurricane Katrina, Ike and Gustav were all unusually strong and damaging. They were also part of a trend to more numerous and more damaging hurricanes affecting our continent. There has not been an increase in tornadoes or fatalities from them in the past 50 years though. In a like manner, we have not had an increased incidence of droughts since 1955. Droughts were promised by God in the scripture cited.

God promised economic disasters. Economic disasters seem to be a regular happening in our society. The first one was in 1837-1843; another occurred in 1857-1858. Others followed in 1873, 1893, 1901, 1929-1939 and most recently in 1978-1979. These always seemed catastrophic, but we weathered the storms – except in 1929 when government intervention prolonged it. This resulted in it being called the “Great Depression.”

I was a boy during that one and remember it well. We never suffered from privation although many of our neighbors did. One amusing event occurred when my father brought home some “rabbits” he bought at a local market. We ate them for dinner all nicely fried with hot biscuits and gravy on the side. The next morning I was reading the paper when I came across an article whose headline read as follows. “Local Butcher

Arrested for Selling Cats.”

It seems the butcher had gone out and killed a bunch of cats, skinned them and cut them up to sell as rabbits. I called out to my father who was in the kitchen and asked him where he got the rabbits. He told me it was at the same market where the butcher was selling cats and calling them rabbits. Mother did not take too well to that news. I vividly remember, though, that they tasted as good as domestic rabbits. I do not eat rabbit anymore.

Economic downturns occur about every 10 to 15 years. This one is not unusual; however, the steps the government is taking will likely prolong it. The real cause for the current one is greed on the part of everyone in our society. This is especially true of major banks and Wall Street. Even more perniciously, we have accumulated enormous personal debt that we are unable to pay back. Some people have as many as four or five credit cards that are maxed out. Add to that a mortgage, loans on two cars and very little is left over for health care, food, clothes and recreation. Under these circumstances, personal debt has escalated. One of my patients had 60,000 dollars in credit card debt. If we add as examples the recent Madoff scandal, Governor Blagojevich's attempt to sell Obama's senate seat, Marcus Schrenker's financial shenanigans, as well as the earmarks that congress attaches to every appropriation bill, and the enormous salaries paid to industry executives and athletes, we can say that the sin of greed is rampant.

In light of the above, we can ask if the moral climate of our nation is what we expect in the end times. In the end times we are told, “There will be gross immorality. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power . . . They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected” (2 Timothy 3:1b-8). These accusations seem to apply to our society today.

But what about the prophecies? Before the prophecies are to be fulfilled Israel has to be reconstituted as a nation, and it has been. There is a major effort to destroy it, and this was prophesied. The Temple is to be rebuilt in Jerusalem. It has not been rebuilt. The Aztec calendar ends in 2012, and unless my ears deceived me, Nostradamus predicted the end to come in 2012. Others have interpreted the book of Daniel so that they get a date similar or alarmingly close to 2012. (Others disagree with the dating of his prophecy.) I can go on with other prophecies, but they are too varied to offer much predictive evidence.

Then the Antichrist has to come. He has to take over the world and reconstitute the Roman empire. There has to be a rapture either premillennial or postmillennial, depending on your theology. There has to be a battle of Armageddon. No! None of these things have happened. Jesus is not ready to come back.

Still, people predicted the end times in the past and they have not come. Those of us who are authentic Christians try to be objective and believe that they may be coming, but we do not want to issue jeremiads to that effect. No, the end of the world as we know it is not upon us. Only God knows, (but we are suspicious). The problem we have is not knowing how badly it has to get to signal the coming of the end times. We simply cannot make up our minds. I have to believe, at least, that we have been cursed by God, or that our sin has so grieved the Holy Spirit that he has withdrawn his blessings. If this is the case, we are suffering the consequences of our own wrongdoing.

Well, if the signs are not conclusive, are things just plain bad? If this is the case, what should we do? I believe we have no choice but to persevere in being obedient and looking to the future with confidence. We know God is in charge and he will guide, protect and direct us. We certainly need to be people of prayer, diligently searching the Scriptures, worshiping in the Spirit, and supporting one another in our fellowships. We above all need to repent and pray for revival. Jesus said, "Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be

able to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36).

I am not an expert on this subject, but I have thought about it and looked at the evidence for the end times. For a detailed recounting of the needed evidence go to:
<http://contenderministries.org/prophecy/endtimes.php>

TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN

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Jesus said, “From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked (Luke 12:48, NIV). The title of this essay is the way I remember the scripture, not the way it was written in either the KJV or NIV. No matter how it was written in different versions, I remember the essence of the message.

Why is this message important? The answer is that it is a message about the requirements of servanthood. This principle is still in existence in our business and sports worlds today. There is a problem though, for we reversed it and now say, of whom much is expected, to them will be given much. The astronomical salaries of CEO’s and sports stars today reflect this reversal.

It should be apparent that we get astronomically high wages when we become Christians. Jesus said we are servants and friends of the Most High God to whom much

will be given. We are truly given much. The most important is the gift of the Holy Spirit. We have God in us. He is there to make us new persons. We get a new personality and are transformed. He now guides and directs our activities and does so to bring glory to himself. In the process, we too are glorified.

We are also given the fruits of the Spirit. The presence of the emotions of love, joy and awe occlude the negative emotions of sorrow, fear, anger, and shame. These latter emotions are the ones that are unpleasant and cause us to suffer. Our suffering is, therefore, reduced or abolished. We also receive peace instead of turmoil, patience instead of impatience, kindness instead of unkindness, goodness instead of evil, humility instead of pride, self-control instead of unrestrained sinfulness. In addition, we are given all we need to live life. And then to top it all off, we are given eternal life so we can be in God's presence forever, and be loved infinitely.

We do not get any of these things in the jobs we hold in the secular world. We may get money, status, power over our fellow employees, health insurance, dental insurance, bonuses, vacation time and other perks, but we do not get the benefits of the love of God, his gifts and eternal life. Yet with all the valued perks, we do not get unlimited vacations and holidays. Above all, we do not get to lie on brocaded couches beside crystal clear streams served by 70 virgins and eager young youths. Trees do not surround us hanging heavy with fruit. These latter things are what the Muslims expect in their version of heaven. No, instead we get to earn our living and our perks by the sweat

of our brow.

What are God's expectations of us? All he asks of us is obedience and that we love. He said to us that if we loved him we would obey his commandments and he and the Father would come and live with us and in us. Then he gave us the symbol of obedience – the Cross to remind us to obey. I learned this lesson years ago when I wanted to know the meaning of the Cross. This came about when I said in a talk in West Virginia, that I had many crosses to bear. I was then corrected by a retired minister. He said, "Doctors, what you were talking about are burdens. The Cross means something else." He did not tell me what, so I had to find out.

I began by reading books. I read most of the books in the Duke Divinity Library about the Cross, but I really did not discern what it meant. Eventually, I asked God what it meant, but I didn't hear anything. Then one day I was praying about it on my way home from the hospital. As I pulled into an intersection a block from home, I had a vision that appeared in my minds eye. It was a big signboard. It had flames all around it, and on it was the word OBEDIENCE. Two weeks later, I was reading Philipians 2 and I read these words. "And being found in appearance as a human being, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" For me that was confirmation of Gods message to me.

But if we love him and want to obey his commandments, we have to know what they

are. These are HIS commandments. (1) We are to love God with all our being. (2) We are to love our neighbors (3) as ourselves. (4) Then we are to love one another as he has loved us. (5) Then we are to do love by feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, clothing the naked, taking strangers in our homes and visiting the sick and prisoners. Then finally, we are to go into all the world and make disciples baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I will review a book below by Brother Yun, a Chinese Christian preacher. He is not theologically educated, but has led thousands to Christ in China and has been an inspiration to others all over China. I want to tell you here that he cannot understand the Western church and the people in it.

They are dead in their faith. They are not obeying Christ's commandments. They send most of their missionaries to countries that are "safe." All the while, their church is decaying while they sit purposeless and passionless in a decaying society. It exists in stark contrast to the church in China that is alive and vibrant even though it is persecuted and members are being martyred every day. The church in China also has a vision to reach the world between China and Jerusalem. They want to convert the Buddhist, Hindu, and Muslims in the countries in between. The name for this movement is "Back to Jerusalem." They are willing to die to fulfill their vision. They intend to persevere even though they are discouraged by Christians in the West.

It is interesting that I noted in my travels that most churches do not have a vision. It has

been said that without a vision the people perish, yet most are without one. I asked the leaders in various churches and Christian organizations what their vision is, and all they can give me is their mission.

A vision defined here is a goal revealed by God. Most people do not have a personal vision, so they do not see one for their church. A vision will be different from the commandments given by God. It is a specifically aimed goal. A friend of mine had a church that had as its vision to impact a school near their sanctuary. The Chinese church has as its vision to see the people in the Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim worlds between them and Jerusalem converted. Their mission is to send missionaries to evangelize that part of the world.

The missionaries the Chinese church will send out will not be like Western missionaries. They will be people who, like the apostles, know the scriptures and teaching of Jesus, but have not been to theological school. They are willing to die like the apostles did in carrying out the great commission. Many of them will die, for Satan will activate his followers in these religions, and they will persecute and even kill these missionaries. This happened to western missionaries in China during the Boxer Rebellion. It happened recently in the Orissa province of India.

Because the West does not believe that Satan exists, or does not take him seriously enough, he is active in the areas the Chinese intend to evangelize. He is a murderer

and a liar and we can see the fruits of his activity. He wants to destroy Jews and Christians. He murders them and tells lies to lull them into complacency. The most recent evidence of his nature is reported today from Israel, where as soon as the Israelis withdrew from Gaza under a supposed "truce," they began to reopen their tunnels into Egypt, and again rockets were fired into Israel.

The West does not believe we are in Spiritual warfare. I have not seen any mention of the spiritual nature of the terrorist war in any journal. I have not heard church leaders speak out on the subject. Only a few leaders of lesser authority have made measured statements to the effect that Satan is behind all of the attacks on the western world. Satan has done a great job in convincing the theological world that he does not exist, or that he should not be taken seriously.

Jesus took him seriously enough to die on the Cross, to defeat him ultimately. We need to wake up! We are like the woman who fell asleep in church. The Pastor was preaching on Ephesians 5:14 and said, "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." He then repeated himself louder, and finally he said it even louder a third time. With this, the woman roused herself and stayed awake for the rest of the sermon. On leaving the church, she said to the pastor, "Reverend, how can a person sleep during your sermon if you keep hollering wake up?"

We need to wake up. Satan is out to destroy us!!