

*Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, "Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?" And I will certainly hide My face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods."*

Deuteronomy 31: 17, 18

## **2009, Anno Domini: Storm Warning**

My wife was in prayer just before my Thanksgiving Break, and received this word from the Lord:

***Take heed, oh saints of God – for perilous times are ahead. Fill your cupboards while you can. Seek a safe place that will withstand the mighty wind that I, your God, will send into the country. Be sober and do not fear, for this is a time of great tribulation which was prophesied.***

I do *not* believe this to be triggered by the recent election, because I think this message would have been given regardless of whether Barack Obama or John McCain won the presidency. Nor do I think this necessarily a comment on the recent protests over California's passage of Proposition 8, which prohibits recognizing domestic partnerships between homosexuals as "marriage," since attacks on churches who stand on the Biblical view of homosexuality have been taking place for some time now. Those assaults have simply been "ramped up," and are a mere symptom of the illness that plagues the nation as a whole.

I believe, instead, that the Lord taking is His efforts at getting this nation's attention "to the next level," as it were. He is, first of all, warning America that as it walks (in some cases, *runs*) further away from the Lord, stronger disciplinary actions for those nations that forget Him are about to be employed. Secondly, He is setting up a choice for His church – follow Me and find shelter from the storm that is coming, or follow those who claim to speak for Me but, instead, serve themselves.

On the first point, you might have noted that I said *stronger* disciplinary actions are about to be employed. God has been trying to get our attention for years, often through the various things America has taken pride in. America came out of World War II as the most powerful nation on Earth. We were permitted to develop the atomic bomb instead of Nazi Germany because the Nazis were aggressively persecuting the Jewish people, in addition to believers who stood up to Hitler for the sake of God's Word and God's people. We had a robust economy untouched by Axis bombs, most other nations looked up to us with wonder and admiration (unless they were more inclined to follow the Soviets) and we were Israel's "Big Brother," protector of that emerging Middle East nation, a Jewish state surrounded by enemies. Perhaps most importantly, we had a citizenry that for the most part still believed in God and still sought His Righteousness – out of which were raised leaders for the nation. As long as we sought His Kingdom, everything else fell into line, just as Jesus said it would in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6:33)

But American government and citizens – and even American believers – let all that go to their collective heads. Wealth and power turned our heads to the right and the left, and we no longer heard the voice of the Lord. Distracted by our own selfish desires, we ignored the threats from within. The first cases were filed in the courts that planted the seeds of trying to remove any mention of the Lord from the public discussion. Most of these were out of the public eye, so the public was not aware of the battle that was joined. People arrived in positions to educate our children who sought to tear down the landmarks that pointed toward the God worshipped by our forefathers. Science was installed as a target for reverence instead of the Lord.

By the 1960s, those working in secret to turn the nation away from God began to work openly, and the culture since that time has been not only walking away from Him but has been emboldened in recent years to ridicule, harass and speak of the right ways of the Lord as though they were the true evil. Self began to be worshipped. Now, disturbing new voices emerge urging that the United States join in the worldwide trend toward opposing the state of Israel

As the nation's moral compass became increasingly faulty, the Church took its eyes off its Head, and sought human solutions for America's problems. In some cases, it joins hands with those who would "spin" the Word of God to permit whatever perversion of His ways is popular at the moment. Some have gone so far as to permit those in open, unrepentant sin to rise to positions of authority within the church. Some have abandoned submitting themselves to the Lord and have turned to a quest for political power, which is limited in its capabilities and a poor substitute for access to the Almighty, eternal, omnipotent God of the universe. Still others have discovered an outward show of Godliness as a means to great wealth, living in luxury while followers give their hard-earned money to their organizations, sometimes out of great poverty, having been bamboozled by such "shepherds" into thinking that they will end up the same way and that greed is somehow Godly. Those members of the Body of Christ that recognized the danger and sought to warn of the dire straits ahead found themselves ignored, dismissed as out of step with the times, ridiculed as unsophisticated, backwoods rubes or placed in the same category as cult leaders who listen only to their inner demons and lead their followers to destruction.

God has been trying our attention as everything we once took pride in now seems to be an indicator of what has gone wrong. We who have our flag on half a dozen spots on the moon now have lost two spacecraft to seemingly insignificant problems and we watch as smaller nations begin ambitious programs to get to that same location. We who pioneered efforts to clean up our cities and make the public's health a top priority now turn those tools to preserve life toward the use of a culture of death; in Oregon and Washington, citizens recently voted to permit physician-assisted suicide under conditions that only can expand as this practice becomes more accepted, and the souls of at least 50 million unborn children cry out to the Lord as our own sense of horror over such a staggering number fades into the distant past. We lead the way in our citizenry on a host of medications for various ills, many of which are our own doing because of the choices we've made. The economy that was once the "arsenal of democracy" now is in the ropes, thanks in part to greed. Once the wonder and envy of other nations who wanted to emulate our success, we now find ourselves isolated by other countries and the subject of ridicule and scorn. Upon standing triumphant against the evils of both fascism and

communism, we now find ourselves with a host of new enemies rising up to take their place. Unable – or unwilling – to read the “writing on the wall,” as it were, people want the church only to say what makes them feel good:

*They say to the seers, “See no more visions!” and to the prophets,  
“Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things,  
prophecy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path and stop confronting  
us with the Holy One of Israel!”*

(Isaiah 30:10, 11)

The problem is, the Holy One of Israel does not want us to feel good if those good feelings lead only to our destruction. A mother or father (whose own consciences are not already seared) will not let their children continue in the wrong choices they have made if they know those choices will lead only to their pain, sorrow and early death. And so, if mere admonishment will not get the job done, the rod of discipline must be employed.

With the word God has given, this is where America is now, or at least stands on the brink. I do not know how or when the rod will fall; frankly, there are so many areas to choose from it could almost literally be anywhere. Some would argue that our current economic problems may be the vanguard of His judgment, and the message He gave my wife would seem to back up that view, which means we may not have very much “lead time” before the wind blows at full strength. If enough people can be warned and engaged in prayer for this nation and its leaders, then perhaps God may stay His Hand and the nation not experience the full force of His judgment. But we must be ready if that is not the case. And so, the church must do the following:

1. **Pray.** As members of the Body of Christ, we must be fully connected to the Head, which is Christ. The time for games is over; a time to kneel has arrived. Far too often, we treat prayer as if it were the last resort, when in reality it should be our first recourse. We must be able to hear the voice of the Spirit, who will direct us in the right path and guide us through this time.
2. **Prepare.** Take heed of the warning so that you will not be caught unaware. Stock up on the basics and secure your finances, not only so that you can be prepared for yourselves, but so that you can also carry out our standing instructions to share with others in need. Part of our assignment is to reach out to others with the Love of God. The Lord will send people to our doors for help so that we can give it to them and they can see that the Lord is good, and will turn to Him for Salvation.
3. **Put away the nonsense.** Those in the Church who still flirt with or indulge the things of the world must leave them. We must be sober – not somber, for “the Joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10), but be sold out for Him and be a vessel worthy to be used by God in however He sees fit. While all of us will be affected by the storm that is at hand, God has a way of making clear, public distinctions between those who are His and those who are not. Some of these have already come to light (such as believers being healthier than those who are not), but in their efforts to seemingly drive God from the public discourse, they ignore the God Who is at the core of such distinctions and actively ponder how to get the benefits of belief without actually believing.

Above all, the Church needs to look beyond the storm that is coming to what it will bring. As I write this, we are just concluded the celebration of the Jewish Festival of Lights, called Hanukkah. Most of us who are not Jewish have only a superficial knowledge of the holiday; it runs eight days, a candle is lit on the menorah and you get a present on each day. But the full story is a commemoration of a great victory and a miracle; the Israelite people were under the rule of Antiochus IV, a Greek successor of Alexander the Great, who tried to exterminate the Jewish faith and culture, desecrating the Temple in Jerusalem with a statue of Zeus and sacrificing a pig on the Altar of God. The Apocryphal Books of 1 and 2 Maccabees tells the story of the defeat of Antiochus IV by the Maccabee brothers led by Judah, who then set about the task of cleansing the Temple and restoring the worship of God.

Once a new altar and holy vessels were made, worship could begin. But there existed only enough oil for the lamps in the Temple – which was supposed to burn continually during the rededication – for only one night. But God made the oil last for eight nights, until a new supply of lamp oil could be prepared. The message is clear – once we cleanse ourselves of the things that keep us from God, God responds with His presence, and miraculous things happen. How many times have we heard – or repeated blindly – this passage of Scripture:

*If My people, who are called by My Name, will humble themselves  
and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I  
hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land.*

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

Many believers today read that verse and think, “Yeah, well, that would be nice, wouldn’t it?” and then go right back to trying to manipulate God in order to get more wealth and stuff – stuff that drives us further away from God. God wants America back, not because the nation is prophesied about (it isn’t, not specifically) or that if America is lost to Him, some grand eternal plan will derail (it won’t), but because the founders of this country, imperfect though they were, dared to base the foundations of this nation on the Word of God and to proclaim, “No King but King Jesus.” Any nation that dares to stand on the promises of God must stay close to Him or it will experience *all* the promises of God, including those for nations that forget God. God wants America back because He does not want His children lost; and if we won’t take the trouble to clean out the house ourselves, but try to use Him to acquire even more junk, He will come in and do a thorough job. The wind coming from God will cleanse the nation and help to steer it back toward Himself. And, if we have ears to “hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 2) and obey the voice of the Lord, we not only see a nation restored to Him and spared further – and stronger – judgment, but also “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:21) for our own obedience.