



ANXIETY MERCHANTS & FALSE PROPHETS – PART I

By Wilfred Hahn



How terrible are the times; how anxious Americans have become! Christians everywhere feel pressured. Countless analysts, preachers and prophecy experts have been (and continue to) spread fearsome worries about the future.

Their shrill warnings can border on the hysterical. If it is not the false alarms of “blood moons,” it is about geopolitics or the economic outlook. Some even claim that they have had “divine inspiration” for their prophecies. Speculations are wide-ranging: The U.S. dollar will crash; surely the world economy will collapse; and others warn about “tribulational” events being just around the corner, for which one should be prepared.

Whom to listen to? What should one do in response? Perhaps, consider advance preparation?

There indeed are plenty of worrisome developments around the world. God-

fearing people will discern the long-term trends of moral decay. Wickedness and humanism are increasing in influence, and therefore mankind’s economic systems, societies and civil institutions are deteriorating and being corrupted. Instability is the new norm. Mankind’s modern idols are teetering and tottering.

However, we again ask, how should one respond?

In answering this question, we encounter two diametrically opposed perspectives. One is Biblically supported, the other is not. And, it is the latter that leads to most of the fear-mongering, false prophecies and profit-making deliverance. We will investigate.

A worthy watchmen would remind people (and the world) that the Lord's return is near; that the time for repentance is short; and to look up, "[...] for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28, KJV). After all, on many occasions Jesus urged the disciples to watch.

Bogus Watchmen on the Wall

The Lord told Jeremiah "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them" (Jeremiah 15:19).

As it may be, some do appoint themselves as spokesman; however, they do not speak worthy words. Often, their words bend toward popular demand and itching ears.

It follows that "worthy, and not worthless words" could only be those that align with biblical knowledge and truth. Unworthy words lead to error and confusion and therefore cannot be inspired of God. Why?

"For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints (1 Corinthians 14:33, KJV).

There is no shortage of people and ministries who like to see themselves as "watchmen on the wall" (Isaiah 62:6). To be called as a watchman can be honorable and edifying, provided of course, that one is speaking worthy words and admonitions. The outcome should be peace "in the churches of the saints."

A worthy watchmen would remind people (and the world) that the Lord's return is near; that the time for repentance is short; and to look up, "[...] for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28, KJV). After all, on many occasions Jesus urged the disciples to watch. Therefore, watchmen that follow these directions from Christ will prove to be effective and reliable servants.

For example, these honorable forecasters would implore and call out with warnings of the following nature: "Watch out for false prophets [as] they come to you in sheep's clothing" (Matthew 7:15); "Watch out that no one deceives you" (Matthew 24:4); "[...] keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42); "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation" (Matthew 26:41); "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed" (Luke 12:15).

Note that none of these urgings from the Bible requires a physical preparation; they are only spiritual ones affecting the heart. None concerns itself with worldly goods or material possessions. For again, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15). A key distinction found here is that the concerns of these "worthy" watchmen are not about the "abundance of possessions."

As such, these messages will contrast with the types of announcements that will come from more earthly-minded prognosticators, who may even masquerade as Spirit-led forecasters or prophets speaking for God. They focus more exclusively upon temporal and materialistic affairs. Moreover, followers of such spokesmen are likely to encounter wild speculations and suffer angst and confusion.

These so-called watchmen might prognosticate that the world's monetary



Sadly, though teachers and preachers may be well-meaning in their warnings and prophecies about predicted financial events and economic trends, they are misguided. They discredit the pulpit.



sands of false prophets, which one is likely to be correct? One cannot know in advance. Dire prophecies that have a very low probability of being correct are therefore useless. Even worse, as mentioned, such prophecies lead to much anxiety and confusion.

None of these perspectives here denies the veracity of Bible prophecy. All Bible prophecy has and will be fulfilled. But even with

system is about to collapse. Or, frighteningly, that the stock markets will crash and that the U.S. dollar is sure to plunge. Apocalyptic scenarios are envisioned in which banks will be shuttered and depositors will be unable to access their money. Possibly, grocery store shelves will be emptied and electrical and municipal water systems will no longer function.

What to do? How to preserve your wealth should these frightful scenarios actually occur? How to protect your own family?

As might be guessed, a lot of confusing answers are on offer. Indeed, terrible things have happened in virtually every country over past centuries. However, that fact does not add any real validity to a forecast. The problem lies in the fact that no one has a sure solution or reliable prediction for something that might apply to the near-term future.

That is to say, there are lots of predictions and offered solutions, but none are sure or likely to be correct. Out of thou-

the inviolable foreknowledge of prophecy, we are admonished, “[...] Do not go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). While prophecy provides a light in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19), it provides no guidance as to short-term events.

Sadly, though teachers and preachers may be well-meaning in their warnings and prophecies about predicted financial events and economic trends, they are misguided. They discredit the pulpit. Secular professionals who may specialize in geopolitics or currency market trends, for example, are also often wrong in their predictions (if not almost always). Then, what advantage does a pastor or ministry leader have with his predictions?

This writer has been active in the global financial industry for nearly four decades. During this time I have witnessed many irresponsible financial predictions from the pulpits of North America. These may have induced their congregations to buy gold, buy the Iraqi dinar, sell the U.S. dollar, and a host of other possible investment schemes. The damage has been great both

Furthermore, no one can reliably predict the near-future. The Bible confirms this in no uncertain terms. Said James: “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow” (James 4:13-14).

in monetary terms as well as reputational. Not only are such types of prophecies likely to be unreliable, but they also betray an ignorance of Bible-rooted perspectives.

Battling Confusion

Over the years, I have also received countless inquiries from readers asking me to legitimize the “doom and gloom” (and also profit-making) forecasts of various economists or Bible teachers. These respondents were anguished and concerned. They were in fear. Were they and their households vulnerable to economic calamity? What should they do? They would ask me to read or research the opinions of these commentators.

My response has generally been the same. Indeed, there will be troubles and crisis. In fact, the history of the world is marked by crisis, greater and lesser. There have been crises beyond count. One researcher, Moritz Schularick, alone counts 71 banking crises having occurred between 1870 and 2009. There have been many other types of crisis. Human strife and crises of various types are a normal occurrence.

Furthermore, no one can reliably predict the near-future. The Bible confirms this in no uncertain terms. Said James: “Now listen, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.’ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow” (James 4:13-14). The Proverbs writer counsels, “Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not



know what a day may bring” (Proverbs 27:1).

If we cannot reliably see the future, then what to do about our current worries and anxieties? Jesus directly answers this question. He tells us, “[...] do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:34).

We indeed are required to be good stewards with the skills and opportunities that God has given us. We have a responsibility to plan rather than to predict. Christ mentions the situation of the tower builder: “Suppose he starts building and is not able to finish. Then everyone who sees what he has done will laugh at him. They will say, ‘This fellow started to build. But he wasn’t able to finish’” (Luke 14:29-30).

However, we are also told that we should rely upon God to lead us through crises and concerns. For if “God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?” (Matthew 6:30).



Jesus cares for us: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Deliverance for Profit

Understandably, we may well empathize with pulpit forecasters in part. Who has not been chastened when it comes to predicting future trends, as they may impact our household or investment decisions? However, there is an even more reprehensible type of opportunist in such matters.

If you have some money, there are plenty of vendors willing to provide their advice and to sell to you their solutions. To no surprise, the business fortunes of these advisors and suppliers are benefited by fear-mongering and exaggeration. Sadly, some otherwise godly ministries may rely on such sales in order to cover their budgets. The greater the fear that can be generated, the more nitrogen-packed food, bomb shelters, and crisis-proof investments that can be sold.

Even more appalling is that Bible prophecy may be used to drive survival supply sales. These vendors (some claiming to be ministries) are outfitting people specifically to be able to survive the coming Tribulation period. Even ministries that take a pre-Tribulation view (i.e. the rapture of the Church occurring before the start of the Tribulation period) can appear nearly indistinguishable from the Tribulation preppers. They also offer to sell survival supplies; perhaps promote the purchase of gold bullion, and may even urge the purchase of personal weapons.

Thoughts to Ponder

Jesus said that “In this world you [Christians] will have trouble” (John 16:33). We can then confirm that we will not be able to avoid some worldly

troubles. Yet, none of Christ’s urgings to be on “watch” are concerned with this type of trouble. He is most concerned about our salvation and faith and preserving us from spiritual deceptions.

Would Christ allow that salvation and deliverance from crisis and trouble for the members of his body, the Church, would be dependent upon affordability? In other words, can only those Spirit-filled Christians that can afford a large portfolio of gold bullion or a 7-year supply of nitrogen-packed food, be protected from last-day crisis and wickedness? Could it be that poor Christians will have no access to such deliverance?

This could never be true. Christ offers salvation and deliverance to all who would come. As the Spirit of Christ said through Isaiah, “Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare” (Isaiah 55:1-2).

In the same way, Christ’s deliverance does not (should not) have any monetary cost. We may indeed suffer monetary loss in a world that is increasingly inhospitable to Christians. However, salvation and deliverance from a wicked world is available to all without a monetary price. While hucksters peddle survival supplies for the future Tribulation period—to only those that can afford them—God has a much more equitable plan, not that we should deserve it. It is the great “snatching away” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18) ... the Rapture.

(In the next part to this series, we will further examine the commercial hucksterism conducted in the name of Christianity, so that we might not fall.) (MC)