



ANXIETY MERCHANTS & FALSE PROPHETS

— PART II

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We continue with Part II. We had concluded that most crisis “fear mongering” forecasts that we see in Christian newsletters, magazines and in pulpit sermons are not endorsed by the Bible. Of course, the teaching of Bible prophecy dealing with the future is promoted. However, the only “crisis-watching” that Christ and the New Testament writers were concerned about was that which affected spiritual conditions, not monetary or material.

As it was, our examination of the topic of “anxiety merchants” was prompted by the many recent siren calls of forecasters and prophecy speculators (who identified themselves as Christians), predicting near-term crisis of various types affecting the world as well as America specifically. These have included everything from the portent of so-called “blood moons” to total, worldwide economic collapse.

What might be wrong with such forecasting, some may ask? There are indeed many deteriorating trends in the world,

whether financial, societal or moral. And, most certainly, we do maintain that Christians should be good stewards (1 Peter 4:10); that they should recognize the “season” of the times (Matthew 16:3); and should pray, plan and provide for their living needs (Luke 14:28). However, we should not be anguished by the taunts and pulls of false prophecies; and secondly, the cares and confusion of the world.

It is not uncommon that “anxiety merchants” may attempt to legitimize their prophecies with the claim of having received direct revelation by the Holy Spirit,

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or on account of their credibility of being a “respected Christian.” Yet, while these crisis forecasters raise fears, they nonetheless cannot offer reliable solutions. They are all false prophets because none of their forecasts are accurate.

How then should Christians respond, us being “[...] aliens and strangers in the world” (1 Peter 2:11)? We continue our series.

Discerning the Differences

With so many crisis prophecies of late, should we prepare for difficult times? And, just what types of crises should we be preparing for? According to a recent comment of Jim Bakker, if you are just starting to prepare, “You are awful late.” But, late to prepare for what—the Tribulation, the Rapture, the moral demise of the entire world, spiritual deceit, demonic doctrines, or something related to impending economic troubles?

There are some clear distinctions to be made between these different reasons for preparation. We showed in Part I that the New Testament primarily only warns about spiritual crisis, a falling away, and the doctrines of false prophets. It does not much concern itself with economic crisis. Jesus Christ’s example here is illustrative. Never once did He utter warnings of financial disaster (though, the prophecy of “not one stone here will be left on another”—Matthew 24:2—would have implied a crisis of some type taking place in the future), or how to weather the ups and downs of economies and markets.

As it was, the Roman world of the Mediterranean during the time of Christ was experiencing enormous financial shakings. The final credit collapse of 33 AD during the reign of Emperor Tiberius (according to the accounts of the historian Tacitus), couldn’t be more similar to the global financial crisis (GFC) that seized virtually the entire world in the late 2000s. As such, the GFC was not a new development; rather, a normal occurrence for manmade idol systems and the realm of Mammon.

Consider the significance of the fact that the entire New Testament dedicates not one single word to a major financial crisis occurring in the Roman world at that time. Jesus Christ and His disciples were responding to a completely different urgency—to “proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God” (Luke 4:43).

Two Orbs Never to Meet

The confusions of modern-day prophecies (whether prophetic speculations or fearmongering doomsterism) are mostly attributable to one dispensational misconception. There are two major spheres of actions—those of man and those of God. These realms must be kept separate and treated differently when dealing with prophecies (forecasts).

The sphere(s) of man reflects the choices of mankind which contribute to the long-running agenda of corruption and opposition to God. It leads to and underscores the sentiment of the final age of “kingdoms casting off” their chains (Psalm 2:3). This is the realm of



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mankind; the era over which Satan and his demon princes have the ability to give kingdoms. The Bible clearly shows that history has been driven by this Satan-Man collusion.

The Prophet Daniel and Apostle John lay out the timeline of these kingdoms (and their relation to the Hebrews). And, in this respect, from the dawn of recorded history, nothing much is new under the sun. The great tension between the worship of God and Mammon continues unabated, though the latter is increasingly becoming the god of this age.

This is the world that we live in today. There are business cycles, wars, new and broken treaties, droughts, uprisings, conspirators, and lusts of various kinds. Hu-

man history is a heaving mass of change. Characteristics of this realm also include booms, busts, financial bubbles, economic collapse, and wealth turnovers. This is the norm.

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Distinct to this is a separate domain. This exclusively concerns the actions of God. It comprises the things mentioned in Bible prophecy of the future and past that God has decreed (or foreseen) to

happen according to the free-will choices of mankind. Secondly, and most crucially, these are the direct actions of God Himself. These are in response to the arrogance and waywardness of mankind. God bares His arm. He acts in wrath upon a disobedient world that has refused to hearken to His many prophets, the various dispensations of grace, and His Son.

Corroborating this view, Isaiah uttered this prophecy: “I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins. I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless. I will make people scarcer than pure gold, more rare than the gold of Ophir. Therefore I will make the heavens tremble; and the earth will shake from its place at the wrath of the Lord Almighty, in the day of his burning anger” (Isaiah 13:11-13).

We must keep these two orbs of affairs apart (though they are not entirely disconnected) with respect to our responses to claimed prophets and forecasters. Short-term predictions about the Man-Satan Conspiracy—the current era of mankind’s economic and financial cycles, geopolitical trends, and existence on earth ... etc.—should only be of concern to humanists and those who are engulfed by materialism. Not, supposedly “strangers” in the world (1 Peter 1:1). Christians prophesying about the near-term course of mankind’s state of affairs are on the same footing as everyone else. They have no special forecasting advantage. The fact that they may be Christian offers no certification that they will be correct in their predictions or their recommended solutions.

As such, we don’t need so-called “Christian” prophets consorting with or predicting the course of Mammon, and offering us strategies on how to profit or to preserve our wealth in this world. God

does not—cannot—have any interest in helping anyone have success consorting with Mammon. God and Mammon are not compatible. They are the antithesis of each other.

On the other hand, as Christians, we are free to study Bible prophecy and accept it under the authority of the Bible. But, we are not to speculate or to “[...] go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). To do so would be to prophesy ourselves. Rather, we are to watch and to recognize the season of the times. We are free to observe that long-running trends and developments align with the prophecies of the Bible. We can perhaps even identify prophetic stage setting. However, in no case are we to lose sight of our “grace and peace [...] in abundance” (1 Peter 1:2).

We are also called to both proclaim and heed the warnings in the Bible with respect to spiritual falsehoods and deceptions. Above all, we must realize that any insights—i.e. “a lamp in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19)—that we glean from Bible prophecy afford us NO short-term forecasting abilities in the realm of Mammon or the sphere of mankind. Possibly, knowing what the Bible says about the nature and traits of humankind, we may have insight into the behaviors that drive the actions of mankind. But in this writer’s opinion, this does not offer any decisive forecasting advantage.

No Human Can Reliably See the Future

As an economist and global investment strategist, having managed tens of billions in global markets, I have some experience as to the reliability of people’s divinations of future trends. I have yet to encounter or learn of any one human that can reliably or precisely see the future. Not one. Most certainly not myself.



But back to the many false, modern-day prophets predicting crisis. For example, there are many advisers, preachers, and commentators that have warned or prophesied about a crash of the U.S. dollar at various times. Others have told their congregations to put their faith in gold ... perhaps to buy gold now because the world is coming to an end.

That will be disappointing for many people, because the world chases after voices that claim to see the future.

In reality, economic forecasters (prophets) have an extremely poor track record (including the myriad of so-called Christian financial forecasters). To be sure, while we cannot reliably predict the future course of events, it remains true that we can certainly discern the seasons. In fact, as Christians we are admonished to do so ... to watch the signs of the times.

We can certainly identify the rapid shifts in human values, worldview, and morality. Here we can assuredly sense the accelerating drift toward materialism and humanism both in North America and worldwide. Moreover, we can document the long-running globalization and worldwide convergence of materialistic beliefs.

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How should these prophets be judged? Suppose that one forecaster may have once foretold that an economic crisis or financial downturn was to occur. How far in advance was their prophecy ... or how near to the actual fulfillment? What fact or measure was taken to be the validation of their prophecy—perhaps the

New York Stock Exchange falling 10% ... or 50%?

Exactly what should be the criteria to prove a prophet? The Bible is quite clear on this question: A prophet must be correct all the time; not just once or twice; not off by a few percentage points; not just over the long-term, but also over the near-term. All prophecies must come to be true (Ezekiel 33:33). Therefore, there are no modern day forecasters that would qualify as a prophet according to the Old Testament tests. After all, “no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things” (2 Peter 1:20).

As such, of what use are any forecasts of economic crisis or prosperity? Firstly, one cannot know in advance which forecaster will prove correct; which of their prophecies will fail or not; and when they will change their “interpretations.”

The prophecies of the Bible, on the other hand, are authored by God.

Consider this recent “warning” forecast made by a Christian financial analyst, writing an article entitled, “Four Financial Strategies to Prepare for a Blood Moons Collapse” in *Charisma* magazine: “It is very difficult to predict the precise dates for an economic collapse. However, much of the data suggest we could see this play out in September or October of this year. This doesn’t mean a collapse couldn’t happen sooner or later; it could be months or years away.”

Of what help is this forecast? We are not centering out this individual, but rather want to point out a common trait of these types of forecasts: They are useless. As it was, this “warning” for Christian readers of this magazine was published in September, which provided no lead time at all. There indeed may be financial tremors ... a second-phase outbreak of the Global Financial Crisis. And if so, it would not be a surprise. It is also possible that policymakers may either hasten or delay such an outcome.

The prophecies of the Bible, on the other hand, are authored by God. He “[...] is not human, that he should lie, not a human being, that he should change his mind” (Numbers 23:19). God’s prophecies, therefore, are reliable and true. Thus, if we base our comments about the future upon His Word, we will have spoken “[...] worthy, not worthless, words” (Jeremiah 15:19)—not just anxiety-producing hysteria.

We observe an additional point of unreliability of most crisis-warning forecasters. They will tend to advise “selling out” or buying gold, or some other type of defensive strategy. However, what do these same forecasters advise when a

foreseen crisis is over? Would they have recommended to their flock to “buy-in” at the bottom of a financial or real estate downturn, for example? It is one thing to warn of the near-regular financial crises that come along, but what about the recoveries?

As it may be, despite the steep declines in real estate values and financial securities at the onset of the Global Financial Crisis, overall wealth in America has since recovered to new highs (according to the measuring conventions of the U.S. Federal Reserve’s Flow of Funds Report). Prophets of doom would then necessarily have had to revise their predictions, would they not? In truth, were we to apply an unbiased set of criteria with which to rate modern-day crisis prophets that focus on materialistic events, we would have to conclude that they all are unreliable—Christian or non-Christian.

Points to Ponder

Surely, there is little harm in some forward planning. The average householder today will normally plan to have sufficient food in the house that anticipates foreseeable needs. Households may also want to lay aside savings for their retirement years. However, if we are looking for refuge in earthly financial markets or other possible stores of value (gold, guns, food ... etc.), we will be mostly frustrated. Neither short-term nor intermediate timing of any such buy or sell transaction can be guaranteed to be successful.

Financial advisors who proffer forecasts are all unreliable. Therefore, anyone who searches out these prophets to divine the future for their investments, will eventually be disappointed.



Mankind has chosen its idols. Latterly, these have taken the form of a financialized humanity and the worship of wealth (both false and real).

Why? There are a number of reasons. As already mentioned, we cannot reliably see the future; and secondly, we humans are inclined to act on emotions of both fear and greed. Human emotions, especially when exciting large crowds to run in the same direction—perhaps to all adopt a new expectation of the future—are almost sure to disappoint.

Predictions from sources such as mentioned are likely to be motivated by conditions that are already very obvious. As such, these “negative” or “positive” views have already had an impact upon the U.S. dollar or the gold price ... or upon what they may have recommended.

Also, crisis forecasting in North America is often based upon perceptions of domestic trends. Therefore, pulpit forecasters can fail to take global perspectives into account. While the economic or financial problems that are cited as proofs for a warning prediction may be real, other countries in the world may face worse conditions. As such, to cite one example, the US dollar will have risen contrary to the consensus “doom” expectations of pulpit prophets over the last five years or so.

The result of all of the above, is that pulpit forecasts often lead to catastrophe and hurt many people. The impact of our wrong responses, fear-mongering, and our financial insecurities can be quite damaging.

If one is not a bona fide “anointed” prophet of God, one should not make financial market predictions from the pulpit. The two separate spheres do not mix. Credibility is certain to be lost. Secular analysts are themselves subject to gross inaccuracies in their predictions. As such, it is

unwise to risk a ministry’s reputation on similar misstatements, or to bear responsibility for anyone having acted upon incorrect advice.

Ominously, Canada’s largest securities regulator (the equivalent to the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission) recently took the prejudicial step of asking all regulated participants (stockbrokers, portfolio managers ... etc.) to disclose whether they were a part-time pastor! Why? The regulator has repeatedly encountered instances of pastors having promoted “Ponzi schemes” and other irresponsible investment strategies. (This is true not only in Canada, but also most certainly in the U.S.)

Their “financial prophecies” were reckless and even viewed as criminal by the securities regulators. It is a sad statement that “Christian” pastors are being convicted for their fixation with materialism or prosperity gospels. Preachers and pastors would do well to teach Biblical principles of stewardship. In any case, stewardship does not necessarily have anything to do with investing.

Mankind has chosen its idols. Latterly, these have taken the form of a financialized humanity and the worship of wealth (both false and real). Bible believers, by contrast, hearken to Apostle Paul’s advice to Timothy: “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment” (1 Timothy 6:17). (MC)

(In Part III, we will return to examine the claims of prophetic “anxiety merchants” who sell survival supplies and strategies.)