

It's Time To Be A Real Christian

Rod Reynolds

The Apostle Paul warned us, “ But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (1 Timothy 3:1-5).

As Paul warned, we are living in perilous times, and as things progress, the world promises to become even more perilous. Are you prepared for what is coming? How should we prepare? Each of us needs to ask himself these questions.

Jesus Christ warned that even as the end of the age draws near, paradoxically many, even in the Church of God, would be heedless, convinced of their own righteousness, self-satisfied, spiritually blind (Revelation 3:17-18).

We're warned in many Scriptures not to be spiritually asleep, especially as the end of the age approaches. We need to wake up and be prepared for what's ahead of us. It's time for us to take stock of where we are in relation to what's coming and make sure we are real Christians, prepared and ready for what we are facing both in the near and more distant future.

As Israel came out of Egypt, they were bound for the promised land. They knew – or at least had been told – what their ultimate destination was to be. But they didn't know all the twists and turns that would lie in the path before them. They also did not understand the spiritual requirements that would enable them to successfully complete their journey – even though they had been told that as well (Hebrews 4:1-2).

In a similar manner, we can know what our hoped-for destination is, the Kingdom of God. We don't know all the twists and turns our path to the Kingdom of God will take, but we do need to keep our bearings, and we need to know what is required of us spiritually to reach the goal.

Many signs indicate, and many pundits are warning, that we are facing a watershed crisis in our history, as nations (especially the United States and British descended nations), and as a world. Below I will review some of the current trends in today's world, and how they relate to similar events in history. This can help us to know what we can expect in the future, and how we can make sure we are ready for whatever comes.

Jesus said we do not know the day nor hour of his coming (Matthew 24:36). However, we can know when that time is approaching. Even though the world will

be warned, most will be caught unawares. But the calamitous events preceding the coming of Christ and his coming itself need not catch us unprepared (Luke 12:54-56; Matthew 24:43-44).

How can we discern the times? If we view world events from the perspective of Bible prophecy, we can perceive how events are moving toward the collapse of the present world order, to be replaced by a new one dominated by a united Europe. We cannot know the precise timetable or twists and turns that future events will take, but we can understand the broad outline of what is coming and major events that lie ahead.

As of November, 2013, we are still in the throes of what has been called the greatest economic crisis since the great depression. The current predicament was triggered by a housing bubble in the United States that led to a banking crisis in late 2007 as millions of mortgages went into default.

The crisis in mortgage defaults in the U.S. is not over, despite the trillions of dollars that have been pumped into the system to maintain liquidity. Reuters reported in February, 2010 that, "In the United States, mortgage default risk has risen in the face of emergency government and lender efforts, including a \$75 billion plan to refinance or modify loans to troubled borrowers" ("S&P survey sees U.S. mortgage defaults up," February 16, 2010). The trend has continued into the current year (2013); "Mortgage defaults rise, setting an alarming trend", www.housingwire.com, January 15, 2013; "TARP Audit: Housing Recipients Re-Defaulting in Alarming Numbers" ; www.moneynews.com, July 24, 2013; "New Defaults Trouble a Mortgage Program", www.nytimes.com, July 24, 2013. "Rising mortgage defaults may force FHA to request bailout from Treasury: report," www.washingtontimes.com., September 5, 2013.

Another indication of the troubled economy is the fact that student loans in the U.S. now exceed a trillion dollars, and recent years have seen record defaults among borrowers ("Debt Crisis: Student Loan Defaults Set Record," www.inquisitr.com, January 31, 2013). The student loan debt crisis may be far worse than commonly believed, according *The Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Government Vastly Undercounts Defaults," July 11, 2010). "... one in every five government loans that entered repayment in 1995 has gone into default. The default rate is higher for loans made to students from two-year colleges, and higher still, reaching 40 percent, for those who attended for-profit institutions." *The Chronicle* points out, "When borrowers default on their student loans, taxpayers are on the hook for 97 to 100 percent of the losses, depending on whether the default is on a guaranteed or direct loan."

Even more ominous is the rapidly expanding national debt of the U.S., which increased by about 2 trillion dollars in 2009 and now (November 2013) tops 17 trillion dollars, having increased under the current administration by over 6 trillion dollars. For the first time since near the end of world war II, the national debt at

the end of 2012 was more than 100% of national GDP ("History of the United States public debt", *wikipedia.org*).

It doesn't take an economic genius to see where this is leading. Reuters columnist John Kemp commented, "The United States and the United Kingdom stand on the brink of the largest debt crisis in history" ("U.S. and UK on Brink of Debt Disaster", *blogs.reuters.com*, January 20, 2009). The Congressional Government Accountability Office has stated very clearly, as have many other analysts, that the spending policies of the U.S. government are not sustainable. "...the Government ... must eventually address the long-term fiscal imbalance resulting from Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. The Government's fiscal policies for these programs as currently structured are not sustainable" (*A Citizen's Guide to the 2008 Financial Report of the U.S. Government*, p. 3).

This report was published in February, 2009, about a year before a new massive nationalized health care entitlement program was signed into law by President Obama, called the "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act." The new program is predicted to add at least a trillion dollars to the deficit over the first ten years ("CBO Releases Updated Estimates for the Insurance Coverage Provisions of the Affordable Care Act"). Unfunded liabilities of the U.S. government are now estimated to top 126 trillion dollars (*www.usdebtclock.org*), an obligation nearly all analysts agree is impossible to meet.

Economic crises of the kind we're facing have often led to watershed changes in the power and influence of major nations. The Roman Empire officially ceased to exist in 476 A.D. when conquered by the Heruli under King Odoacer (also known as Odovacer). But in 554 A.D. Justinian at the behest of the Bishop of Rome restored the Roman Empire under the domination of the Catholic Church. That was the first of seven prophesied resurrections of the Roman Empire (or a politically united Europe; Revelation 17:8-11).

The fifth resurrection as we look back in history occurred under Napoleon. But what led to the rise of Napoleon as dictator of France and Europe? The French revolution was triggered by the calling of the Estates General in May, 1789 to try to figure out how to deal with the fact that the French government was bankrupt. The bankruptcy of the French government led to the collapse of the monarchy, the French revolution, the Napoleonic wars, and the Dictatorship of Napoleon.

The sixth resurrection of the Roman Empire was the Hitler - Mussolini axis (an axis of evil if there ever was one). In many respects World War II -- started by Mussolini, Hitler and the Japanese Empire -- was a dress rehearsal for a future climactic World War that will bring an end to this age. At its conclusion that war will usher in the reign of Jesus Christ on the earth (Isaiah 5:26-30; Joel 3:2; Zechariah 14:2-3, 16; Revelation 6:4; 9:15-19; 19:15).

Mussolini came to power in a time of economic chaos in Italy. The first world war

and its aftermath and the depression that began in 1929 brought many nations to the verge of bankruptcy. The tensions in domestic affairs in various nations led to a marked turn toward dictatorial forms of government, and to widespread repudiation of financial and moral obligations in the effort to solve domestic problems.

Under the Dawes Plan and the Young Plan Germany had become heavily indebted to the United States. Other nations in Europe also owed huge debts to the United States amounting to over \$10 billion. By 1928 Germany had a foreign debt of 30 billion gold marks - mainly to the U.S., because of easy loans made possible by the Young Plan. This was a staggering debt but it had made possible in Germany a boom period of superficial prosperity. At the time Hitler's party had only 12 members in the Reichstag.

But in 1931 a banking crisis occurred in Europe which led to the withdrawing of foreign funds from Germany and the bankruptcy of the German government - unable to pay its debts. In 1928 there were only about a million unemployed in Germany. By 1932 there were over 6 million unemployed. Instead of 12 seats in the Reichstag Hitler had 107 seats after the 1932 election. When Hitler became Chancellor in January, 1933, Germany was in extreme national crisis brought on by national bankruptcy and a world economic crisis. In the March 1933 elections the Nazis increased their strength to 288 seats (David Irving, *The War Path*, p. 21), and the world was on the road to World War II. Hitler managed to leverage his party's minority position (but with a plurality of about 45% of the Reichstag's delegates) to become the absolute dictator of Germany.

Hitler solved Germany's economic problems (temporarily) by doing several things:

1. Renunciation of foreign debts.
2. Establishing strong central government that forbade strikes and instituted a program of public works such as building the autobahn.
3. Balancing the national budget.
4. Establishing bilateral barter agreements with Balkan and Near Eastern countries.
5. Rearmament. From 1935 to 1938 Germany went from practically nothing to the world's most powerful nation militarily.
6. Confiscation of the property of the Jews.

The lesson in this is that if the U.S. economy collapses, or there is a collapse of the world's economy, new political realities will follow. Such an economic collapse is considered by many observers to be very likely in the not too distant future.

And such an event could well lead to the prophesied emergence of a united Europe under a dictatorship, what the Bible calls the "Beast" (Revelation 13:1-8; 17:12-14).

What can you do to make sure you're prepared, no matter what happens?

Jesus said, " Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them" (Luke 12:35-37). In accordance with Jesus' instructions, then, we must be watching. We must be alert to the dangers facing us and the world, and to warn of what is coming. Every real Christian has a part to play in the Church's mission to do that, either directly or in a supporting role. We each individually have to be alert and vigilant, spiritually aware (Revelation 3:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9).

We must not allow ourselves to be consumed with the affairs of this life. We have to do certain things to maintain our existence, but at the same time we need to keep our eyes on the long term goal, the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Isaiah 55:6-9; Romans 13:11-14).

As Peter admonished, we need to be about the business of making our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:3-10). He listed several attributes of godly character that we are to develop to help us do that.

Diligence , Greek *speedo*, as prescribed in 2 Peter 1:5 implies quickness, haste, earnestness, diligence. Hence is implied action now, without delay. Immediate, earnest, sincere, diligent effort.

Virtue, Greek *arete* (2 Peter 1:5), implies excellence, resolution, energy. In other words, act on your faith. Faith without works is dead (James 2:26). Genuine faith leads to energetic action on our part to repent, to study, to pray, to serve God, to overcome the flesh.

We should be growing in true knowledge (2 Peter 1:6). We need to be learning more about God, about his plan, his precepts and laws, his word, about what he wants us to become. We should be diligently studying God's word regularly (2 Timothy 2:15).

Temperance, mastery, self-control (2 Peter 1:6). We must work diligently to overcome lusts, bad habits, selfishness, self-righteousness, and every other vice and undesirable character trait.

Perseverance (2 Peter 1:6) implies remaining faithful when others have departed

from the faith, continue firm, hold out, remain constant, endure. "... he who endures to the end shall be saved," said Jesus (Matthew 24:13).

Godliness (2 Peter 1:7) implies reverence and faithfulness, an attitude of humility and service toward God. It implies doing good, serving others with reverence toward God and love for neighbor. Even further, Jesus commanded, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:44-45).

Brotherly love (2 Peter 1:7), implying a genuine affection for others. We need to develop a bond with others among the faithful based on our mutual fellowship with God and Christ.

But beyond that, Godly love goes deeper than affection. It is a genuine concern for the welfare of others no matter who they may be, manifested in our actions, our behavior (Romans 13:8-10).

"... he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:9-11).

The time is now to be prepared for Christ's return. The time is now to show God that you are a real Christian. The time is now to make your calling and election sure.

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