

# Don't Waste The Recession! – Part One

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## FOR FURTHER STUDY

For many Americans, including Christians, politicians, and everyone in between, America has always been seen as being too strong, too smart, and too prosperous for any inside or outside force to control or affect us as a nation. In fact, as a nation, we have been somewhat arrogant about it. We believe and live as if the turmoil and challenges that other nations face will never affect us. In our minds, we have become the determiners of our own destiny, whether for good or bad. The problem with that thinking is that it is contrary to Scripture. The Bible declares that God Himself, not man, is presently working all things after the counsel of His own will. As God, He has the ability to either cause or to allow all things that affect us.

Why would God allow a recession of this magnitude in 2009? The simple answer is that evidently God wants our attention because He has something to say to us. Evidently, past periods of prosperity have only served to close our ears and dim our eyes to the point that we have been ignoring God altogether. God does not like to be ignored.

Whether you take the position that God caused the recession or that God allowed the recession is immaterial at this point in time. The greater point is that God has something to say to us and He means to be heard. All things happen on purpose and by design. For the Christian, we can take comfort in Paul's words found in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose". Note the words "all things". That includes the recession.

### The Word Recession

When I use the word recession, I don't have a big, fancy definition in mind. I simply mean financial setbacks and difficulties, business slowdowns and closings, foreclosures, bankruptcies, bank failures, economic slowdown, work related layoffs, loss of retirement funds, and loss of investments.

### Our Biggest Problem Today

While very few Christians would argue the fact that God is speaking to America and the world in box car letters across the sky today, most people have very short attention spans when it comes to God speaking to us. The events of 911 are a perfect example of this. Just after the events of that date, Americans flocked to houses of worship all across America to seek the mind of God and what He was saying to them. Church attendance was at an all time high. Yet, within a short period of time, we went back to business as usual to where we are today. According to statistics, church attendance is now at an all time low. When God gets our attention by causing or allowing things to interrupt our best made plans, it would behoove us to heed everything that God has to say, and to seek His mind and will in all things. The worst possible scenario would be for us to waste the recession by missing what God desires to say to us and through us.

Another problem is that many, if not most have the idea that America is somehow immune from God's displeasure and judgment. We base that on 2 Chronicles 7:14 along with other related verses. The problem with that thinking is that there is no evidence whatsoever that we as a nation or as a people have followed the commands of the verse. In fact, we will even tolerate scoundrels in public office who have questionable morals if the economy happens to be good. Remember during a recent political campaign where someone said, "It's the economy stupid". Nothing else seems to matter to anyone. I believe it would help all of us if we read past 2 Chronicles 7:14 to include verses 15 and 16 to get the whole message.

### Foundational Verses of Scripture

Proverbs 16:33 "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is wholly of the Lord (even the events that seem accidental are really ordered of Him).

Proverbs 19:21 "Many plans are in a man's mind, but it is the Lord's purpose for him that will stand".

Psalms 33:10 "The Lord brings the counsel of the nations to naught: He makes the thoughts and plan of the people to no effect".

Psalms 33:12 "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for His inheritance".

Proverbs 14:34 "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people".

Isaiah 6:19-21; 31-34

### Foundational Truths

1. God is absolutely and completely sovereign and supreme in all things.
2. God either "causes" or He "allows" all things according to His sovereign will and purpose.
3. Everything that happens is in accordance to His plan and purpose.

### God's Unusual Dealings With Nations in the Past

In the Old Testament, it was clear that when a nation turned from God to serve idols, He had specific measures that He would take to call them to repentance:

1. He lovingly and graciously sent prophets to them to say "thus saith the Lord".
2. If they responded correctly, their sin would be forgiven and they would be blessed.
3. If they did not respond correctly, then God would judge them severely.
4. Many times, He would allow unprecedented prosperity for long periods of time even if they did not repent. Why would God do that? To help with the answer, let's look at several Biblical examples of this:

### Examples of Financial Blessings Prior to Judgment

1. The Days of Noah: God used Noah as His prophet to warn the people of the pending judgment. Amazingly, according to Luke 17:26-28, during the 120 years prior to the flood, they feasted, celebrated harvest, had plenty of work, and traded goods and services. In short, business was booming. Yet, a dark cloud was gathering even as they were prospering. Luke 17:27 says this prosperity lasted until the day Noah and his family entered the ark.

2. The Days of Lot: Sodom and Gomorrah enjoyed the same booming economy until it was destroyed by God with fire (Luke 17:26-28). Ezekiel 16:49-50 adds this "Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good".

3. The Days of Josiah: Josiah was only 18 years of age when God stirred his heart to seek the Scriptures. The message he read was not encouraging. Judgment was coming because of the wickedness in the land. To make certain of the message, he sent emissaries to the prophets to make certain he was understanding the reading correctly. The prophetess Huldah responded by saying that it was true. Judgment is coming and God will not change His mind (2 Kings 22:11-13; 15-17). Upon hearing this, Josiah humbled himself, tore down the idols, removed the pagan temples, dispelled the witches, stopped child sacrifice, and called the nation back to God. Amazingly, they enjoyed prosperity for the next 21 years until Josiah died at the young age of 39. Almost immediately, they were carried into Babylonian captivity.

4. The Days of Judah: Almost overnight, Judah's good days came to an end. Invading armies came in and pillaged the land and burned the temple. A remnant fled to Egypt for refuge, yet they continued to sin. (See Jeremiah 44 for the details of this account). Jeremiah 44:16-18 records an amazing admission of the people. In short they said, we have committed these sins before but God didn't do anything about it, so why would He judge us now for the same thing? What an admission! Jeremiah responded by saying, "Are you so blind that you cannot see"?

5. The Days of Babylon: Revelation 18 says that in the last days, a prosperous society called Babylon will collapse in just one hour. Who that is, we do not know. See Revelation 18:3,7; 9-11.

Note the common denominator of these examples. God's displeasure and judgment followed long periods of financial prosperity.

### Why Would God Allow a Recession or Cause a Recession?

1. Money Is Always The Best Way To Get Our Attention. Money represents who we are. It can even show how genuine our relationship is with God. There are more than 1600 references to money in the Bible (see 1 Timothy 6:5-19 and Hebrews 13:5). Satan declares that we deserve what we have; that money brings happiness; and that money equals security. You may have noticed recently, that none of these are true.

2. The Recession Exposes the Things We Try To Keep Hidden and Drives Us to Repentance: None of us are perfect. All of us have hidden sin in our lives and God desires to root it out. Even Job, who was said to be perfect and upright in all things (Job 1:1), found himself repenting (Job 42:6) after God had tested and tried him. The Apostle Paul was brought to the brink of death to teach him not to rely upon himself (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). The sin of self reliance is in every one of us.

3. The Recession Enlarges Our View of The World: Hundreds of millions of people live in poverty and recession every day of their lives. More than 16,000 children die every day from hunger. One billion people do not have safe drinking water. There are 18 million orphans in Africa alone. The recession reminds us that our worse days are better than most people's best days.

4. The Recession Forces Us to Refocus Our Confidence and Security: According to 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, our goal must never be to be wealthy in order to give more. Our goal must be to be generous, even in our poverty and affliction. According to Paul's words, joy came only when they were willing to give when they didn't have much to give.

See Acts 4:34 Psalm 37:25 Isaiah 41:17 Psalm 37:28

Whatever you do, Don't Waste the Recession by missing what God is saying to us!