

10 Perspectives to Gain Peace and Real Riches - Part 3

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We continue with the final part of this series. Finally, we come to the conclusion of our quest:

“In these troubled times to find peace, contentedness and to “store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20).

We now outline the last three of our needed perspectives.

8. The Binary Nature of Wealth

To this point, we have not yet discussed the definition of “real wealth” and “eternal riches.” We had earlier reviewed two other concepts of wealth — illusory wealth as differentiated from true earthly wealth (the fruits of labor and the created physical firmaments). However, before doing so, we must first highlight one additional transitory aspect of earthly wealth. While newspapers may focus on losses, bankruptcies and indebtedness, they usually ignore the other side of the equation. Every asset is owned by someone. Every transaction must have a buyer and a seller; every borrower, a creditor. As Isaiah puts it:

“[...] for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor” (Isaiah 24:2).

The visions of Zechariah shown in chapter 5 of the book of the same name, further testify to the effects of the binary nature of the world’s commercial systems.

Apologies, if we seem to be dwelling on a seemingly redundant point. Yet, its implications are not generally realized. While many trillions of dollars of wealth may be disappearing into the ether for some people, for the most part someone else is gaining in relative wealth. It is true that capital can be destroyed and that the world in a capitalistic sense will be poorer in such cases. Generally, however, wealth is more likely to be transferred to someone else or is converted to a different form during times of economic crisis or financial inflation.

To be sure, these processes have been underway these past few years as for centuries before. Consider who might have benefited from the issuance of sub-prime mortgages? Somebody then sold these mortgages to the issuers of asset-backed paper. Someone built or sold the homes that went up in price to ridiculous extremes relative to household income levels. While AIG may have lost a reputed \$170 billion in writing credit default insurance, the counterparty who bought the insurance in the first place is being paid off. The point we make is that while the popular media may be deflecting attention by way of its biases, there is another perspective that must not be overlooked.

Times of financial crisis, conditions of ongoing corruption and ever easier opportunities

to defraud or outwit the masses, continue to lead to ever widening wealth skews, as we have already pointed out. The corollary to that condition for society is ever increasing economic oppression; a trend of growing anxiety with the cares of this world for a greater majority of people. We will touch on the significance of this development for the world and Christians in Point 10.

Thankfully, there is one type of wealth over which one need not agonize or worry. Christ revealed its identity:

“Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted [...]” (Luke 12:33).

9. The Real Biblical Worldview

Researchers point out that one of the main differences between the US financial crash and others — for example, that of Japan in the 1990s — was that it was households (individuals and families) that became heavily overindebted. This was not the case in Japan, nor the Asian crisis of the late 1990s, nor those in Scandinavia in the early 1990s. There, it was more the actions of companies and governments that led to these crises. But why in the case of the American, did people become so easily seduced to take on such huge amounts of debt, and to accept the vain predictions of perpetual prosperity? Responsibility of stewardship was thrown to the wind and the idea that prosperity and wealth were both eternal and effortless was the common belief.

It may have to do with another main difference: namely, America’s major religion — a post-modern, utilitarian aberration of the Biblical Christianity. This may seem a harsh statement, but I believe that the facts well support it. Most definitely, America is the most Christian-professing, major nation in the world. But crucially, only in North America do we find the prevalence of Prosperity Gospel. This theology even merits an entry on Wikipedia. This twisted, false gospel has invaded the thinking of virtually all Christians, though no doubt many would derisively dismiss its more brazen versions. The mainstream Wikipedia points out that this “somewhat similar (yet strikingly different) belief appears in most ‘New Thought’ religions, Unity, Religious Science, Divine Science denominations.”

It is a false teaching — “a doctrine of demons” — that not surprisingly has had insidious repercussions. Its implicit message is that the evidence of God’s blessing — yes, even the validation of one’s salvation — is a high standard of living as defined by the world’s dominant humanist perspective. This view does not stand up to any Scriptural scrutiny. It is not Biblical. Not one mention or even an indirect statement supporting this doctrine is found in the New Testament. If that were so, we must conclude that Jesus Christ, all the apostles, and most first century Christians were unsuccessful “undercomers.” They had not discovered Prosperity Gospel and never entered into its blessings. One wonders why one of the first names for Christians in the first century was “Ebionite,” meaning “the poor ones.”

Prosperity Theology is an errant belief system, heavily laced with paganism, and candy-coated with Christian form and words. It is a heresy that has been bringing America to its ruin, turning cold the faith of many, and may eventually reveal that many of America's progressive Christians never did have a true conversion in the first place. It is not a gospel but rather an idolatry.

While we may decry the hedonism of elites and the fraudulent thefts of Wall Street captains, a special blame must be reserved for the false shepherds that have crept into the pulpits this past half-century. They did not storm the pulpits by accident. What was not preached was self-denial (Matthew 16:24), that "we are not our own" (1 Corinthians 6:19); nor that the ultimate purpose of our existence is the glorification of God, not the satisfaction of fleshly stomachs and glands.

As a result, high-income countries such as the US and Canada are full of baby Christians, still dieting on milk, who cannot deal with the "meat" of reality and responsibility. Paul thought such Christians contemptible, saying:

"You need milk, not solid food!" (Hebrews 5:12). "You are [...] worldly" (1 Corinthians 3:3). "[...] Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

The greatest tragedy is that many of these "baby Christians" will give up on their faith and begin to hate God during current and coming tough economic times. The "different" god that they had been taught, was the proverbial big sugar daddy that showered baubles, toys, success and acceptance upon them every time he was called on the cell phone. God was a means, not an end.

And now, just because a "Darwinian" world economic system has preyed upon and destroyed their earthly wealth, they no longer want eternal "treasures in heaven." Could it be that some people were never interested in eternal wealth in the first place? Letting go of eternal riches for a bit of temporal luxury is bad investment policy in the extreme. At such times as this, let's be bold enough not to look to left nor right, but toward our eternal destinies and promises.

10. Who to Blame? Convenient Sacrificial Lambs

Great crises, whether financial, economic or otherwise, always involve victims and sacrificial lambs. It is convenient to assign blame. It soothes the national conscience. Therefore, upon whom to pin the tail this time? Who might be the sacrificial lambs? Less than a decade ago, such people as Martha Stewart, Bernard Ebbers of World-Com infamy, Enron CEO Kenneth Lay, Tyco International chief Dennis Kozlowski and others, were marched in front of the news cameras on their way to court or jail. (Some of them were even declared Christians). They were no worse than many other business people. They just happened to have been caught in the public eye. If anything, they reflected the accepted culture of the times, a cheating culture. This deal with cheating is becoming evermore flagrant and is an accepted value in our society.

Just what values are being exemplified in the following example? US President Obama recently stated that investors can have “absolute confidence” in Treasury bills and that “not just the Chinese government, but every investor can have absolute confidence in the soundness of investments in the U.S.” Then, only one week later, the Federal Reserve announced one of the greatest money printing operations of all time. As we will explain further, this will prove to be a momentous occurrence. It is the future implications of this great corrupt act to which we must next direct our attention. Don’t fixate on what has happened to date. Big changes and challenges lie ahead.

We must make two more comments with respect to the blame game. Many times in the history of the world, the Jews were the convenient whipping stock for financial collapses. Tragically, it happened many times. For various reasons — mainly because God decreed that they would be a separate and dispersed people, until their Millennial restoration — this special people, who were called to be God’s servants, has excelled. Indeed, Wall Street today is home today to a disproportionate number of Jews. Many have high profile positions. For example, the two recent central bank governors, Allan Greenspan and Ben Bernanke — the very two that are presiding over current monetary malfeasance of grand scale — are Jews. Larry Summers, Robert Rubin, Timothy Geithner — in fact, half of the treasury secretaries since 1995 (these widely seen as the big bubble years of financial alchemy) have been Jews. We need not go on.

The current stage of the global financial crisis (GFC) may be nearing an end. Yet, its final repercussions have yet to unfold, as other troublesome stages still lie ahead. In my view, these stand to be quite grim. There is a high probability that an inflationary spiral or a “crack-up” boom will occur. This will cause enormous societal stresses. Many people are already angry. Outright protest and anarchy could flare up at some future point. We are speculating. Yet, current conditions are dangerous and grievous, especially so when perceived in light of the history of the Jewish people.

Surely during the last few years, terribly corrupt and idolatrous conditions swept the US and most of the world. And, these conditions stand to get worse as grand monetary manipulations undermine any semblance of fair stewardship and ethics. That financial indicators themselves are deceptive is a very crucial realization that too few Christians have pondered. (For a more in-depth treatment of this subject, please access the booklet, “Forecasting Right From Wrong: New domain of financial markets?”)

The American Jew has experienced a Golden Age since the 1950s. And, America has prospered because of the liberties and acceptance it has bestowed upon this people the “apple of [God’s] eye” (Zechariah 2:8). But every Golden Age for the Jew to date, whether experienced in Spain, Russia, Poland, Germany and others, has come to a close. As Christians, we must pray that this does not happen again and that the demonic spirit of anti-Semitism does not cause America (indeed even ourselves) to have any complicity in such evil.

It couldn’t be more important that Christians maintain a balanced and informed

perspective on this topic. We cannot forget that Christians are greatly indebted to the Jewish people, for we are grafted into their root.

“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you” (Romans 11:17-18).

Finally, may we make one last point. Please don't misinterpret me on this comment, as I always receive heated responses every time I touch upon this topic. Yet, it remains confounding how many intelligent Christians lose their focus in the area of conspiracy theories and corrupt elites. In doing so, they get themselves trapped as purveyors of the Social Gospel. Yes, there are conspiracies in the world and there are a lot of rich corrupt people. (Not all rich people are corrupt, though the Bible sometimes assumes this to be the case. For example, see James 2:6, 5:1.)

It is the basic nature of humans — everyone — to love money, to share in “the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does” (1 John 2:16). All people, whether elites or common people, must accept responsibility for their actions and idolatries. The sins of some people can affect the entire world; others only their immediate families.

In any case, it is not the great commission of the Church to convict and hunt down sinners. If one should want to make it their life's ambition to scalp so-called global conspirators, or to hang Wall Street manipulators, or perhaps to get sex-trade workers incarcerated and off the street, one is free to do so. But please do not claim that this is a Christian mission or duty. God has set rulers and governments in place to establish earthly justice and to carry out such initiatives.

The Church must preach the Gospel: that man is a sinner and headed for damnation and that only by acknowledging Christ as Lord, Son of God and Savior will he be saved. Then, once imbued with the living Holy Spirit, the convictions of sin will emanate from the heart. The scalpings, condemnations and hangings will not lead to repentance of a type that offers eternal life. The Bible repeatedly says that the Spirit is the sword (Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 2:16) and likewise the Word (Revelation 19:15). If we are to engage in any offensive actions, it must be with this Sword, not our social, activist programs.

The Penultimate Act for the Near-term Future

For the final time we ask the question: What lies ahead? We now provide two answers. One is directed to the preservation and maximization of our eternal riches. The other to this present earthly realm of money and economics. But why should we care about this present world that we know will pass away? Just why must we do our best to steward our lives and possessions? There are many grounds, provided above all that our affections remain fixed upon the Lord. For one, we must not become trapped by this world.

Sometimes this is unavoidable due to the sins of others, and not ours. There are many other sound reasons. However, let's allow King Solomon's balanced observation to suffice for this purpose.

“Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor and steal, and take the name of my God in vain”
(Proverbs 30:8-9, KJV).

One of the key pivot points for the future is now clear: Central banks are printing money. We hope we will not be thought as false alarmists. However, no one should underestimate the crucial significance of recent events. It is momentous ... as if the entire world will have shifted upon its axis. What we mean by this term “printing money” is actual fiat money creation ... money out of thin air. The Bank of England, the US Federal Reserve and the Swiss National Bank have announced outright purchases of market securities. Other central banks can be expected to follow. In the case of the US Federal Reserve, it intends to buy asset backed mortgage bonds (agencies) and treasury bonds totaling \$1 trillion (on top of the \$650 billion in mortgage bonds already announced in 2008). The bell tolls. Central banks are desperately trying to re-inflate monetary channels.

There must be an inflationary outcome of some kind because there is now rampant “monetary” inflation. This is the essence of all inflation and all its outworkings. The only question remaining concerns the manner of its manifestation. All of this is not necessarily obvious, and may take some time to manifest its evil in the form that people recognize. While the fears driving these “flight to safety” flows may be understandable, it nevertheless stages the scene for the next big disaster ... the final effects of virulent monetary inflation. All the lambs have been rounded up in the slaughterhouse, as they now will find themselves trapped in relatively depreciating cash-equivalent investments and bonds. Can you see the makings for the next crisis?

Looking ahead, at some point, we would then expect general incomes, consumer prices and real assets also to be re-inflated. But this should not necessarily be expected to occur right away. While such an outcome may be attempted, ultimate hopes stand to be disappointed. Indeed, stock market levels could be manipulated up for a time, yet real economic life for the average person would deteriorate further. At the same time, rising interest rates would quickly choke off economic recovery prospects. Also, relative wealth would have been greatly redistributed through the crisis period (which is exactly what is occurring at the present time), further undermining growth potential.

A main point of this series, with respect to the topic of the earthbound realms of money and economies, is that we should be looking ahead ... not behind. Hopefully, our brief explanations will have shown readers that new challenges lie ahead. These will be diametrically different, in our view, than those that have already occurred. While people are now holing up in what they perceive to be safe havens from the disasters that have already occurred, they are actually now sitting in the middle of the track of a train hurtling from a different direction.

Thoughts to Ponder

We have come to the end of our 10 points and perspectives. Eternal perspectives are all so comforting, but where does the rubber hit the road here on earth? Times of economic and financial trouble do cause human hardship and stress upon this earth. Many people are suffering great anxieties and possibly even hunger and homelessness. What's the point of being so heavenly minded that ones advice is of no earthly good?

Actually, if people do not have their heavenly riches sorted out, there is little point in discussing earthly conditions. Why? Because life will be disappointing at certain times. It is a fact of life that there will be troubles. Jesus said, "In this world, you will have trouble" (John 16:33). World conditions today are absolutely treacherous to the Christ-indwelled person. This is a key characteristic of endtime conditions.

The Bible mentions many victims and casualties of that time. Christ prophesied that not much faith would be left on earth when He returns (Luke 18:8). Some people will be drawn away from their faith because of lust for riches and the deceptions of wealth; others will become victims through entrapment and economic oppression (Matthew 24:12, Luke 21:34, 2 Timothy 3:1-7). Either fate can be the result of our own actions or that of others. Whatever situation we may find ourselves in, we will be hard-pressed to maintain a contented and peaceful attitude if we do not first realize where our eternal riches lie. With the anchor of the promises of salvation and eternal life, we are much better able to deal with such temporal questions.

This one thing is for sure: I (we) know where my (our) riches are hidden and preserved ... not somewhere "where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal" (Matthew 6:19). No. Better to "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matthew 6:20).

The rich young ruler was advised by Christ:

"You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Luke 18:22).

Furthermore, Christ clearly linked our stewardship and faithfulness on earth with the ability to appreciate real eternal riches.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the real riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke 16:10-12, KJV).

Consider the significance of that verse. If we can't even be faithful with temporal things — our earthly lives and bodies in service of the Lord Jesus Christ — then how could

even eternal promises and riches be appreciated by such mortals? It is a humbling question and confirms that our eternal perspectives must be put right first. It is only then that we can deal with our own temporal circumstances, no matter what they may be or how they came about, whether through our fault or that of others.

If eternal values are just so important, then why did God create us to sojourn in the physical realm of earth, booby-trapped with a concept of money, and replete with bodies and souls that have natural spiritual and genetic proclivities to want to serve Mammon and to love money? There is never a resting point in the endeavor to choose to serve God. It is a condition of this dispensation ... this present stewardship under God's Kingdom.

Yet, we have enormous opportunities to lay up riches while we are still here on earth. Consider this statement of Christ:

“I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings (Luke 16:9).

This was a puzzling statement, as it seemed to endorse the rather devious actions of the wicked servant (See Luke 19).

What this parable confirmed is that we can use worldly wealth — whether monetary capital, assets, skills or other possessions — and turn it into eternal riches. This is an incredible offer. You can turn temporal materials things that you cannot keep, into eternal riches that you cannot lose! This being the case, it is such a travesty to try to turn eternal riches into temporal pay-offs in the here and now. This may sound ludicrous. Yet, so many popular teachings (Prosperity Theology, for example) today are based on that very idea.

There are incredible opportunities to store up wealth in heaven. This is especially true during troubled and difficult times such as now. Whether the sun may shine or storms rage; whether in health or sickness, fortunes or mishaps; and whether we have economic recoveries or financial busts, God's love toward us endures. Our salvation remains secure; our eternal hopes not lost; and we have a faith that leads to heavenly treasures. God still remains on the throne and the order that He has set upon earth endures.

“Hear this, all you peoples; listen, all who live in this world, both low and high, rich and poor alike: [...] Why should I fear when evil days come, when wicked deceivers surround me — those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches? [...] For all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others. [...] But man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions. But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself. Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his

house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him. Though while he lived he counted himself blessed — and men praise you when you prosper — he will join the generation of his fathers, who will never see the light of life. A man who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish” (Psalm 49:1-2, 5-6, 10, 12-20).