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7/26/09

## Revelation 13, 18 “The Financial Future of our World”

Intro. What is going on? About 18 months ago the world began moving into a deep recession, which could become a depression. Unemployment continues to rise. And yet it seems no one saw it coming. Our government has responded with bailouts and a so-called economic stimulus bill that is adding hundreds of billions of dollars to our government debt. Does that concern you?

We have been in a series entitled, “Biblical Financial Principles for Troubled Times.” We are in economic trouble because our nation has turned from God, and violated His economic principles. Today, we are going to take a peak into the economic future of our world. We will not look to Washington to make economic predictions. They do not have a good track record! We are going to look into the Word of God. After all, God says that He declares the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10). I am going to show you that what is happening today is consistent with the predictions of Bible prophecy.

We will look into Bible prophecy, not just to satisfy our curiosity, but to help us be better prepared for the future. Proverbs 22:3 says, “A prudent man foresees calamity (*ra*) and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished” (27:12 also). The bad news is that very difficult days *may* be ahead in the near future. Yet I do not want you to hear this message & panic or worry. I want you to trust God, who will care for His own. And I want you to have hope. You see, the good news is found in the words of Jesus in Luke 21:28, “Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.” Jesus is coming again, and His appearing may be soon. Haggai 2:7 says, “I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations....” In the midst of the troublesome days ahead, many will turn to Jesus, “the Desire of All Nations.”

So what does the Bible predict regarding the economic future of the world? First of all:

### I. A WORLD ECONOMIC SYSTEM IS COMING

We see this truth in Revelation 18. In vv.2-3 we read that an angel “cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen.... For ...the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.’” Babylon was one of the first world empires in the ancient world. It became a symbolic term for a world empire that has rejected God. The Roman Empire came to be known spiritually as Babylon. The book of Revelation predicts that in the last days, a world empire will be established. There is no doubt but that there are strong forces at work to unite the nations of the world. A new world order is coming. Already we have witnessed the coming together of the European Union. In the end times, that European Union will be headed by a powerful leader who is called “the antichrist” in Scripture. We are facing a crisis in leadership, and the world is now searching for a new Caesar. The antichrist will not be content with ruling Europe. He will implement an ambitious plan to rule the world!

In Revelation we also see that the world will unite partly for economic purposes. If you look down to vv.11-14 we see that kind of world-wide trade that the Bible predicts, “And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise

anymore: merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble; and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.” These commodities are descriptive of world trade today. Slavery is mentioned last. They will trade in the “souls of men” or in the “lives of people.” Young women in many nations are being bought & sold as sex slaves. Some of the Muslim nations look the other way while slavery is being practiced.

Then v.17 mentions “Every shipmaster, all who travel by ship, sailors, and as many as trade on the sea...” Most of the goods that are traded in today’s world economy come to us by ship, especially from China.

This prophecy is being fulfilled before our eyes. We already have a world economy. We are living in a day of global, interdependent economies. We depend on foreign nations for about 70% of our oil. It is hard to go to Walmart without at least half of your shopping cart having been made in China. Former Russian President Gorbachev said in 1991, “Military security might be assured through economic interdependence that makes confrontation unprofitable. Political union & peace can be achieved through economic interdependence.” Indeed, at least for now, China is not likely to attack the U.S., one of their best customers. The Internet is making the global economy even more of a reality. The European Union now has a common currency, called the Euro, which is another step in the direction of economic unity. I believe we are moving toward a global currency. The U.S. dollar has been the closet to it, but it is fading.

I want us to consider a few of the detailed predictions concerning this coming world economic system. Here we see:

A. The Leaders of the World Economy – Two groups of leaders are especially mentioned in v.3, “the kings of the earth ... and the merchants of the earth.” The political leaders and the business leaders will unite behind the antichrist. The business leaders who do will “become rich through the abundance of her luxury.” Literally, they will become rich through the power of Babylon’s strength. I believe the one-world government under antichrist will become very powerful, and only the business leaders that play along will be rewarded with wealth. Even today too many businessmen sell their soul to the devil, so to speak, to make huge profits.

I urge all business men and women to adopt godly standards for your business, and never violate them just to make more money. I would rather have less money and the blessing & favor of God, than more money playing with the devil.

B. The Means of Attaining Final Unity - Notice again what it says in v.3, “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication...” When a person drinks too much wine, they get drunk, and they lose their reason. They begin to do foolish things. The antichrist will deceive the nations into adopting his godless economic policies & other practices. In fact, in the last of v.23 we read, “by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.”<sup>1</sup> They will be spiritual drunk with deception. You see, when the prophecy makes reference to “her fornication,” it is talking about spiritual fornication primarily. People will turn from God, and follow the antichrist. Instead of putting their trust in God, people will put their trust in government. Instead

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<sup>1</sup> Likewise, Rev. 13:13-14 says, “He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth by those signs which he was granted to do...”

of turning to Jesus, the Christ, they will turn to the antichrist. They will even worship the antichrist.

In the last days we need to be very careful, because they will be days of deception. Jesus warned of this in the prophecy of Matthew 24. He said in v.4, "Take heed that no one deceives you." False religious leaders will deceive people (vv. 5, 11, 24; 1 Timothy 4:1). Businesses will deceive people. And worst of all, the antichrist will deceive people. Regarding end time events, Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no one deceive you by any means...." Don't be deceived by the false promises of government leaders. Put your trust in God.

So far many of these biblical prophecies have either been fulfilled, or the stage is set for them to be fulfilled. The Bible is right on target. That should give you reason to listen to the rest of the message. What else does the Bible say about the economic future of the world?

## II. A WORLD FINANCIAL CRISIS IS COMING

One indication of a coming financial crisis is found in the prophecy of the 4 horsemen of Revelation 6. In vv.5-6 we read, "So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius....' A denarius was a silver coin that a common worker would earn as a day's wage. According to the prophecy, the price of wheat will skyrocket. An economic crisis will take place near the end times.

The scripture is clear that antichrist is coming. In order for any dictator to rise to power, there must be a crisis that causes people to give up their liberty for the sake of security. An economic crisis will pave the way for antichrist. I believe this prophecy is illustrated by history. Hitler rose to power during one of the worst economic crises to hit Germany. One of President O'Bama's advisors said that they should not waste a crisis. As the President has pushed for major reforms, he has repeated the word "crisis" hundreds of times. Even so, the antichrist will only be able to rise to power due to hope and promises that he will be able to solve the world's staggering problems, including an economic crisis. Of course, there will also be the threat of war, and the "crisis" of global warming.

I do not see our government doing much to avert a financial crisis. Over the last 75 years politicians have expanded entitlement spending without a solid long-term plan for paying for these entitlements. As the baby-boom generation retires and needs even more health care, the problem of overspending will grow worse. The national debt is growing at an exponential pace. Congress has shown no financial discipline whatsoever. They continue to fund earmarks and wasteful spending. They are probably going to add a trillion more dollars to the budget with healthcare reform. In just 21 years (2030) the cost of Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will rise to more than \$2 trillion, or about 66% of the current federal budget.

What are we to do as we face an economy that, at some point, is going to get much worse before it gets temporarily better? Look over to Luke 22:35-37. There Jesus said to His disciples, "When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals, did you lack anything?" So they said, "Nothing." Then He said to them, "But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me: 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.'" In normal times, we should just trust God to provide, and there should be no need to make special provisions for our needs. But in extraordinary times, we are to make

provisions to prepare for the crisis times of life. The disciples were about to face days of persecution. Jesus would no longer be with them. They were to adjust to the new situation.

Even so, since an economic crisis may be coming within the next few years, you have even more reason to work on getting out of debt. Work on saving enough to have several months of reserve to live on if you had to. What is really surprising is when He says, “he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.” I will let you draw your own conclusions about getting a weapon to protect your life & property!

### III. WORLD ECONOMIC MANDATES ARE COMING

Turn back to Revelation 13. Here we read of the rise of the antichrist. According to the last of v.7, he will gain control “over every tribe, tongue, and nation.” He will be endorsed and promoted by a powerful spiritual leader, who will build a coalition of world religions. Now notice in vv.16-17 where the world is headed, “He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.” Here, “the beast” is just another term for the antichrist. As I have indicated, I believe that prior to the total power-grab of antichrist, there will be a great economic turmoil. Whenever we have big problems, there will always be politicians who will offer a government solution to the problem. Desperate times call for desperate measures, so they say. So one solution to the problems that the world will face will be to unite under a one world government, and the solution to the economic crisis will be to unite under a one world economic system as we have talked about.

As part of the world-wide economic reform, the government of the antichrist will want complete control of the economy, and all economic transactions. And so they will propose that you can't buy or sell unless you have the mark or the name of the beast. That means that the one world government under antichrist will control all economic transactions. Whether it be the industrialist trying to close a billion-dollar international deal, or the child buying an ice cream cone at the corner store, the rule will be: no seal, no sale!

There will be a number of reasons for this mandate. 1) The governments of the world will be able to collect more sales tax if they control all transactions. Perhaps instead of taxing income, the antichrist will collect taxes at each point in the sale of goods. 2) Politicians know that the key to political control is economic control. The Federal Government learned how to control the states a long time ago. Back in 1913 they started taxing the income of individuals. Then, money given to the states is conditioned upon the states doing what the Federal Government tells them to do. 3) This will largely do away with the underground economy.

When people sign up to gain authorization to buy or sell, they will not issue a card with a barcode. That can be lost, stolen, & counterfeited. Instead, they will accept a mark “on their right hand or on their foreheads.” The word translated “mark” is based on a Greek word for a sharp instrument that would be used to make the mark. I believe that the mark of the beast could be engraved into the skin by some high tech instrument, or it may even be similar to a tattoo. That unique number would make sure that all transactions are properly credited to a person's account.

On the other hand, it could even be a micro-chip of some kind implanted under the skin. The technology is probably now available to implant a computer chip containing more than just an account number. It seems universal health care is coming, and even so, your medical records could be encoded in that chip as well. An implanted chip can be used with a GPS to monitor where you are. You may wonder why the “mark” will be on the hand or forehead. The hand is

obvious, because it will allow easy access for scanning. Modern technology explains why the forehead is another option. We now have face recognition technology. Furthermore, modern computer equipment can identify a person by reading their eyes.

In addition to the reasons already given, the mark will be required for 3 reasons: 1) For identification – Already, the vast majority of people on earth have been assigned some form of I.D. number. We are seeing today a move toward a more complete system of I.D. Ever since September 11 there has been more talk of a national I.D. card for security reasons. 2) In the case of animals, a “mark” was used for identifying ownership. The antichrist will demand the mark as a token of allegiance. The devil wants to own you, to enslave you. If you let him, he will get you so deeply into sin, or the occult, that he will have you for eternity. 3) To achieve a cashless society. If they can force all transactions to be made electronically, then they can virtually eliminate billions of unreported income. We are moving in that direction. Recently, Wendy’s moved in the direction of paying their employees with a cash card instead of a paycheck.

There is already economic pressure for everyone to receive a number. Back in the early 90’s the I.R.S. enacted a new regulation stating that you cannot claim an exemption on your tax form for a child over age 2 unless they get a S.S.# and you report it. So they are already using economic pressure to get people to get the number. I’m not saying that a Social Security number is the mark of the beast. But that type of thing is preparing the world for the mark of the beast.

As you can see from this prophecy, there will be great pressure for conformity in the last days. Of course, if a person does not go along, and give total allegiance to the antichrist, and accept his mark, they will be persecuted & oppressed by the government. According to v.7, many believers will suffer under the antichrist.

It seems likely that the antichrist will have some success in restoring economic prosperity to the world. This is reflected in Revelation 18. It seems likely that he will introduce some novel and ingenious economic system that could have an impact as great as the introduction of joint-stock companies.

These prophecies could not have been fulfilled even 50 years ago. It will take advanced and powerful computer technology to implement such a system. Our generation is the first generation that such a system could be implemented. Isn’t it exciting to know that we could be very close to the return of Jesus!

This part of the world’s economic future is most likely limited to the period of time known as the Great Tribulation. Many Bible scholars believe there is strong biblical evidence to believe that Christians in the present age will be raptured before that tribulation period comes. I certainly hope so. In fact, I wish Jesus would come again right now! If Christ comes for His church before the tribulation, then the warnings of the mark of the beast have no relevance to us. On the other hand, I believe it is prudent to know what you would do if those Bible scholars are not correct. If the day ever comes that a world government demands that you receive some mark or implant before you can buy or sell, don’t do it! Revelation 14:9-11 warns of the terrible eternal consequences of doing so. Furthermore, if you ever find yourself living in such days, you need to adjust how you live. The apostle Paul said in 1 Cor. 7:29-31, “But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess, and those who use this world as not misusing it....” I believe Paul is saying that during times of great persecution & distress, married couples should not have children. Singles should not marry. If you buy anything, don’t get

attached to it, for you could lose your possessions in such times. Those verses do not apply to us now. But they could at some point in the future.

Then in the last of v.31 Paul gives a reason, “For the form of this world is passing away.” And that leads to the last prophecy about the world’s economic future. The book of Revelation also says:

#### IV. THE WORLD ECONOMIC SYSTEM WILL BE JUDGED

This is made clear in Revelation 18. In v.2 it says that the angel “cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’” Again, Babylon is symbolic of the political, economic, & religious empire of the antichrist. Then in v.8 it says, “Therefore her plagues will come in one day—death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.” Evidently the financial centers of the world will go up in smoke, including New York, London, and Hong Kong. In vv.9-10 we see that the smoke of her burning will be seen from quite a distance. What happened on 9/11 is just a preview of what is to come, though in this case, the judgment will come most likely directly by the hand of God. Notice also v.17, “For in one hour such great riches came to nothing.”

In a similar way, a sinner may die and face the judgment of God in one night. The rich fool of Luke 12:16-20 lost his barns and his soul in one night.

In v.5 we see the reason for this judgment, “For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.” The fact that her sins have reached (Gr., *kollao*, literally “glued” or “welded together,” i.e., piled one on another as bricks in a building) unto heaven is an allusion to the tower of Babel (Gen. 11:5-9).

We know that God is patient, and slow to wrath. But there comes a time when the wrath of God can be restrained no longer. Thus it was with the world of Noah’s day, & with the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. There comes a time when the sins of a nation or a city accumulate to the point that they reach to heaven and cry aloud for God to act. So often it may seem that God is indifferent to sin, crime, & suffering, but He will act in due time. The time is coming when God will say, “Enough is enough.” If God doesn’t judge the growing sinfulness of America, if God doesn’t judge the ungodliness of western Europe, if God doesn’t judge the violent hatred of Islam, if God doesn’t judge the atheism of Red China, and if God doesn’t judge the idolatry of Hinduism, then He is going to have to apologize to those of Noah’s day, and to those of Sodom & Gomorrah. God will remember sin that is not covered by the blood of Christ. No one will get by with sin against a holy God. It must be punished. By the way, I’m glad that my sins are forgiven in Christ. That means that God will not remember my sins. They have been buried in the sea of forgetfulness.

One application of this truth is that we should not attach ourselves to something that is heading to judgment & destruction. 1 Jn. 2:17 says, “And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.” Don’t focus on the temporal things of life. They will surely pass away. Focus on what is eternal. Furthermore, we are to detach ourselves from the world. In the very last days, God says in Rev. 18:4, “Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.” God gives a good reason for the doctrine of separation, “lest you share in her sins.” If you hang around people who do wrong, you are much more likely to share in their sins. So the wise Christian learns to fellowship only

with godly people. So God's people are warned not to be enticed by the wealth and pleasures of this future Babylon, but to come out & be a separate people. Lot fell victim to the world. He failed to remain separate from the world.

Now there is a general principle here. It is not God's will for His people to partake of the judgment of ungodly. The angels had to remove Lot from Sodom, lest he shared in its judgment. As Jesus warned believing Jews to flee from Jerusalem before its fall & destruction in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:16), so tribulation saints are warned to flee from the centers of the kingdom of antichrist, especially toward the end of the tribulation. However, I believe that the tribulation saints will be removed from the world before the final bowls of judgment are poured out, based on Matthew 24:31 and Rev. 14.

Conclusion: Bible prophecy paints a very credible picture of the economic future of our world. There have been hundred of fulfilled prophecies already, and I believe you should give heed to the warnings of Scripture. Jesus is coming again. The signs of the times point to His soon return. Are you saved? Have your sins been forgiven. Or are you still under the judgment of God? If you have not yet turned to Christ, I urge you to repent of your sins, and trust in Christ as Savior before it is too late.

If you are saved, keep learning Bible prophecy. Watch for the return of Christ. Don't worry about the future. Follow Scripture, and you will be ready for whatever may come your way. Put your hope in the One who holds the future! After all, our future is heaven!

Sources: W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, © 1962-1966 by Zondervan Publishing House; John Hagee, *Financial Armageddon* (Lake Mary, FL: Front Line, 2008); George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, © 1972 by Eerdmans Publishing Co.; Hal Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming*, © 1973 by Vision House publishers; John Philips, *Exploring Revelation*, © 1974 by Moody Bible Institute; Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996); John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, © 1966 by Moody Bible Institute; Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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