

Your message burns in my heart and bones, and I cannot keep silent. (Jeremiah 20:9)

The testimony of JESUS is the spirit of the prophecy. (Revelation 19:10c)

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03.21.2020

Sovereignty of God (Commentary)

Before launching into this writing, I want to correct something I recently wrote (*Behold, I Stand!*). In it I stated the perfect storm and our Engedi moment had come. What I should have said (which I have since corrected in the writing) is: ***The perfect storm is building and with it our Engedi moment.*** I continue to maintain, however, that the current panic is a trial run for what is coming, when many forces converge.

I suspect that the next phase of this will come without much, if any, warning. Of course, we still do not know how this current *pandemic* is going to play out and what authoritarian actions the governments of the world might enshrine into their laws, much like what happened in the US in the aftermath of 9-11. We can be sure of one thing—change is coming and many are speculating (opinions, theories, conspiracies) what this might look like, ranging from a great depression to a great awakening to "we are going to beat this thing; we always do" (implying it will be business as usual when "we do") to "we're going to come back stronger and greater." I just heard a former government leader state that "once the medical profession comes up with a solution to the pandemic, everything will return to normal. We're all in this together and we will get through this because that is who we are." There is nothing wrong with giving people some hope, but we better be sure it is not false hope or hope in the wrong thing. On my part, I believe there is a new norm coming, and our true hope is a person whose name is Jesus. We'll know soon enough!

One more thing: it is needful to acknowledge that there are many good people out there who are expressing love to one another, helping out wherever they can, even in the midst of social distancing. There does seem to be a good gene in our DNA that seeks to help and appreciate one another during crises, and there are many reports of this manifesting during this crisis, including those who are looking for ingenious ways to solve problems.

Now, as I keep reminding people (and myself)—in large measure, history is simply a repeat performance of past events; thus, the expression: *history repeats itself*. Probably a better way to express it is that our earth, along with its primary inhabitant—us—goes through cycles on a vast array of fronts; thus, we are confronted with cycles involving pandemics, economics, climate, nations, and war, to name a few. Some of these cycles lead to a reset, of sorts. On a global scale, it seems that the earth has a reset button that every now and then (according to some cyclical pattern) gets pushed and things change to some new paradigm. WWII is an example of a reset as the power and might of nations shifted to the United States, which has dominated the world for the last 75 years. Is another reset of nations coming? Will it be for the better or for the worse? Perhaps this is why some of us have this strange feeling about this current crisis. We'll see.

We need to be reminded that pandemics killing thousands upon thousands are nothing new. According to some statistics, the Spanish flu of 1918 killed about 5% of the world population; in the US, over 600,000 died. Obviously, our knowledge of disease and its treatment has advanced tremendously in the last 100 years, so outcomes might be quite different. Yet, we must not be overly confident that our technology and authoritarian action (as we see in government at all levels today) are going to yield the result we

desire. It's always good to be reminded through Solomon's wisdom that ***pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall*** (Proverbs 16:18). It seems that crises are designed to humble us. Yet, on the other hand, some see crises as a new opportunity to push a new agenda based on some ideology that seeks to herd the masses (like cattle) into its corral.

This leads to a question that was posed to me recently: *Where is God in all of this?* The answer is quite simple: *Where He has always been.* **Enthroned on high as the absolute Sovereign of His creation!** Nothing has changed regarding our creator and the one through whom He created, which is none other than the Son of God, King Jesus.

The word *sovereign* comes from the Latin *superanus*, which means "above," and refers to **one who is supreme and in permanent control and authority**. Kings and queens are referred to as the sovereign of their kingdoms, meaning they reign over them. Clearly, the one who truly and absolutely is above all as the sovereign of the kingdom that is over all is God. ***The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty (kingdom) rules over all*** (Psalm 103:19). God reigns!

So, let us be abundantly clear that, during this present crisis of global proportions, the sovereignty of God is unchanged and His kingdom is unshakable. The cross of God's Son has made sure of that; sealed with the blood of the Lamb. Stated another way—the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus proves it and absolutely secures it.

Another thing; implicit in the above question is a sequel: *Is this crisis the judgment of God?* I think most people have a misunderstanding of God and judgment. Many look at it from the perspective of an angry God out to punish His wayward creation. But this is not the way to see it. At its basic level, judgment is nothing more than a determination or an assessment of conditions on the ground, so to speak. Surely, God is constantly making determinations (judgments) about His creation. He is not an absent landlord, as many view Him. We need to be mindful that He wrote and engineered the specifications for His creation and this includes the vast array of cycles the earth and the human race go through. He knows when these cycles will hit, even if the cycle is of human origin. Whether He steps in and takes action to alter the course of history (i.e., resets to a new order), either directly or indirectly, is up to Him. **It is He who changes the times and the epochs** (Daniel 2:21).

As a side note; one of the Greek words for "a decision, judgment" is *krisis* (G2920). Notice the similarity between *krisis* and our English word *crisis*. Truly, judgment can, and often does, produce a crisis for the recipient(s).

This morning a new thought came to me. WWI (1914-1919) was a precursor to WWII (1939-1945), much like the 2007-2009 financial crisis was a precursor to the current 2019-2020 crisis that is both a pandemic and an economic crisis. Along these lines, I am drawn back to something I wrote in 2008 in the midst of that crisis. Here are some excerpts from twelve years ago, along with inserted commentary.

October, 2008

What we find ourselves in today is according to the sovereignty of God, which means it is all part of His plan to achieve His grand purpose of the eons. The fact of the matter is that most of the world, and even some Christians, do not acknowledge the sovereignty of God over the kingdoms of the world. The Lord spoke to Nebuchadnezzar that the Most High is ruler over

the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes (Daniel 4:25, 32). Why? Because heaven rules (Daniel 4:26)! Everything, and I repeat, everything is being worked out according to God's plan to bring about His purpose.

*To take a saying from Paul—here is a trustworthy statement: **Men try to rule in the absence of God, but no matter how hard they try, God is still sovereign, and He alone has the first and the last word in the affairs of mankind.** After all, through His Son, He is the Creator, and He alone is responsible for His creation, down to the minutest detail.*

"Remember the former things long past, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure'.... (Isaiah 46:9-10 NASB)

People of God, we are moving into days in which what has transpired to date will pale in comparison to the problems that we will face. Consider what the leaders, especially the US leaders, are doing today. They are throwing everything they can think of at the financial collapse, even to the point that they are now considering measures that could increase the US annual budget deficit to one trillion dollars. Of course, with even a suggestion of such action, the Stock Market soared 430 points in one session. This is without sound logic. As if on cue, over the course of the next few days, it plummeted over 700 points. What drunkenness!

Insert March 2020: As of today, the US government is getting ready to pump over six trillion dollars into the economy it has purposely caused to crash. It is also interesting how, in 2008, the markets were swinging dramatically and today this swing is back in motion, only it is far more dramatic as we have seen the Stock Market moving wildly, 2000 points at a time, like a wild beast thrashing about to save its life. Of course, the dynamics of the 2020 market are different from the 2008 market, so the outcome may be different, as well. Many claim the markets will rebound quite significantly once things normalize and people are working again. Of course, others are looking for the bottom to fall out, with an ensuing depression or hyper-inflation. We'll know soon enough. Based on what has come to me over the years, even if a rebound does occur, it is not a sign that the shaking is over; more is to come.

*A day is coming when the leaders of the nations will not have solutions to the perplexing problems they are facing. **Perhaps the situation in the US and the entire world will become so severe that mankind will begin to cry out for answers that no man will have, and the church of God will wake up.***

Insert March 2020: Only the Lord Jesus knows the true spiritual condition of His people. Most of what we see is the outward (public) form of the church. The Lord sees the heart. Consider what happened right after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks: for a short time, the pews were packed with people, but this soon faded. Mind you; packed pews are not a reliable sign of some sort of spiritual awakening or revival. Christianity is all about relationship with the Father and His Son, which manifests in the heart; it is not about religion, which manifests in pew-sitting. Today, with social distancing and gatherings of all types being prohibited, instead of flocking to pews, people are resorting to streaming. However, there are reports of a few pastors and their assemblies defying the "no gathering orders." I wonder if the Lord is going to use this crisis to shake His people from their adherence to an old-covenant template and into new creation life, where pulpits and pews are made obsolete. May it be so!

October, 2008

*All that holds the world system(s) together in our day must fall (be shaken) to give way to God's kingdom of righteousness, justice, mercy, peace, and love. **All that is happening today and will be happening in the near future is driving toward this goal. Why? Because God is sovereign!***

*We need God's perspective on the matter and not man's, and this perspective is based on the sovereignty of God. What is transpiring in our day is all in accord with the will of God. It is no surprise to God, as if He did not see it coming. On the contrary, it is all being worked out according to **the times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority** (Acts 1:7). **It is He who changes the times and the epochs** (Daniel 2:21). Unfortunately, so much of what is being presented by the news media is from man's view, which is based on a worldview that seeks to keep God out of the picture, especially that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God.*

The good news is this: No matter how hard man tries to keep God and His Son out of the picture, he can do nothing of the sort. History is God's story. He wrote the story, and He is directing each and every chapter because He is the Sovereign of His creation, and He will not fail to bring His will to pass because His Son did not fail on the cross.

[end of 10.2008 writing]

There is much that could be added to all this, but I'm going to restrain myself for fear of overly stressing things I have already written, or repeating what others are saying, or offering too much opinion. However, there are a few things I want to briefly highlight, with limited commentary.

Number 18: During the 2008 crisis, some world leaders were declaring that the financial crisis could be overcome in 18 months. Now, in 2020, we are hearing the very same number coming from the so-called *health experts*. It will take 18 months before there is a vaccine and this virus comes under control. It seems rather strange to see this number appear in both crises. What is so special about 18 months? Does it take that long to get enough momentum to achieve one's objective? I don't have an answer, so I leave it with one thought—the number 18 signifies **bondage**.

Spirits at Work: Many are trying to explain what is going on with this virus and the way the media and governments around the world are responding. Obviously, some are pushing conspiracy theories of deals made in back rooms, as they say, to bring about some nefarious result. On the political front, there is some indication this is going on, especially in regard to President Trump's re-election. (As I have explained elsewhere, the Lord has instituted **a pounding of the political fortresses** that started some years back and continues in our day.)

However, I don't think the explanation can be tied down to one thing; rather, I propose that there is a high degree of complexity at work that could be likened to a vortex—as in the perfect storm. This complexity is discovered in a multiple of spirits at work to drive people to take certain actions and to say certain things. Let me be clear: I am not talking about demons or even the devil running around causing mischief. A few days ago, on the news, I saw a well-known televangelist hold his hand toward the camera and begin rebuking the devil for this pandemic. This is not what I mean.

By spirit, I mean a driving force, like a wind that sweeps people up and carries them to a new place. The danger comes in when these forces use deception (lies), coercion, manipulation, and appeals for the common good in order to lead people into a dangerous place. In this group, we could include a *spirit of fear*, especially a fear of death; a *spirit of herding* (corralling people into an ideology, much like corralling cattle, so they are penned into thinking and reacting a certain way); a *spirit of authoritarianism*, much like we see occurring throughout governments today. Interestingly, months before this crisis, we began to sense the rise of an authoritarian spirit within our own local community. It's an infectious spirit.

There are too many spirits along this line to name them to a satisfactory degree, but there are two that seem to hold them all together like bookends: ***the spirit of the world*** and ***the spirit of antichrist***.

The ***spirit of the world*** is what drives the natural or carnal man (in contrast to the spiritual man) to exalt self and deny the sovereignty of God. Within this force, I would include all the *isms* created by man.

The spirit of the world can manifest in what could be called ***the spirit of the inflated ego*** that seeks to advance self for personal gain, whether it is to win an election or to be known as the expert in a specific field, rising above all the other experts, becoming known as the one (hero) who figured things out before everyone else did. This is quite common in politics, medicine, and most every other field of endeavor. Listen carefully to the news and speeches; you will hear it.

Now, when it comes to the ***spirit of antichrist***, we need to understand that the term *antichrist(s)* appears five times in scripture and only in John's letters (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 1:7). John wrote of *the world passing away* and *the last hour*; all terms used to describe the end of the age of Moses that took place in 70 AD with the total destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple. It was the last hour for the age of Moses. In this context, John reminded his "children" that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared. This is how they knew it was the last hour.

Thus, in reading John, we must put his letters into the proper **historical context**. John was not writing about some future event that would transpire 2,000 years later; a view many are teaching today. By the way, Jesus prophesied about this and, at some level, all the major writers of the new testament picked up the same theme. Simply, **the wrath of God** was coming upon the apostate Jews of the generation leading up to 70 AD; the ones that refused to confess Jesus as the Messiah, having come in the flesh from God.

... and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is ***the spirit of the antichrist***, which you heard ***was coming and now is in the world already***. (1 John 4:3 ESV [bold italic added])

For ***many deceivers have gone out into the world***, those who ***do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh***. Such a one is ***the deceiver and the antichrist***. (2 John 1:7 ESV [bold italic added])

In John's day, there were figures that stood out as antichrists; notably the Caesars that claimed to be **sons of God**. Nero, who died in 68 AD, was probably the most notorious antichrist of the lot. Titus, who destroyed Jerusalem and entered the Jewish temple in 70 AD, would be another one.

However, in reading John's first epistle, it is obvious he had others in mind, as well. There were antichrists among John and the Lord's people. It is highly unlikely these were Romans but, more likely, Jews that had infiltrated the Christ camp. As John wrote: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all*

are not of us (1 John 2:19). Plainly, the Caesars were never part of John's camp. John explains further: *Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son* (1 John 2:22). To the seven ecclesias, Jesus Himself declared who the liars were in the first century—they were the Jews (synagogue of Satan) who denied the Christ (Revelation 2:9; 3:9).

Thus, John makes it clear that the antichrists (or: anti-messiahs) were those who denied the Father and the Son, and denied that Jesus is from God (the Jews of John's day that rejected Christ, even demanding His death, were guilty of this on both counts). It is in this context that John reminded his children that they had an anointing from the holy spirit residing within that taught them about all things, and they needed to test the spirits based on this anointing. They had the truth residing within; therefore, they could discern lies.

Contrary to much teaching in our day about a future antichrist, I do not believe we should be looking for one individual to rise up and rule the world. The *hour* John wrote about has passed. However, given John's explanation of the nature of antichrists, it seems safe to conclude that since the first century there have been many antichrists to arise and continue to arise—many who have denied, even refuted, the truth about Jesus.

Carrying this thought a bit further, the word *antichrist* is made up of two words: *anti* and *christos*. In the Greek, the word *anti* [G473] means in *the place of, instead of, opposite*. In other words, when it appears with another word like *christos*, it means *to be instead of or in the place of—in the place of Christ*. Thus, one who is antichrist is one who has taken the place of Christ, meaning they have usurped the place reserved only for God's Son. What is that place? It is king. After all, the title *Messiah* or *Christ* signifies that Jesus was and is the King of Israel. We who believe are now the true Israel of God and are under the reign of King Jesus who dwells in our hearts.

It is in this context that I use the term *the spirit of antichrist*. Ones who seek to place themselves over others as their god and, in so doing, take a stand against God's Son, denying who and what He is, are of the spirit of antichrist. Is it possible to detect such a spirit in our day? Definitely! Consider the backlash (often filled with vitriol and hatred) on social media and in the blogosphere when public figures (e.g., politicians and their allies, or pastors) invoke God—especially the name of *Jesus*—in public discourse.

The spirit of antichrist is what drives carnal leaders to become **gods and saviors to people**, essentially **usurping the place given to God's Son, King Jesus**. Keep in mind that what drives these leaders is that they do not know Jesus and thus deny (even reject) His place over the earth as its rightful king. In their hearts, these ones do not acknowledge that there is one who rules over the kings (leaders) of the earth. In their minds, heaven does not rule over them. They see themselves as if they are gods in their own right.

When people demand that their leaders do something to fix a problem, this spirit is all too willing to accommodate, but with a price to the people (that might include bondage or loss of freedom at some level). We are witnessing this today through government and public health officials who are standing in the limelight, dictating to the world what it must do to be saved from a virus. (Where will this lead if left unchecked?) Keep in mind that one does not have to deny Christ outright (as if to declare publicly they renounce Him); they simply have to assume a role-like stance as if they are saviors to the people.

One more thought along these lines: the western world has been long thought of as *the Christian west* but today it is often referred to as *post-Christian*, as if the nations have walked out on Christ. Like John,

could we not say: *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.*

Mind you, this is not to imply that government is a bad thing, for, as Paul exhorted, God places ones in governing authority to maintain order and punish evil, and he wrote this as he lived under the Roman authorities that often acted in quite brutal and evil ways. After all, they put the nails in the hands and feet of our beloved Lord Jesus. Frankly, I would have preferred if Paul had exhorted what to do with evil governments, but his emphasis, as it was throughout his epistles, was on the deportment of God's people—how they (we) are to be the aroma of Christ in the world, regardless of the character of governing authorities; subjection to authorities was the order. John's advice, and we can be sure Paul thought the same way, was to test the spirits to see if they are from God.

Dear saints, this is what we are to do in this day. Test the spirits! We have the same anointing within us that John and his "children" had nearly 2,000 years ago. Is God's Son in the midst of these spirits or is He absent, even denied or falsely presented? Are egos driving some leaders that seek god-like status for personal gain (power, control, money, fame; to name a few)? We don't fight against government. Our battle is a spiritual one and we are to battle against these spirits that deceive people (including leaders), leading many into bad pastures filled with wolves. **Don't get herded by these spirits!**

Let us not forget; the counter to all of this is ***the spirit of the Lord***—a mighty wind that sweeps across the globe, bringing people into the kingdom of God. The big difference is that man's wind has to be stirred up through lies and deception and false hope; whereas God's wind is stirred up through truth and righteousness and the only hope. As my wife began singing lately: ***His truth goes marching on!*** Let us be caught up in ***the wind of truth***. Jesus is the truth!

Let us listen for His voice! And, may the anointing of the Anointed One that dwells within us become a gushing fountain for all the world to see.

Let us be like the psalmists and praise our God—whose name is **Father**—from the rising to the setting of the sun. A new day is about to dawn with the rising of the Son—whose name is **Jesus** and whose title is **King**. This day will be a reset on an order beyond our wildest imaginations. It is called ***the kingdom of the Son of God's love***. Love will see us through this day and into His kingdom with the character of heaven (God's realm), which is love, for ***love never fails!***

Let us not forget that, in spirit, we are presently under the reign of King Jesus and we abide in His kingdom. Our king is the full embodiment of the kingdom of God. The good news is that the day is coming when we will be a manifestation of His kingdom of glory to all the nations. ***Let us press on—the prize awaits! King Jesus in you, the expectation of glory!***

Praise Yah! Praise, you servants of Yahweh, praise Yahweh's name. Blessed be Yahweh's name, from this time forward and for the ages. From the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, Yahweh's name is to be praised. Yahweh is high above all nations, his glory above the heavens. Who is like Yahweh, our God, who has his seat on high, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth? (Psalm 113:1-6)