

UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but this is my one aim:
to forget everything that's behind, and to strain every nerve to go after what lies ahead.
I press on toward the finish line, where the prize waiting for me is the upward call of God
IN KING JESUS.*

(Philippians 3:13-14)

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by – Stuart H. Pouliot

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Leaders of Beast Kingdoms are Smart

Lately, I have heard it said several times that many of the leaders in the news that are helping to steer our nation through crisis are **smart people**. I ask: By what standard are these people so smart? What does being smart actually mean? Have their so-called *smarts* actually produced something of value? What makes them so smart? Just because many see these leaders as smart, does this truly mean they are smart?

If you listen carefully to those who speak of this smart group, you will discern some of the criteria upon which such statements are made. Supposedly, they are smart because they speak eloquently, or they graduated from a prestigious school, or they were a Rhodes Scholar, or they have a name that is associated with public service or fame or power, or they just look good (by one's own criteria).

Consequently, as the thinking goes, the incoming president of the US is a smart man because he speaks eloquently and he went to a prestigious school, and the outgoing president is not so smart (actually, some say *dumb*) because he does not speak so eloquently, and yet, he too went to a prestigious school. Of course, the outgoing president saw torture as a smart move, and the new president sees \$1 trillion of more debt as a smart move. The president before the current one was a pretty smart guy too, for he was a Rhodes Scholar. But, if memory serves, he was also the one brought before Congress for impeachment for lying under oath. But who cares; after all, doesn't everyone lie, especially politicians? Isn't this what makes them so smart? Wasn't it under this same president's watch that the government-backed mortgage companies (Freddie Mac, Fannie Mae) were pushed by the government to give mortgages to people who could not afford to pay them back? Mmm; isn't this what started the financial meltdown? I hear that the financial leaders are pretty smart too. How about the previous chairman of the Fed? He was called a smart guy over the many years he served as the head of the banking cartel. But when the crisis hit, he admitted that he had made mistakes that helped the crisis materialize. How about the head of Treasury? Again, it is said he is a smart guy, but nobody seems to know if what he has done so far in doling out billions of dollars will work. We do know that to make it work, at least as he perceives it, he strongly urged (i.e., forced) banks to take the bailout money even if they did not need it or want it. Is this what smart is all about? How about the other two smart guys in Congress, both of whom had regulatory oversight of Freddie and Fannie, who are now going to help straighten out the current mortgage mess through more regulation? One of them had a gay prostitution ring being run out of his house, supposedly without his knowledge. Wink! The other received a sweetheart deal from one of the mortgage companies that he was supposed to be overseeing.

Now, the news has been aflutter over the prospect of the daughter of a slain president becoming a senator. After all, she is really smart because she has a name, knows how to raise money, and has lots of money, and, by the way, raised a family. Mmm; wasn't there another name in the news during the presidential campaign? If memory serves, there was a candidate for vice president who is raising a family, including a mentally-challenged child. But somehow, she wasn't as smart as other women because she didn't talk like those who go to prestigious schools. Oh, and by the way, the reason this woman with the famous name is being considered for the senator's position is because another really smart woman, a

former first lady, is vacating it to take a cabinet post in the new administration. Wasn't she the one who stood by her man, forgot where important papers were hidden, and also failed to put together a health care plan? Well, I hope that you realize this is an attempt to make light of what is perceived to be "smart" in our day. The point is that the heart of the current system that rules America today is smart! Using imagery from Daniel's visions, the system that runs the world today could be called a *beast system or kingdom*. John the apostle saw it as the *kingdom of the world*, which could be called *the reign of man*.

The word *smart* is very much a beast concept, for it means "alert; clever; capable; quick, witty," and "shrewd, sharp, as in one's dealings." This describes how the beast system operates and who is rewarded the most under this system. The clever and the shrewd ones are the ones that are most revered. They are the ones that not only survive but also rise to the top to lead others. The ones that are not labeled smart are not revered but often scorned or looked down upon. Further, under this system, people are valued based on their appearance, not on their heart. It is about optics and presentation; something clever people survive on, even thrive on. But the Lord said to Samuel in reference to Saul.

"Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:7 NASB)

The sons of Israel were looking for a king like all the nations (1 Samuel 8:4-5). Saul was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. In other words, outwardly, he had a stature among the people; he looked like a leader of the nations. Of course, we know the outcome of his reign. This is how a beast system looks at things. Does the person look good, dress right, say all the right things, speak eloquently, project the right image, make everyone feel good, even look presidential? The beast does not care about the inner man and his morality, ethics, or character. Doing the right thing out of love and kindness does not even enter into the mind of a beast kingdom.

For those with spiritual discernment, it should be clear that the world system that dictates our lives each and every day is, again, as Daniel saw, a *beast kingdom* that rules on the earth, refusing to honor the God of creation. It may have changed names over the years, but the very heart of it has always been very Babylonish, traced back to Nimrod. We are presently in captivity to this system that has a beast-like nature that has even trained and mesmerized mankind to think like it does, making its ways acceptable, perhaps even right, in our day. So, we buy into wars as if they are just. We buy into banking and credit usury as the only way to keep capitalism going. We buy into the rich having to become super rich in order to create jobs that keep people in bondage to a system that pays poorly. We buy into government having all the answers and meeting our every need and want. We buy into women having an absolute right over their bodies, even to the point of killing their unborn. We buy into everything is relative based on the reality one creates, not based on some absolute truth. We buy into a god that is not interested in what we do on earth. We get to set our own course without interference. And, the list goes on.

Most have no idea how much of their thinking has been shaped by the mind of a beast kingdom and not by the mind of the kingdom of God. God's way is not man's smart way; He looks at the heart, looking at the inner man, the character of the person. We need our minds renewed to think as our Lord thinks (the mind of Christ), to judge (discern) as He judges, to see as He sees, to feel as He feels (i.e., love). We should not be looking to the smart ones but to the righteous and holy ones, the ones with the character of King Jesus, the ones who understand how God's kingdom operates. Let us not be like ancient Israel demanding a king in the image of fallen man. We have a perfect king—King Jesus! Let us not be smart or be persuaded by the smart; let us be like Jesus and be persuaded by His life and love!