

Are We Already In Captivity?

The Possibility Exists - What Is Our Responsibility

John W. Ritenbaugh (1932-2023)

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We are going to begin this afternoon's sermon in the book of Joshua.

Joshua 8:30-35 Now Joshua built an altar to the Lord God of Israel in Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded the children of Israel, as it is written in the Book of the Law of Moses: an altar of whole stones over which no man has wielded any iron tool. And they offered on it burnt offerings to the Lord, and sacrificed peace offerings. And there, in the presence of the children of Israel, he wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he [Moses] had written. Then all Israel, with their elders and officers and judges, stood on either side of the ark before the priests, the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, the stranger as well as he who was born among them. Half of them [meaning half of the Israelites] were in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded before, that they should bless the people of Israel. And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and the cursings, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, with the women, the little ones, and the strangers who were living among them.

Just to give you a little bit of background about what was going on here: The command given by Moses that this be done is recorded in Deuteronomy 27. Joshua is following through on what Moses commanded him to do. The time of this occasion, here in Joshua 8, was shortly after the children of Israel entered into the Promised Land. They had already fought a battle with Jericho; the walls fell down and they completely destroyed that city. Then from there they went to Ai where they suffered a defeat. After this defeat, they took counsel with God and He revealed to them the problem they were

having. They straightened that problem out, went back to Ai again, took it over in no time flat, and completely decimated that city. They were not able to conquer it the first time because there was very bad sin in their midst. After the sin was straightened out, God was with them once again.

That leads back to Deuteronomy 7 in understanding about the sin that was within them because Moses commanded them most specifically that they were to read, or recite, the blessings and the cursings. A little later in this sermon I am going to read Deuteronomy 28, but here I am going to read to you each one of the cursings as they appear in Leviticus 26. I think it is helpful to understand that before they read the blessings and cursings Moses made sure they read through a major portion of the code of holiness contained in Leviticus 19. These were the standards they had to live by. After reading these, they went into reading the blessings and the cursings.

I am going to read and I want you to follow with me beginning in Leviticus 26:14. This passage will set the stage in order to lay a foundation for what follows a little bit later in the sermon. I want you to understand that when the Israelitish people went into the land and began to conquer the territory that they were taking over, they had presented before them a very clear understanding that if they obeyed they were going to be blessed and if they disobeyed they were going to be cursed. Immediately when they obeyed they were blessed and when they disobeyed they were cursed.

As we begin to read, we see the people had fresh in their minds the victory they had as they began to take over the land and the defeat they had when sin entered into their lives. As an example, God put a man [Achan] and his entire family to death because of the theft of some gold and beautiful clothing that the man lusted after. It should have been a very clear object lesson to them and it is in the Bible for you and me so that we will understand there is this same blessing and cursing that hangs over us. This does not hang over us so that we will fear it in the sense of being afraid of it, but it is a constant reminder that this is the way God is going to run things.

If we as individuals and as a nation of people follow God's commands, we are going to be blessed, but if we do not, then we can be sure that because

God loves us He is going to punish us. That punishment is meant to bring us to repentance so that we will get straightened out and hopefully then we can be saved.

Leviticus 26:14-46 But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, but break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit.

'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied.

And after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. I will

destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. As long as it lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it. And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no power to stand before your enemies. You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away.

But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and that I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I

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brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the Lord. These are the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

I read this primarily because of what the United States is going through right now. We are indeed making efforts to understand what we are going through and why we are going through it as a nation. There are many specifics regarding this that we need to understand especially as it applies to us because, brethren, by us knowing these things the judgment on us is going to be more severe than it is on the Israelites, at least in terms of spiritual responsibility. We do not want to get caught in what the United States of America appears to be headed toward.

I received a sobering but also revealing email from Geoff Preston in Perth Australia regarding the state of this American culture that we live in. The first part of this email is fairly well known but the last half of it consists of a survey that I personally do not recall ever seeing before. The fairly well known portion of it is a conclusion reached by a Scottish history professor at the University of Edinburgh in 1887; his name was Alexander Tyler. He had this to say about the Athenian Republic that ended about 2200 to 2300 years ago. I think you will remember what Professor Tyler said.

A democracy is always temporary in nature. It simply cannot exist as a permanent form of government. A democracy will continue to exist up to the time that the voters discover that they can vote themselves generous gifts from the public treasury. From that moment on the majority always votes for the candidates who promise the most benefits from the public treasury with the result that every democracy will finally collapse over loose fiscal policy which is always followed by a dictatorship. The average age of the world's greatest civilizations from the beginning of history has been about 200 years and during these 200 years these nations always progressed through the following sequence of national attitudes and national circumstances. Beginning from bondage they progress to spiritual faith, from spiritual faith came great courage, from great courage liberty was produced. The liberty enabled abundance, abundance led to complacency, and complacency degenerated into

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apathy, apathy to dependency, and dependency brought them back to bondage.

There are eight rungs on this ladder. Which rung of the ladder do you believe the United States of America stands upon? Why am I asking you this? Because, brethren, we live here. Following Professor Tyler's observations, the email continues with the results of a survey completed after the most recent presidential election held in 2008. This analysis was made by Professor Joseph Olson of Hamline University Law School in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The number of states won by President Obama in 2008: 19. [How many states are there?] By John McCain: 29. Square miles of land won by President Obama: 580,000. By John McCain: 2,427,000. Population of counties won by President Obama: 127,000,000. By John McCain: 143,000,000. The murder rate per 100,000 residents in counties won by President Obama: 13.2. Murder rate per 100,000 residents in counties won by John McCain: 2. Six times higher, but Barack Obama won the election. There was one thing that he did not lose because closer analysis of the demographics of the territory won by President Obama and the demographics map of the territory won by John McCain reveals that the land won by John McCain was mostly land owned by tax paying citizens of the United States of America. President Obama's territory mostly encompassed areas whose citizens lived in high-density populations of low-income tenements living off of various forms of government welfare. They voted overwhelmingly for President Obama and they pay no taxes or very little. They exist on government handouts and their incomes are provided by government paychecks.

Professor Olson believes that the United States is somewhere between the complacency and apathy phase of Professor Tyler's historic progression chart. Forty percent of the nation's population has already reached the governmental dependence stage—forty percent are living from paychecks received from the federal, state, county, and city governments. This includes forty two million who are living on food stamps and additional millions more who are receiving Social Security, veteran's pensions, and other

pensions from state and local governments. Of the remaining one hundred and eighty million, around sixty million are less than adult aged children. That leaves at the very most about forty percent of the population, about one hundred twenty million, the overwhelming majority of which are middle-income people. These are the people who are taxed and keep things running.

I would say that the evidence is beginning to pile up that indeed we are living in the *dependency* stage and the next thing is the breakup of the government of the United States of America into a dictatorship, if Professor Tyler's conclusions reach that point.

Governments produce no profits. Their total income is from taxation. Governments run on other people's money and yet many, many in this nation who are dependent on the government perceive this money as something owed to them by the government, not the fact that somebody else had to earn that money by working. Are you beginning to see how lopsided things are becoming in the United States of America? There was a time when virtually everybody worked to support themselves and also to pay their share of the income tax. Because of the way things have been run in the United States of America, which is patently unfair to the bulk of the people who are producing, we see more and more people slipping into the dependency state in terms of their relationship with the government, and they are always going to put themselves into a position where they will vote for the one they feel is going to pay them.

Professor Olson goes on to say that if Congress grants amnesty and citizenship to twenty million invaders, called illegals (remember that term "invaders" because it becomes interesting toward the middle of this sermon), and those former illegals vote, we can say goodbye to the United States of America in fewer than five years. He is saying they are going to wring it dry, or completely sell it into bankruptcy. The attempt to sell amnesty to the American public has been made fairly strongly and has grown increasingly stronger in the last eight to ten years. Professor Olson says that once the head of the might of the world has been decapitated, the rest will fall.

All of this has to be thought of in fairly large terms considering that we are a part of it. This statement about the United States getting into a position where it is ready to fall is exceedingly important because even though *our*

government is in heaven and is absolutely perfect in all of its operations, our government (meaning our Father in heaven and our Elder Brother Jesus Christ) has deemed that we must live within this world's government and to some degree of course to its authority.

So I ask you now, what kind of attitudes have developed in America as the dependency grows? You might recall the commentary I gave several months ago based on a projection by Walter Williams, an economist who teaches economy at George Mason University ["Liberalism and the Next Election (Part 2)"]. He projected that despite the widespread negative opinions regarding Barack Obama, he will win the next election. Where is he getting that projection from? He is getting it from these figures that show how many people are dependent upon the government to keep them going. This is one of the major things that destroyed Rome. Williams may have changed his mind about Obama being reelected but I am pretty sure that he will change it to project that regardless of whom the democrats run for president, the democratic candidate will win because of the vast number of people in the United States who are dependent upon the government for income.

This ought to be of concern to those of us in the church. Something I am going to pass on to you that I heard directly myself, it was one of those statements that makes you hit yourself on the side of the head and think, "That's right!" What I heard was Herman Hoeh make a comment during a sermon he gave in the Norwalk congregation that I was pastoring at the time in the early '70s. He said, "If it is happening in the world, it is happening in the church."

What he was implying is that we in the church are not as separate from the world as we may carelessly assume. He meant that the world's spirit enters into our thinking and conduct fairly easily unless we make conscious efforts to evaluate its attitudes, block them, and reject them. The way we do that is to think things through and ask ourselves: What is going on? Why is it going on? What is going on in my life? How am I responding to these things?

We have to consciously choose to live by faith rather than the direction that the world's spirit is tending to pull us. That is something that has to be consciously done or the tide of the spirit of the world—the *zeitgeist*—may very well pull us along with it.

Attitudes play a major role in one's conduct and so what is an attitude? An attitude in the context I am viewing it is a leaning, a disposition, an inclination, a position, a tendency, an orientation to one's thinking. It is the way that one views something and therefore tends to behave toward it.

Now where are we in terms of fulfilled prophecy? Are we further along or not as far along as we might think that we are? Is it possible that we are looking at an order of events in the wrong attitude because we have been unintentionally misinformed as to how they are going to be fulfilled? Have we not been looking for a major war with great devastation, and people being taken captive to another nation? Is it possible that the events may not be happening in exactly the order that we pictured? Are we aware that wars are for the most part fought over economic resources and financial matters and that the breakdowns that follow in their wake precede the military land conquests and the captivity aspects?

Turn with me to a very sobering chapter in Ezekiel 5. I am going to read a major portion of this chapter because I feel it is necessary to really impact on us as to what lies ahead.

Ezekiel 5:1-6 And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass it over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the hair. You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around it with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your garment. Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel. Thus says the Lord God: This is Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that are all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.

We are not all that far in terms of time here from the reading of Moses' writing by Joshua when they entered the land, and the people have very soundly rejected God and His way and the curses are on.

Ezekiel 5:7-8 Therefore thus says the Lord God: Because you have multiplied disobedience more than the nations that are all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done according to the judgments of the nations that are all around you—therefore thus says the Lord God: Indeed I, even I, am against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations.

God is going to put us to shame!

Ezekiel 5:9-17 And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. Therefore fathers shall eat their sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds. Therefore, as I live, says the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish you; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them. Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them. Moreover I will make you a waste and a reproach among the nations that are all around you, in the sight of all who pass by. So it shall be a reproach, a taunt, a lesson, and an astonishment to the nations that are all around you, when I execute judgments among you in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I, the Lord, have spoken.

Why is God being so hard on Israel? We not only deserve it, we should have known better. This nation was founded with a fairly solid Christian basis.

The people were not really Christian, but they believed the Bible to a much greater degree and with sincerity far greater than the people of the United States of America do now. They laid a form of government that under the circumstances was about as good as a government could possibly be, giving people a great amount of freedom to move about and be prosperous and to really have room to develop themselves and their families into a great nation. By and large, they did develop a great nation, at least in terms of prosperity, and of course with the help of God. However, within the last eighty or ninety years we have trashed what those people gave to us. I am almost ashamed to say that I have seen it and I have probably contributed a great deal to it as well, although not as much as I did before I came into the church and now I think I understand a great deal better.

I want to go from this chapter because it is pretty horrible to contemplate and look at the book of Ezekiel in its proper time and place setting. First of all, understand that Ezekiel was a Jew and he went into captivity in Babylon during the time of one of Nebuchadnezzar's three invasions of Judah. Those invasions took place in 604 BC, 594 BC, and 586 BC. It is felt that he went into the middle invasion there in 594 BC. Turn now to Ezekiel 2:3. God is speaking here.

Ezekiel 2:3 And He said to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

The reference to "this very day" was some time after 596 BC and after he had been in captivity in Babylon for a period of time. I want you to notice that Ezekiel is sent to prophesy to Israel. Go now to chapter 3.

Ezekiel 3:1 Moreover He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.

Remember He said "children of Israel" in His directions before. Now He is speaking a bit more specifically as we will see in a moment. He was to go speak to the house of Israel.

Ezekiel 3:2-4 So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll. And He said to me, Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you. So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness. Then He said to me: Son of man, go to the house of Israel [He repeats it] and speak with My words to them.

Ezekiel 3:14-15 So the Spirit lifted me up and took me away, and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me. Then I came to the captives at Tel Abib, who dwelt by the River Chebar; and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days.

Ezekiel was transported miraculously from wherever he was, which appears to have been Jerusalem, into Babylon. There he was to begin fulfilling his responsibility. We see that he is to take this message to the house of Israel. However, when God took him up He put him right in the midst of the house of Judah because that is where the Jews were. They were in captivity in Babylon. That is where the river Chebar was and we find that if we were to continue going through the entire book of Ezekiel, Ezekiel never left Babylon. In fact he was killed, martyred by fellow Jews, in the concentration camp in which he was being held.

Here is what you need to understand about this setting: Judah and Israel are two separate nations. Ezekiel never literally went to the house of Israel, yet that is what God directed him to do. So, where was the house of Israel located during Ezekiel's day? They were already in captivity. One hundred and thirty years before Ezekiel ever got to Babylon, the Assyrian Empire had devastated Israel in 722 to 720 BC. The Assyrians completely cleaned the nation out of all Israelitish people, took them into Assyria, and from Assyria the Israelites and the Assyrians, from what we understand, began migrating away from that general area.

So Israel never settled down. They spent their entire history migrating until sometime in the ending centuries of what we will call the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in northwest Europe, in the Americas, in Australia, in New Zealand, in South Africa. They did not receive the message from Ezekiel

until their wanderings were over. What conclusion does that leave you with? There is no doubt that Ezekiel preached to the Jews but they are called the house of Judah, a different dynasty altogether than the house of Israel, although related.

When God gave Ezekiel the original commission to go to Israel, which included the Jews (and you can be sure that Ezekiel did preach to the Jews), that message never reached the house of Israel until sometime beginning in the 19th and 20th centuries. The major part of that witness was made through the Worldwide Church of God. Those people had to be identified. Mr. Armstrong carried through with his responsibility. He preached the gospel to them and when he did his responsibility in fulfilling Ezekiel's message was over.

Now what does that mean in relation to the prophecy? It means these prophecies have never been fulfilled to the house of Israel. They were fulfilled very largely to the Jews but not the house of Israel. It means, brethren, that we have to face them because they *will be fulfilled*. We are in the house of Israel. We are of the house of Israel. So whether we live in northwest Europe, America or Canada, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa, those things lie before us. God does not lie; He will follow through with what He says He will do.

What we see here in Ezekiel 5 primarily represents or portrays what we have normally pictured as what will happen to the mighty nations of Israel who have a combined population of somewhere near five hundred million people. But I wonder if you have noticed that out of all of these destructive dooms only one of them involves warfare? I know that you do not remember specifically everything that was said in Leviticus 27, but if you go back and read it there is only one mention there, and only one mention here in Ezekiel 5, and it is called the "sword." Where do all the other things at least have their beginnings? Right here.

I know that you know and believe that you are beginning to see some of these things fulfilled. It is still fairly hit and miss, as we might say, as God directs the areas that He wants to do something in. This year, for example, the soil, the ground in Texas was turned into bronze. The sun in the sky was

as hard as a rock up there because they went for a long period of time through a drought. Other places got unusual drenchings of rain. Just last Sunday in Charlotte, during the football game they had four inches of rain in eighteen minutes and they played that game where in some places the water was six and eight inches deep. I did not see it but heard about it; we were elsewhere, up in Chicago.

Now where did the rain fall? In the city, which is kind of interesting because God specifically says, "I will cause it to rain on one city and not on another." Where we need the rain is out in the country where the crops are growing. So you look at Charlotte's rainfall totals and you will find that we are getting about the same amount of rain every year in Charlotte but that is where the weather bureau is located, the place where they do the measuring. What is falling in the outlands where the crops are growing? Very interesting to think about.

These things are happening in the United States of America and we are keeping track of them. That brings me to a question. How many times did God literally scatter the Israelites, whether it was the house of Israel or whether it was the house of Judah? How many times did He do that? We are looking forward to a big scattering, are we not? I do not intend to derail you because it is coming, but it is not here yet. God *is* going to scatter Israel. He *is* going to scatter Judah again. I think that you are well aware that after this is all over there is a great regathering of the Israelitish people back in their homeland and He says from traveling from where they were scattered. It is coming.

But how many times has He actually done it? He did it once to the house of Israel through the Assyrians from 722 to 720 BC and He scattered them so much they *never* returned. He did it so completely that most of them do not even know who they are or that they are Israelitish people. What about the house of Judah? He scattered them as well through Nebuchadnezzar so that some of them, a very large number, were taken into captivity and that included people like Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and it included Ezekiel as well. Seventy years later, of all the people He scattered within Babylon a very small number returned to repopulate Judah once again, and that of course was done under Ezra and Nehemiah.

So what does the Bible show? The reality is that He scattered the house of Israel, both portions of it, only one time. Another one is coming. He only did it one time but there are other ways to provide oppression upon a nation that is sinning against Him and we find that this is underway.

Now God is merciful and He does not punish without also giving ample warnings. He usually does this through prophets; He does it through preachers, but mostly it has been done through prophets. I want you to turn to Amos 4:6 and we will see a record of what happened just after the time of Amos. Amos preached in that period of time before the house of Israel was taken into captivity. His own writings appear to date it somewhere around 760 BC. They went into captivity between 722 and 720 BC so this preaching by Amos was done about forty years before they were taken into captivity. God gave them *forty years* to repent.

In the meantime, He had other prophets going through that area in order to prepare the people for what was coming, giving them an opportunity to repent. Amos is a tremendous book and you ought to read it because, brethren, it is aimed right at the United States of America. When you see the sins that God displays in this book, you are going to be able to relate it to the times you are living in right now, if you will just update things to the 20th and 21st century. Notice God's testimony. He does not lie. His prophets recorded this.

Amos 4:6-8 Also I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities. And lack of bread in all your places; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord. I also withheld rain from you, when there were still three months to the harvest. I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered. So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water, but they were not satisfied; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord.

I think you can see that in the capital city of Samaria, which is where the preaching was being done, things in the northern ten tribes there in the house of Israel were somewhat more advanced than we are right now.

Amos 4:9-12 I blasted you with blight and mildew. When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees, and your olive trees, the locust devoured them; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord. I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt; your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses; I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord. I overthrew some of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning; yet you have not returned to Me, says the Lord. Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel; because I will do this to you, prepare to meet your God, O Israel!

Almost like face-to-face; He is saying, "You are going to have to answer to Me."

Amos 9:13 For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind, who declares to man what his thought is, and makes the morning darkness, who treads the high places of the earth— the Lord God of hosts is His name.

I do not believe human nature has changed and God is showing that despite what He brought upon them, they did not relate what was happening to them to God's displeasure with them. Is that happening in the United States? It is happening just like it happened in the book of Amos. Out of this huge population of the peoples of northwest Europe and the United States, Australia, and so forth, are people turning to God in repentance? A small number are.

So what does this tell you? The vast majority are not relating things that are happening to God. To them these are just natural consequences of shifts in weather patterns and so forth. They think it is happening only because of these innocuous laws that exist. They do not see that it is God who is pulling the levers on the universe and causing these things to occur to make people *think*. God is so far away from their thoughts that they cannot seem to turn them in that direction because they do not believe the Bible. Their faith in God is one of ease, something they relate to occasional prayer, but they do

not **see** God. He is not part of the perception that they carry in their minds day after day, minute after minute, and know that they want to relate everything in life to Him and His purpose for us. The Creator is not on the minds of very many people.

Take a look now at Deuteronomy 28, which of course was written a few years after Leviticus 26 and has a tendency to go into greater detail. I want to point out that things are not going to happen uniformly throughout the United States, which encompasses a large area of about three million square miles or so. You can see from Jesus' prophecies in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13 that it is here and there. In other words, everything is not happening in one place at one time.

Deuteronomy 28:16-20 Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Cursed shall be the fruit of your body [that means our children] and the produce of your land, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will send on you cursing, confusion, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.

In those five verses, God is portraying attitudes of general confusion and the loss of good, purposeful direction to life within the nation. In other words, it is now to the place where it is stumbling around, not knowing exactly which way to turn; up, down, left, right or whatever. We see in these verses a blurring of conduct and a strong indication toward economic decline. This decline comes up in verse 31 through 33. Notice how it is stated in rather a country-ish portrayal.

Deuteronomy 28:31 Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it; your donkey shall be violently taken away from before you, and shall not be restored to you. . .

What is He talking about here? He is talking about our means of creating wages, creating money. They are tools that people use to become prosperous. God is sweeping away our ability to be prosperous. Where, brethren, has all of our manufacturing gone? It is not in the United States anymore and what manufacturing is still here is owned by outsiders, and so where do the profits go?

Deuteronomy 28:31-32 . . . your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you shall have no one to rescue them. Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, and your eyes shall look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no strength in your hand.

You know that does not actually have to represent a taking away into captivity of our children. They are being stolen away through television, movies and so forth. These are the things that they admire and they are not part of where this nation began when it was a fairly righteous nation. These influences are stealing the minds of our children. They live with us but they do not see things the way we used to see them at all.

Deuteronomy 28:33 A nation whom you have not known shall eat the fruit of your land and the produce of your labor, and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually.

I heard the other day one of those things that just amazes me. Nestle Corporation is transporting shiploads of Great Lakes water to China. Imagine that! That chocolate company is taking water from one of our biggest reservoirs of fresh water, the largest reservoir the world has ever seen, and they are selling it to China. Who would have thought of doing such a thing fifty years ago? We would have said, "Hey, that's ours! Where are you going with that?" Brethren, outside of the Creator God, the thing that has made this nation so prosperous is food and our weather patterns. The largest aquifer in the world is still pumping water out in the great central basin of the United States. It is under Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and it stretches all the way up into North Dakota. That is what made this nation so

wealthy. We did not have to worry about food, about weather patterns. Water, water everywhere and buckets full of it to drink, and now here we are selling it to the Chinese.

Do you know what else is happening? This is really disgusting. There are very wealthy people in America who are buying up western land atop this aquifer so that they can sell the water to their fellow Americans because water on the surface, good water, is diminishing.

What I am getting at here is I want you to see that things are happening of major consequence, things that we took for granted before but we cannot take for granted now. Things are happening in such a way that there are even people who are farsighted enough and have enough money that they are getting ready to be able to make a killing while you and I do not have the water to take care of ourselves. Our fellow Americans are doing this. T. Boone Pickens is one of those who is buying up the land just as fast as he can get his billions of dollars to be able to do that.

Deuteronomy 28:27-29 The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart. And you shall grope at noonday, as a blind man gropes in darkness; you shall not prosper in your ways; you shall be only oppressed and plundered continually, and no one shall save you.

Again, illness enters into the picture but this time He adds to it people of unbalanced minds. Anybody who is watching the news, listening to the news, knows that there are crazy things, murders happening *over nothing*. So many unbalanced minds out there.

Deuteronomy 28:30 You shall betroth a wife, but another man shall lie with her.

He is telling us that there is going to be a breakdown in family life.

Deuteronomy 28:37 And you shall become an astonishment, a proverb [talking about the nation], and a byword among all nations where the Lord will drive you.

He is talking here about the loss of prestige of the United States of America and the other Israelite nations, not because we are merely envied for our wealth and our power but hated as being the *cause* of the world's problems. You think this is not up to date? We have a president in office who went around the world apologizing for the United States of America. Why did he do that? He did it because, at least one of the reasons is, he knows what they think of us. Our prestige is gone.

Deuteronomy 28:43 The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower. He shall lend to you, but you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail.

Now in one way the Mexican illegals invasion is a part of this but it is in a sense small by comparison to what is happening in relation to the Chinese and the Japanese. They are buying up American property wherever they can find it and I am not just talking about the Chinese government, I am talking about individual Chinese citizens. The only way they can make use of their money outside of China is to buy property in places like the United States and Canada. They are buying up Canadian properties at ridiculously high prices and as the article said the next target is the United States of America and most likely the West Coast. I have seen one writing on this and I am not really sure of its authenticity but one of these days I am going to see something that authenticates this and that is that the Chinese have already bought up something like fifty square miles either in Idaho or in Montana. Somewhere near Boise, fifty square miles! It said they are going to build a city there. We will see what happens. These things are happening.

What is my point here? My point is that we are being crushed from within before these other things, big things (I am talking about a war and captivity

which are surely going to come) ever happen. Other things are happening right now and they are going to continue to happen, and we are being crushed before we ever leave the United States' land mass.

I will very quickly go into something here so that you at least will have an overview. I will not get to a solution for you and me of what I am drawing a word picture of, but I want you to turn with me to the book of Judges. I got this idea from Steven Collins. Some of you know Steven from his writings. I do not mean that you know him personally, but Steven was in the Worldwide Church of God and when the breakup came in the Worldwide Church of God he went with United. He was with United for a very long period of time and then he went through a period of sickness that took him out of operation there for a while.

However, during the time that he was writing either in the Worldwide Church of God or after the breakup of the Worldwide Church of God he came up with this idea that we are being oppressed from within by what is happening here within the United States. We are going to go to Judges 3. I just want to touch bases with this so that you see the form of what happened to Israel after they came into the land and they did not obey as they were charged with obeying.

Judges 3:11 So the land had rest for forty years. Then Othniel the son of Kenaz died.

Judges 3:30 So Moab was subdued that day under the hand of Israel. And the land had rest for eighty years.

Judges 5:31 Thus let all your enemies perish, O Lord! But let those who love Him be like the sun when it comes out in full strength. So the land had rest for forty years.

I went through these verses because I think most of us are aware that the history given in Judges shows alternating periods of good and bad times. The good times were generally a good deal longer than the bad times. However,

let it be understood the book of Judges also show that what the Israelites did in the good times most assuredly brought on the bad times or else there would have been no bad times.

What am I getting at here? When times are good, that is when we do the things that bring the bad times on. We live it up, we forget God, we drift away from God and we do things that He says not to do. And when He begins to punish as we just saw there in the book of Amos, we are so far from God as a nation that we do not relate what is happening, all these bad things, to the fact that we are bringing it on ourselves by our conduct.

Now this ought to be something to alert us and the fact that it is largely ignored both by nations and individuals that both nations and individuals tend to destroy themselves in good times because they let down on the attitudes (remember I mentioned attitudes earlier) and conduct that brought them the good times in the first place. If not for this conduct, Professor Tyler would not even have his progressive steps.

Judges 2:11-15 Then the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt; and they followed other gods from among the gods of the people who were all around them, and they bowed down to them; and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord and served Baal and the Ashtoreths. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel. So He delivered them into the hands of plunderers who despoiled them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies all around, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. Wherever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for calamity, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were greatly distressed.

A couple of things I want you to notice. God delivered them into the hand of plunderers. Do you think the Chinese are not plundering us? The Japanese? Even our fellow Brits own more United States treasury bonds than any other nation on earth except China and Japan. Very interesting. So these people are despoiling them.

Now, notice a second thing that I think is a lot more significant than we tend to think. He, that is God, *sold them* into the hand of their enemies all around so that they could no longer stand before their enemies. I think of importance here is that all of these captivities of Israel, here is Israel being sold into the hands of their enemies, they are not taken to a foreign land, it happens right at home.

The second thing is, God sells them. That is an interesting term. Why does God use the term "sold"? Does it have something to do with money? Did the captivity have something to do with the destruction of our prosperity through being sold to someone else?

Judges 4:1-2 When Ehud was dead, the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord. So the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor. The commander of his army was Sisera, who dwelt in Harosheth Hagoyim.

Judges 10:6-7 Then the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtoreths, the gods of Syria, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the people of Ammon, and the gods of the Philistines; and they forsook the Lord and did not serve Him. So the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel; and [again] He sold them into the hands of the Philistines and into the hands of the people of Ammon.

The Hebrew word used for "sold" in each of the verses above is *makar* as transliterated and this word indicates a monetary transaction used in Scripture to indicate the buying and selling of merchandise, land, and slaves. There are other words God could have used but that word *makar* was used to draw our attention to a monetary transaction. Is there any nation on the face of the earth that is more interested in money than the United States? I do not know.

In addition to the buying and selling of merchandise, land, and slaves, the word *makar* is even used to mean the selling of daughters who are literally sold into marriage, meaning entirely given over to. You have to transfer that thought of that verb into what we are talking about here. He sold us completely over to somebody else—our enemies. Now in this case, the one

that was sold into this kind of captivity was figuratively His own wife. So if we draw on other portions of the Scripture, this could possibly indicate a selling of her into slavery as a result of her sins.

Because this word *makar* means a monetary transaction, those sins may very well have included banking and lustful indebtedness as a result of which they became slaves and needed a redemption price to bring freedom.

Now recall that God most frequently frames His description of sins, the breaking of His laws, as forms of idolatry regardless of whether the sins might literally be murder, adultery, stealing, lying, Sabbath breaking, or lust. Indebtedness is almost always the result of living beyond one's means and that means it results from lust.

Judges 3:8 Therefore the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and He sold them into the hand of Cushan-Rishathaim king of Mesopotamia; and the children of Israel served Cushan-Rishathaim eight years

Of particular interest in this sermon is the mention of Kushan-Rishathaim. It is not so much who he is but rather where he is from that is really intriguing. He is from Mesopotamia, Babylon. Mesopotamia is a long way from Israel. However, archaeologists have dug up some very interesting information. Mesopotamia was the home of Babylon and the basic principles of Babylon's banking system is the same as is used today in the western world. Do you hear what I am saying? Our banking system is Babylonish. The Israelites way back in the days of the Judges were using the Babylonians as their bankers.

The 1943 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* notes the Babylonians had developed a banking system as early as 2000 BC. In its Vol. 3 under the heading "The History of Banks" it notes that banking was part of the sun god temple system and *the temples were also the banks*. When you put the worship of a false god with a banking system that is rigged for the bankers to make all kinds of money from a people who are lustful, spending their money doing things that should not be done, driven by their desires, and what happens? They go into such indebtedness that in order for God to bring to their attention what is happening He uses the word "sold." God sold the

people and their properties to the banks and they became captives of those banks.

That same 1943 *Encyclopedia Britannica* mentions that the Babylonians were using a credit system of banking with paying of interest after specified periods of time, even as we do today. It points out that by 576 BC Babylon had a banking system that compared to the Rothschild's Banks of 19th Century Europe.

There is nothing new under the sun. Those banks loaned on crops attaching them in advance, loaned on signatures, and paid interest on deposits. Our capitalistic banking system has its roots in Babylon, Mesopotamia and that was directly tied to the religious sun god temples.

Martin Collins said in his sermon given on September 17 that history shows that as a nation's economy declines into overwhelming debt, immorality increases ["Lacking Nothing (Part 3)"]. In other words, both give strong evidence of moving in tandem with each other and that is where we are as a nation today. We are behaving just like our ancestors and we have gotten ourselves into debt to the Babylonish system and its banks.

As a result, we are in such debt we cannot pay it off and we are being oppressed in every area. While this monetary and economic oppression is taking place, God is hitting us with famine, drought, floods, an occasional earthquake, a devastating earthquake, and little by little our pride is being broken on every front. One of these days we are not going to be able to meet the emergency, and I do not think it is very far off.

I want you to understand that I believe there is a very strong possibility that the captivity has already begun, and it is has begun right within our homeland.