

Preparing For Bad Times (Part 2)

How To Prepare

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In the last sermon that I gave you on this subject, I showed you that God clearly shows in His instruction to His children that they should not assume that they are going to sail right through all the economic ups and downs and natural disasters that hit their nation.

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself:
but the simple pass on, and are punished.

There is everything from little children's tales to Jesus' instruction regarding this principle. I happened to think this morning about the story of *The Three Little Pigs*. They knew the wolf was in the area, and so each one of them prepared for the wolf's eventual arrival at their house. The one built his house out of straw. That was his preparation, and the wolf came and blew it down. And then the other one built his house out of wood, and the wolf came and blew it down. But the other one prepared a great deal better. He built his house out of bricks, and the wolf huffed and puffed, but he could not blow it down, and so the little pig was safe because he was prepared for the arrival of a disaster, or at least a potential disaster.

Then I happened to think of Jesus' instruction to make sure that you build your house on a rock. That is the preparation theme. You do not build your house on a sand pile, because whenever the storm comes it is going to wash the sand away, and all your preparation is going to go for naught. So Jesus is firmly on the side of getting prepared for the storms of life that are going to come. Whether they are spiritual, or whether they are physical things that are part of our environment, we should take notice and do what we can to prepare. If we do, there is a pretty good possibility that these steps that we take in preparation are going to help us to avoid, or at the very least, soften as much as possible what could potentially be a very painful, perhaps life-threatening situation.

In other words, one should not deliberately put himself at risk for things, except for those things of the very highest order, and that is of obeying God rather than men. The choice there is very clear. The position that we take is very clear as well.

In Proverbs 6 is further instruction along this line.

Proverbs 6:6-11 Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provides her meat [her food] in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall your poverty come as one that travels, [that is, step by step] and your want as an armed man [that is, you will be defenseless].

So the ant is put forth as an example of someone sensibly preparing in good times for the possibility of the bad times that are going to follow. The ant is a self-starter and it does not need an overseer driving it. It does not need a guide to tell it what to do. It wisely works diligently in good times during the harvest to prepare for the bad times. We need to consider that the bad times are surely going to come, because nothing stays exactly the same. That is a fact of life.

Here we are in Big Sandy, and I am in the midst of a couple of men who were employees of Ambassador College. Here was the church, and Ambassador College, the school which we might say was the school of the prophets of God's true church. Who would have ever thought that this was anything as **insecure** as it turned out to be? But it changed, and so their lives had to take a change as well, because even something like that which looked so spiritually solid was not as spiritually solid as it might have looked, and physically the college is gone, and their jobs are gone.

The saying is, "There will always be an England." *Oh yeah?* We have these sayings like "God's country." Do you think "God's country" might not get devastated? See, the Scriptures show that these things are going to change, and so to assume that God will take care of us without our making effort to provide for ourselves is a presumption. Sometimes presumption is based on

ignorance. Those things can all be excused, but nonetheless it falls within that area, and at the same time to not prepare is not learning the way of God, to carefully choose the way of life that will produce the most and the best toward the fulfilling of God's purpose for our lives.

Perhaps you might feel that you are presently going through (or have gone through in the past), some pretty hard economic times. But, brethren, you are living through the longest economic **boom** in the history of the United States of America. It will not stay this way either, because it never does. **It WILL end!** The economy will crash, and it seems to me that it might not be all that far off. Perhaps it is even dateable.

The indicators that I gave you in the last sermon are just general signs that precede almost all crashes. I am not trying to convince you that I have any particular direct inspiration from God in this matter. It is simply that I know a law in this universe. "There ain't no free lunch." "The piper has to be paid." The huge indebtedness of the government and of individuals has got to be accounted for.

Money and its power is being concentrated in the hands of the few, and those few who are gobbling it up are not gods, but they are selfish, carnal-minded men who will use their power to concentrate and consolidate their power even more intensely. When that happens, it invariably leads to revolution of some sort. We can hope though that at least it will be peaceful. It could be economic. It could be political. It could even be an out-right shooting war between nations. That depends upon the configuration of the problem, but whatever form it takes, it is going to bring confusion. The normal course of business is going to be interrupted, and jobs are going to be lost. Incomes will be cut off, and savings, if any, are going to be depleted because they will be used up, or the supply of that money will cease to exist, and there might be social unrest.

In the past when things of this sort occurred, it was usually confined to one nation or one area of the world, but because of rapid transportation and communication and the powerful efforts toward globalism of business, this one is going to affect a larger portion of the world than ever before. In that last sermon I did not mention the global aspect of the looming crisis, but

today business ties are so *globally* interconnected that if somebody sneezes in Japan, somebody catches cold in New York City.

Please turn to Revelation 18. I think we all understand that this gives us one picture of "the beast," and it says:

Revelation 18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.

"Kings" here is put forth for "leaders." Political leaders primarily, but it could be leaders in other areas of culture as well.

Revelation 18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buys their merchandise any more.

If we would read this in more detail, we would find that in this chapter God kind of focuses on the business aspects of "BABYLON THE GREAT."

Revelation 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing.

Revelation 18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to naught. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off.

See how God is beginning to bring into the picture others who are affected by the interruption of business aspects of Babylon. The "shipmaster" takes in those who are involved in transportation.

Revelation 18:21-22 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee. . . .

All of these things are things that are involved in entertainment, things that lift our spirits and bring joy.

Revelation 18:22 . . .and no craftsman [those who are skilled in working with their hands], of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in you; and the sound of a millstone [those manufacturies] shall be heard no more at all in you.

There we have a picture of BABYLON THE GREAT continuing right on up until God Himself moves to destroy it. That is a factor that needs to be considered in what I am going to be talking about here in just a little bit.

I mentioned at the end of that previous sermon on this subject that there is something on the horizon that might bring on a major crunch with a datable time-frame, and might have huge economic and prophetic implication. I wanted you to see in Revelation 18 that it will not stop the development of Babylon. It will not stop it, and in one scenario can even play a major role in advancing its development.

What I am speaking of is the Y2K computer problem, and this thing looks potentially serious enough to me that I feel that we had better begin getting ready for it. But first we must overcome this concept that Americans seem to have so deeply ingrained in them, that either nothing will happen, or that in the last half of the ninth inning, the bases are loaded, two men are out, the count is three and two, and somebody hits a home run to make the whole problem disappear. That is part of the American psyche, that somehow and in some way, technology or something will save us.

I once read a quote by Alexis de Tocqueville which was kind of interesting considering the United States. I guess he spent about ten years traveling around the country trying to find out what made us tick. Some of the conclusions he came to are very interesting, because he said at one point, "There must be a special angel that watches over drunks, children, and the United States"—because somehow or other we always seem to win at the last moment."

I have here an article by Ellen Goodman. You may not know her, but she is a nationally syndicated writer. Her columns appear quite frequently in

newspapers around the United States. She is a liberal, but she is also the editor of *The Boston Globe*. This is a lady that kind of has her finger on the pulse of things, and she is not uninformed. The title of this article, "On the Brink of the Y2K Disaster" appeared May 30, 1998, and it is on this thing of the American psyche, that somehow or other, somebody is going to save us at the last moment. Anyway she writes:

Many computers, we are told, will go into catatonic shock. Telephones and lights may go dead. Robots may quit work. At least one executive for Barclay Bank is talking about buying candles, tin food, and bottled water. I don't even want to think about the program governing our ballistic missiles.

We will talk about that just a little bit later. She says a little bit later:

My sense is that the 'millennium bug' is in fact part of the great American planning disease. This is a country in which a long-range economic plan on Wall Street is a quarterly report. Planning is positively un-American. It's just not that we're nearsighted; it's that we prefer to improvise. The much vaunted American optimism with the "can do" spirit also leads us to believe that we can fix it, and at the last minute. The Boy Scout motto is 'Be Prepared,' but the more romantic, the more heroic style, is to pull out a rescue operation at the very last minute on the brink of disaster. This is the myth nurtured throughout our culture in everything from Superman to Star Wars. It was the theme of the World War II victory movies and patriotic egotism. Americans don't have to worry about getting into a pickle, because we can always get out of it. . . . Today we remain far too cheerful in the belief that technology can save us from the troubles that technology got us into.

Projections by those following this problem more closely range from it being nothing more than a speed bump on the road to greater prosperity to a huge mountain that is going to take years to scale. But even a speed bump—the most cautious of all projections—makes the person slow down, and this thing **is** going to slow the economy down.

I have another quote for you from *USA Today* dated May 6, 1998. It was a front-page article, and it is an interview with a lady named Susan Phillips. Susan Phillips is very highly placed in the Federal Reserve System.

A Federal Reserve policymaker said Tuesday that she expects the Y2K computer bug to take a bite out of the economy for the next two years as money and resources are siphoned off to cure it.

The money is already being spent. If you are spending money fixing **this**, you cannot do other jobs. The other jobs have to be put off to the side, and those jobs that were planned undoubtedly were going to cause these companies to hire and whatever, but now they cannot hire them because they have to put the money into something else.

Central Bank Governor, Susan Phillips, said in an interview that the diversion of resources will lead to slower productivity and possibly higher inflation. 'It's at least something that will be a minor disruption,' she says. 'If it's not done well, it could have **much more** of an impact.'

"If it's not done well." Remember that.

Federal Reserve officials reckon U.S. companies will spend at least \$50 billion fixing the Year 2000 computer glitches.

Brethren, \$50 billion is a **stunningly** low estimate. You will hear about that a little bit later.

Still Phillips doesn't expect the computer glitch to have a lasting impact on the economy.

That is a real political statement. It might last ten years. How long is "lasting"?

Productivity growth should pick up in the next century after the USA puts the problem behind it.

What are you going to do between now and the next century?

"I think we'll bounce back," she says.

There is a man by the name of Edward Yardeni, and he is a Wall Street economist. (This is not the man who wrote *Time Bomb 2000*. That man is a computer expert. His name is "Yourdon.") In December of 1997, Yardeni projected a ten percent chance that the Y2K problem will cause a recession. When the government's report came out in February of 1998, upon hearing it, Yardeni did some more calculations. He says now there is a thirty percent chance it will cause a recession. In May more projections came out, and Yardeni has now upped his chance figure to sixty percent that Y2K will cause a recession.

Nobody knows the extent of the impact. Everybody agrees there is going to be an impact. If the economy is already slowed down from things that are happening in the Orient possibly, and from other factors before the Y2K problem begins to directly affect us, and if the preparations **are** as Susan Phillips said. "Not done well," the combination of an economy already in trouble, plus the Y2K problem, might be a problem of gigantic economic political, social, and military proportions.

Computers have become such a fabric of our lives, that in the course of ordinary business throughout the day, we have now gotten to the place where we take them for granted. However, the mainframe computers that the larger companies use to store and process information, have a built-in glitch that is going to cause the problem, and that is that they do not have the ability to read dates beyond December 31, 1999.

How this problem came into being is understandable, but why it was allowed to continue for so long without confronting it is much more mystifying. The problem began in the early days of computer usage when computers were huge and the storage space for information was very small. In one sense, the computer could be likened to an electronic file cabinet. Everybody knows what file cabinets look like, and everybody understands that a file cabinet only has so much room inside of it to store files. So it is with computers.

In the computer though, information is stored on a rapidly spinning metal disk that is also called the hard drive. When computers were new back in the sixties, the manufacturers had not yet perfected the engineering to store the huge amounts of information that we have today, and thus space on the hard drive was a very precious commodity. So in order to save as much space on the disk for the computer to do its operation, the programmers (the people who electronically tell the computer what and how to perform its operation) made the decision to enable the computer only to recognize the last two numbers in a date; thus **98** is recognized as **1998**. The 19 is assumed by the computer. Thus the date **99** is in reality read as **1999**.

When we get to the year 2000, the computer is going to read it as **1900** because it does not recognize the **20** in the year 2000, and the computer has absolutely no, zilch, nada information for the year 1900. Nothing! It did not even exist then! So it will either put up a flag that says "does not compute," or it will give deficient, unreliable, wrong information in an effort to do its job. How can you rely on it? You cannot, and that is the problem.

Now how large is the problem? Well listen to this from *The Ruff Times*, an economic newsletter. This was in the December 15, 1997 issue, and *Ruff* is in turn quoting a man by the name of Capers Jones, who is president of FPR Inc. Capers Jones has written a book on the Y2K problem, exploring the economic aspects of it. Capers Jones says this:

It is the most expensive single problem in human history. This may well affect the Federal government, state and local governments, public services, your financial affairs, your vital information, employment, including your paycheck, your benefits, your payroll taxes, personal records, and your job.

Capers Jones is not the only one who has written, and articles are beginning to appear in newspapers and news magazines almost on a daily basis now as they are beginning to become aware that this thing is not the minor affair that they first treated it as.

A quote from *The Washington Post*:

For some institutions it will soon be too late. A global catastrophe could affect many people's lives around the globe.

A quote from *The Los Angeles Times*:

The IRS is launching a massive effort to forestall a breakdown of the income tax system when the year 2000 arrives. If the agency cannot quickly revise millions of lines of obscure software codes, it will throw the government's financial operations into chaos. Experts say the Federal government has been dangerously light in recognizing the problem.

A quote from *The Sacramento Bee*:

In the silent realm of cyberspace, a doomsday clock is counting off the seconds. Industry representatives warn that computer users will find themselves with a giant techno hangover when check-bounce benefits are cut off, taxes become immediately due. Anything that depends upon software for its operations is potentially at risk. If this problem is not addressed, nearly all computers could fail.

A quote from *Business Week Magazine*:

The world of finance is especially vulnerable. The absolute worse case is a global financial meltdown. Clearing and settlement of transactions could break down, stock felled electronically could be wiped out [that is, the record of them], interest might not be properly credited, deposits or trade might not be credited to an account. The consequences may be catastrophic.

And Ruff says, "And they once called **me** a prophet of doom!"

A quote from *Newsweek*:

Almost anyone who has looked at the problem agreed not only that it is profound and potentially disastrous, but no silver bullet exists to zap it.

Now you may have already been affected to some degree. You might want to take out your credit card and look at it to see what the expiration date on it is, and it is very likely going to have an expiration date of 11/99 or 12/99 if it was issued within the last year or two. There are some people who are now beginning to get Year 2000 dates on them, and in a way that is good news. It is beginning to show that the credit card companies feel that they might have things under control, and in a way that might signal something that is good. However there are places around the country where credit cards have been rejected by the cash registers because the cash register is not Year 2000 compliant. They will not recognize the date, and so people get up to the cash registers with their groceries or whatever, and they do not have any cash, and they have a credit card, and it is rejected.

We, the church, have been contacted by the IRS. We paid our withholding taxes, but they did not know what month it was for. It was clearly marked what it was for, computer wise, because we deposit the money electronically with the bank, and the bank then transfers it to the IRS. The last time that Martin checked it out with the IRS office in Memphis, the voice on the other end apologized and said they were sorry for the disruption or whatever, but it is a Y2K problem. So already there are minor things beginning to take place. There was no real problem there for us, but nonetheless little glitches are beginning to show up.

The Y2K is not a problem that men are searching for a hidden answer. The answer is obvious, but it is virtually insurmountable. It is a "time and labor management" problem, and there is a huge amount of work and not enough people, and not enough time to test and find out what needs to be done. It is just that simple. Virtually everyone's best estimate is that it will take every company and government faced with this problem **three years** to complete the process. That includes a period of time to assess the size of the problem, organize the attack on the problem, complete the reprogramming, and then test the results. The testing alone takes five or six months.

The problem is that very many companies did not get started until it was too late to finish their entire process before the year 2000 arrives, and there are a number of reasons for this. Some simply procrastinated. Others disregarded the seriousness of this, thinking it foolish, and in some cases nonexistent. Others simply did not have the money in their reserves to cope with it. In

other cases the company was not well organized and a lot of time has been lost.

Others simply did not have the people to do the job, and this is a major, major part of the problem, because they either have to hire outside help, or to try to do the job with in-house personnel. If they do that, then they have to pull the in-house personnel off the job they already have, and so research at the very least, and production, like Susan Phillips said, comes to a screeching halt. Companies do not do well where there is no production. They go broke.

In addition to this, this sort of reprogramming is not fun work. Very, very much of it is just plain boring for a programmer. One man that I read about this compared it to pushing sand around in a sand pile, and that tends to make productivity in producing the changes low. Also adding to the confusion is that programming is almost as much an art as it is a science. This was especially true in the early days when common standards regarding programming were very few. Each programmer developed his own code for telling the computer what to do in each circumstance that might arise.

Discovering what those codes are is sometimes very difficult for the programmer coming along behind to re-program it thirty years later. The re-programmer, even under the best of conditions, might be dealing with a known computer language, but it is obsolete, and nobody learns it anymore. And so the re-programmer, being unfamiliar with the old programming language, is even more at a loss to interpret the original program's personal innovations because the original programmers did not document things well. Even if they did document it well, the records have been lost. I mean we are talking about thirty years ago, and you know how Americans are. We do not save things very well, so we are dealing with a problem of human nature at work. That is just the way we are. These companies find themselves between a rock and a hard place because they did not take the warning early enough and seriously enough to prepare.

Now, **how BIG is the problem?** There are literally *billions* of lines of code that have to be re-programmed and re-tested. Do you know how many there are, or what the estimate is? Seven hundred *billion* worldwide! I was telling Dr. Maas driving up here that I think I found a way to give us some sort of an idea of how big a billion is. Maybe you can relate to this. This appeared in

the *The Charlotte Observer* newspaper just two weeks ago from today. A syndicated writer there in Washington got the bright idea after the Congress had passed the \$202 billion highway bill, a real pork-barrel thing, see. "Let's build more interstates and let's give money to the States to build more highways to take care of the press of traffic.

So he got to thinking "How big is \$202 billion?" Another idea lit up his mind. He said, "What would happen if we gold plated those highways?" So he called up some people involved in gold plating in the industry and he asked them how much it cost per square foot to put a light plating of gold on a piece of jewelry. They told him that basically the cost runs anywhere, depending upon the quality of the jewelry and the thickness of the gold on there, from roughly \$8.00 a square foot to about \$30.00 a square foot. He got out his pencil, sharpened it up, and he decided, "We're going to gold plate the interstate highway system. How much of this thing can we gold plate?" He decided to make it more specific by limiting the gold plating to go on one lane of interstate highway twelve feet wide.

Do you know what? The cost of gold plating it would cover one lane of the entire interstate highway system in the United States of America. I am not done yet. This is the \$202 billion. He still had money left over to gold plate other highways, so he took into consideration all of the other highways that are in the federal system. When he was done with that he **still** had money left over to gold plate other highways, so he decided to take in the state highway, and he finally ran out of money after forty-thousand miles of that. Do you know how much he said? Two hundred thousand miles of highway in the United States, one lane wide, could be plated with a thin plate of gold with \$202 billion.

We are talking here about **700 billion** lines of code worldwide. There are ten million computer programmers worldwide. Taking into consideration that these programmers already have full time jobs and would have to stop what they are doing in order to turn their full attention to the problem at hand, and that the companies are unwilling to do this, and factor in also the amount of time left between now and 1/1/2000, and the amount of time it ordinarily takes to re-program and test, the arithmetic will not add up. It cannot be done in the time that remains. The arithmetic will not even add up when every one of the ten million programmers is put to work on this problem right now.

The people who are reporting on this problem are reporting that the companies are only putting about fifteen percent of their personal staff on this. Even if a company does become compliant and they have their problem completely fixed, it still does not mean the problem is over, because one company's computers very frequently interface with other companies' computers, and if **their** computers are not compliant, the corrupted information is passed on, and the results are suspect.

Let me give you just a little bit of an idea of how big of a problem this might be. Citibank in New York City is the largest bank in the United States of America. Its computers are interfacing with 450 other banking institutions. That includes clearing houses, other banks, the Federal Reserve System, and if any one of them feeds corrupt information because **it** is not 2000 compliant, the integrity of the whole system begins to become suspect, and so corrupt information might go on and be used for quite a while before it is ever found.

Let us add up the cost of doing this job. The cost estimates I have for fixing one line of computer code is as low as \$1.00, and as high right now as \$9.00, and it is rising. So add it up. $1 \times 700 \text{ billion} = \700 billion to be spent on this worldwide. Remember I said that the figure for the United States is almost obscenely low—that \$50 billion. We are the country most dependent on computers. Most of them are **here**. Now when you multiply \$9.00 per line times 700 billion, it equals \$6.3 trillion! Are you beginning to see why Capers Jones said it is the most immense costly problem in the history of mankind?

Governmental figures on this tend to be low because they want to nullify the problem as much as they can. Most people writing on this say that it will cost the United States between \$1.3 and \$1.6 trillion, not counting *lawsuits*. Are you aware that a Class Action lawsuit has been filed against a computer company? Now what is my scenario? The company will rush to try to fix the programming without testing the results. They are simply going to “wing it,” hoping for the best. The programmers almost never get the entire program perfectly right the first time around. They are only human, and to expect programmers to get it right the first time around is an impossible goal, considering the size of the problem.

Remember, what you are going to hear now is my speculation. Everybody is speculating. Nobody knows for sure exactly what will happen, but in a worse-case scenario it could be very scary. I personally think what is going to happen is going to be spotty. Some companies will be prepared; others will not. Some areas of the country will have services that other areas of the country are denied, because whatever it was, their companies were not ready. Also the full impact of the problem will not happen all at once simply because of the randomness of the dating information contained within a vast number of computers.

To me the most critical area of all for us as a social culture is the area of the **utilities**: electricity, gas, water.

This problem is going to begin to come to the fore very strongly just as winter really gets underway, January 1, 2000. What if there is no electricity in your area? Can you imagine what it would be like having no heat in your home, or no lights, no electric range to cook on, no water flowing into your home because the pumps will not be working, and no toilet to use, and no radio unless you have a battery-operated one, and no television at all?

There is some good news, and that is that the utility companies *appear* to have their part of this problem pretty well under control, but not all of them. They appear to be making good progress. However if your electricity comes from a nuclear power plant, they are particularly vulnerable because almost all of the warning systems, the alarm systems, are computerized. So rather than risk a nuclear accident, the plans have already been made to shut them down. It is too risky. But if they have the problem under control, then you do not have to worry about it. I said the good news is that the utility companies seem to be making very good progress.

The second most critical area is **communications**: telephones.

Business would crash without telephones. There would be no calling the police or the fire department. You could not call anybody. If your house burns, too bad. Nobody could come there, except your neighbors. Again there is good news on this front, and that is that AT&T, the largest of them all, expects to be compliant, even with their testing, by the end of 1998. They

are in pretty good shape. What you have to be concerned about is not so much the big companies, it is the little ones. They simply do not have the financial resources and personnel to be able to do what needs to be done, and so small phone companies are suspect because they have small resources.

The third critical area is **transportation**.

The United States of America is getting a small foretaste of transportation problems in the merger of Union Pacific and Southern Pacific which began in 1995. I do not know what the problem was, but when they merged, the people who made the merger maybe did not take into consideration the computer system. It was either overlooked, or the problem was disregarded as not being important. The two companies have non-compatible computer systems and it has thrown the now-merged company, going under the name of Union Pacific, into great confusion because the location and use of railroad cars is kept track of and scheduled by computer, and they are losing shipments all over their system.

Deliveries and pickups have been delayed six to seven months trying to track down railroad cars. They have to do it now visually. The cars are in the yard somewhere and they cannot find them. During this past year 24 million bushels of wheat went undelivered in Kansas alone because Union Pacific could not get the railcars there, and who knows what was lost in the other States. And horror of horrors for the railroad company, they are actually having to call the truckers to ship things for them, to sublet to the truckers in order to get things done.

Add to this the fact that the use of rails in the United States is all computerized as to what trains go on which rail, at which time, and in which direction. This is now all computerized. All switches are thrown by computer. No brakeman does that job anymore. Shipments are all done by computer programming, so you can see the potential for problems there as well.

Truck deliveries are now scheduled by computers, and it is a big, big industry in the United States. What if there were no food deliveries? I think we are all aware that modern supermarkets control inventories in what they call "a just in time" basis. In other words, they have only three to five days'

stock in the storage cells, and deliveries are timed to arrive just as the inventory is running out. Again there is a ray of hope. The trucking industry seems to be on top of their situation, but there is a fly in the ointment with the rest of transportation.

The next critical area is **banking**.

The potential is here for runs to be made on banks by people seeking cash, because if they hear of the potential of this Y2K problem, confidence in the system begins breaking down, fear takes control, and people rush to get their money out of the bank before anybody else can claim the bank's reserves. I do not know whether you are aware of it, but banks are now required by law only to have a reserve of \$7.50 for every \$100 in deposit. You cannot expect the FDIC to bail out the banks, because the FDIC almost went broke just a couple of years ago in the Savings and Loan scandals and so forth that broke out, and this thing might be many, many, many times larger than that.

Again there is some good news, because the banks also are apparently in reasonably good shape, but as good as this looks, even with the banks, they fully expect that at least three percent of the banks in the United States will not be compliant. That is not a good figure. It sounds good at first. What if one of those three percent is **your** bank, and all these other banks are tied to it?

Even though these four areas are in reasonably good shape overall, there is no way to pinpoint exactly where everybody stands. I mentioned earlier that these companies are between a rock and a hard place because of certain factors. Now here is one of those factors, and this quote is being taken from the *IT Recruiter*. It is a magazine to those people who hire information-technology people, and programmers are information-technology people. The title of the article is: "How far will you go to attract and retain Y2K consultants?"

There are twenty months to go until the year 2000. Given the risk of crippling lawsuits and possible financial ruin, the incentive has never been stronger to do whatever it takes to ensure that your company is Y2K compliant, and yet six out of ten American companies have not done complete assessments, and only one out

of three companies has a Y2K plan in place, according to data from a recent survey.

Brethren, many of these people do not even know what to do yet.

With the exorbitant cost attached to fixing the Y2K bug, it may be overwhelming for smaller shops to consider spending more on Y2K employees. One way, according to Kapelman, is for Congress to get involved.

Have you heard anything from Congress?

One-third of companies in America are doing nothing. The government should be providing tax incentives to give benefits for those who are addressing the Y2K problem, and perhaps penalize those who are not. Currently no one in Congress has drafted a proposal to financially assist companies with their Y2K costs.

Of course everybody wants the government to solve their problems.

A high technology-worker shortage in the United States continues despite aggressive retraining and hiring programs according to findings of a study released by the Information Technology Association of America.

Big problem—few workers. Cannot get it done unless these companies are willing to make the sacrifices. Some day I think that they will finally resolve to do something, but apparently it has not hit them yet. I think if you are listening, then you will have to agree that there is a potential here for a major problem for a company depending on computers a great deal.

Now who is most at risk at all? Well, it is government—the Federal, state, and local governments—and the smaller companies because they do not have the financial resources to do the job, and neither do they seem to have the will to make the sacrifices necessary to meet this awesome challenge. Here, with governments, is where the major problem really gets sticky

because government touches on much of life through their regulatory agencies and social services. This is the fly in the ointment. Business may be ready, but if the government is not ready, we are going to have trouble.

A report from the *San Jose Mercury News*, June 3, 1998:

The Federal government faces a significant task of critical computer breakdown because some Cabinet departments are having trouble speeding up the pace of their repair work on the Year 2000 glitch, according to internal documents obtained Tuesday.

A quote from *The Orange County Register*, June 3, 1998:

A Representative, Stephen Horn, the Long Beach Republican who monitors the computer problem for the House of Representatives, called on President Clinton to make fixing the computer bug a national priority. 'He's got to make a fireside chat on it. The President must use the bully-pulpit and inform the people of this nation,' said Horn, who heads the House Technology Sub-Committee. He predicted serious disruption of the nation's air traffic because of the Federal Aviation Administration's slow pace at fixing crucial computer systems. 'That doesn't mean planes will drop from the sky,' he said, 'but significant numbers might never make it off the runway because of malfunctions in the Traffic Control System which would disrupt travel nationwide.'

While the Social Security Administration has done outstanding work in preparing its computers, Horn said the progress might be for naught because the government's check-issuing arm, the Treasury Department's Financial Management Service, is making dismal progress.

Now how bad off is it? I will just read you some figures here from the government itself on when its departments are going to be Year 2000 compliant.

The Justice Department: 2001

Health and Human Services: 2002

The General Services Administration: 2002

The Treasury Department: 2004

The Department of Agriculture: 2006

The Department of Transportation: 2010

The Department of Defense: 2012

The Department of Labor: 2019

The Department of Energy: 2019

They said the Social Security Department was in good shape. It is, except for one thing. They are dependent upon the fifty states to feed them with information, and the states are not in good shape in getting their computer problems under control. There are, according to the latest report I read, only four states that are rated as being on top of the problem—4 out of 50. That does not sound too good to me. I can only remember three of them right now. The three of the four that are in good shape are: North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington. I forget what the fourth one was. The rest are in various stages of disarray.

What can we do? **FIRST PRIORITY:**

Proverbs 16:3 Commit your works unto the LORD, and your thoughts shall be established.

Proverbs 16:9 A man's heart devises his way: but the LORD directs his steps.

These two verses, together within the context of the book of Proverbs, **assume** that God does this for the righteous. Our responsibility is to make those choices to ensure that we are that way in developing our relationship

with Him. It does not mean that if we slip and we sin that we are on the outs with Him. He is more concerned about the overall direction, attitude, perspective, and motivation from our conduct.

In other words, perfection is not the condition of a good relationship with Him. Now He would like to have it, but He realizes that expectation is unrealistic. God **is** realistic, but as the perfect Creator and Designer and Artist, He is always working toward that end in His labors with us, and while that creative effort is going on, His perfect mercy, compassion, and forgiveness is also working to reserve us until He is satisfied His creative efforts are complete. That is why in a way we can be what we are, sinning on occasion, because He, as perfect Creator **willingly** forgives, and He **will** direct our thoughts as we make plans to do what needs to be done. So that's where these verses fit in.

Psalm 37:3-5 Trust in the LORD, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed. Delight yourself also in the LORD; and he shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psalm 37:7-8 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked devices to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not yourself in any wise to do evil.

This is absolutely *first priority*. Keep, build, and preserve the relationship with Him, and commit your ways to Him. Submit to Him your thinking and your plans about what to do in regard to this. James 1:5 tells us to ask for wisdom. If you lack wisdom, ask Him, and He says He gives it liberally to us. The **number one priority** is to seek the Kingdom of God, and *all these things shall be added to you*. This principle (including everything to committing your thoughts and your plans about these things to bringing God into it through prayer, Bible study, and obedience) thoroughly involves God.

THE SECOND PRIORITY: Get a right perspective on this as it pertains to **you** as a Christian.

The thing to remember here is that this is not a persecution against the church. In Matthew 10:23 the instruction in regard to persecution is very clear.

Matthew 10:23 But when they persecute you in this city, flee you into another: for verily I say unto you, “You shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.”

When there is persecution, you flee. When I was reading that I thought, Boy, that is interesting. He said to flee from one city to another.

Acts 8:1 And Saul was consenting unto his [Stephen's] death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.

I read this verse because I wanted you to see that circumstances dictate what needs to be done. The people fled, and were scattered, except the apostles. This is very interesting. The ones you think the enemy would most likely get stayed right where the persecution was going on. What can we get from this? You have got to think this through, because every problem like this is going to create its own solutions, and solutions will create problems, so this has to be thought through very carefully. What we are talking about here, the Y2K thing, is something that is coming on the entire nation. It is not directed right at the church. We are caught in it.

Amos 5:16 Therefore the LORD, the God of hosts, the Lord, says thus; Wailing shall be in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! Alas! And they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing.

God is describing what is going to be going on. He is prophesying what is going to go on in Israel as He begins to bring the punishment to pass.

Amos 5:17-20 And in all vineyards shall be wailing: for I will pass through you, says the LORD. Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! To what end is it for you? The day of the LORD is darkness,

and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and learned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the LORD be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it?

This is saying to those of us who are in the United States to be careful about what you do, because if you think that you will escape by going to another area of the country, you may be surprised.

Let us make this really clear. Again, remember we are just dealing with a principle here, and this is primarily aimed at Israel. This one is very interesting because of the mention of the altar in chapter 9, verse 1, the temple being a type of the church.

Amos 9:1 I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said,
Smite the lintel of the door.

Why would He say that? The door is the way of entrance and exit, so if you close the door and cause it to collapse, nobody gets in and nobody gets out. There is an example of this when Samson pulled down the temple of Dagon. He pulled the pillars, the lintel in type, and everybody that was in there got crushed.

Amos 9:1-6 I saw the Lord standing upon the altar: and he said,
Smite the lintel of the door, that the posts may shake: and cut them in the head, all of them: and I will slay the last of them with the sword: he that flees of them shall not flee away, and he that escapes of them shall not be delivered. Though they dig into hell [to escape God], thence shall my hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: And though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them: And though they go into captivity before their enemies, thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them: and I will set my eyes upon them for evil, and not for good. And the Lord GOD of hosts is he that touches the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood: and shall be

drowned, as by the flood of Egypt. It is he that builds his stories in the heaven, and has founded his troop in the earth: he that calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the face of the earth: the LORD is his name.

Amos 9:8 Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, says the LORD.

Amos 9:10 All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil [the calamity] shall not overtake nor confront us.

See, they are going to escape it. No, they will not. So choose your poison. Every solution will create its own problems. The whole country is going to be chastened by God. So God is saying we can run, but we cannot hide. The piper must be paid, and we are getting caught in this. Yes, we are God's church. It is not aimed at us, but this thing is coming first on Israel, and then the whole earth, and we have to live through some of these things.

THE THIRD PRIORITY: Inform yourself about this problem.

I have just barely skimmed the surface in what I have given here. Items are appearing in newspapers and magazines much more frequently now, and those of you who have access to the Internet can maybe search out some sites and distribute some of the material to others, but **be careful**, because as always there are those who are trying to make a fast buck out of this.

Evaluate your own particular circumstance:

Everybody is a little bit different. Everybody's circumstance is a little bit different, but everybody is responsible before God for evaluating their circumstance, and as your watchman, I am warning you that something is coming. I do not know how bad it will be, but you are being warned. You have to evaluate your own circumstance. At the very least, start setting emergency food supplies aside. Every time you go out shopping, forget about that luxury item. Buy a can of beans. Buy a can of corn. Do not buy

the cookies. Do not buy the six-pack. Buy something that will keep you during a time of trial. You get the principle, do you not? Even if nothing major happens, the exercise in preparation will be very good for us, because God prepares in advance. We want to be in His image, and that is what He does. That is His image, to prepare in advance.

The question comes up, "Are we putting ourselves in jeopardy by having food available?" Well, let me ask you a question. What is better? Starving to death from the get-go, or sharing what you **do** have with your neighbor? Which is Christian? Would you not rather be a type of savior for your neighbor and share what you do have with them? Of course. That is what Christians are supposed to do.

The firms that sell freeze-dried and nitrogen-packed food are reporting that they are so deluged with orders that they are now three to four months behind in making deliveries. They are putting in additional lines of work crews because so many of your fellow Americans are getting ready, and these firms feel that they are going to run out of food supplies to meet the demand. Some people are not waiting around.

Begin checking your files to make sure you have a paper record of everything important to you.

Check your insurance papers, your bank statements, mortgage papers, birth certificates, deeds, Social Security and Medicare information, credit card statements. Get your house in order just in case you have to prove something that will no longer be accessible by the computer. The time to begin is **now** so that you are not stressfully frantic when this thing begins to hit in full force. Have money on hand. I understand that this carries a danger with it because of the times that we live in, of the possibility of theft, but risks sometimes have to be balanced against each other, and a decision made, and the decision is yours.

Should you keep some money at home because there might be a run on the bank when people begin to realize the scope of this? The other day I heard a financial guru in Charlotte say (apart from the Y2K context), that it is wise for *anybody* to have three month's cash on hand at home at all times.

There are some dates that might be significant before we get to the year 2000. The first one is only about two and one-half weeks away—July 1, 1998. The reason is because 46 of the 50 states' fiscal year begin on July 1, and this is the last **full** fiscal year before the Y2K problem begins in earnest. The reason for concern is that again some mainframes have been programmed for a 1999 end of run. "99" was the computer program's language for "shut down." Now the people who did this in the early days commonly used this as a trigger, and they know that some of these are in mainframes that were sold to governments—Federal, state, and local. They just do not know where they are. They only know that they do exist in a small number of computers.

The next date is October 1, 1998, and that is because that is the last full Federal government fiscal year. It begins on that date, and the problem is the same, "99" end of run.

The next date is July 1, 1999, because then the year 2000 dates begin to show up in the fiscal year policies and projections and things like that. It may prove to be a problem. Then October 1, 1999 for the Federal government (the same thing).

Then finally December 31st, or we might say January 1, 2000, which very interestingly is a Sabbath. I think it is so interesting that the seventh millennium, that represents symbolically the Sabbath, begins on the calendars that men have created—with a Sabbath. Is there any meaning? I do not know. It is just very interesting.

In conclusion, the Y2K problem is not something that I feel is going to turn this country inside out. Revelation 18 clearly shows Babylon (the Beast) not only surviving, but rolling merrily along without it seems, an economic dip, at least a bad one, until finally God Himself has to throttle it.

One possible scenario here is that Europe secretly already has their computers 2000 compliant, and this is going to give them a huge economic upper hand, and that this will be a major step toward impressing its mark upon the world. Now that does not agree with the news that is coming out of

Europe regarding the Y2K problem, but that is the scenario that some out there in cyberspace are trying to sell to people. But the news coming out of Europe is that they are worse off than we are.

Another one is that the person—the Beast—is going to rise up with the solution, and he will be looked upon as a savior. I do not know. I give those things to you simply because they are out there. Of all the countries in Europe, only five of them are making good progress. They are Britain, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Finland. Regarding the others, the latest report on Germany is that they are only between five and seven percent completed. What all this means, I do not know.

Everybody is speculating. I do believe there is going to be an economic crunch produced by this thing. It may be just a speed-bump. It may be something serious. There may be social problems, with rioting erupting because of a failure to receive government checks. Social Security seems to be in good shape, but the Treasury Department that actually issues the checks is not in good shape. So things are going to be spotty.

So remember, keep close to God. Evaluate your own particular problems. Take a look at this problem. Read about it. Inform yourself of it. Begin to store some things. Do not get frantic about it, but begin to do something, and get prepared somewhere along the line here, and do it quickly.