

Breaking Israel'S Pride

Will the Economic Downturns Break the Pride of our Power

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 06-Dec-08; Sermon #913c

The word "pride" appears forty nine times in the Bible, and it was surprising to me that only three of them are in the New Testament. Interestingly, the first time it appears in the Old Testament is in Leviticus 26:19, where God warns Israel, "I will break the pride of your power." The Hebrew word translated "pride" in that verse is used in a positive sense from time to time, and it indicates excellence, majesty, and glory. In fact, it is frequently used in reference to describe God. However, in the negative usage, it indicates arrogance. In other words, the term indicates intensity of a quality.

By using the arrogance synonym, the translation of that verse could then say, "I will break the arrogance of your power." Let's add to that. The English dictionary definition of pride is quite telling. It is "an undue sense of one's own superiority, inordinate self-esteem, arrogance or conceit." Now, feeding that into the verse, the verse could then read, "I will break your arrogant sense of the superiority of your power."

Let's add yet more. The Hebrew word underlying "power" means "strength." The English word "power" suggests "the ability to act; capability; or the capacity to control." The verse might then read, "I will break the arrogant sense of your capacity to control."

Let's add one more factor. It concerns the proposition "of." "Of" means "coming from originating at; or proceeding from." I think we might then translate Leviticus 26:19 as, "I will break your arrogance proceeding from your capacity to control."

Based on a fairly large amount of supporting evidence given throughout God's relationship with Israel, combined with circumstances in world affairs at the time, I have speculated that the Revelation 17 woman riding the Beast—the one controlling the Beast—is modern day Israel. The common interpretation is that the woman is a church. In our time, no church in the Western world is controlling any single nation, let alone a group of nations making up the Beast. Besides, Revelation 17 and 18 together show that the woman is a great commercial power. How many churches do you know that are great commercial powers?

The British Commonwealth nations and the United States, combined with other nations of Northwest Europe, are such a commercial power, and the United States is the greatest commercial power amongst them. But from whence does Israel's power in this

world come?

Do you recall last week I used that verse in Ecclesiastes 10:19, where Solomon says, "A feast is made for laughter and wine makes merry, but money answers everything"? This helps answer where Israel's power lies and the fountain of its pride: It is from its God given wealth.

In recent sermons I have mentioned Deuteronomy 33:17 and its description of the tribe of Joseph. Let me remind you: It says, "[Joseph's] glory is like a firstborn bull, and his horns are like the horns of the wild ox, and together with them, he shall push the peoples to the ends of the earth." This is a description of a great, wealthy worldwide power. It takes wealth—great amounts of it—to succeed in accomplishing the level of worldwide submission the people of this verse give to Joseph. The verse indicates a wary respect given by those being pushed to a people with unambiguous power to influence and control. The power lies in the obvious wealth that clearly provides and supports the power.

Proverbs 14:20 tells us, "The poor is hated even of his own neighbor, but the rich has many friends." It is wealth that makes a large, formidable, intimidating military possible. It is wealth of a large population base from which the military can be drawn. A huge manufacturing industry, supported by the wealth of an abundant supply of minerals and intelligent working force and unmatched agricultural system with abundant water.

But there is a fly in the ointment. It is becoming clear as we move toward the return of Jesus Christ that the wealth is now more apparent than real, because internally the nation has not handled its wealth well. Amazingly, through greed, the nation has squandered its wealth. It is very nearly bankrupt. It has borrowed so much from other nations in order to support a fantasy—a lifestyle based in the false idea that its wealth was generated from a never ending fountain of gold. All it had to do was to print more money and people seemingly automatically had trust in it, even though there were less and less real assets to secure that money.

Faith in our internal assets has disappeared because lenders already own those assets. The day of reckoning has arrived and we can borrow no more. Support from outside our borders has eroded to almost nothing, because we have relatively little left that somebody else doesn't already have a lien against, because we have already borrowed money on it to maintain our fantasy. I think that God has willed that it is time to wake us up to the reality that "there ain't no free lunch!" He has determined that it's time to break our arrogant pride in the power of our wealth, our arrogant pride in our power to control everything that we set our mind to do.

Breaking Israel's Pride by John W. Ritenbaugh (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Our political leaders are still talking tough. But our economic leaders are plainly dismayed, and if one reads their comments and considers, one will find that their statements are contradictory and confused because they know that every step taken to bail us out takes us deeper in debt.

Let me warn you that the reality of the depth of this crisis has only begun to hit people. The housing mortgage problem is impacting the stock market. The stock market is indeed down. But brethren, it has not crashed yet. It will. And then comes the commodity market collapse. And when it falls, brethren, we hit bottom.

You are living through the process of the United States of America becoming a beggar nation. 9/11 proved that we are not invulnerable militarily. Those great oceans are no longer an absolute protection anymore. This was the first real hit on our pride. Now, we might still look rich to those who have not given careful observation. But the reality is that this economic collapse, which is only now becoming apparent to most citizens, is the straw that may break the camel's back and destroy the arrogant pride still proceeding from our wealth.