

~ Lead, Kindly Light, Amid The Encircling Gloom ~

Our nation has experienced a series of setbacks. We used to read about terrorist actions in Israel or in other parts of the world and look on with curious gaze. Suddenly, we learned that elements of the world hate us. When terrorists succeeded in destroying the Twin Towers in New York City, the Palestinians were dancing in the streets. How could this be? Our country has given billions of dollars in aid to the Palestinians and has labored tirelessly to bring about peace in that region. Is this our thanks? Going after the terrorists is grim business, but this country seemed to feel it had no recourse but to face up to the fact that Muslim terrorists lived and breathed in an atmosphere of hatred and almost a death wish against us. That is hard to understand. It is not just a difference of opinion, but people are prepared to die gladly to cause us pain and loss. This is serious because hatred here is very intense and focused. There was and is no pacifying it with congenial mannerisms or reconciliatory words. They want us dead and our country destroyed.

One of the five pillars of the Muslim religion is Jihad. It is the right to declare holy war against those who may threaten their faith. When Iraq waged war against Iran, it was all right because it was all in the Muslim family. Likewise, when Iraq attacked Kuwait with the full intention of moving on to take Saudi Arabia that was all right because they were all Muslims. While Jihad was never intended to be used by every hate-crazed fanatic, nonetheless, that is exactly how terrorists are using it. The Saudis threw Osama bin Laden out of his home country, so he holed up in Afghanistan and for years built a terrorist base of hate-crazed followers who willingly blow themselves up to carry on a new kind of guerrilla warfare. The Japanese had trained an elite kamikaze force who were committed to die for their Emperor. This is effective in causing death and mayhem. We looked on horrified on September 11, 2001, as our airplanes were taken over and turned into missiles of death and destruction. Why do they hate us so? What have we ever done to these people to cause such fanatic hatred?

If it were not for oil in most of the Muslim countries, they would be starving in their desert sands. They have had a windfall of oil profits unparalleled in the world. Yet the terrorists feel the U.S. and Europeans have exploited them. Osama bin Laden claims the Arabs should be getting one hundred and forty dollars for a barrel of oil. They are free to ask that price. Who could afford it? We could run our cars on a heavy amount of ethanol and gasoline for a quarter of that cost. These terrorists are out of touch with reality. Hatred is such a destructive force. It doesn't feed on logic, but is driven by blind outrage.

The terrorists are not going away. Even though their stronghold fell apart in a few months, yet they have hate-filled people poised in different parts of the world ready to deliver terror and death to innocent victims. We now can sympathize with the British and Irish who have been plagued by terrorism over the years. We have changed our attitude toward Israel who almost daily has some hate-filled person blowing himself up to spread death and destruction.

President Bush has announced warnings to those nations he has termed an "axis of evil". He even named names, identifying Iraq,

Iran, and North Korea. This sent a shot over their bow. They looked on to see the Afghanistan terrorists routed in two or three months and with only a few American casualties. Modern warfare is so destructive that large armies can be destroyed easily. No one can withstand bombardment used in modern warfare. Not even one manned airplane was shot down. These rogue nations could not fail to notice this.

### *Enron Collapses*

Trouble comes in bunches. Enron was among the ten largest companies in this country. It was referred to as a 900-pound gorilla that would do whatever it wanted to do. It was loaded with talented people. They had one of the most prestigious accounting firms to represent them. They rose like a rocket to power and prominence. Like the Titanic, it looked unsinkable, but overnight we learn this giant is bankrupt. It was a haven for pension funds. Money placed there just seemed to grow producing wealth for the investors. It was a darling investment for banks and investment firms. That is where the smart money was. The investors, banks, and employees are now holding an empty bag. We do not mention these things to demean anyone. This company started out with

confidence and brains and plenty of financial backers. No one could have imagined that it would skid into the ditch. No one ever thought the Titanic could sink, much less that it would sink on its maiden voyage. Such are the fortunes of life.

Now eyebrows are wrinkled among investors wondering how many other companies may be in trouble. Businesses are started every day and the larger percentage of these fail. It leaves behind financial loss and heartache. Usually these are small and the pain is limited to small groups. When these giant corporations fail, it spreads pain to countless thousands and that is what makes news.

Then there is a financial collapse of the whole nation of Argentina; it is a basket case. Japan has been in a depression and has not been able to extricate itself. Several foreign airlines went bankrupt. United Airlines has been threatening bankruptcy. K-Mart had to file for Chapter 11. LTV collapsed. Bethlehem Steel filed for Chapter 11. The Allied Irish Bank found one of its agents has lost \$750 million. The World Trade Organization creates riots wherever held. The list could go on, but we see big companies and nations are collapsing under debt.

Our own government has returned to deficit spending. These are troublous times. We may survive this downturn, but there is much gloom on the horizon. No nation can spend its way out of a financial day of reckoning.

### *Where Is the Safe Place in Times Like These?*

The only secure place is “under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psalm 91:1). Our hope is not in man or anything that he can do. It is not that there are not good people with good intentions. People want things to be better, but in this world evil predominates. History confirms this with the rise and fall of nations. However, we believe in the ultimate collapse of all the Kingdoms of this world. As bad as that may sound, we are happy to proclaim the glorious Millennial Kingdom of Christ will follow this.

In Revelation 20:11, we read, “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away; and there was found no place for them.” The “earth” represents our social order and the “heavens” represent our spiritual ruling powers that are so heavily involved in making trouble. These must all pass away for a “new heavens and a new earth” will replace them—the fifth

universal empire will be the Kingdom of Christ on earth. Now this is good news, the light shining in our present darkness.

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