



# Financial Signs of the Times

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*"the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil..." (1 Timothy 6:10)*

Note: Scripture used in this Bible Study is from the New King James Version.

The Bible speaks frequently about end time world economic affairs. So this makes financial markets and systems signs of the rapidly approaching last days. Let's take a look at 12 of these signs proposed by Wilfred J. Hahn in a series of *Midnight Call* magazine articles from October, 2001 through August, 2002.

## 1. Increasing Wealth

James 5:1-5

- 1 Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you!
- 2 Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten.
- 3 Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.
- 4 Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath.
- 5 You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

### How do we know this passage is addressing the end-times?

We know this passage is addressing the end-times because of the reference to "last days" in verse 3.

### Why should the wealthy weep?

The rich should weep because miseries are coming upon them in the last days.

### What is wrong with being wealthy?

There is nothing wrong with being wealthy but generally people wealthy people tend to trust in their wealth for deliverance from what ails them in the world rather than God.

- 1 Timothy 6:10 - For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

This is why Jesus said that it would be a rare thing to see wealthy people in heaven...

Matthew 19:24 - And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

A person who is burdened with the cares of this world and its material temptations will not easily find his way to God.

### How does wealth burden you with the cares of this world?

The problem with thins is that they come with responsibilities... The more things you have, the more attention they require and the more you have to be concerned about losing what you have.

### What is the problem with wealth that verses 2 and 3 here address?

Wealth is of the world which is passing away. Wealth in this world has no eternal value and God will make this clear to all in the end-times.

### Verse 3 says, "You have heaped up treasure in the last days." What is the financial sign of the end times that this verse speaks of?

We can expect the growth of wealth to be dramatic in the end times.

### Has that occurred? How has wealth grown dramatically in recent years?

Total global wealth has been multiplied by at least 40 times this past century to more than \$250 trillion. While this great increase can partially be attributed to population growth, per capita wealth has grown by at least 10 times over the same period... According to the estimates of Brad DeLong of Berkeley University, the monetary value of the average human's economic output in the world has grown from \$115 at the time of Christ to over \$6,500 today (a growth of 56 times).

### Is the wealth that has been growing so rapidly in these end times real or is it simply perceived?

Much of the acceleration of wealth today is simply perceived. For example, debt gets double counted since the owner of a property counts the value of the property as an asset while the lender on the mortgage on the same property considers the principal on the loan as an asset as well. Likewise, stock value has more to do with what people think a stock should be worth rather than what it actually has demonstrated through performance.

### **How does this rapid growth of wealth impact the church?**

It is very dangerous since the church often reflects trends in society at large. It is interesting to note that the last of the seven churches addressed by the Apostle Paul in the book of Revelation is to one that has become fat, wealthy and content... one that has fallen asleep. This Laodicean church has become complacent and smug saying, *"I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"* (Revelation 3:17).

### **James 5:5 reinforces the idea that people will be wealthy from a worldly perspective in the end times. What else does it say about people in the end-times?**

I think that we should take this literally... people will be fat.

- This has certainly been in the news lately with Houston being declared the fattest city in the U.S. (Fall, 2002).
- It has also been documented that many nations are experiencing an epidemic rise in obesity... The World Health Organization global database on Obesity and Body Mass Index shows that in 1995 there were 200M obese adults world-wide, in 200 there were 300M.

### **James 5:6 give another characteristic of people in the end-times: "you have murdered the just, he does not resist you." What is this talking about?**

- I believe that this is a reference to abortion that is being done in the name of convenience and economics. Those unborn babies do not deserve their lives being cut short and they certainly can do nothing to resist those determined to get rid of them.
- This is certainly an end-time trend. No time in history has wide-spread infanticide been practiced with society as a whole so callused about it.

## **2. Unequal Distribution of Wealth**

**Reference: James 5:1-5**

### **What does verse 3 say that wealthy people do with their wealth in the end-times?**

Wealthy people hoard wealth, they store it up.

### **Why do people hoard wealth?**

If you are trusting in your money to bail you out of problems in this world, you can not have enough of it.

### **Does this mean we should not save for the future?**

The Bible makes it clear that it is wise to save for the future. For example...

Proverbs 6:6-8 - Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, Which, having no captain,

overseer or ruler, Provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.

But this is talking about saving more than what you need. God's provision of manna for Israel was on a daily basis. With the exception of preparation for the Sabbath, the Israelites were instructed not to save any more than what they needed for the day.

### **What is the problem with hoarding wealth?**

When you hoard, you deny others what they need so that you may have more than you need. Hoarding causes the rich to become richer and the poor to become poorer.

### **What trends have we seen for the distribution of wealth in the world?**

The gap between world's income-rich and income-poor is wide and continues to widen. Only 15% of the world's population accounts for 78% of the world's total income. The gap between the per capita incomes of the world's seven richest countries with the seven poorest has widened to 50 times in 1998 from only 20 times in 1965. Though world wealth is in the multiple hundreds of trillions of dollars, more than 1.2 billion of the world's 6 billion population live on less than one dollar per day.

### **Does this end-times trend toward hoarding mean that we would be better off with a Marxist system than a Capitalist one?**

No, Marxism has already proven that it is a failed system. While the Capitalist system has proven itself better than Marxism, it too is flawed and will ultimately fail. Those who trust in our Capitalist economic system will find themselves caught up in God's wrath as will all who trust in anything other than God for their salvation. Capitalism is the end-time economic system.

### **What else do the rich who hoard their wealth do per verse 4?**

The wealthy have a propensity to cheat workers out of what is due them. This has been seen in the Enron debacle. I know exactly what they went through in the value of their 401K retirement fund being tied to the value of company stock. There was a time when I attempted to sell my TI shares when TI stock was extraordinarily high but could not because of the company's rules. These rules changed before the Enron bankruptcy but after TI stock value had become deflated at the collapse of Internet stocks. Generally speaking, this is how the rich get their wealth, on the backs of the poor, *"do not the rich oppress you"* (James 2:6)

## **3. Greed & Love of Money**

2 Timothy 3:1-2 - But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money...

### **How is the dramatic increase of those who are lovers of money an end-time trend?**

We mentioned previously how Capitalism has won-out over Marxism in the struggle to be the world's economic system. Indeed the leaders of world communism, Russia and China, are now worshipping at the alter of Capitalism. Even Islamic and Hindu nations that have been slow to embrace materialistic values are coming to its table inch by inch. In recent years gradual changes have taken place in their religious interpretations and financial systems that serve to increasingly bring them into line with the new global materialistic order.

### **Why is the study of history a good thing?**

It is true that history repeats itself, "and there is nothing new under the sun" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

### **Where can we learn about how God acted when his people started becoming materialistic?**

The Old Testament has describes God pouring out His wrath on His people Israel for loving money instead of Him. God raised up the Babylonians to take them into captivity when greed became pervasive in them. For example:

Amos 8:4-7

4 Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, and make the poor of the land fail,

5 Saying: "When will the New Moon be past, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit,

6 That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of sandals-- even sell the bad wheat?"

7 The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: "Surely I will never forget any of their works.

### **What is the attitude of the merchants in this passage?**

They want to get rich quick.

### **How do we see these demonstrations of greed in our day?**

We see this in smaller packages that cost the same as the previous larger packages, hams that are artificially impregnated with water to boost their weight and purchasing agents who extort sellers for lower prices. Beef is considered pure if it doesn't have more than a certain percentage of filler and chocolate that does not contain more than 5% vegetable fat can still be called chocolate.

### **What is greed?**

Greed is wanting more, not being content with what you have.

### **How is greed similar and yet different from envy?**

Envy is also wanting more but specifically wanting something someone else has.

### **How is greed similar and yet different from jealousy?**

Jealousy is a form of wanting more but specifically it is a fear of losing what you already have.

### **The Bible says that God is a jealous God (Exodus 20:5), how can jealousy be a bad thing if it is a characteristic of God?**

- There is a righteous jealousy and an unrighteous jealousy just as there is righteous indignation and garden variety anger.
- The righteous jealousy of God is out of love for us and a concern (not fear) that we will exercise our sovereignty (or free will) to fall out of fellowship with Him. Our sovereignty is outside of God's control by His choice.

### **How is greed similar and yet different from covetousness?**

Covetousness is broader than greed and pertains to every form of greed. Greed is usually associated with money and possessions. Consider:

Luke 12:15 - "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

The NIV translates the Greek word the NKJV translated "covetousness" as "every form of greed."

### **What forms of greed are there?**

1. Things: property, toys, status
2. Money: this buys things and is a measure of our status
3. Fame: this can be converted to money plus it strokes our ego
4. Power: The communist ideal sought to eliminate money and property as a focus of greed but power/authority/control replaced it. This is why Capitalism won out over Communism because it embraced greed and was better aligned with man's world-view. However, Capitalism will eventually fail as well (see Revelation 18).

### **Why does greed feed on itself and increase?**

A materialistic society is based on greed...

Jeremiah 6:13 - Because from the least of them even to the greatest of them, everyone is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even to the priest, everyone deals falsely.

Materialism causes gain to be the motivation for all human action. And competitiveness causes all people to be caught up in the cycle. Deceit becomes the norm because it becomes necessary to win a bigger piece of the pie. After a while deceit becomes an accepted practice with society even

praising the greedy. The wealthy are profiled in the media for us to envy and are scrutinized so as to discover the secrets of their success.

#### **What is the subtle message from a TV program about the rich and famous?**

The implied message is, since they are rich they must be intelligent, noble people and greed is OK. This is part of being given over by God to a debased mind (Romans 1).

#### **How does greed become a problem in the church?**

The Church is often a reflection of society as a whole with all of its problems. Indeed while the Israelites were set apart by God for His purpose, even the priests fell pray to greed...

Ezekiel 33:31 - So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.

Today people study Scripture to discover principle on how to get rich faster rather than to get to know God better. There is also an attitude that prosperity is directly related to faith, that if you are not prosperous that you lack faith.

#### **What is the problem with this prosperity is tied to faith gospel?**

Money is only one measure of blessing by God. Most of God's blessings are not nearly so tangible...

Galatians 5:22-23 - the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The Apostle Paul knew that these intangibles were infinitely more important than money saying, "*I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content*" (Philippians 4:11).

## **4. Corrosion of Gold and Silver**

James 5:1-3 - Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire.

#### **What is gold and silver used for? Why?**

Gold and silver are used for jewelry and, at one time, currency because its rarity gives it value.

#### **What about the characteristics of gold and silver make it good for jewelry and currency?**

It is a beautiful metal and while silver does tarnish, gold does not.

#### **How then can gold corrode as this verse suggests?**

James is referring to a devaluation of gold and silver. We usually take this to be representative of any kind of wealth,

that principal is certainly in line with the rest of Scripture. However, my eyes were recently opened to the idea that this passage is talking about a literal devaluation of gold and silver...

#### **When did nations use gold and silver for their currency?**

Gold has been used as money or to back money in all ages up until the middle of the 20th Century.

#### **What has happened to diminish the role of gold in being used as money or to guarantee currency?**

- The demand for currency has far outstripped the new supply of gold. This caused governments to go off the gold standard and so currency was no longer backed-up by gold.
- Also, the price of gold has been on a steep decline primarily because with going off the gold standard, central banks have been selling off their gold holdings.

#### **Could today's decline in the value of gold be seen as an end-time trend?**

It has never occurred before that gold has not been seen as a valuable asset of wealth. However, portfolio managers and investors today have disdain for this ancient precious metal. Very few of them would consider investing in what they see as a monetary relic. Gold has indeed corroded as James forewarned.

## **5. Increasing Stress**

Luke 21:34-36

34 "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly.

35 "For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth.

36 "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man."

#### **What time period is this verse warning us about?**

This verse is addressing the time leading up to the Lord's return (it is Luke's version of the Olivet Discourse).

#### **What should we not allow ourselves to be weighed down with?**

We should not be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life.

#### **What is the cares of this life?**

The cares of this life is the daily struggle to put bread on the table, to get ahead in life.

### **Why shouldn't we be caught up in these worries?**

God has promised to provide for us all that we need...

Matthew 6:31-32 - Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

### **Since Jesus gave the cares of this life as an end-time trend, what can we expect to see as we get closer to His return?**

More and more people will be given over to worrying about the cares of this world, this will result in a general increasing of stress that people experience. Indeed, the book of Revelation makes it clear that this would be the case:

Revelation 14:11 - they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image

The book of Revelation also says that economic conditions will get so bad during the tribulation that most people will basically pay a day's wages for a day's worth of food...

Revelation 6:5-6 - When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come and see." So I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine."

### **What does it mean, "do not harm the oil and the wine"?**

During the tribulation people will find what they need to cook with and alcohol to be inexpensive. A foreshadowing of this tribulation condition came in a recent report (Fall, 2002) about North Korea... food was hard to come by but liquor was plentiful. The rationale was that if people had plenty to drink, they would not worry about the lack of food.

### **What kind of trend for stress can we expect in the end-times?**

As we have discussed before, we should see the stage being set before the tribulation for things that happen during the tribulation, these are the birth pangs that Jesus gave us as signs to watch for. Therefore we can expect a trend toward intensifying stress and anxiety in the world to be an end-time process that will be evident before the rapture of the church.

### **How have we seen stress and anxiety increasing in our world today?**

There is pressure to do more work with fewer people while at the same time there is increased job insecurity. The average work week has increased and there are an increasing percentage of households where both spouses work to make ends meet. One survey claims that women are working 233 more hours in a year than in 1976. Overall, Americans work 163 hours more per year than in the early 1960s.

### **Why do we see people working more hours and an increasing number of families where both spouses work?**

- One economist expressed this opinion: "Many people are addicted to consumption, and work to feed their habit."
- People are living to work rather than working to live. More and more people are living pay-check-to-pay-check with no margin to save. Personal savings have fallen extremely low in recent years while consumer spending continues to rise.

## **6. Wage Injustices in the World**

James 5:4 - Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath.

### **Who do the wealthy in James 5:4 defraud?**

The reapers, the laborers who mowed the fields of the wealthy were defrauded.

### **What is the application of James 5:4 for today?**

- James was using terms for the agrarian society of his day. Mowing was hard, physical work that was labor-intensive. The parallel today is factory work but not necessarily factory work in this country where automation, minimum wage laws and labor unions have kept workers from being abused as James describes.
- This does however fit the economic enslavement of workers in lower-income countries of the world... Many large corporations depend on the low wages of the Third World such as India, China, and Indonesia where people work for a few dollars a day. In many instances their pay does not provide them sufficient income for proper food and shelter. These workers manufacture most of our clothing and shoes. If they were paid as workers in our own country the price of these products would be three to four times what we pay today.

## **7 & 8. Lovers of Self & Pleasure**

2 Timothy 3:2-4 - For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God.

### **Which of these end-times characteristics strike you as already present in the world today?**

*Lovers of money* – greed is a pervasive motivation in our day and is widely accepted as being healthy.

*Proud* – those who proclaim that a low self-esteem is the root cause of social problems generally have it exactly wrong, often it is the other way around (bullies for example).

*Blasphemers* – those who proclaim that evolution is true are blaspheming God because they are calling Him a liar.

*Disobedient to parents* – it is no longer politically correct to discipline children so fruit of this is obvious in our day.

*Slanderers* – dirty politics are the norm now.

*Traitors* – ex-presidents who should no better but dishonor their previous office by publicly opposing the policies of the current president. Also, those celebrities who give aid and comfort to the enemy during times of war are traitors.

### **What will people during the end-times love rather than God?**

People during the end-times will be into narcissism, loving themselves and pleasure rather than God.

James 5:5 - You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

### **How have we seen the pursuit of self-indulgence in our day?**

We could go on and on with statistics about amusements, cosmetics, plastic surgery, luxury automobiles, etc. But the point is that society is pre-occupied with the pursuit of pleasure and entertainment.

### **Haven't we always had people loving themselves and pursuing pleasure? What qualifies this to be an end-time trend?**

End-time trends concern the entire world. The concept that consumption and self-indulgence is what drives prosperity is being accepted by the world as truth. It is easy to see this locally where we've been told, "be patriotic, buy something," but this attitude is being adopted by more people in the world due to the success of Capitalism.

### **How does the concept of consumption as the path to prosperity clash with what the Bible teaches?**

The Bible teaches that it is savings which is self-denial that leads to enduring prosperity. In contrast, over consumption and indulgence is a celebration of self, it is sacrificing the future for near-term pleasure. I am reminded of Esau who traded his birth right for a bowl of stew.

## **9. World Population Trends**

Daniel 11:37 - He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.

### **Those of you who remember my study on the three gods of the end-times, what god was the desire of women?**

- This is the god of fertility. In the end-times, people will no longer value large families as the basis of prosperity.
- The world's annual population growth has fallen substantially from 2.0% in the mid-1960s to 1.3% today. 61 high-income countries are actually experiencing shrinking populations. Never before in human history has there been such a downturn in birth rates.

### **Why has people stopped valuing larger families as a source of prosperity?**

As people have become more dependant on the production of others rather than their own labor, having family laborers has become less important. At the same time pensions and social security has promised to take care of people in their old age where as this was the responsibility of the family in the past. Additional children are seen as a financial burden rather than an asset. All this is tied into an increasing focus on self.

### **What is the impact that a slower population growth will have on the economy?**

- Future retirees are worrying that there will not be enough workers to support them when they retire. This is causing pension systems to have problems, many of them facing bankruptcy as more benefits have to be paid out.
- I believe this worry is what has caused the stock market inflation than is in the process of being deflated now... investors and even governments artificially inflated the value of stocks by buying them in hope of storing up future income potential.

## **10. Emergence of a Commercial Colossus**

Revelation 17:3-9, 17:18-18:16

3 So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

4 The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

5 And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

6 I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.

7 But the angel said to me, "Why did you marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.

8 "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

9 "Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

18 "And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth."

1 After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illuminated with his glory.

2 And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!

3 "For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury."

4 And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.

5 "For her sins have reached to heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

6 "Render to her just as she rendered to you, and repay her double according to her works; in the cup which she has mixed, mix double for her.

7 "In the measure that she glorified herself and lived luxuriously, in the same measure give her torment and sorrow; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.'

8 "Therefore her plagues will come in one day-- death and mourning and famine. And she will be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judges her.

9 "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning,

10 "standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.'

11 "And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise anymore:

12 "merchandise of gold and silver, precious stones and pearls, fine linen and purple, silk and scarlet, every kind of citron wood, every kind of object of ivory, every kind of object of most precious wood, bronze, iron, and marble;

13 "and cinnamon and incense, fragrant oil and frankincense, wine and oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and bodies and souls of men.

14 "The fruit that your soul longed for has gone from you, and all the things which are rich and splendid have gone from you, and you shall find them no more at all.

15 "The merchants of these things, who became rich by her, will stand at a distance for fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

16 "and saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, purple, and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls!

### **What is the beast of Revelation 17?**

The beast is the Antichrist, that world leader who is in power during the tribulation.

### **Who or what is Mystery Babylon?**

Some have claimed that Mystery Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church.

### **Why do some say that Mystery Babylon is the Roman Catholic Church?**

They say this because the first reference to religion that did not glorify God in the Bible was associated with Babylon, at the Tower of Babel. The Catholic Church has also been guilty of persecuting saints in its history and the woman sitting on 7 mountains can be taken as a reference to the 7 hills of Rome. The book of Revelation certainly speaks of a world-wide religion during the tribulation and the Catholic Church certainly is a potential candidate to be the leader of such an ecumenical movement. They certainly have reached out to other religions giving them validity as alternate faith traditions.

### **What is a better description for Mystery Babylon based on its description in Chapter 18?**

There are many references to wealth and commerce in Chapter 18. Wilfred Hahn found 45 terms of commercial relevance along with 28 commodities and products being mentioned. I agree with Dr. Hahn that Mystery Babylon is the world-wide economic system that is in place during the tribulation. While the groundwork for this worldwide economic system is in place today, the Antichrist will formalize certain aspects of it such as, "*no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name*" (Revelation 13:17).

### **If Mystery Babylon is the world-wide economic system that is in place during the tribulation, why is it called that name?**

The Tower of Babel wasn't just a religion in opposition to God, it was mankind working together to accomplish a mighty work on their own without God. This is why God confounded their language, to make it more difficult to band

together and develop inflated ideas of what they might accomplish corporately through human effort alone. Mystery Babylon is that spirit of independence from God.

### **Why is Babylon the Great called a Mystery?**

Mysteries are something that while may have been hinted at before are not revealed until later. The world-wide economic system of the end-times was not described in the Old-Testament but it is here in the New Testament.

### **Where was Mystery Babylon hinted at in the Old Testament?**

Recall our study on the three false gods of the end-times: Mofi, the god of money and finance of Daniel 11:38, the god the fathers of the Antichrist did not know who is honored with wealth.

### **What does Mystery Babylon sitting on seven mountains refer to?**

- Well the explanation that this is a reference to Rome could well fit our world-wide economic system interpretation since the Antichrist will emerge from the “revived Roman Empire.” The “revived Roman Empire” is really Western Civilization and we get this term from Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of a metal statue which Daniel interpreted.
- However, as I was preparing this lesson, it occurred to me that the seven mountains could be the G-7 economic leaders. The term “mountain” is symbolically used in the Bible and especially in Revelation for political power structures. The G-7 were the leaders of the countries with the greatest economic power in the world. Per a Sept 28, 2002 article in the Houston Chronicle, the G-7 are the heads of state from the U.S., Britain, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, and Italy. The G-7 became the G-8 by adding Russia because their nuclear weapons give them some status in world affairs but the real economic powers are the original 7.

### **How will Mystery Babylon get drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus?**

True Christians will not take the mark of the beast. The mark of the beast will be foundational to the economic system of the Antichrist so Christians will stand out as rebels to “lawful” authority. Since Christians are different, they will be blamed for everything that is wrong with the world and so the Antichrist will try to get rid of them by killing them.

### **Why is Mystery Babylon described as a woman?**

She has to be a woman since she is also described as the mother of harlots. Mystery Babylon is a world economic system that spawns many sub-systems all of which feed on the lusts of mankind. Harlots turn what God intended to be holy into something detestable by luring men into a fleeting

moment of pleasure as part of a financial transaction which has consequences beyond what the “client” bargained for.

### **Why is Mystery Babylon described as a great city?**

- Some have claimed that since Babylon the Great has been described as a city that it must be some place with world-wide influence like the United States or New York City. But pictured here is a system that is greater than any single country or city,,,
- As is usually the case, the key here is in the first reference to it as a city in Revelation 17:18. Mystery Babylon is described as a great city because it is a corporate entity which rules over others, in this case, the kings of the earth. Cities are creations of men where the whole is viewed as being greater than the sum of its parts.
- The debut of cities in the Bible reveal that they are places that men congregate to do great things apart from God, the first city mentioned in the Bible was founded by the first murderer, Cain (Genesis 4:17). Nimrod was a builder of cities and the founder of Babel (Genesis 10:8-10) which brought God wrath with its humanist motivations (Genesis 11:1-9).

### **How do we know that Mystery Babylon is global in reach (Revelation 17:18)?**

Because of the references to kings of the earth, Mystery Babylon has an impact on all the world’s leadership and thus affects all people in the world.

### **What does Revelation 18:3 tell us about Mystery Babylon?**

Mystery Babylon is both a source and a distributor of great wealth. The *“merchants of the earth have become rich through the abundance of her luxury.”*

### **What does it mean that the kings of the earth have committed fornication with Mystery Babylon?**

Leaders will compromise their integrity by yielding to the temptation to take advantage of their power to make themselves wealthy.

### **What happens to Mystery Babylon (Revelation 18:8)?**

This world-wide economic system will suddenly fail completely during the tribulation. This failure will result in death, mourning and famine.

### **Prior to the fall of Mystery Babylon, what do people think of the world-wide economic system (Revelation 18:7)?**

People are confident in the spirit of self-sufficiency and boastfulness: *“for she says in her heart, ‘I sit as queen, and am no widow, and will not see sorrow.’”* (Revelation 18:7)



**Revelation 18:23 describes merchants as “the great men of the earth,” how would this be viewed as amazing in Bible times?**

Revelation 18:23 - The light of a lamp shall not shine in you anymore, and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall not be heard in you anymore. For your merchants were the great men of the earth, for by your sorcery all the nations were deceived.

This indicates that the world’s greatest men are no longer kings, priests, and political leaders, instead they are business people.

**When has merchants been considered the great men of the earth on a global scale?**

Historically, most cultures actually despised the merchant classes. Business people were usually considered among the lower castes since they were concerned with material gains and worldly matters.

**Why would being a successful businessperson qualify for world-class greatness?**

Obviously, this necessitates the emergence of a globalized economic system in the last days. If this were no so, the merchants could not be “*great men of the earth.*”

**Who are some of the great men of the earth today?**

Today, among the great men of the earth we have Ted Turner who donated \$10M to the U.N., Bill Gates, George W. Bush who was a businessman before he was president, and CEOs who get paid more than movie stars and professional athletes.

**According to Revelation 18:23, how did the merchants deceive the nations?**

The NKJV uses the word “sorcery,” other versions say it is “magic.” Revelation 18:3 describes this deceptive agent as “wine.” This magical intoxicant is the lure of being able to spin wealth out of thin air, fabricated with no cost. Our economic system has made it possible to transfer great riches easily though they may not amount to much more than paper. It is riches that are generated through manipulating perceptions and getting on-board with the latest fad.

**In Revelation 18:10 & 17, Babylon the Great comes to an end in one hour, what does this tell us about the basis of wealth it produces?**

If wealth has been built on perceptions and suddenly those perceptions change, the wealth evaporates. We have seen a foreshadowing of this collapse in the recent bear market on Wall Street precipitated by revelations of unethical practices on the part of Corporate leaders of Enron, Worldcom and other major companies. It is interesting to note that the fall comes in an hour while the consequences are described as a day.

**What evidence is there that shows the stage is being set for Mystery Babylon to come onto the scene?**

- Most major corporations are global organizations today, they have to be to compete in the global marketplace.
- We have brand names like McDonalds and Coke everywhere in the world even in places like China and Russia.
- We’ve seen the world’s economy tied so closely together that if worries cause stock value to crumble in one place that it effects the whole world.
- We have an economic system in place where you can buy anywhere in the world using your credit card.
- Most nations tie their money on only a few monetary systems, the Dollar, the Yen, or the Euro. This is converging with the Euro being the model for how this consolidation will happen.

**How should we as Christians respond to seeing Mystery Babylon emerge?**

We should not allow ourselves to get caught up in the deception of Mystery Babylon by allowing ourselves to be tempted by the love of money. Revelation 18:4 implores us not to have any complicity with Mystery Babylon: “*Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.*”

## 11. Deceit and Corruption

**A study of the Antichrist would tell us a lot about what character traits will be prevalent and even valued during the tribulation. What defining characteristic do you think we’d learn about the Antichrist from such a study?**

The Antichrist will be of his father the devil who comes on the scene in Genesis as a liar. Indeed we’d learn that the Antichrist is a master of deceit... “*he cast truth down to the ground... and prospered*” (Daniel 8:12).

Daniel 8:25 - he shall cause deceit to prosper under his rule; and he shall exalt himself in his heart. He shall destroy many in their prosperity.

**Do we see deception in the world today?**

- Certainly, it is endemic. Rush Limbaugh made a career out of revealing the hypocrisy of liberals...  
For example, those who protested the 2003 war in Iraq while the war was going on spoke out of both sides of their mouth when they said they supported the troops. After the war had started, such protests only served to encourage the enemy which threatened to prolong the war. Acting to prolong the war certainly does not serve to support the troops. If the truth be known, these Iraq war protesters really hate

America and long for a socialist global government... they'll get their wish some day.

- But liberals do not have a monopoly on hypocrisy, there is plenty to go around. I think George W. Bush is pretty hypocritical in his policies toward Israel. We can pull-out all the stops to go after terrorists who threaten the U.S. but Israel is continually urged to have restraint in their situation.
- Deception is so pervasive, we have become desensitized to it... For example, take the advertising claim for a toothpaste that will make your teeth "whiter than white." We ignore the fact that nothing can be whiter than white and dismiss the claim as the usual exaggerated claims of a salesman. Salesmen pitch their products based on what they believe people want to hear rather than what the product will deliver. This is viewed by marketers as a form of gamesmanship, to achieve commercial success some form of artistic license with the truth is necessary. We have applauded "spin-doctors" who promote the positive truths while glossing over the negative.

**Certainly we can see the spirit of the Antichrist in the world today. What is the danger to the Christian in getting caught up the world's deception?**

Christians too can be corrupted by the prevailing world view and this can impact or relationship with the Lord. It does not mean we loose our salvation but we can fall out of fellowship. The will cause us to be unfruitful which has eternal ramifications...

John 15:4-5 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

Another great danger is that if we are not familiar with the Word of God, we can be deceived by false teachers in the church...

1 Timothy 6:5 - men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

**Why do people tolerate false teachers in the church?**

Besides their not being able to discern the truth for themselves, the false teachers tell them what they want to hear...

2 Timothy 4:3 - For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers

False teachers are rewarded for giving people a good report.

**Where can we learn about how God dealt with people who tolerated false teachers in the past?**

The Old Testament stories about Israel are instructive for us to see how God dealt with a society that fell away from Him. They also had false teachers...

Isaiah 30:10 - Who say to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy to us right things; speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.

**What did God do about Israel following after false teachers?**

God punished Israel for following after false teachers by raising up Assyria, Babylon, and Rome to act for Him.

**What kind of false teaching do people tolerate in the church today?**

People today don't want to hear about hellfire and brimstone because this might make them uncomfortable, it is not "seeker-sensitive." Instead they want to hear about worldly things and rationalize that it is more relevant. False teachers are often after financial gain and they will give their market what they demand. Nothing much has changed in this regard from Old Testament times...

Micah 2:11 - If a man should walk in a false spirit and speak a lie, saying, 'I will prophesy to you of wine and drink,' even he would be the prattler of [or prophet for] this people.

Dr. Hahn quoted some statistics of stock analysts which indicate that "sell" recommendations are only given 1% of the time in recent years. This used to be 10% of the time. These analysts are so conditioned to placate greed that they only forecast gains. The pattern we can learn from the Old Testament is that God severely Judged Israel for these sins of deception and He will do the same to us.

**Of course the survey that Dr. Hahn quoted was done prior to the current bear market (Summer, 2002). Given the decompression in the stock market do you think stock analysts are now giving more "sell" recommendations?**

- Of course not, that wouldn't be politically correct... I have even seen a commercial that lampooned the idea a stock broker would even consider recommending that an investor should sell. In the commercial, the broker was in your typical boiler room with all kinds of activity and other people talking on the phone around him when he said the word "sell" on his phone. Immediately everyone fell so silent you could hear a pin drop then he said, "did I say sell? I mean buy, BUY!" Of course the boiler room returned to its usual noisy routine.
- This shows the fear the stock analysts have for using the "sell" word. Instead what analysts have been recommending in this bear market is "hold." One news commentator admitted that "hold" recommendations were generally regarded by investors as a euphemism for "sell."

### **What should we expect the trend to be for spin-doctoring and playing fast and loose with the truth?**

One thing we can be sure of as we get closer to the coming of the Lord we can expect to see more and more of this kind of subtle deceitfulness...

2 Timothy 3:13 - But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.

### **How can you expect to be treated if you set yourself apart as a Christian and do not participate world's greed?**

You will be condemned for it. Indeed Jesus said that this would be the case...

Matthew 5:11-12 - Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

As Jesus said, this too has not changed from Old Testament times...

Jeremiah 15:10 - I have neither lent for interest, nor have men lent to me for interest. Every one of them curses me.

## **12. Divide the Land for Gain**

Daniel 11:36-39

36 "Then the king shall do according to his own will: he shall exalt and magnify himself above every god, shall speak blasphemies against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the wrath has been accomplished; for what has been determined shall be done.

37 "He shall regard neither the God of his fathers nor the desire of women, nor regard any god; for he shall exalt himself above them all.

38 "But in their place he shall honor a god of fortresses; and a god which his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and pleasant things.

39 "Thus he shall act against the strongest fortresses with a foreign god, which he shall acknowledge, and advance its glory; and he shall cause them to rule over many, and divide the land for gain.

**Most of this passage has already been addressed in the study on the three gods of the end-times. There is however a reference at the end which we have not taken a close look at, in the end-times, the Antichrist will "divide the land for gain" (verse 39)...**

### **What is the context of dividing the land for gain here?**

The context of dividing the land for gain here is globalism.

### **What globalistic trend have we seen in the corporate world?**

We have seen in recent years the rise of the multinational corporation that has flourished from the demise of the sovereign might of nations. The 100 largest transnational corporations account for 7% of the total world economic activity. All 60,000 transnational corporations together are estimated to contribute between 25% and 45% of the world economic activity. This is a significant increase from the 3% of world economic activity in the early 1950s.

### **What kind of land-grab have we seen among multinational corporations in recent years that has not occurred prior to the 1980s?**

There has been mergers and acquisitions of all kinds, both cross-border and domestic. We are in the midst of a massive industry consolidation where only the largest corporations within a particular specialty survive. This world-wide trend will require an authority at an international level to regulate it.

### **What is being done to regulate all this transnational activity?**

There are several multinational organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), United Nations (UN), and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Over 90% of the rule changes by these organizations in the past 15 years have been in the direction of facilitating the flow of global money and direct foreign investing. Both of these areas greatly benefit multinational corporations.

### **What is the Christian to do as we see all these end-time trends?**

- We should not allow ourselves to fall victim to the deception.
- We should use these events as an opportunity to tell others the truth.
- We should be encouraged that we don't have to suffer in this world long... Jesus is coming soon to set things right.