

South Dakota Governor Slams Critics Who Misunderstand Faith and the First Amendment

South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, a Republican, believes too many critics misunderstand the First Amendment, particularly regarding the presence of faith in the public square.

“I have been, over the last 10 years, just constantly surprised by the amount of people who think that religion and prayer cannot be in our schools,” Noem recently told *The Prodigal Stories Podcast*. “And that that is what our Constitution and Founders intended, which is not true whatsoever.”

The governor said the real purpose of the constitutional language surrounding religious freedom was to ensure “our religion could not be unduly burdened by the government.”

Noem maintains Americans’ “freedom of religion is incredibly important,” a stance at the baseline of her recent legislative journey to try to protect prayer in public schools.

A now-defunct bill Noem championed, titled “A Moment of Silence,” would have created a moment during which students could “pray in schools at the start of every school day,” or simply just reflect on the day ahead. The measure was shot down in committee by her fellow Republicans.

She said it was unfortunate to see members of her own party derail the prayer effort, detailing her belief that the public school system deserves to be a place where such freedoms are defended and clarified.

“I think that it was a discussion necessary to have in our public school systems,” Noem said. “It would have allowed them

to have a moment of silence every day that gave the students an opportunity to reflect, pray, meditate, have a moment where they found a purpose in how they were going to approach their day.”

Noem said she wanted every administrator, teacher and student to know they are free to pray in schools personally—and, despite the bill being blocked in the state’s GOP-dominated House Education Committee, the governor has no plans to drop the effort.

“I’ll continue to bring this issue because I think it’s important to have these protections in place for our students,” she said.

Noem also tackled a plethora of other matters during the podcast, candidly addressing her political future, ideological stances and other governance issues.

She was remarkably frank about the legislative clashes between her and other Republicans, divulging her belief that some fellow GOP members potentially “don’t embrace” the same “kind of conservatism” she does.

“I may be a little more conservative than the state is—I only won my last race by three points,” she said. “I brought a lot of bills that embraced conservative ideals and values. ... I’ve been very proactive on pro-life issues and gone to bat defending innocent life.”

Listen to the full interview for more.

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8 Lessons the Global Church Can Learn From the Hillsong Scandal

Whether it be a historic denominational church or an independent evangelical church, it's always unfortunate whenever there is a scandal in the church.

Often, when the media reports a Christian scandal, they report only the salacious details, neglecting the many thousands of lives that the power of Jesus Christ has transformed. This is certainly the case regarding the public deconstruction of the Hillsong brand.

One report says that Hillsong has lost at least half of its American campuses in the last two weeks! Whether this movement survives is totally up to the response of its leaders as God says He will lift us if we humble ourselves. Consequently, there are at least eight lessons we can learn from Hillsong:

1. We cannot build a church upon mega personalities. Many of the Hillsong churches, including NYC, were built upon the mega personalities of their lead pastor. Whenever a church is built upon one person's charisma and influence, it becomes dangerous because its foundation dissipates if that pastor resigns.

2. The lifestyle of the top leader filters down to the ecosystem of the whole church. The Hillsong NYC Pastor, Carl Lenz, had to resign because he was caught in an adulterous relationship. The reports I read also cited numerous affairs amongst the staff in the church. Recently, the global lead pastor, Brian Houston, had to resign because of a flirtatious text to a staff member. He was also caught in a woman's hotel

room, whom he met at a conference. Unfortunately, culture starts at the top of an organization, and whatever is practiced and tolerated filters from the leader down to every other part of the entity.

3. We cannot build on a bad foundation. I remember when Hillsong Church started in New York City. They had concerts every Sunday night for several months until they built up a critical mass. Then, one Sunday evening, they announced they were starting a church the following week during Sunday morning hours and encouraged everyone to attend. I heard that this was their modus operandi in other cities of the United States and beyond. Consequently, they planted churches based on the strength of their worship band, gathering crowds taken from other smaller feeder churches. This merely transfers growth and does not expand the kingdom of God.

4. Every local church needs local church governance. Pastor Terri Crist in Arizona resigned from Hillsong recently because he claimed they do not allow local churches to be autonomous. According to the *New York Times*, "For Mr. Crist, leaving Hillsong was the culmination of several years of doubts about the institution. He objected a few years ago, he said, when a global church restructuring disbanded his board of local leaders and put him directly under the authority of the Australia-based global board." This is a gross violation of the biblical model we see in the New Testament. Every local church should be governed by indigenous leaders who understand the context of their city and culture. They are usually best equipped to give oversight to the congregation.

5. The brand of a movement can tarnish all the churches so branded. Many leaders like Pastor Sam Collier resigned because it was too difficult for him to raise a new church with all the scandals distracting from his purpose of preaching the gospel. Whenever a local church connects to a movement and is forced to take its name, it is taking a chance that the brand of said movement will be a positive and not a negative one

when moving forward.

6. A church can have an excellent Sunday presentation but poor infrastructure. Hillsong put on some of the greatest Sunday services in the world, especially because of their extraordinary worship. Unfortunately, this presentation often hid the fact that they had poor infrastructure, lacking a healthy, biblically-based culture amongst the staff and leadership. Just because a church has a big crowd and exciting services doesn't mean they comport with the New Testament pattern for processing and vetting its leaders and staff (1 Tim. 3:1-15).

7. You can have a megachurch with a few disciples. The bottom line for determining if a church is influential is if they are winning new converts and making them disciples of Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20). A church that is built upon attracting people because of great music, without biblically-based solid teaching from the pulpit, will have difficulty producing genuine disciples of Christ. (To be fair, there may be exceptions to this with some substantive biblical preaching in some Hillsong campuses, but I am referring to the primary way they plant churches and keep drawing people.)

8. A leader or church should not cater to or focus on celebrity culture. It is important to reach all people, including celebrities, with the gospel. NYC Pastor Carl Lenz was known as the hipster, cool pastor to the celebrities. However, when a lead pastor seems to be enamored by celebrity culture and caters to "power people," they violate the command against showing partiality (James 2). Young, "cool," attractive pastors who are close to famous secular people have to be careful. They must guard against being seduced by lust for fame and an illicit lifestyle.

The apostle John warns us to "not love the world or the things in the world because if anyone loves the world, the Father's love is not in them." The love of the world includes the "lust

of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:15-17). In conclusion, my prayer is that all the thousands of sincere Christ-followers, including some of the leaders in Hillsong, will have wisdom from God as it relates to continuing the Hillsong movement and redeeming their witness for Christ.

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What Makes Israel So Controversial?

There are two competing views of Israel. The first is that the Jewish State is a miracle and cause for celebration. The second is that Israel is a calamity and should be exposed and opposed.

How can there be two polar opposite opinions, and what makes

Israel so controversial?

Fake News

Long before Trump came up with the term, Israel was the target of false news. As a young student in Israel in the 1980s, this perplexed me. What was really the truth? What I saw was so different from how the media portrayed Israel. We now call these lies “fake news.”

Two Faces of Arab Leaders

We also learned not to go by what the Arab leaders said to the western world in English, but what they said to their own people, especially in Arabic, because it differed significantly. One of the most well-known examples is Yasser Arafat, head of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), who in 1993 met with the prime minister of Israel at the White House, shook hands and started what the West thought were steps toward peace with Israel. However, soon after, while he spoke in a mosque in Johannesburg, South Africa, a leaked recording of Arafat’s remarks to the Muslim faithful revealed his true intent:

“The Jihad [Islamic holy war] will continue, and Jerusalem is not [only] for the Palestinian people, it is for all the Muslim nation. You are responsible for Palestine and for Jerusalem before me. ... This agreement, I am not considering it more than the agreement which had been signed between our prophet Mohammed and Quraysh.”

The agreement he referred to is well known within Islam. Mohammed had been unable to conquer Mecca, so he made a 10-year agreement with the ruling Quraysh tribe that allowed him to enter Mecca to pray. After just two years, he had built up his military forces enough to abrogate the agreement, slaughter the tribe of Quraysh and conquer Mecca.

Arafat never intended to live in peace with Israel and used

the peace process for personal gain. Western leaders refused to believe he meant this and awarded him a Nobel Peace Prize. He later turned down all offers for peace and started the bloody Second Intifada.

Ruling Ideologies

Israel is also up against ruling ideologies in our world today, such as globalism, secularism and moral relativism. Israel flies in the face of all three of these.

First, Israel is a nation-state based on nationalist aspirations of the nineteenth-century Zionist movement. Globalism wants to do away with national boundaries and depicts nationalism as being racist or divisive.

Second, Israel is a Jewish state created for the sovereignty and freedom of the Jewish people. Therefore, government holidays and societal norms are based on the Jewish religion. This flies in the face of the ruling ideology of secularism, whose proponents look down on a state that reflects the majority religion of its citizens.

Third, the world is increasingly relativistic in its morality. With moral relativism, there is no right and wrong, no truth and falsehood, no black and white—everything is gray and each person decides what is true or false, moral or immoral. The people of Israel gave the world the Bible and the Ten Commandments upon which we base our system of jurisprudence. Moral relativists despise the Bible and the Judeo-Christian ethos based upon it, insisting they are antiquated and bigoted.

Antisemitism

A global study of antisemitism conducted in 2014 determined that 25% of the world's population holds anti-Semitic views. Of that 25%, an astounding 70% had never met a Jewish person proving the problem is one of propaganda, misinformation and

disinformation. Lies and conspiracy theories have destroyed the Jewish people's reputation for 25% of the world's population. It's a global problem that can't be solved overnight. The Jewish people cannot turn this situation around on their own and need our help to do so.

Spiritual Warfare

Finally, Israel is fighting a spiritual war not easily understood. However, three verses in the Bible offer a clear biblical explanation for it. The first is Genesis 3:15, where the Lord says there will be enmity between the serpent and the woman until her seed crushes the head of the serpent. In the end, the Messiah will defeat evil, but first, spiritual forces will direct this enmity and hatred toward the woman.

The second is Psalm 83:1–4, which says God's enemies are conniving to destroy His people Israel so that even their name will never be uttered again. This spiritual enmity against God and His people is reflected in military confrontations and governments.

The third reference to this spiritual war is found in the New Testament book of Revelation, chapter 12, in which Israel is described as a pregnant woman crowned by the sun, the moon and 12 stars, which represents the 12 tribes of Israel. An evil dragon sits at her feet, waiting to devour the male child, and when he fails, comes after the woman. The age-old animosity of the serpent in Genesis is now depicted in the dragon.

Christians and Jews Together

Revelation 12 goes on to describe that when the dragon is unable to destroy the woman—the people of Israel—he goes after her “other offspring, those with the testimony of Jesus” (v. 17). The church was born out of the Jewish faith and people, and we, too, suffer in this spiritual fight. The evil pursuit is against the woman (Israel), her male child (the Messiah), and the woman's other offspring (the church of Jesus Christ).

This helps explain the shocking hatred for Christianity in our days, particularly Bible-based, Evangelical Christianity. We, too, are being openly maligned, hated and falsely accused by the proponents of globalism, secularism and moral relativism.

We are in this together and must stand in solidarity with one another. Whereas the Jewish community may be small, Evangelical Christianity claims over 800 million worldwide. Many Christians pray for the peace of Jerusalem and seek to bless the Jewish people. However, more need to be educated and mobilized to speak out in opposition to these ideologies and bring an end to the controversy of Israel. {eo}

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What Happens When You Opt for the Praise of Men Instead of God's Approval

Joshua was keen to know whether God was on his side or the side of the enemy. This came up when he saw an imposing, awesome figure all of a sudden after the Israelites crossed the Jordan and were waiting on a divine signal what to do

next.

He saw a man standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and asked, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" The reply: Neither. "No; but I am the commander of the army of the lord. Now I have come" (Josh. 5:13-14, ESV).

Joshua would have known that the true God is a God of glory, a jealous God. Moses was his tutor. But now that Moses is gone and Joshua has no peer to turn to, he must discover God for himself—as if this were a new revelation. The sight of this stunning man—an angel—was going to be Joshua's next lesson in the principles of the glory of God.

Joshua may have thought God owed Joshua assurance that God was on Israel's side. The truth is, God *was indeed* on Israel's side. But God deemed it was more important *at that time* for Joshua to learn more about God than to be reassured that He was on Joshua's side. Sometimes God delays answering our prayers in order that we may learn more about His ways first. God lamented that the children of Israel did not know His "ways" (Heb. 3:10). Here is a principle I put to you which I guarantee will lead you safely throughout your lifetime: Esteem God's ways as being more important than anything else you wish for.

Seeing the glory of God for yourself—not second hand—will help eliminate the fear of man. You will be enamored with His glory—His will. The glory of God is the dignity of His will. Joshua needed to see this. It prepared him to conquer Jericho! Seeing the glory of God for yourself—that is, when you see how real He is, will enable you to stand alone and disregard the opinions of people. To put it another way: the glory of God is His own opinion. God has an opinion on everything; if you get to honor His opinion it is a guarantee you will be safe and victorious in all you do! Wisdom is getting God's opinion—and honoring it.

Most relevant is Jesus' diagnosis of the Jews as to why they did not believe in Him and consequently missed their Messiah: "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" (John 5:44). When you *choose* the praise, honor and glory that comes from God rather than the praise of people, you are in good stead—I would say brilliant stead—for what God will do for you in the future. Two things follow: 1) you learn you made the greatest choice you will ever make and 2) you have found the best way to live.

When you opt for the honor of God vis-a-vis the praise of man, it is losing your life. The promise of Jesus follows: when you lose your life for the Gospel's, you find it; if you try to save it you will lose it (Mark 8:35).

The fear of man is basically selfish. We can be consumed with the fear of what people think about us, what they might do to us or say about us. But when you are fully consciously on God's side—wanting only what He wants, fear is eventually removed! It leads you to perfect love which casts out all fear (1 John 4:18).

Most of us have a question like this when we think of obeying God's word: What's in it for us? We are in the "me" generation, as I said above. Consequently, too much Bible teaching today—whether in the pulpit or in Bible colleges and seminaries—basically leaves this question in the back of our minds: What's in it for us? Most theology is anthropology—man-centered. It is time to ask the question: What's in it for God?

When we become convicted and convinced that the proper question is, what's in it for God? and we find out what that is and follow through with it, the fear of man is on the way out.

The Joy of Pleasing God

When God answers prayer, He pleases us. When He supplies our need, He pleases us. When things are smooth and not rough for us it is because God chooses to please us. We love it. And hopefully are thankful.

I put this question to you: which gives you more satisfaction—when God is pleasing you or when you are pleasing God?

Is this an unfair question?

Of course, we all prefer for God to please us. Paul said he knows what it feels like to abound and also what it feels like to be abased, how to cope with plenty and to be in need (Phil.4:12). Which do you suppose Paul would prefer? Easy answer: to have plenty, to be without want or in any pain. Of course!

But I put this challenge to you: learn to get your satisfaction from knowing you please God.

Let's back up: Do you *want* to please God? Would the knowledge that you please God thrill you? As we observed above, Enoch had the testimony before he was taken to heaven that he pleased God (). I would challenge you, dear reader, to get satisfaction more and more that you please Him.

You will ask: how can we *know* that we please God? Yes. It is by trusting Him when things around you are not what you want them to be. For example, sometime ago I went through a period when nothing was going right—when I was low and feeling that God was certainly hiding His face. I was pleading with the Lord for a breakthrough when it suddenly came to me, “R. T., you preach that people should get their satisfaction from knowing that they please God. Now is a time for you to practice what you preach by knowing you please the Lord at this very moment—*by accepting things as they are*”.

Hebrews 11:6 says that we please God by faith; that without

faith it is impossible to please Him. That means that when I keep my eyes focused on the Lord—and not circumstances around me—I may safely conclude I am pleasing the Lord! And when I see this, it gives me satisfaction. God knows everything I am thinking. He knows all that is going on around me. So, when things are adverse, it is as if God is handing me the privilege of knowing I please Him on a silver platter.

- ✘ My point is this: When I embrace the privilege of pleasing God by sheer faith, and esteem pleasing Him more than pleasing people, the fear of man vanishes. {eoa}

The preceding is an excerpt from Chapter 6 of R.T. Kendall's book Fear (Charisma House, 2022). For more information or to order the book, visit .

R.T. Kendall was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. Born in Ashland, Kentucky, he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (.) and Oxford University (.). Kendall is the author of numerous books, including Total Forgiveness, More of God, Word and Spirit and We've Never Been This Way Before.

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Messianic Rabbi: When Not Even Moses Could Enter the Tabernacle

We are about to celebrate Passover, the festival of redemption. During Passover, Jews and Christians celebrate the

deliverance of the children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt, and many families gather around their tables and enjoy a Seder meal.

Within the Seder meal, each item of food symbolically represents a specific part of the deliverance story. This meal takes place on the 14th day of the Biblical month of Aviv, also known as Nisan.

However, I don't want to focus on the Seder meal and all of the intricate symbolism in it. You can find hundreds of great blogs and books covering that subject. In this blog, I want to direct your attention to something else that takes place on the 1st day of the month of Aviv.

Exodus 12:1-2 says, "Now Adonai spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, 'This month will mark the beginning of months for you; it is to be the first month of the year for you.'"

It amazes me that even though G-D made the 1st of Aviv Israel's new year, most of the Jewish world, as well as most believers in Yeshua, pass by the date with little or no acknowledgement of it. For many, the 1st of Aviv is merely the day we begin to empty our homes of hametz (yeast products) in preparation for celebrating Passover.

Instead of passing the day by, we need to look at it more closely. There is something that happened on the 1st of Aviv that was not only miraculous, but it also contains a lesson that is vital for us today, especially those of us who believe in Yeshua.

We find the significant event in Exodus 40. While I encourage you to read the entire chapter, for the sake of brevity, I will only write out a few of the verses.

Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, "On the first day of the first month, you will set up the Tabernacle of the Tent of

Meeting." (Exodus 40:1-2).

In this verse, G-D spoke to Moses and told him to set up the Tabernacle on the first day of Aviv. Just a little further down in Exodus 40:16-17, Moses did what G-D commanded and set up the Tabernacle on the first day of Aviv.

"Moses did so, just as Adonai had commanded him. Now it happened during the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the Tabernacle was raised up."

So, on the 1st day of the month of Aviv, the day Israel celebrated the New Year, Moses set up the Tabernacle. If nothing else significant happened on that day, this event alone is enough to cause us to celebrate. I know this is not a commanded feast day, but we observe so many non-commanded days as memorials. Certainly, the day the Tabernacle was completed and set up should be remembered yearly.

On the 1st day of Aviv, the Tabernacle of G-D was set up by Moses. After all the work to build and prepare the Tabernacle to the exact specification provided by God Himself, the Tabernacle was finally completed, set up, and inaugurated.

While the Tabernacle was completed and set up on the 1st of Aviv, that is not the only thing that happened on that day that we read about in Exodus 40. If we keep reading through the chapter, we get to Exodus 40:34-35. It says, *"Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of Adonai filled the Tabernacle. Moses was unable to enter into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud resided there and the glory of Adonai filled the Tabernacle."*

Think of what an amazing experience it was to see the cloud fall and the glory of G-D fill the Tabernacle. When the Spirit of G-D filled the Tabernacle, the cloud was so powerful that Moses was unable to enter. Not only did something miraculous happen on the 1st of Aviv, but like I said earlier, there is an important lesson for us today.

The miracle happened when the visible presence of G-D fell like a cloud and His Spirit filled the Tabernacle. Just as the Tabernacle became a home for G-D's Spirit to dwell, we are temples of G-D who become homes for G-D's Spirit to dwell. In 1 Corinthians 3:16, Paul says, "*Don't you know that you are God's temple and that the Ruach Elohim dwells among you?*"

The fact that we are temples or tabernacles for G-D's Spirit to dwell isn't the lesson I want to share with you. Here's the lesson: although Moses oversaw the entire process of the Tabernacle's construction, once the Tabernacle was set up, the Spirit of G-D filled the Tabernacle so full that even Moses couldn't enter. This should be the same with you and I today. Yes, we must prepare ourselves to be the tabernacle or temple of G-D, but once we are prepared to welcome His Spirit into our tabernacle, we must let His Spirit fill us so completely that there is no space or room for our spirit at all.

Here's one last thought for you to consider: only after G-D's Spirit completely filled the Tabernacle could the Children of Israel follow the Cloud's lead and go wherever G-D directed them. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer is the author of *Overcoming Fearlessness*, *What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?*, *With Me in Paradise*, *Transient Singularity*, *OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry*, *#ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer*, *Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians* and *Galatians in Context*.

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3 Reasons Why Christianity Is Not a Religion

If you're looking for religion, Pastor Jack Hibbs says Christianity is probably not for you. It's much, much more than that, says Hibbs, the lead pastor of Calvary Chapel in Chino Hills, California.

"This may be offensive," Hibbs says, "but unlike Islam, unlike Judaism, Christianity is not technically a religion. Those other [religions] are man's attempt to reach a deity. Christianity is when the God of all creation came down into this world and clothed Himself in human skin that He might experience what you and I experience so that you and I might have a faithful, compassionate, tender high priest to cry out to—Jesus Christ."

Hibbs says there are three main differences between religion and a relationship with God:

1. **With Christianity, God speaks.** "He knows nothing about a silent religion. It doesn't exist," Hibbs says. "I see a contrast between the true living God of the Bible and all of the dumb idols that have been crafted throughout millennia. They can't hear. They can't speak. They can't smell. They can't relate."

Hibbs then draws the comparison.

"Our God is a God who communicates," he says. "The God of the Bible speaks. If today you have a god who is not speaking, I suggest you get a new God."

2. **We can hear God speak.** "We often think that He's the

silent God because we think He's not speaking," Hibbs says. "Oh, He's speaking to you. Our problem is we are so busy. We're so cluttered. We have so much noise going on. I'm convinced He's always speaking."

He then admits, "I rarely listen. When I relax and calm down, when I'm gardening or mowing the lawn, God speaks to me more in times like that or in times of isolation. It's deep. It's internal. And it's a revelation of words or knowledge or instruction."

3. God knows all your secrets. Pastor Hibbs impersonated a congregation member who has secrets. "'Oh, Pastor, all my life I've been hoping and praying nobody finds out about that thing. It has burdened me for 50 years. It has weighed upon me. It's crushing me.'"

He replied to his imaginary congregant, "God knows all secrets. He knows them all." Then he addressed the crowd, "In Psalm 139:2, it says, 'You know my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thought afar off.' Isn't that bizarre? God knows what you're going to think of in the next 15 seconds or 15 minutes.

"Are you here for religious purposes? You should be here for personal reasons. You should come to this place saying, 'Where's God? I want God.' I'm happy to report that, yes, He's a God who speaks. He speaks to nations, speaks to cultures and He speaks to you personally. He's a good God. He's a forgiving God."

For more of this message, watch this video. {eoa}

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Kingdom Economics: Guided by an Invisible Hand

Adam Smith, often called the father of modern economics, was an 18th-century Scottish philosopher and author. In 1759, he published a book, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In 1776, the same year as the Declaration of Independence, he published his most famous book, *An Inquiry into the Nature, and Causes, of the Wealth of Nations*. In both books, he described economic forces, which he referred to with the metaphor of an invisible hand, that would automatically guide the economy to a point that is best for the economy and society.

These economic forces are self-interest, competition, and supply and demand. Self-interest is important because most people strive to better themselves. Competition is a force which causes many to try to improve themselves. Supply and demand use prices, incomes, and profits to ensure quantity demanded equals quantity supplied.

Businesses attempt to maximize profits, workers attempt to maximize incomes, and buyers attempt to maximize their satisfaction by making wise purchases. Businesses are successful if they better meet customer needs. Workers are successful if they are more productive. Consumers vote with their shopping preferences to determine which products should be produced and in what quantities.

Adam Smith's theories argue that the capitalistic system and free markets will always outperform regulated and planned economies. Taxes should be low. Government economic policies should be minimal. Labor should focus on jobs that match their skills. Private property should be protected. A strong legal

system, which enforces private property rights, is a prerequisite. According to Adam Smith, and today's Classical and Neoclassical economists, there is an invisible hand which directs an economy to an equilibrium which is best for society.

The scripture refers to the Lord as our Good Shepherd. A shepherd leads, guides, and protects the sheep. The scriptures do not specifically use the invisible hand metaphor, but His sovereign hand is evident throughout scripture, creation, and our individual lives. We know that His word does not return void, that our days are foreordained, that He will keep us safe, and that all things will work together for our good.

"Your eyes have seen my formless substance; and in Your book were written, all the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them," (Psalms 139:16, NASB 2020).

"For You are my rock and my fortress; for the sake of Your name, You will lead me and guide me. You will pull me out of the net which they have secretly laid for me, for You are my strength," (Psalms 31:3-4, NASB 2020).

Sometimes when it appears that all is lost, a series of what appears to be impossible consequences will converge until the Lord's will is accomplished. The book of Ester is one such story. Until victory was assured, it wasn't obvious that the Lord was moving or who the victor would be. But after the fact, it was obvious that events were being guided by an invisible hand to accomplish the will of God.

King Ahasuerus of Persia ordered Queen Vashti to display her beauty at a drunken party. The Queen refused. The King was angry and ordered that the Queen never come into his presence again. (Note that the culture in Persia would never condone a Queen displaying her beauty publicly.)

The King searched for a new queen. Beautiful young virgins were brought to Susa. After a year of beauty treatments, each

virgin was to appear before the king. Among the virgins, was a Jewess named Ester. Ester received favor from her beauty attendant. Since Ester was an orphan, her cousin Mordecai had been her guardian. Ester was selected as the new queen. (Note that this would be very unlikely in the natural.)

Mordecai was sitting at the King's gate. He missed Ester and they would share messages back and forth. Their relationship had not been made public. Mordecai heard of a plot against the King and informed Ester. The King stopped the plot and killed the guilty. (Note that this appears to be a random event unrelated to the story.)

Haman, a servant of the King, was promoted to a position of authority. All the servants and people were bowing to Haman, except Mordecai. He refused to bow to him. Haman plotted to have all Jews annihilated. A lot was cast to determine the month and day. A letter, under the King's seal, was sent to the provinces to eliminate the Jews on the 13th day of Adar and to seize their possessions (Note the situation appeared impossible).

Ester learned of Haman's plot. At the risk of her life, she went to the King and invited the King and Haman to a banquet. At the banquet, Ester asked that they return the next day for another banquet. As he was leaving, Mordecai failed to bow, and Haman was infuriated. He decided to have Mordecai hanged the next morning before Ester's banquet. (Note that even if Ester exposed the plot, it would have been too late for Mordecai.)

The King couldn't sleep. He decided to read the records which reminded him of the plot against him. The King discovered that the informant had not been honored and the very next morning he asked Haman to honor Mordecai publicly. (Note that the odds of Mordecai being rewarded that morning is nearly impossible. It appears the Lord is moving, and the Jews have hope.)

At the Banquet, Haman was exposed and shortly thereafter hanged. Mordecai was promoted to authority. The Jews were given permission to defend themselves. The Jews celebrate their salvation from Haman every year. (Note that God is victorious.)

When it looked darkest, the Lord was still working. Negative circumstances were changed into blessings. All things work for our benefit. The Lord is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Although it may appear dark and currently impossible, the Lord is working and His invisible hand will change circumstances to bless His sons and daughters. {eoa}

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose,” (Romans 8:28, NASB 2020).

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Chris Reed Unveils Prophetic Warning About the Coming ‘Perfect Storm’ for America

In a recent prophetic dream, Pastor and MorningStar Ministries CEO Chris Reed says he saw that America is headed for tumultuous times in its future, perhaps to the point where many of the 50 united states will secede from the union before the country is redeemed and renewed.

“I believe we are coming upon a perfect storm as we see these events unfolding in the world,” Reed says. “I don’t believe America will be exempt from this. We really need to be in prayer and preparation and warn people around us. Although this will turn out to be successful, there are going to be some bumpy roads ahead. I think more than ever we need to have a prophetic perspective of current events around us.

“I had one of the most vivid, detailed dreams I’ve ever had that I believe is from the Lord regarding unfolding events from this point forward,” he adds. “It’s something we really need to take heed as a warning to prepare.

Reed describes his dream like this:

I had this dream, early morning on March 25, 2022. In the dream, I saw an unknown man who was dressed in a black suit and held a \$50 US bill in his hand, and he tore the \$50 bill up in three different stages. After each stage, random people who came up to me handed me national newspapers from here in the United States with various unique headlines. I could read these headlines; they were very vivid in my memory.

The first headline read this: “The Dollar Drops 30% in Value.” A subtitle to the headline was: “Middle East Oil (countries) Strikes Deal with China Instead of the U.S.”

I was then given another headline, which read: “The Perfect Storm: Inflation Reaches a New High.”

Then, another person came up to me and handed me a news headline, “Food Shortage Crisis as Wheat and Bread Imports Are at a Stalemate.”

Another headline was then handed to me, which said something like: “Riots and Civil Unrest as Citizens Demand Entitlement Checks.” This was the only headline where I couldn’t remember the exact wording of. What I shared was close to it.

Then the dream focused again on the man in the black suit. This time, he tore the \$50 bill in half. When he did this, an earthquake happened under my feet.

Another person came up to me and handed me a headline that read, "Israeli and Palestinian Two-State Solution Reached." Then another person came up to me and gave me a headline, "Major Earthquake Hits the Middle of the U.S." Then the man in the black suit took the \$50 bill and started tearing it into small pieces, one by one.

Another person walks up to me and hands me another headline, "America in Pieces: More States Secede from the Nation in Retaliation to the Federal Government."

I was then handed another headline, which said, 'US Military Takes Charge as Uncertainty Looms Over the Federal Government.'

Then the man in the black suit took out a new dollar bill. It was a \$1 US bill. What was interesting about it was that the \$1 bill looked like a cell phone. I did see George Washington's face on it, but it looked very different than a normal \$1 bill. I remember looking at it, and just studying it, and I was kind of pondering why this \$1 bill looked like a cell phone.

Another person came up and handed me a headline, and the newspaper headline read, "New Currency for a Renewed Nation."

Another headline was handed to me, and it said, "Simplicity Restored as Americans Grow Their Own Food." Then I woke up.

Dream Interpretation

Following is Reed's interpretation of his dream:

We have, in part, a pretty good interpretation, with my team's input. No one sees the whole picture; as the Bible

says, "We know in part and we prophesy in part." I may have a part and others may have a part. We'll put all of the parts together, and then you have a whole pie. Well, I believe that's how it is with the prophetic. I don't believe one person has the whole.

The \$50 bill to me represented the U.S. currency, but also the 50 united states. The man in the black suit tearing the bill in different stages represented the aggressive unfolding of events, of which a timeline I'm not sure. But I really feel like, in 2022 and 2023, we're going to see these things unfold. I've had a few confirmations of this dream since then that I believe had to be the Lord.

In Revelation, there is the black horse of the four horsemen of the seven seals. It was the black horse rider who dealt with money and the economics, the measure of wheat for a penny and barley for a penny. But it could not hurt the oil and the wine, which I think that speaks of the fact, that somehow, believers, while preparing, mentally, physically and emotionally, must be aware that God is going to help His people through this time in this renewing of America.

I did feel like this dream was successful in as far as how America would come through this renewed after this purging. I knew that we were coming upon a time of trouble, but as I thought about this dream and the events unfolding, this is something we should take seriously. The headlines themselves kind of speak for themselves, More than ever, we need to be prepared. I believe we are coming upon a perfect storm. As we see these events unfolding in the world, I don't believe America will be exempt from this. We really need to be in prayer and preparation. {eoa}

Chris Reed is a prophetic pastor and the CEO of MorningStar Ministries in Fort Mill, South Carolina.

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RT Kendall: The Best Kept Secret Since the Creation of the World

Satan's chief enemy is Jesus Christ. Oh, how he hates the Son of God.

No vocabulary in any language would come close to demonstrating how much Satan hates the Lord Jesus Christ. He hates any mention of the cross. He despises the blood that Jesus shed on the cross.

After all, the cross—which cannot be stated too often—is what guaranteed his downfall. Until Easter morning the devil thought he had conquered the greatest victory of all time. He regarded himself as the architect of the crucifixion. He was sure he orchestrated all the events that led to Jesus' death: the chief priests' plan to kill Him (John 11:49-53); the betrayal by Judas Iscariot (John 13:2); the anger of Herod toward Jesus (Luke 23:11); the unanimous request of the Jews to set Barabbas free and crucify Jesus (Matt. 27:20-23); the decision of Pontius Pilate to have Jesus crucified (Matt. 27:24-26); the Roman soldiers glee in physically crucifying Jesus (Matt. 27:27-31); and joined by the priests saying, "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (Matt. 27:42).

But on the day Jesus was raised from the dead, Satan suddenly

discovered that he not only failed; it is what sealed his everlasting doom. This is described in the book of Revelation. This then is why he hates the blood of Jesus. Had the “princes of this world” known what they were doing, “they would not have crucified the Lord of glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). The cross was the weapon of God to defeat Satan, sin and death—the best kept secret since the creation of the world!

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rules or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:16-17, ESV).

At some stage, the issue of the origin of evil emerges. I may say categorically: how and why evil emerged is unknowable. We can deduce some things that seem fairly clear. For one thing, there was a revolt in the heavenlies, probably before the creation of man. Satan was a creation of God (Col.1:16-17). God did not create *fallen* angels. They, as all creation, were created without sin. Before the Fall, Satan may have been called “Lucifer, son of the morning” (, KJV).

Apparently, this was an angel of very high intelligence, although I am speculating. It is clear he was jealous of God. He apparently recruited every angel in the heavenlies to join in his revolt. How many? Who knows? Possibly a third of the angels, if that is what Revelation is referring to (). We don't know for sure, nor do we need to know. It is safe to assume however that all of the redeemed by the blood of Jesus have an angel who guards them day and night (Heb.1:14;).

When Paul says, “We do not wrestle against flesh and blood” but against “the authorities” and “spiritual forces” in the heavenlies (Eph.6:12), two questions can be asked. First, does Paul speak for all Christians? In other words, can you and I assume that we too automatically have this battle because we are saved? Or is this something Paul came into and shares with

us? I am inclined to think that not all Christians know about this. Some discover it, some don't.

The second question: does Paul mean that he does not regard people—"flesh and blood"—as the enemy but rather the devil? In other words, has he learned not to take opposition personally, but sees the devil being behind it?

If so, it suggests that you and I should not see a person who opposes us or doesn't like us as being the origin of opposition, but that he or she is being coerced by Satan. This would be why Jesus would say to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan!" (). He did not accuse Peter of not being saved. He did not get angry with Peter himself. He saw that Peter was saying something that Satan originated. {eoa}

*The preceding was excerpted from Chapter 7 of **R.T. Kendall's** book, *Fear* (Charisma House, 2022). For more information or to order the book, please visit [. R.T. Kendall](#) was the pastor of Westminster Chapel in London for 25 years. Born in Ashland, Kentucky, he was educated at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (MDiv) and Oxford University (DPhil). Kendall is the author of numerous books, including *Total Forgiveness*, *More of God, Word and Spirit*, and *We've Never Been This Way Before*.*

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Pastor Jack Hibbs: Why You Don't Have the Wisdom or Power to Determine Your Gender Identity

"A woman must not put on men's clothing, and a man must not wear women's clothing. Anyone who does this is detestable in the sight of the Lord your God."

Pastor Jack Hibbs, the founder of Calvary Chapel in Chino Hills, opens this sermon with that verse, Deuteronomy 22:5. Then he continues, "God's not into fashion design. God is into protecting a person's gender."

After some amen's from his congregation, he paraphrases a verse from Proverbs, "The Bible says to train up your child in the way that they should go." He explains further, "It means that when a baby boy is born, you treat that baby like a baby boy. You have to guide them and steer them. You don't leave them to themselves. The Bible says, 'A child left to themselves brings reproach to their parents.'"

Then he gets specific. "When the little boy puts on mommy's bra, you say, 'Honey, you take that off, sweetie. That's for mommy. That's not for you. Put on my cowboy boots or put on my work gloves, pal.' They need to be taught. They're not gender confused. They think it's a funny-looking piece of clothing. It's doesn't mean anything more than that."

Hibbs takes a brief pause, then impersonates what someone who disagrees might say, "Well, we're not going to announce its gender. We're going to let it figure it out for itself." Hibbs responds to his impersonation, "That's child abuse."

After reading through Galatians 5:19-21 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, he says, "Okay. Here's where it gets practical. You might say, 'But, Pastor Jack, weren't they born that way?' The answer is that they were not born that way. God says, 'I made humans, male and female,' but remember, Romans 1:25 says, 'They decided to trade or to exchange or to switch the truth about God.' So they say, 'God made me this way.' No, He did not do that."

Hibbs references a previous sermon by saying, "Many kids, many people today are sexually confused because of two reasons, according to the scientists in psychiatry. Molestation as a child and/or images of extreme pornography cause a child to become sexually disconnected in their thinking. And they're radically confused by that."

He then offers a healing message for parents and loved ones of someone who is confused about his gender or sexuality, "It doesn't mean they can't be healed and blessed and restored. It means it's going to take love, not more confusion."

He adds, "We need men to be men and to show young people what it is to be a man. And we need women to be women to show young people what it is to be a woman. By doing so you'll bless that child's life, and you'll honor God."

Hibbs ends with a thought on the subject, "If you're going to raise your kids, as a parent, you're going to tell them the truth, and you're going to tell them the truth in love. There are going to be times when you are to encourage them. Then there are times when you need to admonish them." {eo}

To hear his full teaching and more practical advice on how to treat homosexual friends with love, please watch this video.

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