

Do Current Economic Distresses Point to End Times?

The U.S. July jobs report has been released. It is not good.

Although 114,000 jobs were added during the hot summer month, employment missed the 175,000 new jobs the Department of Labor had projected by more than 60,000. This pushed the unemployment rate up, while continued inflation and recessionary fears stoked a stock market meltdown on Aug. 2.

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Prophetic Pains, Pangs and Problems

In Matthew 24:1-31, Jesus prophetically warned his disciples of future physical pains, international pangs and economic problems at the end of this age. The Jewish prophet Jeremiah spoke of this future time of terror and persecution for his people, Israel, as “Jacob’s troubles” (Jer. 30:7b, NKJV). Daniel referred to this end-time distress as a time of “anguish greater than any since nations first came into existence” (Dan. 12:1; NLT).

Jesus, the Jewish Messiah and the Gentiles’ Savior, stressed that the generation of his disciples who endured the constant and increasing distress, anguish and persecution until the end of this age would be rescued (saved/delivered). (See Matt. 24:13, 34; Rom. 11:25-27.)

Financial Distress Is Often Due to

Our 'Cheating God'

Just as the New Testament warned about the financial distresses we can expect in these last days, the Old Testament tells of financial blessings intended for end-time believers that are so abundant there will not be "room enough to contain it."

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The Old Testament prophet Malachi explained that this special financial blessing is hindered when we "cheat God" of the tithes and offerings due to Him.

Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me! But you ask, "What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?" "You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in my Temple. If you do," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies, "I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!" (Mal. 3:8-10).

The word "tithe" means "one-tenth." It is the amount Abraham presented to Melchizedek, the priest-king of Jerusalem, in Genesis 14:18-20. Jacob/Israel also promised to pay a tithe of his possessions and income (Gen. 28:22). This patriarchal practice preceded the Law, given to Moses, by hundreds of years.

God doesn't need our money. He created and owns everything. He wants us to acknowledge this and worship Him. He wants us to focus on Him and not our resources or possessions.

Did you notice that God said the Hebrews had cheated Him in

more than just their tithing? Look again at verse eight and see they had cheated Him “of the tithes and offerings due to me.” They had cheated Him of their tithes (10%) and their generous offerings.

As a result of these significant failures, their whole nation was cursed. Perhaps you can identify with the cursed conditions the prophet Haggai considered when he said: “Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!” (Hag. 1:6b).

The Gracious Ministry of Giving

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Paul taught the New Testament believers to join him and “excel also in this gracious act of giving” (“ by learning to give generously and not as a grudging obligation, for “God loves a person who gives cheerfully” (2 Cor. 9:7c). New Testament giving is to be voluntary, willful, cheerful and in the light of our accountability as stewards of God.

Verse 11 includes a sense of equality when Paul says, “Give in proportion to what you have.” Some have more and can give more. Regardless of the amount, your generous giving meets the material needs of the poor, other saints and ministries for Christ. This produces, through them, “many thanksgivings to God” (2 Cor. 9:12b, ESV). Your example of generous, open-handed giving may prompt others to pass it on.

God Challenges Us to Test Him

Malachi recorded a challenge between God and His people when he asserted the promise of God’s abundance and deliverance as related to the believer’s obedience to their tithe. If they

will again obediently pay the tithe of their income and possessions, He promised to “open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing for you so great you won’t have enough room to take it in. Let me prove it to you!” (Mal. 3:10, TLB).

Did you notice the two steps? First, we return one-tenth of our income and possessions to Father God, the source of every good and perfect gift. Second, God opens the windows of heaven so we can receive abundant blessings from Him and share generously with the poor and others. How is that blessing determined and processed?

Perhaps Jesus has answered that for us in Luke 6:38 (NLT) when He taught: “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”

In the midst of the current economic distress worldwide, let us faithfully pay the tithe we owe God and also give generously to Him, His people and His purposes.

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