

Kingdom Economics: When Things Don't Go as Expected

Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Before the invasion, many—probably most—Western analysts expected the war to last from a few days to a few weeks due to Russia's vastly superior military might.

However, the Ukrainians surprised everyone. Due to the bravery of the Ukrainian people, technologically superior Western weapons and the surprising ineffectiveness of the Russian military, the war has yet to conclude.

Over the coming weeks, the West imposed increasing levels of economic sanctions on Russia. The goal was to weaken their economy and currency. However, things didn't go as the West had expected. The Russian ruble fell sharply initially but has since rebounded to one of the world's best performing currencies.

Russia instituted strict capital controls. Their central bank increased interest rates to about 20%, and Russia began requiring Western nations to pay for their purchases of Russian natural gas in rubles. Since then, Russia's interest rate has dropped to 9.5%, capital controls have begun to ease, and strong Asian demand for energy coupled with high energy prices have supported the ruble. The result is that the Russian ruble is near a seven-year high compared to the dollar. Things didn't go as expected.

Many are expecting the ruble to continue to strengthen against the dollar, with one major caveat. Russia could be forced into a technical default on their debt beginning June 29. The U.S. has allowed Russia's central bank to continue to make debt payments by changing rubles into dollars. However, the U.S. is going to let the exemption expire. Impacts on the ruble are

uncertain, as creditors know that Russia has the money to make the payments but is prevented from making them. The move will damage dollar credibility as the world's reserve currency and hurt Western lenders.

Members of the kingdom of God also face many of life's situations in which things don't go as expected. Outcomes can be surprisingly negative, surprisingly positive, or just totally unexpected. Similarly, unexpected events can have a variety of causes.

Causal factors could include sin, poor stewardship, lack of faith, lack of prayer, supernatural favor, protection, tests of faith, the redirection of the Lord and/or the vast array of life's surprises that are unexplained because His ways are above our ways.

The Lord prohibited Israel from making a covenant with any of the peoples within the Promised Land. The Gibeonites living in the Promised Land had a great fear of Israel. They sent envoys to Joshua with worn-out sacks on their donkeys, worn-out sandals, worn-out wineskins, worn-out clothes, and dried and crumbled bread. The Gibeonites told Joshua that they were from a far country and they wanted to make a covenant of peace with them. Israel gave them provisions and entered a covenant because they did not seek the counsel of the Lord (Josh. 9). Lesson: Seek the counsel of the Lord.

Israel had just conquered Jericho, one of the most fortified cities in the ancient world. Joshua sent men from Jericho to spy out the land. The spies returned and reported that Ai only had a few inhabitants and that Israel could conquer it with a much smaller force. Joshua sent 3,000 men, but Israel was defeated. Joshua was devastated.

Joshua and the elders of Israel mourned, fell on their faces and sought the Lord. The Lord told him there was sin in the camp, then told him to consecrate the people and He would

reveal the sin tomorrow. The next day, it was supernaturally revealed that Achan had stolen things under the ban in Jericho. As directed, Israel stoned Achan and his family. The Lord then gave a winning strategy for victory with Ai (Josh. 7-8).

Lessons: Obey the Lord, repent, seek the counsel of the Lord, obey.

On his second missionary journey, Paul was passing by the Phrygian and Galatian region because the Holy Spirit warned him not to speak in Asia. Paul then went to Mysia and was attempting to go to Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit did not permit him. He then went to Troas, where he had a vision of a Macedonian man asking him to come help him. Paul had been receiving the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit and received the supernatural guidance needed at the time it was needed (Acts 16).

Sometimes we must be obedient to what we know to do in order to be able to receive the further guidance needed. Lesson: Be obedient to what you have been given, be sensitive to the Holy Spirit, continually seek His guidance and direction, and obey.

In the current environment, many events are happening (good and bad) which are unexpected. These events can be the result of the actions or inaction of others or ourselves. Regardless of the environment, the answer is God.

We are called to be citizens of the kingdom of God. Regardless of the environment or the circumstances, we are called to receive and model the righteousness, peace and joy enabled by the Holy Spirit.

Let us be faithful.

"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17, NASB). {eo}

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