

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION
Ezra: Encouraging God's People Unto Spiritual Renewal
VII. Guarding Our Financial Assets From Marxist Theft
(Ezra 8:1-36)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) With the installation of the new president, many Christians are disillusioned! Some thought God had wanted the former president to stay in power while others fear that the installation of the new administration means we have entered the Great Tribulation Period! Thomas Samoska's letter in the Republican-American, Jan. 22, 2021, p. 8A, listed several concerns many Christians have such as the censorship of conservative speech on the Internet, the suppression of Newsmax and One America News by mainstream networks, the lack of government probes into voting irregularities and the suppression of reports of voter fraud by Democrats and the mainstream media, the biased reports on the Jan. 6 Capitol riots where "(m)any eyewitnesses reported the Capitol Police opened the gates and allowed demonstrators to pour into the Capitol" and the "large military presence . . . for the inauguration" that all "looked planned." He added, "Conservative Christians are very afraid and very angry . . ." (Ibid.)

Yet, we often teach that Revelation 3:21 with 7:17 shows that in our era *before* God takes believers to heaven in the rapture that in turn occurs *before* the Great Tribulation, we believers will face a Mini-Great Tribulation marked by intrigue and oppression, and God will cause an overcomer(s) to nurture by Bible teaching those who reel from such troubles. This interpretation is based on the Revelation 3:21 claim that God will cause an overcomer to sit with Christ "in" (*en* in the Greek text) His earthly throne as He sat down "in" His Father's heavenly throne, and the only ministry Christ "in" His Father's throne performs in Scripture that fits what occurs in Biblical churches (by Bible teaching) is stated in Revelation 7:17 where Christ nurtures believers who come out of the Great Tribulation. Since the issues we noted above that concern Christians are marked by intrigue and oppression, they certainly fit our interpretation that a Mini-Great Tribulation occurs in our era, so we are to teach Scripture to nurture afflicted people!

(2) Well, with the installation of the new president, our financial assets are more at risk to Marxist and globalist theft, so God wants us to explain and address this issue from Scripture to nurture the afflicted (as follows):

(a) The Marxist belief that the property of the "haves" should be *forcibly* redistributed to the "have nots" fuels the globalists' view of "sustainable development" whereby "developed countries" are to be restrained "through multinational power" to promote "social justice, welfare programs, public housing and elimination of national sovereignty, parental authority, and religious liberty." (Brannon Howse, Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 484)

(b) Laura Ingraham claims that globalists have used the COVID-19 pandemic to apply this view worldwide: her report, "Ingraham: 'Biden and the global reset' threatens economy, liberty" (Nov. 15, 2020; Foxnews.com) noted, ". . . (S)ince last spring, powerful people began to use the pandemic as a way to force radical social and economic change across the continents . . . Americans under the new world will . . . have to sacrifice liberty and prosperity so that things are more fair and equitable in the rest of the world." Thus, government shutdowns of many businesses has led to 965,000 recent unemployment claims as customers reduce "traveling, shopping and eating out." (Christopher Rugaber, "U. S. unemployment claims jump 965,000 as virus takes toll," Ibid., Republican-American, Jan. 15, 2021, p. 5B) "Many analysts . . . worry that with millions . . . unemployed and as many as one in six small companies going out of business, people . . . hurt most by the downturn won't likely benefit from a recovery anytime soon," Ibid.

(c) Also, President Biden's executive orders clearly support the "sustainable development" view: Matt Viser's story, "Biden plans a flurry of executive orders, new legislation for first days as president" (Jan. 17, 2021; msn.com) claimed, ". . . Biden is planning to return the United States to the Paris climate accords and repeal the ban on U. S. entry for citizens of some majority Muslim countries . . ." (i) As for the Paris Agreement, President Trump pulled the U. S. out of it since it put an economic burden on "American workers, businesses and taxpayers by U. S. pledges under the Agreement in reducing carbon fuel emissions." (Michael R. Pompeo, "On the U. S. Withdrawal from the Paris Agreement," state.gov; Nov. 4, 2019) President Biden's return of the U. S. to that pact thus adds financial burdens to Americans to redistribute wealth to other nations. (ii) His repeal of the ban on entry for people from certain Muslim nations also utilizes the redistribution of wealth: J. R. Nyquist and Anca-Maria Vernea's paper, "Russian Strategy and Europe's Refugee Crisis" told how "'modern terrorism was introduced to the Muslims by the communist block a half a century ago," for "'(i)n a published article by the Katehon Institute in Russia, B. Ozeruva explained that the Soviet government in 1918 'was guided by understanding Islam as a close ideology to the communist doctrine'" since "'Islam favors . . . social justice and the redistribution of wealth.'" (Brannon S. Howse, Marxianity, 2018, p. 256-257)

Need: So, we ask, "What should we do about the increased risk of our financial assets to Marxist theft?!"

- I. **Ezra and the Hebrews who traveled with him faced the threat of the theft of great assets, Ezra 8:1-22:**
 - A. The scribe Ezra with around 4,000 to 5,000 Hebrew people in vulnerable family units planned to make the four-month-long, 900-mile overland trip from Babylon to Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:9; B. K. C., O. T., p. 667)
 - B. Ezra was also returning over 28 tons of gold and silver vessels worth \$244.6 million in today's spot gold and silver prices that the Babylonians had taken from the Jerusalem temple! (Ezra 8:25-27 with NIV ftns.)
 - C. In addition, their trip was threatened by "caravans" of "Bedouin Arabs" that prowled the desert to attack and take spoil (Ezra 8:22; J. F. B., Com. on the Whole Bible, 1977, p. 343) that was complicated by the fact that Ezra had refused to receive a military escort from the king, testifying that God would protect them, Ezra 8:22.
- II. **Ezra thus took Biblical and practical steps to guard their great assets on the journey, Ezra 8:23-30:**
 - A. First, Ezra led those who traveled with him to petition God in prayer for safety on their trip, Ezra 8:23.
 - B. Second, Ezra assigned 12 priests and 12 Levites who were Biblically chosen by God to handle the holy temple vessels to transport the vessels on the journey, Ezra 8:24, 28 with Leviticus 21:6-8 and Leviticus 22:2-3 NIV.
 - C. Third, Ezra weighed out, recorded and assigned the vessels to the 24 men, charging them to guard what was assigned to them as they would give an account of the vessels when they arrived in Jerusalem, Ezra 8:24-29.
 - D. Fourth, in spreading the vessels among 24 men whose families each packed about 1 1/3 tons of vessels in their baggage on their wagons, Ezra thus concealed the vessels from onlookers to avoid encouraging any attackers.
- III. **The Hebrew group under Ezra enjoyed God's protection from attackers along the way so that they arrived safely in Jerusalem and delivered all the holy vessels to the temple officials, Ezra 8:30-34.**
- IV. **Ezra and his Hebrew travel companions then sacrificed to God and delivered the Persian king's orders to officials in the Jerusalem area, advancing the welfare of the Hebrews and their temple, Ezra 8:35-36.**

Lesson: *To avoid the loss of great assets to thieves on their trip to Jerusalem, Ezra led his fellow travelers to pray for God's protection, he assigned Biblically qualified men to have custody of the assets, he kept good records of the assets and he sought to keep the assets from being a ready target for thieves by spreading them among 24 men.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life, John 3:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. (2) To guard our assets from Marxist theft, may we (a) trust God to guard them, (b) Biblically handle them, (c) keep good records of them (d) and avoid making them easy targets.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

We apply specific Scripture passages on heeding this sermon lesson (as follows):

(1) On relying on God to protect our assets, Hebrews 13:5-6 claims God promises to be our Helper regarding material needs, that we should not covet, but trust in Him that we not be in fear what man (Marxists) might do to us!

(2) On handling our assets Biblically, Scripture has much to say, and we list some key themes: (a) frugality (John 6:12), (b) financial planning (Luke 14:28-30), (c) relying on even simple income streams to offset the loss [or seizure] of accumulated wealth [by others] (Proverbs 27:23-27) and (d) making bold, diversified, long-term investments [like stocks or stock funds] and regularly adding to them produces significant long-term gain (Eccles. 11:1-6). (e) As our financial goal, instead of aiming to be rich, what leads to many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10), we are to be content with "food and raiment" (1 Timothy 6:8 KJV): to explain, the Greek text's word for "food" is *diatrophe*, the "means of subsistence" (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 139), and the Greek word for "raiment" is *skepasma*, "clothing or housing cover" (Ibid., p. 761). Thus, God wants us to aim to provide for the *means* of our livelihood and clothing and housing cover *throughout* life, involving working, investing, saving, etc.

(3) Ezra's weighing, assigning each man to be in charge of holy vessels and recording it (Ezra 8:24-29) exemplifies good record keeping, what any certified accountant will claim offers better oversight of one's assets.

(4) We can help lessen making our assets easy targets for Marxist theft by (a) living modestly to minimize attracting unwelcome attention, (b) diversifying our assets to lower their accessibility to thieves and (c) staying occupied with edifying ventures that Marxists and globalists do not seek from us such as (i) aiming for good health that saves much in costs and aids our quality of life, (ii) working for an income throughout life (2 Thessalonians 3:10; Proverbs 10:16), (iii) studying and heeding Scripture that offers great profit in all realms of life (1 Timothy 4:8) and (iv) focusing on doing God's will to amass great rewards in heaven that no thief can steal, Matthew 6:19-21.

May we trust in Christ Who died as our Atoning Sacrifice for sin that we might receive God's gift of eternal life. May we then guard our financial assets from needless Marxist and globalist theft by relying on God to guide and protect those assets so we can use them to live for Him, by handling our assets Biblically, by keeping careful records of our assets and acting in ways that minimize making ourselves targets for thieves.