

Sunday Celebration (1-18-09)

*"Surviving an Economic Famine"*

**INTRO** ... The Economic Downturn

- This affords us a unique opportunity to Look to God in a New Way
- Also affords us a unique opportunity to RE-EXAMINE How We've Been Looking at God & to God

**1Kings 17:1-16 ... "The Great Famine of 850 BC"**

## **Facts of a Famine**

- **Famine was a LARGE SCALE event that touched a Variety of Different People**
  - **Elijah**
    - He is sent to a location that requires Extraordinary Provision
    - He has to Relocate again to an Unfamiliar Location – Zarepath
  - **The Widow**
    - The Famine has brought her to DEATH's DOORSTEP—
- **Famine Was Part of God's Economic Stimulus Package** ... designed to help people turn from the death of trusting & serving Idols to trusting & serving God
  - Famines tend to show up in Scripture during periods of flourishing IDOLATRY.

**1Kings 16:29-33** (~850 BC)

- The Propensity to Wander during times of Prosperity ... Hos (~750 BC)

**Hos 10:1, 13** Israel is a luxuriant vine that yields its fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; as his country improved, he improved his pillars. ... 13 You have plowed iniquity; you have reaped injustice; you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your own way and in the multitude of your warriors.

● **America's Needed Economic Fix**

... Is God Touching the American Baal & Asherah?

*"It is astonishing to see what Westerners spend their money on. A survey of expenditures in the late 1980's and early 1990's demonstrated that Americans spent annually twice as much on cut flowers as on overseas Protestant ministries, twice as much on women's sheer hosiery, one and a half times as much on video games, one and a half time as much on pinball machines, slightly more on the lawn industry, about five times as much on pets, one and a half times as much on skin care, almost one and a half times as much on chewing gum, almost three times as much on swimming pools and accessories, approximately seventeen times as much on diets and diet-related products, twenty times as much on sports activities, approximately twenty-six times as much on soft drinks and a staggering 140 times as much on legalized gambling activities. ... Meanwhile, the amount of American giving to charitable organizations of all kinds remains relatively constant at somewhere between 1.6 and 2.16% of a family's income. American Christians do only slightly better, averaging somewhere around 2.4%." Craig Blomberg, "Neither Poverty nor Riches", p. 19*

## **Famine and Our View of God**

*Do "Famines" Cause Us to Become Confused about Who God Is?*

### The Defining of God through Circumstances and Limited/Pop-Theology

- **The God of the Bible is the SAME** (of Same Character & Worth):

*... God is Not Defined by Our Temporary Seasons and Settings*

- **30 Non-typical Years** 1980 – Present .....

Never known 3<sup>rd</sup> world conditions on planet earth ... Out of Touch with the Rest of the World. Unique Experiences of: Home ownership ... Luxury items ... Health conditions

*Only 5% of the world's population has ever logged on to the internet, and nearly all the users live in industrialised countries. One billion people - that is a third of the world's work force - are unemployed or underemployed. 500 million workers are unable to keep their families above the \$1 poverty line. **BBC, January 2001***

Wage Earners making less than \$2/day (Source: Worldbank, World Development Indicators)

Bangladesh – 83%

China – 47%

Vietnam – 64%

El Salvador 58%

Stock Market

1921-1929 ... The Dow Jones Index rose 504% to 381

1929-1932 ... The Dow lost 90% of its value to fall below 1921 levels

1980-2007 ... The Dow increases from 759 to 14,164 (1,766% increase)

Personal Debt

Consumer Credit Debt rose 155% from 1990-2004

Home Mortgage Debt rose 201% from 1990-2004

Bankruptcy filings were up 382% from 2004 compared to 1980

... Not only have we been prosperous, but we've added debt to our prosperity to supercharge our ability to consume.

- **"Prosperity Doctrines"**
  - The Doctrine of Personal Prosperity vs. Kingdom Prosperity

*A mailer from a church in Mesa, Arizona, in 2006 read, "Is your life everything you want it to be? You hear all kinds of offers of ways to improve your life, but do they work? God is offering you a way to make your life everything you truly want it to be." David Wells, "The Courage to be Protestant", p. 37*

***- Kingdom Prosperity may involve personal suffering***

- *Jesus Christ ...*
- *Jeremiah ...*
- *The Martyrs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century...*
- *Elijah...*

*Famines are Not Outside of the Providence of God. When they occur, God is up to something for His kingdom's sake.*

*The Church in America is Limping Along ... because we live our lives without needing God... Famine (Recession) increases our NEED for God*

## **How do the Righteous Survive a Famine**

- **They don't trust in places, jobs, or favorable circumstances**  
(Not Cherith or Zarepath) but in GOD
- **They Obey the Word of the Lord—even in the face of Lack**  
... The widow – it doesn't make any sense to give the last of your oil and flour away, when you don't have enough for yourself

*The good thing about a famine (a Recession) is that it dries up our alternatives to God and forces us to look to God as our ultimate source and our ultimate satisfaction!*