

A WARNING TO AMERICA, AND TO THE WHOLE WORLD



HURRICANE KATRINA

“And there will be ... upon earth **despair among nations**, with perplexity at the **roaring and tossing of the sea**. Men’s hearts will faint from terror, being apprehensive of what is coming upon the world.” (Luke 21:25-26)

AUGUST 2005. Yes, it was another “big one.” Hurricane Katrina, fueled by the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, battered the states of Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama with winds as high as 240 km/h.

It was one of the most deadly and costly natural disasters in US history. The UN said it was one of the world’s worst natural disasters in terms of property damage, and it outstripped the December tsunami in Asia.

Before Katrina, the most deadly hurricane in US history was the one that hit Galveston, Texas, in 1900. Between 8,000 and 12,000 lives were lost. But the costliest was the Category 5 Hurricane Andrew, which struck with a fury in Florida and Louisiana on Aug. 24, 1992, killing 15 persons and leaving 250,000 homeless. It cost \$26.5 billion.

The cost of recovery from Katrina’s vengeance is expected to be as much as \$US 200 billion.

Four states were affected, but New Orleans in south Louisiana suffered the worst damage. For weeks, the city looked like a war zone, and was patrolled by troops in trucks and armoured personnel carriers, and with helicopters hovering overhead.

Katrina also virtually destroyed the cities of Gulfport and Biloxi in the state of Mississippi, and many other smaller cities.

New Orleans had a population of around 500,000. It was renowned as a city of charm, music and revelry, but it was also famous for its decadence and lawlessness –

it was a place where “everything was for sale.” Before the hurricane the city was rotting with a neglected infrastructure, increasing poverty, a high crime rate, and a corrupt police force.

Hurricane Katrina formed in the Bahamas on August 25, and the next day it became evident that it would be a major threat to Louisiana and the Gulf Coast. On Aug 27, the Mayor ordered residents to evacuate New Orleans. The hurricane hit the area over the next two days causing heavy damage, but, everyone thought, the city had survived. Then a worse-case scenario happened – four levees broke, allowing water to pour in, flooding 80% of the city.

(New Orleans is hedged in between Lake Pontchartrain on the north, and the Mississippi River on the south. Most of the city is around 3 metres (9 ft.) below sea level. The city is surrounded by a 565 km system of levees - walls built to hold back the waters.)

As the city flooded, 100,000 people were stranded, and were without food, water, phones, or power for days.

After the hurricane struck, the American emergency-management system seemed to be paralyzed. Anarchy broke out, and armed gangs had the run of New Orleans. Many police abandoned their posts, unwilling to work in a lawless city. The gangs terrorized the hapless people – raping and looting with impunity, and shooting at police and rescue workers. Rescue teams and relief took days to arrive.

The US administration, including the President, came under severe censorship for its slow response in sending aid to the most affected states – Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

The seeming inability of the federal and local authorities to rescue survivors and to maintain law and order, raised questions about the government’s preparedness to respond to other natural disasters, and to terrorist attacks. Some argue that the demands of the Iraq war were preventing the country from protecting itself at home.

One congressman said; “Clearly, with all the money we’ve spent, all the focus we have put on homeland security, we are not prepared for a disaster of this proportion whether it’s induced by nature or man.”

NEW ORLEANS HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED

President Bush commented that no-one had foreseen the breaching of the New Orleans’s levees. In fact, the possibility of such a New Orleans disaster has been anticipated for many years. Everyone knew that it would come, sooner or later.

In 2001, (before Sept 11), the *Houston Chronicle* quoted the Federal Emergency Management Agency as saying, the three mostly likely disasters to threaten the US are; 1. an earthquake in San Francisco; 2. a terrorist attack in New York City; and, 3. a hurricane hitting New Orleans.

The FEMA “prophetic” passage read: “The New Orleans hurricane scenario may be the deadliest of all. In the face of an approaching storm, scientists say, the city’s less-than-adequate evacuation routes would strand 250,000 people or more, and probably kill one of 10 left behind as the city drowned under 20 feet (6m) of water. Thousands

of refugees could land in Houston. Economically, the toll would be shattering ... If an Allison-type storm were to strike New Orleans, or a category three storm or greater with at least 178 km/h winds, the results would be cataclysmic.”

New Orleans was a disaster waiting to happen. Someone described the city as “a fool’s paradise.” But with the focus on the war on terror, natural hazards were put on the back burner. The billions of dollars needed to upgrade the levees of this city were not available – and President Bush was unwilling to allocate more than \$250 million for that purpose.

The commander of the US Army Corps of Engineers put it bluntly, “We were just caught by a storm of an intensity that exceeded the designs of the project we have in place.”

THE PRESIDENT ACCEPTS RESPONSIBILITY

After the political fallout from the disaster had rocked the US and the White House for more than two weeks, President Bush accepted responsibility for his government’s failure.

“Katrina exposed serious problems in our response capabilities at all levels of government,” he said. “To the extent the federal Government didn’t fully do its job right, I take responsibility.”

THE HUMAN TRAGEDY

NEW ORLEANS has suffered nine major hurricanes since 1909, but Katrina was the worst. It is hard to take in the immensity of this ferocious storm. The misery, suffering and distress that followed was on a level never before experienced in the United States; lawlessness, anarchy, looting, and violence broke out, while sewage, overwhelming stench, disease and death turned the city into a stinking ghost town. Many stranded people had died while waiting to be rescued, and bodies were floating in the flood waters for many days.

The flood waters became a “toxic soup” as petroleum products from industrial plants and submerged cars and trucks mixed with household and business chemicals, sewage and decomposing bodies, threatening to produce a health and environmental catastrophe.

New Orleans Mayor, Ray Nagin warned that what was waiting below the poisonous mix of gasoline, industrial chemicals and human waste would be gruesome. “It’s not safe here. There is toxic waste in the water and dead bodies and mosquitoes and gas. We are pumping about a million dollars’ worth of gas a day in the air. Fires have been started and we don’t have running water.”

The government ordered everyone to leave the city. Within two weeks the evacuation of New Orleans was almost complete. But some people simply did not want to leave their homes; about 5000 were left in the city.

Some 400,000 refugees were scattered across 13 states – 240,000 of them in neighbouring Texas where a public health emergency was declared.

After eight days the first breached levee was plugged, and engineers began to pump water out the flooded city. But they declared that it would take three months to

pump the water out of the city, and it would take more than that to clear the debris and demolish the ruined buildings. And it could be months before water and electricity is restored.

Big frustrations were felt also along the Mississippi coast, where people who had stayed were stranded in demolished neighborhoods and had to scavenge for necessities.

The official death toll, 3 weeks after the hurricane, had risen to 1066, but bodies were being found every day. Authorities said it would be another six weeks before all homes could be searched.

THE ECONOMIC DISASTER

IN TWO DAYS Katrina took out New Orleans, and with it, a functional port complex.

New Orleans could not be regarded as a small, unimportant city. It was, until Aug 28, the supporting city of the South Louisiana ports which move more tonnage each year than any other port in the US.

The Ports of South Louisiana and New Orleans **export** more than 52 million tons a year, including a large proportion of US agriculture - corn, soybean, etc. And almost as much cargo is **imported** through the ports — including crude oil, chemicals, fertilizers, coal, concrete and steel.

This is the fifth-largest port complex in the world.

The US has a great system of rivers that flow through the Midwest, and all of them converge on the mighty Mississippi, and flow down to the ultimate port of New Orleans.

Produce from the heartland of America is transported down the River by barges to the ports in and around New Orleans where they are unloaded, stored, sold and reloaded onto ocean-going vessels. Until Aug 28, New Orleans, in many ways, was the pivot of the American economy.

In one weekend, Katrina shut down America's biggest port complex and put a halt to its mighty river transport system which generated more than \$US 800 billion in trade each year. And without a city with its infrastructure, work force, oil fields and pipelines, the largest port in the United States is largely paralysed. The storm wiped out a half million jobs

The Louisiana Offshore Oil Port, which services supertankers in the Gulf seems to be intact; and while the Mississippi River as a transport corridor has not been lost, the ports and oil platforms must be restored.

But New Orleans, the support city of the import-export industry, has been so badly damaged that most of it will not be habitable for a long time. The population has either fled or has been evacuated, and many of the work force do not want to return. Many will find jobs and facilities in other states.

If the Mississippi River and the port complex are shut to traffic for long, the foundations of the economy would be shattered. If industrial materials needed in the factories do not come in, if steel for auto industry does not come up the river, and if

the agricultural produce does not flow out, there will be a tremendous impact on American and world economies.

Adequate alternative routes and transport are not readily available. Apart from river transport being cheaper, there aren't enough trucks or rail cars to handle the long-distance hauling of these enormous quantities.

Everyone is worried about the effect on the price of oil which may be very painful; but the impact of the shutdown of the Mississippi commerce could be even more devastating.

This is a national crisis, because without the largest port in the United States and its supporting city, America's export-import is greatly set back. So it is essential that New Orleans is rebuilt. And it will be! But it is going to take a long time.

Economists are warning that the physical and psychological damage caused by Katrina is likely to curb economic growth in the US and the global economy well into 2006.

REBUILDING NEW ORLEANS

WEEKS of foul waters have ruined wiring and insulation, and the buildings themselves. And as most of the city's homes are wooden structures, much of the city will need to be demolished.

The federal government has pledged billions of dollars for rebuilding funds, but it will take months for the basic recovery efforts to be completed before the money for reconstruction starts flowing.

There are many who would like to see the city rebuilt on higher ground, but there are those who insist that New Orleans isn't going anywhere; it will be rebuilt in the same place with more powerfully-reinforced levees. New Orleans must be rebuilt; commerce demands it. There is no alternative!

President Bush has promised the US government will do and spend whatever it takes to rebuild the hurricane-hit Gulf Coast. Speaking from the French Quarter of New Orleans, Mr Bush said billions of dollars would be spent on the reconstruction - "an unprecedented response to an unprecedented crisis."

"Throughout the area hit by the hurricane, we will do what it takes. We will stay as long as it takes to help citizens rebuild their communities and their lives," Mr Bush said. "There is no way to imagine America without New Orleans, and this great city will rise again."

Although the recovery of the city could take many months, City Mayor Ray Nagin wanted people owning businesses to return to help get the city infrastructure get back on its feet. And within a few weeks of the disaster, many began to return to the higher parts of the city which had not been greatly affected by the flood waters.

But the plan for an early return was set back by the prevailing unsafe environment. About 40% of the city was still rotting under the fetid flood waters, and there was lack of essential facilities. And then there was a new threat ...

HURRICANE RITA!

NEVER BEFORE in US history have two massive hurricanes hit within three weeks of each other. Following Katrina's path, Hurricane Rita developed into a Category 5, and became the third most intense Atlantic hurricane to ever threaten the US.

As it headed across the Gulf towards the Texas coast just a few hundred km west of New Orleans, Rita was 550 km wide, with sustained winds up to 280 km/h.

More than 3 million people from Galveston, Houston and southern Texas fled from the path of the storm.

Rita downgraded to Category 4 a day before hitting Texas - about the same strength as Katrina, and then hit land as a Category 3, with winds up to 193 km/h.

The cities of Houston and Galveston escaped a direct hit, but there was widespread destruction. The full force of the hurricane hit the oil refineries and facilities near Beaumont and Port Arthur.

In New Orleans which was on the edge of the hurricane, there was renewed flooding as some of the patched up levees were breached again.

THE SOARING OIL PRICES

Katrina not only destroyed one of America's most important seaport cities, it also knocked out 25% of the nation's oil and gas production, and 15% of its refining capacity, as well as three crucial pipelines that are arteries of the economy, and the electrical power needed to keep them going.

And three weeks later, eighteen oil refineries that account for one quarter of the total US's fuel production lay in the path of Rita.

Between them, the terrible twins put at least 13 refineries out of commission, including the largest US refinery at Baytown, Texas - practically all energy production in the Gulf of Mexico. This means about 30% of the nation's refining capacity was out of action.

The full extent of the damage to the oil and natural gas infrastructure will not be known for weeks, and it may be months before output is back to normal. The same goes for the facilities that refine crude oil into gasoline, heating oil and jet fuel.

The price of crude oil rose to \$68 per barrel and it was expected to soar to above \$70.

Energy costs in the US and around the world were high, and worldwide energy output was already stretched thin before Katrina and Rita struck. But these the two natural disasters pushed fuel costs higher around the globe and created conditions that remind us of 1973 when the Arab oil embargo created petrol station queues across the country.

With gasoline prices soaring above \$3 a gallon nationwide, the US is facing a serious economic downturn. And it will be worse shortly when Winter arrives; the higher cost of home-heating will hit hard.

The impact of higher energy prices is already hitting hard in Europe, where up to 60% of the retail price is made up of taxes. The price of gasoline rose to the equivalent of \$6.70 a gallon in Germany and hit a record high in Switzerland. A

week after Katrina, Spaniards were paying more than \$5 per gallon - up nearly 7% from a week earlier.

Consumers in Asia also are being squeezed, and everyone from auto rickshaws and motorists to the airlines are affected. Surging oil prices have already sparked an economic crisis in Indonesia, and are causing concern in China, India, Australia; in fact the world economy was hit.

With the New Orleans ports out of commission for months, the US, and the world, could soon be facing another recession.

What is ahead for the oil market, and how high will the price of oil go?

Last March, the investment firm of Goldman Sachs issued a report stating that oil prices are expected to spike at \$105 per barrel.

According to International Monetary Fund Managing Director, Rodrigo de Rato, oil prices are unlikely to return to the levels of early 2004 when they were 50% lower than they are today.

HURRICANES GETTING STRONGER



THE *National Geographic News*, Sept 15, 2005, referring to a study published in the journal *Science*, says the number of storms that reach Category Four and Five — the most powerful, damaging hurricanes — has nearly doubled over the past 35 years.

Category Four hurricanes have sustained winds from 131 to 155 miles an hour (211 to 249 kilometers an hour). Category Five hurricanes — like Katrina and Rita at their peak in the Gulf of Mexico — have sustained winds of 156 miles an hour (251 km/h) or more.

The study finds that the increase in hurricane intensity coincides with a rise in sea surface temperatures around the world of about 1°F (0.5°C) between 1970 and 2004. This rise is being credited to global warming.

GOD IS WARNING AMERICA AND THE WORLD OF COMING JUDGMENT

“And there will be ... upon earth despair among nations, with perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. Men’s hearts will faint from terror, being apprehensive of what is coming upon the world; for the *very* powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.” (Luke 21:25-27)

THERE IS NO question that hurricanes, cyclones, typhoons, tsunamis and earthquakes are increasing in frequency and power, and that the violent roaring of the sea and the waves is creating great despair and perplexity in the nations.

Tsunamis are caused by earthquakes. The increase in the frequency and strength of hurricanes, some scientists maintain, is the result of global warming. Man’s use of fossil fuels contributes in a minor way to global warming, but the primary cause is from the unusual increase in heat and solar storms.

The effects of global warming are most evident at the north and south poles where the polar caps are melting at an alarming rate; and also along the equatorial areas of the oceans where the heat of the water is dramatically raised. It is the raising of the oceans’ temperature that generates hurricanes.

Katrina was just the beginning of even worse events -super-storms, super-earthquakes, tsunamis and epidemics that are to come. Like the tsunami of 26 Dec 2004, Katrina was a very powerful warning of the Great Tribulation ...

“... the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole world, to try those who live on the earth.” (Revelation 3:10)

So much for the natural phenomena; now what about the spiritual causes for our aberrant environment?

Natural disasters are frequently expressions of Divine displeasure. God indicated to King Solomon that He may send drought, plague and pestilence to bring His people to repentance.

“If I shut up the heavens and there is **no rain**, or if I command **the locust** to devour the land, or if I send **pestilence** among My people, and My people who are called by My Name humble themselves and pray, and seek My Face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and heal their land’.” (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

Undoubtedly, God is calling the US to turn from their wicked ways today. But some may argue, “Is the United States more evil than other nations? Why should America be singled out for judgment?”

No, America is not necessarily more evil than others. The US is only one of the nations that are experiencing great disasters. Judgment is coming on the whole world. But no doubt the Almighty is disciplining America, and giving that nation, and all nations, a warning of what is ahead.

The United States is a paradox— there is so much good in the nation, and there is also much evident evil. The same could be said of most nations. But the US is a nation that had many godly founders who established law based on the truth of the Word of God. In the past, the US has been a great champion of the Gospel, of Biblical principles, and of freedom under God. It has been a nation that has been blessed enormously; and God has caused it to prosper. But the Scripture says:

“From everyone who had been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.” (Luke 12:48)

“And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many *lashes*.” (Luke 12:47)

IN WHOM DO WE TRUST?

The United States has known the Master’s will since its inception, but today, the US is rejecting that will; and instead, is leading the world into moral and economic bankruptcy. Today, the US has departed from “in God we trust,” and through its actions, declares that it is “in rationalism we trust.”

Of course, there is a tremendous battle going on throughout the nation – between those who honour the Word of God, and those who are seeking to destroy its influence. A large God-fearing remnant (“the salt of the earth”) have been preserving the nation from judgment for a long time. But today, even that “salt” is losing its savor as spiritual apostasy spreads over much of “the church.”

Here are just a few of the shocking facts about the condition of the US today.

* Over the past 50 years righteousness and morality has been severely eroded throughout the nation, through legislation and social behaviour. The US Supreme Court has kept prayer out of public schools; it has kept the Ten Commandments off the walls of government buildings; and it has chosen death over life.

* On June 17, 1963, the Supreme Court ruled 8-1 against the recitation of Bible verses and the Lord’s Prayer in public schools.

* On January 27, 1973, the Supreme Court chose death over life (abortion) in the Roe vs. Wade case.

* On June 28, 2000, the Supreme Court struck down a controversial abortion law in Nebraska.

* On May 29, 2002, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a case raising the question of whether the public display of the Ten Commandments violated the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. The Court left in place the ruling of a lower court forbidding display of the Decalogue.

* Each week an average of eighty-eight children are expelled from schools in the US for bringing a gun to class.

* In a dispute over display of holiday symbols, New York City schools allowed Jewish menorahs and Islamic crescents but barred Christian nativity scenes, alleging the depiction of the birth of Christ does not represent a historical event. 12 Nov 03.

* In 2003, a federal judge ruled that council members of the Great Falls Town Council cannot invoke the name of Jesus or any other specific deity during pre-meeting prayers. Officials in the South Carolina community appealed the federal judge's decision.

* The US now ranks 49th in the world for literacy and 28th out of 40 in mathematical literacy.

* America was once called the breadbasket of the world, but as of June, 2004, the US imported more food than it exported.

* It is a sad fact that in all major categories of achievement and accomplishments, the US is not even in the top ten anymore. The US is, however, number one in the world for weaponry, consumer spending, and debt (seven trillion US dollars)!

* There are nearly 13 million illegal aliens now in the US, and they have brought many infectious diseases with them. Tuberculosis and malaria are on the rise in the US, and now 7,000 cases of leprosy have been diagnosed in the Northeastern states.

* One-third of all US children are now born out of wedlock, and one-half of all US children now live in a one-parent home.

AMERICA'S GROWING ADDICTION TO PORNOGRAPHY

* Americans spend 13.1 billion dollars on pornography every year, which is the same amount the country spends on foreign aid. More than 260 million Internet pages are pornographic, an increase of 1,800% in just five years.

Christian Broadcasting Network said: "We're living in a sex-saturated society. Even the popular culture is often pulsing to a pornographic beat. Clothing that was seen only in porn magazines decades ago, now drapes some of our most celebrated pop icons.

You can now see XXX movies right on cable TV that used to be available only in seedy porn shops. And the same types of photos are now easily available on the privacy of your own computer screen.

Science is finding that porn users release chemicals in their own brains that are as powerfully addictive as cocaine or alcohol, and the Internet makes feeding this addiction irresistibly easy for the vulnerable.

Mark Kastleman, who has written a book on Internet porn, warning it's "**The Drug of the New Millennium,**" said, "You hit a button and you're instantly there ... and it's anonymous. The anonymity is the real key, especially with religious people. They can do it without anyone knowing."

* One of the biggest concerns is what this will do to the next generation, to children. Wendy Wright, of *Concerned Women for America*, said, "The average age of a child's first exposure to hardcore pornography is eight years old." Most kids see some 14,000 references to sex on TV each year. What has all this led to?

* Six out of 10 high school seniors have had sex, and one out of four sexually active teens will get a sexually transmitted disease this year. ." - Source CBN / Aug 04

A wise king once wrote:

"I will set no vile, wicked or worthless thing before my eyes. (I hate the work of those who turn away *from the right path.*) *That wicked thing* shall not fasten its grip on me." (David - Psalm 101:3)

But when rationalism replaces spiritual wisdom, and when generations turn from the right path to vile, wicked *or* worthless things, is it unreasonable to suggest that God will discipline a nation today?

After the terrorist attack of 9/11, Americans flocked to churches and prayed to God. But in spite of efforts to halt the march into total depravity, the nation, continued on its relentless course, outlawing expression of God's Word in public places. It even included a call to remove the words, "IN GOD WE TRUST," from the US \$1 note.

THE WRITING IS ON THE WALL

TODAY the writing is on the walls of the halls of administration in the US:

"You have been weighted on the scales and found wanting ... God has numbered your kingdom and put an end to it." (Daniel 5:27, 26)

In many regions al-Qaida operatives and their allies, rejoiced at the news of the US being devastated by Katrina and Rita. They say it's God's judgment on the US. But those who rejoice in another's disaster, need to take a hard look at themselves and their own lands, and see themselves on God's scales! The truth is that the whole world is being weighed on God's scales.

"God now commands all people everywhere to repent (*that is, to change their minds and to amend their ways with abhorrence for their sins*), because He has fixed a day in which **He will judge the world** in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all by raising Him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)