

May 23, 2008

Greetings from Tyler,

I'm writing on Thursday again, on account of our trip this weekend to Kingsport, TN for two days of combined meetings, including Mr. Chris Cummings' famous Menu-driven Bible Study. We're personally acquainted with quite a number of folks who are planning to be there, and really looking forward to it.

You may have seen the same sick prediction I came across today. It was aired during an interview with a respected energy analyst who suggested that we may see \$12 - \$15 dollar per gallon gas in the next five years, with a strong possibility of shortages thereafter. It would be much too depressing to buy into such a prediction. There are many oil executives and other experts who say that there is plenty of oil yet to be produced, and the only thing promoting expectations of higher prices and shortages is government environmental regulations.

Given the immediate prospects for leadership (or lack thereof) in the Congress and Presidency, we may in fact be facing ever higher prices. It's hard to imagine that our citizens are prepared to continue voting for people who are committed to policies that are destroying our way of life. But here we are.

Just yesterday a massive truck bomb (4.5 tons of explosives) was detonated near a border crossing with Gaza, blowing a major hole in the border wall, presumably allowing infiltrators to gain entry into Israel. Rockets continue to be launched out of Gaza into southern Israel, occasionally resulting in more casualties. Meanwhile, Abbas declares that Israel must give up East Jerusalem as part of any settlement. This is where the situation stands, after forty years of constant U.S. directed diplomacy.

As I mentioned in last week's update, Israeli Prime Minister Olmert is facing some financial scandals that may well bring down his coalition government. Still, he is pressing ahead with newly announced negotiations with Syria that are causing serious concern in Israel. Benjamin Netanyahu has been extremely critical of Olmert, even suggesting that his willingness to begin negotiations with Syria is an attempt to deflect investigations that might force a resignation. Netanyahu is quoted in today's Jerusalem Post saying, "Ceding the Golan would make it a frontline post for Iran that will threaten the entire country." Syria has announced that it has no intention of severing its close ties to Iran.

Israel's posture over recent years (under constant pressure from the U.S. State Dept.) has been to make concession after concession while Iran arms its enemies in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. Netanyahu has taken strong positions against many of the concessions, and he is particularly hawkish in his insistence that Iran must be stopped from acquiring nuclear weapons. Will the next President of the United States be prepared to accept Iran as a nuclear power? What a horrible thought.

What are we to do? Throw our hands up in despair, trusting that the "worst case" prognosticators are right? Or realize that God has it within His power to answer our prayers, and that He will determine how these events play out. This is no time to lose heart or give up our faith in Him, regardless.

Tabulations and reports for the weekly telecast will not be issued before we leave for Kingsport, so results from this week's Garner Ted Armstrong telecast will come in next week's update. We hope you'll all have a great Sabbath, and enjoy the holiday weekend. Until next time,

Mark Armstrong