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Subject: Weekly Update from Mark Armstrong - 18 July 2008

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Greetings from Tyler,

America seems to be caught in a slow motion vortex, and this week's news is the most recent installment in a long running chronicle.

Big financial losses are reported from mortgage lenders and other financial institutions. Airlines are reporting huge losses and once again, bankruptcy appears to be stalking some of the largest carriers.

The price of oil, still in the stratosphere around \$130 per barrel, dropped nearly fifteen dollars on the symbolic move that President Bush made to revoke an executive ban on offshore and off limits oil exploration. What if the House and Senate were to accede to the will of upwards of seventy percent of Americans that believe that domestic production should proceed? You think the speculators wouldn't slow down on bidding up the long-term contracts?

But certain of our elected leaders have circled the wagons around our national resources, and show no signs of backing down. We will presumably find out the hard way, over a period of several months ahead, whether the nation can survive a system that has served the country well for over two hundred years, or whether our democracy has been corrupted to the point that a relative minority of extremists can block the only route to national recovery.

The dollar has lost nearly thirty percent of its value, and that is partly responsible for the increase in oil's price.

According to initial indications, many plan to escape to the cinema this weekend to be transported into the evil cartoonish realm of the latest Batman movie. When they come out of the theater, gas will still cost \$4.00 per gallon, Iran will still threaten Israel and the world with its nuclear ambitions. The U.S. will still face several staggering economic crises, and reports of the latest gruesome murders, rapes and assorted mayhem will greet their ears when they turn on the radio or television news. We'll still be awaiting a presidential election, hoping for the least of the evils.

The Pope is in Australia at present, absorbing the screaming adoration of Catholic youth. But the BBC is airing a documentary tonight which purports to prove Ratzinger's aggressive participation in the cover-up of Priest child abuse cases. A particular document he sent to Catholic bishops around the world is cited in which he threatens excommunication for anyone who openly discusses any of these incidents. Meanwhile, the pope is expected to deliver another apology for the scandals while in Australia.

As Murray Allatt reports from Sydney, the Australian press in full swoon over the current tour by "his holiness," and even the current prime minister has taken every opportunity to invoke that title.

And, as Murray also points out in his update this week, Australia's recently elected Prime Minister has just released his "carbon trading" program, which asserts that carbon dioxide is a pollutant. Did you know that you are "harming the planet" every time you exhale? According to the proponents of "saving the planet" we humans are born polluters, and should be— well, you figure it out! For a more intellectual discussion of the issue, see Murray's current update.

The Garner Ted Armstrong television broadcast this week offered The Dead, Awake or Asleep, and When I Die— It brought in **525 requests with two hundred thirty two first time respondents**. I've got a funny story. We had a man call in during the program this week and request the material. (He'd called in several times before, presumably had seen the program many times and received some of our literature.) He apparently went back to watching the program after he called, and realized that we teach (what the Bible says) that the dead are asleep and await the resurrection. That did it! He was furious when he called right back, demanded his name be removed from our list, and proceeded to give the receptionist an angry earful.

I do hope he continued to watch, as Dad gave more than ample Biblical proof of this widely misunderstood concept. That's it for this week.

Hope you all have a great Sabbath!

Mark Armstrong