



FRIDAYFAX 2.0

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Kingdom-focussed E-Mail news-bulletin with inspiring reports of God at work around the world, with special emphasis on the current global revolutionary reformation of Church and Missions. **Editor:** Wolfgang Simson. Subscription: €30/ US-\$ 40 per year. Freitagssfax 2.0, PO Box 1248, D-79397 Kandern, Germany. Email info@ffax2.com; website: www.ffax2.com. © Dawn Europa e.V.; 22 issues per year, available in English and German.

2007: More Storms, idols shot down, vital alignments

A new year means also new challenges - and new opportunities. And it means many choices that lie ahead for all of us. Many prophetic voices are getting louder and louder to warn us of a false way – and challenge us to properly discern the times so as to not end up in dead end roads and false paths.

We believe that individual Christians, Churches, networks of churches, ministries and in fact global Christianity are all standing at a historic crossroad, as depicted in the modern rendering of the famous picture about the Two Ways. The decisions we are taking individually and corporately will greatly determine the outcome – and where we will be at the end of the year.

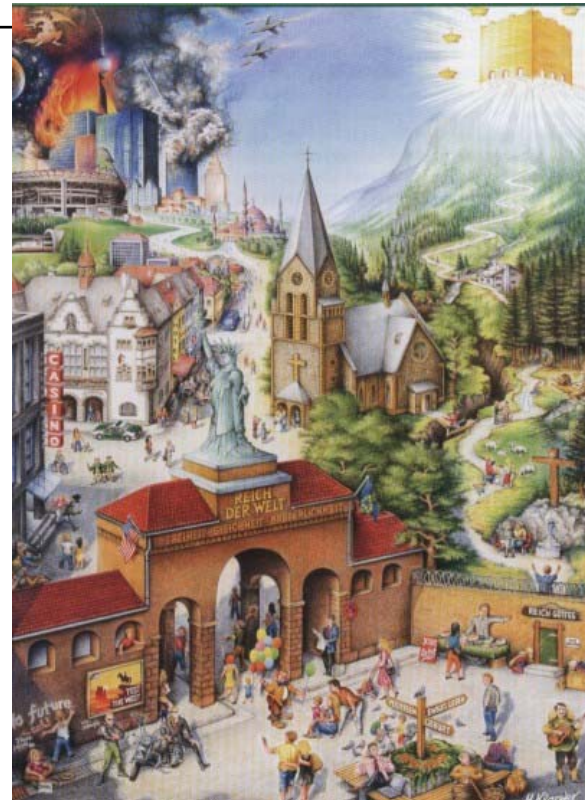
As it is the habit of many followers of Christ at the end of a year, we also took the time to retreat, in order to reflect on the past and discern the future. This is what we feel we have heard from God as the key elements of the year 2007: more storms, idols shot down, vital alignments. It was as if he was saying: I am shaking heaven and earth, and storms will be one of the ways I am doing this. Financial storms, moral storms, real storms. Let us make sure our houses are built not on sand but the rock, “when the winds blow and beat against the house” (Mt 7:24-27). This is much more easily said than done, as the core of building our house on the rock is childlike obedience: to put into practice what God the father is saying to us, nothing less. It is not enough to be in an exciting spiritual environment, to discover fascinating new spiritual insights, visit great conferences or read –or write – new books. Output counts, not imput.

What would happen if truly God would start shooting down our idols – not the idols of the world, the DOW JONES, the World Trade Center, the stock market, money itself, Michael Jackson – but idols that are rampant amongst *Christians*? The idols that literally rule our hearts and minds? My friend John Mulinde, a prophetic voice from Uganda, has, for years, warned Christians to rid themselves of their “idols of the heart”. As an idol is something that takes the place of God in our life, we just have to look for things other than God, concepts, organizations, churches, theologies, salaries, that promise us identity, security, and destiny, something that only God can – and should – give us. If we bind and tie ourselves to anything but God, we will end up being devoured by what we have tied ourselves to. Ezekiel warns Israel not to prostitute before lifeless idols (Ezekiel 43:7.9), but to be holy and separated unto God. Most interestingly, an idol is not necessarily a statue of Buddha at our doorsteps, a Swastika in our garage or a sign saying “Football is my life” on our car, but the inner reasons we harbour in our heart to tie ourselves to an idol. The silly way we convince ourselves that our idol is right, and that in fact God himself probably put it there!

One of the most worshiped idols amongst Christians in the world today is **pathological individualism**, that amazing and stifling captivity of our mind that emerges as we say:

“I will have it my way”

Most Christians –and many Not-Yet Christians - are familiar with the story of the two ways: “Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Mt 7:13-14). However, it is a discovery for many that as they decide to follow Jesus, they – again! - have to make a deliberate choice between two ways of following Jesus.



Do they follow Jesus, or do they follow *the way that they think they should follow Jesus*? If they chose option two, it is absolutely crucial what they think, because this – their own thinking patterns - actually determines their course, not Jesus. A person that places a higher value to his own thinking than to God and his Kingdom is not only a good child of the enlightenment, according to Immanuel Kant “man's emergence from self imposed immaturity”, but a Christian version of an “Amalekite” – literally those that have no king. And as you know, historically Amalekites have been a pain in the neck for Israel; and the probably still are. An individualist is someone that is a king only to himself, our modern word for “idiot” (Greek *idiotes* means a person only concerned about himself and not the community), our word for rebels and self-absorbed stand-alone persons. Pathological individualism magnifies individual liberty against external authority. The Catholic Encyclopaedia, interestingly, in defining true individualists, names **evangelical Protestants** in the same breath as **philosophical anarchists**, and this may or may not make a point. One of the ways we can spot an idol are *the ways that legitimize it*. If we can only somehow get our idol sanctioned, blessed and endorsed by God, it becomes a God-ordained idol, and then, we feel, are safe. But that is a delusion of the highest magnitude. One of the symptoms of the idol of (pathological) individualism is that we make a

Pact with our plan.

Most Christians make a covenant with their own plan. A binding agreement with their own dreams, visions, and goals. And a pact with their chosen paths and ways, methodologies and strategies, to see that plan fulfilled, no matter what, no matter - God. For this, we join churches, organizations, or organize ourselves, or focus on methods as ways to reach a goal. Why, otherwise, would one be a member of an organization, anyway, if we don't believe this is the best way to achieve our life's goal? The structure that our plan is taking, the organized ways we are carrying it out, is the horse on which we bet that shall win the race. However, Gods ways are not human's ways. And human ways that may convince us don't necessarily work for God. God, as Bible teacher Dr. De Haan used to say, only uses broken things. We humans *discard* broken things, to buy new and flashy ones. God is different. He discards the unbroken, flashy, and uses what has allowed itself to be broken. Paul speaks of the way of the flesh and the way of the spirit. And so we might make a simple test to find out if our ways and Gods ways are in-sync, aligned, congruent, or if our individual plan is nothing but a scheme, a thought, a mindset, a castle built on clouds, a house built on sand.

This is the test: when a person comes to you to challenge your setup, your financial plans, your organizational arrangement, your very own pet theology (I know, only *others* have it...), what is your initial reaction?

Do you feel peace about it, smile and bless that person for testing your healthy allegiance with the King? Or does something rise up in you to defend your position, to attack the attacker, or, if you think have the position to do it, to ostracize, excommunicate, cut off such a person – or at least ignore him? In the second case, you are infected, and need to get rid of an idol, and quickly.

If God comes to you this year in his storms and shakes everything, shoots at your idols, how will we respond? If God were to come to you today to say: “Leave behind your own, self designed life, your plans and strategies, and join my plan, my strategies, my ways”, then we are faced with a very serious and monumental decision: will I, or will I not? If this confronts an idol in us, an “idol of our heart”, a voice from our own heart will be heard, legitimizing and blessing the original concept. That's the idol talking, the thing that dares take the place of God in blessing and legitimizing itself, by providing “logical reasons” for our *heretical* life. My friend Dr. Victor Choudhrie calls this in all Un-Indian directness “the goat”, that thing in our head that constantly cries: “Meeee, meeee, meeee”, repeatedly legitimizing what God simply does not legitimize. And so we need to get rid of this “goat”. This is also the medical reason for contracting a “stiff neck”: the traumatized person that absolutely has heard Gods ways and wilfully, decidedly, ignores them and enters his or her own path. This is where the heart hardens, the neck stiffens, and the conscience begins to die. And were we start living a lie – and the idol wins.

What is the alternative?

There are only two ways. The “apostolic way”, the way God sent us on, or the way onto which we ultimately send ourselves. And on whom the democratic majority of Christians might trod on, but not really forever. The alternative is to live a life that can say like Jesus: “The world must learn that I do exactly what my father has commanded me” (John 14:31); a life that says “not my will, but your will shall be done”. A life that puts the principles of the Kingdom above our individualism, and crucifies it. A life that emerges from the self-imposed maturity that has become the founding dream of the enlightened West. A life that practices childlike obedience, individually as well as corporately. This may lead us onto roads that people will not understand, and if they understand, they might not like it. Our donors might not like it. But it will lead to life. And it will not be shaken, whatever the storms say, and how many bullets ever will come our way this year. Which way are you on right now, and which way should you take?