

A Nation Under God's Escalating Judgment

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Bible Text: 2 Chronicles 36:15-16

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Our Scripture reading this evening is from Deuteronomy 28 verses 20 through 48.

The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed. The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth. And thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away. The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The LORD shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart. And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be violently taken away from before thy face, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them. Thy sons and thy daughters shall be given unto another people, and thine eyes shall look, and fail with longing for them all the day long: and there shall be no might in thine hand. The fruit of thy land, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up; and thou shalt be only oppressed and

crushed away: So that thou shalt be mad for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see. The LORD shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs, with a sore botch that cannot be healed, from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head. The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee. Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it. Thou shalt plant vineyards, and dress them, but shalt neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. Thou shalt have olive trees throughout all thy coasts, but thou shalt not anoint thyself with the oil; for thine olive shall cast his fruit. Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, but thou shalt not enjoy them; for they shall go into captivity. All thy trees and fruit of thy land shall the locust consume. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.

Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever. Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the LORD shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee.¹

Thus far the reading of God's holy Word.

Dear congregation, we have a problem, a serious problem, a national problem. One does not have to be a prophet to realize that we, as a nation, are making ourselves ripe for the judgment of God. And just as you have been reading in the papers how that the Bush administration is preparing this nation for potential bird flu epidemic, so we are called tonight to prepare ourselves and by extension this nation for the righteous judgment of the most high God.

And that means we need to ask several important questions. We need to ask: When does God come to judge a nation? And how does he do that? And what should we do to prepare for that?

Well, that is what we want to consider with you tonight from several texts in the Bible. I will read just two of them at the present time. The first is Deuteronomy 28:45 and 46.

¹ Deuteronomy 28:20-48.

Moreover all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue thee, and overtake thee, till thou be destroyed; because thou hearkenedst not unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded thee: And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.²

And the second, 2 Chronicles 36:15-16.

And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place: But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.³

Our theme then, tonight, is a nation under God's escalating judgment. Three thoughts. First, when does God judge a nation? Second, how does God judge a nation? And, third, what shall we do? A nation under God's escalating judgment: When does God judge a nation? How does he judge a nation and what shall we do?

All through the Bible from Genesis three to the closing pages of Revelation the theme of divine judgment, though not prolific is, nevertheless prominent. God tells us again and again that the ways of sin will bring divine judgment.

And so given our day and our nation and our need for prayer, informed, intelligent prayer, we today need to be like the men of Issachar who have understanding of the times. We need to understand who we are as a nation, where we are going, where we have come from. And we need to understand what will happen to us if we keep on going being the way that we are.

And that means we need to ask ourselves the questions in our points tonight. The first question is this. When does God come with his judgment, his judgment of wrath against a nation?

If you comb the Scriptures, I believe there are at least six things that the Bible has to teach us in response to this question. And the first is this. God judges a nation after it receives numerous unheeded warnings.

One thing is very obvious in the Bible and that is that God is a God who gravitates to mercy. He delights in mercy. He is not in a hurry to destroy people or nations, either individuals or whole territories. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God is patient.

² Deuteronomy 28:45-46.

³ 2 Chronicles 36:15-16.

1 Peter three verse 20 puts it so beautifully. It tells us that the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared. So for 100 or 100 plus years, you see, God is patient until the ark is finished. He is not quick to judge. His judgment is certain, but his judgment comes only after many warnings.

But isn't that exactly what God has done for our nation? Hasn't he sent us many warnings, many warnings also of late of Katrina and with the international effects of the tsunami and with the ongoing war in Iraq. What a warning we the most powerful nation on the earth not able to conquer in this particular area.

Truly God has sent us prophets. He sends us ministers. He sends us faithful ambassadors. This nation still has many good sound ministers. But so many are in very small churches. America as a whole is turning a deaf ear to the verbal proclamations of the Lord and to the warning signs given in the realm of nature.

Truly 2 Chronicles 36:15 is happening right now before our eyes.

“And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them [to the United States of America] by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people.”⁴

But we are mocking the messengers of God, rejecting the message, spurning the wooing of the Holy Spirit again and again. And God says his judgment will come. His judgment will come upon such a nation, such a nation will be beyond remedy, beyond remedy.

You look at our past, you think of those famous early ministers, names that should be household words among us, but they have largely been forgotten, I am afraid, men like, Peter Bulkley and Thomas Cobbett and John Cotton and Thomas Shepherd and Jonathan Edwards, great men of God who were intimately involved in the establishment of the original and the subsequent generations of the Puritan colonies, men that were faithful in proclaiming the Word of God.

Today when we seek to bring those same truths, they often fall on deaf ears. Every man does that which is right in his own eyes.

But, secondly, judgment comes upon a nation when that nation becomes morally depraved. That is very clear in the first six chapters of the book of Jeremiah, very depressing chapters to read about Israel's moral depravity. And the bottom line of those chapters is that Israel developed a calloused heart and an insensitivity to the things of God.

But perhaps Paul describes it best, what moral depravity is in Ephesians four. He says in verse 18, “Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”⁵

⁴ 2 Chronicles 36:15.

⁵ Ephesians 4:18.

Then he goes on in verse 19 and he says because they had become callous they had given themselves over to sensuality. By giving themselves over he names they made it a part of their daily life. They don't think anything of sexual sin.

He says, "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."⁶

See, when a nation reaches that point, God's judgment is irrevocable. And so we need to ask the question tonight. We need to be honest. Has our nation reached that point? Where are we in the life of America?

In 33 years we have killed 45 million unborn babies, 4000 a day, more in 12 hours or 14 hours than the number of our soldiers that have died in wars of Iraq and Afghanistan combined. We have killed more babies than the population of the entire nation of Canada. And we have done it "legally." I put that in quotes.

In 33 years by permission of the Supreme Court of America.

America today is spending 40 billion dollars, not million, billion dollars a year on pornography, 30 billion dollars a year on alcohol, 20 billion dollars a year on drugs. ‘

Recently I read a study that concluded that there is 40 times as much child abuse in America today as there was 40 years ago. Crime is rampant in every large city. Few urban dwellers feel safe walking in the streets. Some people feel ill at ease in their own home. Sabbath desecration, swearing is the norm. Homosexuality is in considerable measure an accepted lifestyle. Immorality, impurity is a way of life. Adultery is accepted, even glamorized in the modern media. Have we not reached the point of moral depravity? We are saturated with physical, sexual sin.

America, have we reached the point of irrevocable judgment?

Then, thirdly, judgment comes upon a nation when that nation persecutes the people of God. Amos chapter one and two make that abundantly clear. Eight times in the first two chapters of Amos, eight times God says the same thing, but indicates it with a different group of people.

He says in chapter one verse three, "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron."⁷

Then in verse six, "For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."⁸

⁶ Ephesians 4:19.

⁷ Amos 1:3.

⁸ Amos 1:6.

And verse nine, “For three transgressions of Tyrus, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof.”⁹

And so on. And God doesn’t mean here that he is going to judge a nation when they have sinned four times. What he is saying is that there is a fullness in all these situations that have been reached, a fullness of saturation of sin where God says, “It is enough. And I will judge this nation. And by judging this nation I will persecute my people. The enemy will pull them behind carsts,” something like a harrowing machine, Amos says. Only they had spikes. They would like up the people and pull these carts with these rolling spikes over them to chop the people into pieces.

God says, “For three transgressions of Damascus and for four I will not turn away my punishment.”¹⁰

This judgment is irrevocable. This judgment is coming. And today we see the beginnings of this, too, in America, people suffering persecution for standing up for the name of God, a judge stripped of his judgeship, his legitimate credentials because he refused to move the 10 Commandments from his court room. Other people harassed, standing up for the name of God in church, in society, in the workplace.

A nation is judged by God when it persecutes the people of God.

Then, fourthly, God sends his judgment upon a nation when the ministry of his Word in that nation becomes corrupt and is watered down and teaches false doctrine that destroys faith.

That is what Jeremiah makes so plain in Jeremiah five. The prophet said, “Peace, peace when there is no peace.”¹¹

They preach messages that just made people feel good when God wanted the people to be convicted of sin.

Listen to what he says in Jeremiah 5:30-31.

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.¹²

Today in our land there is very little preaching on repentance, on the judgment of God, little preaching that the bloody atonement of Jesus Christ is our only hope for salvation. So much preaching today focuses on self help. It is reduced to the health and wealth

⁹ Amos 1:9.

¹⁰ Amos 1:3.

¹¹ Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11.

¹² Jeremiah 3:30-31.

gospel of prosperity. God wants to bless everyone. He wants to heal everyone. It is all grace, no law.

But, generally speaking, a nation reflects the message that is brought from the pulpits. The people are like the ministers. And when the ministers water down God's truth, the people water it down. And that is why in the land as a whole the people who claim to be Christians show very little difference in their lifestyle from the people who don't claim to be Christians. So few ministers dare to say, "There is only one way of salvation. There is only one bloody atonement. Jesus Christ is our only hope. You cannot better yourself by yourself. You cannot solve your problems anywhere else than at the cross."

All the religion of secular humanism, propounded from millions of pulpits today is an abomination to God. God will judge a nation when false prophesying prevails.

And our nation is so susceptible to it. It is embarrassing. It is shaming. Think of all the hullabaloo right now about the so called, the *Da Vinci Code* coming out in May 19 in theaters all across this country. Four million people, or 40 million, I am not sure which, have bought the book. Millions of people, anyway, reading this trash that mixes fact and fiction, teaches bizarre things like Jesus married Mary, takes away the divinity of Jesus. It is heresy. It is blasphemy and yet there is people in Christian churches all across the country reading this book, so blinded, so ignorant, so vulnerable.

And a lot of it lies at the door of the pastors because they are not teaching the people faithfully so that people can latch on to some Gnostic document and now go to see the movie. And people will be talking about it and it will undermine the faith of many. Is not God's judgment upon a nation in which truth is taken so lightly?

A couple of months ago they so called discovered the gospel of Judas, brought it back to the foreground. Judas, the said, Judas Iscariot, blasphemy, was the favorite disciple of Jesus and Jesus set him up to it, to betray him. That is the theme of this gospel. There are people all across this country believing that, not understanding that already in the ancient church this document had been found and discarded as worthless, as a fraud.

People are so gullible, so blind. That is part of God's judgment upon us already. And that is why we belong to a church that is solidly reformed and biblical. We have such a responsibility to grasp the doctrines of grace and of faith and to propound them and to live them, to spread them abroad throughout he earth.

Fifthly, God's judgment will come upon a nation when it turns away from God. We read in Jeremiah two verse 19, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts."¹³

¹³ Jeremiah 2:19.

See, God is saying, "When a nation turns away from me and ceases to fear me and removes all traces of me from society, that nation makes itself ripe for the irrevocable judgment of God."

And so what do we do in this nation? Knowing these things, what do we do?

Well, we have decided we don't want the Bible reading and prayer in the public schools. In some cases we have even said no one can pray at a public graduation. We don't want the 10 Commandments hanging on the walls of our court rooms. We have made it difficult for our governmental leaders, even people like President Bush who declares a fervent, private love for the Lord Jesus Christ, he hardly dares to mention the name of Christ because he will be mincemeat in the hands of all the newspaper people and the magazine editorials. So he says as much as he can, supposedly and talks about God, but can hardly name Jesus.

What have we done with the name of God? People can get sued for talking to others about the value of their souls in the work place on lunch hour. Bosses... maybe you have had a boss tell you, "You need to leave your faith at home."

You see, God has to be left out in civic affairs. God has to be left out. We have become a nation that has lost for the most part the fear of God.

Yes, we still have 45 percent of our people that attend church. That is quite remarkable, actually, considering that Europe has eight percent. But they are only one step behind the Europeans, one generation.

We are following in their footsteps.

Now we have got organizations in this country that are committed to the removal of every vestige of the name of Jesus Christ as Jehovah God from our society and they get tax exemption. They qualify as a religion.

What a shame. What a sham.

Or worse yet, instead of leaving God out, the most common uses of the name of the holy name of God is blasphemy and swearing rather than to use it with reverence.

There used to be a day when you could stop every single person you heard swear quite easily and correct them and admonish them in love. But today you know what it is like in the work sphere. You hear it so commonly you, yourself, hardly hear it anymore. It is just so common, so flippant, so casual. We profane the name of God with our tongue as a nation and by our actions of rebellion and disobedience. We add to that profanation.

Are we not ripe for the judgment of God?

And, finally, sixthly, a nation is positioning itself to come into God's judgment when there is no longer any other remedy left. That is what 2 Chronicles 36:16 says.

“But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.”¹⁴

God came with his goodness and the people didn't repent. God came with his wrath and the people didn't repent. God came with his judgments and the people didn't repent. And finally God said, “I will destroy my people and exile you to distant lands.”

America is making itself ripe for tragedy. God has done so much to us in his goodness, like no other nation, lavished upon us material benefits. Now he is coming in the last few years and he is warning us with solemn warnings. And whether it is our soldiers in Iraq, whether it is Katrina, whatever it is, we are not repenting.

Will we keep doing that until there is no remedy left?

Oh, how we should be at the forefront of things, how we should be that remnant in Sodom and Gomorrah that cries to heaven for mercy before God destroys this land.

Now that is when God judges a nation. The second question we need to ask is: How does he actually implement that when he does come to judge?

I have got several point here, too, and the first is this. God judges a nation by the principle of sowing and reaping. That is what Galatians six says.

“For whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”¹⁵

But that applies to nations as well. Listen to Jeremiah four verse 18.

“Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart[, O Israel].”¹⁶

Ezekiel seven is even stronger. Already in verse one we read that God says to Israel, “An end, an end is come upon thee.”

God is saying, “The judgment is already here.”

And then he continues in verse three. He says, “I will send mine anger upon thee, and will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense upon thee all thine abominations.”¹⁷

¹⁴ 2 Chronicles 36:16.

¹⁵ Galatians 6:7.

¹⁶ Jeremiah 4:18.

¹⁷ Ezekiel 7:3.

God is saying, “All your sins are boomerahging back on you. That is what they are doing. It is your own fault. You asked for it. And then when I called you to repentance you wouldn’t repent and now there is no remedy.”

Verse four.

“And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will recompense thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee.”¹⁸

Your own sins will do it to you.

What you sow, you will reap.

Do you realize that, congregation, also personally? That is a solemn thing. Do you realize that to the degree we imbibe moral depravity, to that very degree of intensity we will experience the wrath of God.

So when we murder more than a million unborn babies every year what will be the swing of the pendulum to the same intensity of God’s judgment? When we accept all kinds of sexual perversion as normal in America, what will be the intensity of God’s judgment? When we reach such a low state of moral affairs that we physically and sexually abuse our own children in America? What will be the pendulum swing in the other direction when it comes to the intensity of God’s judgment, when we soak ourselves in alcohol and become a nation of drug addicts? What will be the intensity of God’s judgment? When we become a people, a nation of entertainment fanatics, sports fanatics, computer fanatics, what will be the intensity of God’s judgment?

You see, you can’t alter the principle of Scripture. What a man sows, what a nation sows, that he shall reap.

And then, secondly, how does God judge a nation? He judges a nation according to the degree of light that nation has received. That is why he said in Matthew 11 to the places that he visited that it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Bethsaida and those other villages that he went and ministered the Word of God to.

Now if you think about the immorality and the sexual perversity of Sodom and Gomorrah and consider that God rained down upon them, literally, volcanic ash, fire and brimstone and destroyed them as an example to all civilizations to follow, can you imagine the audacity with America which is a Bible based people. Most people still have some remnant knowledge of the Bible from their background. Knowing this history is tolerating homosexuality and promoting it, saying it is a legitimate alternative lifestyle and mocking with Sodom and Gomorrah.

¹⁸ Ezekiel 7:4.

What kind of judgment will God have upon such a nation that knows better and has had such light as this nation has had?

Do you know that there is no nation on earth that has so many Bibles in their homes per person as America? There is no nation on earth right now that has had so much truth and so much light through so many forms of media as America. No nation with so many churches and so many church organizations and mission organizations. No nation with such potential to spread the gospel around the world.

We will be judged by the light of truth we have.

Thirdly, God judges a nation in a way that reveals his own presence.

See, when God comes in judgment he doesn't do that by accident. He doesn't hide himself in a corner.

Today, of course, there is professional people that have explanations for all of God's judgments. The scientist will almost always have a human explanation for everything. The psychiatrist and the psychologist will have some explanation for almost every kind of human behavior. So one says it is mother nature that sends Katrina. Another says it is his background that made him become a child molester. Few today look to the first and ultimate cause behind all the second causes and understand when divine judgment strikes. And yet God makes it so plain.

He says in Ezekiel seven, that same chapter I referred to several times, that, "Ye shall know..." This is the result of these things that God would send. "Ye shall know that I am the LORD that smiteth."¹⁹

"Because I will judge you."

So God reveals his presence. He revealed his presence in Katrina. It is no comfort to say it was mother nature that did it and God had nothing to do with it. There is no solution. There is no answer. There is no hope.

God has everything to do with it. It is the hand of God's judgment.

Fourthly, God judges a nation through a great variety of methods and the whole Bible is filled with this. I want to just stick for this point, to illustrate this point to what I read to you from Deuteronomy 28. There we read that some of God's judgment are the natural outcome of the sins committed and other judgments are the personal agent of judgments that God sends in particular situations for particular times.

But Deuteronomy 28 lists a whole catalog of methods that God uses, step by step, to call a nation to repentance.

¹⁹ Ezekiel 7:9.

We began at verse 20. There we see, first of all, that God sends into a nation that he is going to judge, he sends a state of confusion.

“The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do.”²⁰

How confused that nation is. Everything they try fails, contradicts, ends up vexing, cursing, rebuking. Isn't that what is happening today in America? How confused our nation is. The fastest growing religion in America today is the Assembly of God Churches, the Pentecostals, people who speak in tongues, things like that. No little... no solid doctrinal content to their teaching.

How sad, how tragic. Or think in secular society. Adoption agencies in most cities are often found within a few blocks of abortion clinics. And so we legalize the murder of the unborn and we prosecute those who kill the born and then we rave about discrimination.

Is there anything more confusing than that? Anything more confusing than discriminating and killing you before you get born, but then not being able to touch you after you get born? How confused we are.

We take the Bible and prayer out of the schools and then we wonder why many of our urban schools become drug infested jungles. We wonder why school teachers are threatened. We wonder where all the morality has gone when we take the 10 Commandments out.

I mean, a five year old could figure it out.

God sends confusion.

Secondly, Deuteronomy 28 says God sends diseases and plagues.

Verses 21 and 22.

The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew [et cetera].²¹

Oh, that doesn't mean that every single individual person that gets sick you say, “Well, he gets sick and she gets cancer, he gets cancer, this is the judgment of the Lord upon that particular person.”

²⁰ Deuteronomy 28:20.

²¹ Deuteronomy 28:21-22.

No, we may not do that. The whole book of Job teaches us that we may not do that. But we may look at the situation as a whole, we may look at the situation of AIDS in this country and cancer as a whole and heart attacks as a whole and our inability to find definitive cures for many or most of these things, we may look at that and say, "This is the hand of God upon this nation."

And then third, God judges a nation by sending natural calamities. That is what Deuteronomy 28 goes on to say in verses 23 and 24.

And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.²²

No rain, drought and all these kinds of disasters, droughts and tornadoes and hurricanes and typhoons and earthquakes, floods, not a single one over which we have total control. They are the judgments of God.

The fact that there were more hurricanes last year than ever before in our history is that just chance, mother nature? No, it is God speaking to America today.

"Repent and turn back to the Lord and stop indulging in all the wickedness and abomination in my sight."

How does God judge a nation? Fourthly, he allows them to be defeated in war.

Verse 25.

"The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them."²³

Could it be? I just ask the question. Could it be that God is using Iraq to humble America, at least to call us to be humble?

Or could it be he is using Iraq to punish us because we don't deserve to win that war?

Sometimes I feel sorry for our soldiers when I think about the fact that we have so little support in our own country and also about the fact that the fighting men on the battlefield who goes to war to defend this nation, a nation of leaders and people who for the most part are living in moral depravity. That man's position on the battlefield is greatly impaired when he is defending a nation that is forgetting God.

How God is humbling us. And yet the tragedy is we don't even realize it.

²² Deuteronomy 28:23-24.

²³ Deuteronomy 28:25.

And, fifthly, one of the ways that God judges a nation is by allowing violence and immorality to become rampant in that nation.

Verses 29 and 30.

And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee. Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her.²⁴

What a description of our society. It sounds like it is taken from a modern day women's magazine or something. This is it. This is what is going on today. Magazines not only for men, but also for women encouraging this kind of behavior.

You see, when God judges a nation he withdraws his hand of divine protection. He lets the violence and the wickedness of mankind loose. He releases it and allows man to live out what lives in the inner recesses of his heart, the wretched depravity.

How does God judge a nation? Sixthly, he judges it by allowing its economy to collapse.

Verses 43 and 44.

The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail.²⁵

That is a pretty graphic picture. You know, only a few decades ago we were the greatest creditor nation in the world, the United States of America. Today we are the greatest debtor nation, a nation enslaved by our debt. Our national debt of trillions is unconscionable and it is rooted in our sinful materialism.

Do you know that the average American family today has enough debt that they can never pay off for the rest of their lives? The average American family.

The truth of the matter is if God wanted to send economic collapse to America he could do so next week and the whole thing would collapse. I am not predicting anything. I am not a prophet, of course. But God will not allow a nation to remain prosperous that has given itself over to moral depravity because the name of God must be protected even among the heathen. That is what God says in his Word, in Jeremiah. If Israel is going to live like the heathen God he says, "I will collapse your economy. I will destroy you because I don't the heathen to think that they can sin with impunity and continue living on in prosperity.

²⁴ Deuteronomy 28:29-30.

²⁵ Deuteronomy 28:43-44.

Don't think all your money, your future is secure in physical things. Your security is not in the things we own. It is not in our property. It is not in our stocks and bonds. Our security must be in Jesus Christ alone, because all the rest of it can collapse any day.

And then, seventhly, finally, God sends his judgment upon the nation by taking his protective hand off of the families and allowing disharmony and disunity.

Verses 54 and 56.

“So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave.”²⁶

That sounds like... doesn't that sound like modern day?

Verse 56.

“The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter.”²⁷

Could you get anything that sounds more contemporary than that?

But, you see, that is just the natural fruit. When a nation determines to live in moral depravity, the things we hold dearest we will lose our grip on. That is what has happened in most of America today. We have lost our grip on the home. We have lost our grip on the family. We have lost our grip on the children. We are living in a society that is unraveling, where there is little respect for women, for men, for children, for human life.

How will God destroy a nation? He will destroy us from within. He will send judgment upon our homes. And when the home is gone and the family is gone, the church is gone and the nation is gone, God help us. God help America.

What shall we do?

What shall we do? I have four words for an answer, a biblical answer I trust. First word is conversion. My friend, if you are not saved you need to be saved. The judgment of God is coming upon this nation. And woe, woe to us if we are not saved.

You need to seek God's face in earnest now. You can't afford to wait. You must be born again. You must repent. You must believe the gospel. You must seek grace to commit your life to Jesus Christ, to submit to him as Lord and master. You must ask him to fill you with the Holy Spirit. Ask him to teach you how to pray for this nation. Ask him to make you part of the solution and not part of the problem.

²⁶ Deuteronomy 28:54.

²⁷ Deuteronomy 28:56.

A second word is commitment, commitment. We need to be committed to spiritual growth, to spiritual welfare, the welfare of our families, the welfare of this church and its ministries, the welfare of this nation, of being a force for good in the world at large.

And to be committed we have to be cleansed. We have to be cleansed from every backsliding way. We have to ask God that we would no longer sell our soul for the pottage of this world's entertainment and frivolities. We have to be committed to God and his Word. We don't have the time to throw away. When the world is perishing in sin, we don't have time to throw it away with this world's empty entertainment. And we certainly don't have the time to wander from church to church and wonder, "Shall I go to this church and that?"

No. We settle down. We make a commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ and we live our lives from within the church for the well being of the nation. Be committed. Oh, what a... how we suffer today from lack of commitment, from shallow commitment. People do that which is right in their own eyes.

And commitment spells repentance, repentance. We are called to see the grace of repentance that Bishop Hooper had when King Edward VI died as a young man of 16 or 18 years and he wrote in his diary, "Lord, the fact that King Edward died is my sin, my sin."

Friends, we are not distant spectators of our nation's calamities. We are the people. We are the citizens. We have sinned and we need to repent of that. We need to be like Ezra when he came back and he found the walls being rebuilt and he rejoiced and he offered sacrifices and then the leaders came and said, "But do you know that the people who have returned from Babylon are intermingling in their marriages and are mixing with worldly ungodly people?"

And Ezra sat down and he plucked his beard and he rent his mantle and he cried to the Lord for mercy and was all hopeless, helpless until the time of the evening sacrifice.

Ezra nine verse five.

And when he saw the evening sacrifice and he saw the blood dripping from the altar, pointing to the Messiah to come he said, "Then I arose and I repented and poured out my heart to the living God and I pleaded on that blood," and he wrestled with God, one man, one man. And God blessed that one man. You actually read at the beginning of the next chapter after that long beautiful prayer in Ezra nine, you read in Ezra 10, the beginning of that chapter:

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, [et cetera

said] We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives [et cetera] Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the [sin].²⁸

That man... I know what you think. You think the same thing I think.

“How can we stand? How can we stand for righteousness in a society gone mad with sin? How can we make a difference? Let’s just give up. Let’s go into our little conclaves and say it is no use.”

No. No. No, says the Word of God. The righteous must stand. The righteous must be committed. It is the only way it will ever happen. Otherwise there is no remedy for America at all. Otherwise our portion is only 2 Chronicles 36:16. “There is no remedy.”²⁹

When was the last greatest revival, great revival in this land? You know it. 1859. How did it begin? A few 100,000 people converted. Where did it begin? It began in New York City? Where? In a restaurant. How? Six men determined to pray together. The next day there was 10. A couple of weeks later there was 20. Then there were too many for the restaurant. They broke into two restaurants. Then five restaurants, 10 restaurants. Then all of the restaurants in New York City had men, business men coming at lunch time to pray together, to storm the mercy seat for revival in America. And it swept down the eastern seaboard and hit Philadelphia and went west and went to Chicago. And all the major cities of America were impacted with this wonderful revival and it began with six men.

Oh, God, do it again and let us be in the foreground and be committed to repentance and to prayer, praying for revival every day. Make a commitment tonight in your families, fathers, that every single day in family worship you will raise this nation before almighty God and plead for mercy and plead for revival. Plead for the fulfillment of 2 Chronicles 7:14.

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.”³⁰

What a promise. Let’s lay hold of it and lay it before God and say, “Lord, do as thou hast said for this dear, beloved country gone awry.”

Pray, pray, friends. Pray that conviction of sin, repentance, the fear of God, Christ centeredness, a sincere hallowing of God’s name would be restored to this land. Pray that men and women, young and old would be turned from vain pursuits and entertainments to the works of God. Pray for the saving work of the Spirit, for the

²⁸ Ezra 10:1-3.

²⁹ 2 Chronicles 36:16.

³⁰ 2 Chronicles 7:14.

genuine [?] for clear and sound and true conversions. Pray for the revival of historic, biblical Calvinism which insists that Christianity move beyond Church walls to embrace distinctively Christian world life view and Christian action in all areas of life including education and business and politics and everything. That is commitment.

The whole of life surrendered to Christ.

And that means involvement. It means involvement. It means investiture of our lives into the well being of this nation. It means that we stop being numb and insensitive to the things of God that contribute to the downfall of this nation.

You see, the problem with this country is not that there are not enough people who claim to be believers. The problem is believers in their lethargy are not burdened with the cause of God, not realizing that the welfare of this nation does not depend in the first place on what happens in Washington, DC. The welfare of this nation depends on what the people o God do. That would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah. No government bureaucracy.

It depends on what happens in our homes, what happens in our churches, our communities. It depends on informing and admonishing ourselves and each other relative to the burning issues of the day. It depends on informing our political leaders of the what the Bible says about issues. It depends even more on evangelizing our neighbors. It depends on going down to Mel Trotter mission and Guiding Light and evangelizing the poor and the have nots and your work associates and your neighbors next door. It depends on communicating with them as opportunities arise about the need for prayer, revival and repentance and truth. It depends on genuine, vital, godly Christian living in the midst of the public square.

And the Holy Spirit will bless those efforts when he burdens people, when he burdens people for the lost, when you feel the pain and the sorrow of unsaved souls, when you truly come to the point, friends, where you see every unconverted person as a mission field and you are burdened by it. God will bless America.

Do you love your freedom? Do you love your country? Are you grateful for our soldiers in Iraq? Do you love liberty? Oh, then turn to God and begin to intercede for the life of this dying nation. And put your money and your gifts and your mouth and your prayers where your heart is. Use it all to spread the gospel around this nation and around the world. Labor to send ministers around the world. Labor to send mission workers around the world. Labor to give of yourself to stem the tide of evil that is destined to lead to our ultimate destruction if we turn not to the prince of life.

The third word, very briefly now as I close. The third word is promises. We need to lay hold of God's gracious promises. Happily there is one more thing I need to tell you about how God judges a nation that I haven't mentioned yet and that is this, that he always saves a remnant of believers. That is biblical. He always does, even in Ezekiel, in those dark days.

He says in Ezekiel six:

In all your dwellingplaces the cities shall be laid waste, and the high places shall be desolate; that your altars may be laid waste and made desolate, and your idols may be broken and cease, and your images may be cut down, and your works may be abolished. And the slain shall fall in the midst of you, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries.³¹

Notice, these kinds of promises you have to get hold of and plead them. Plead them before God almighty. And say, “Lord, all through the world today America is known to be a Christian nation.”

When you travel around the world, that is true, isn't it? Every country you go to people know that many Americans come to church. They know about the southern Bible belt. They know that America is identified with the name of Jesus Christ. At the same time, of course, we have a schizophrenic reputation because we are also identified with pornography and all kinds of junk that comes out of America. But we can say to God, “Lord, help us to abolish these things and help us to restore thy great name in this land. Lord, this country is identified with thy name. What will I do with thy great name if this country is destroyed and annihilated?”

Plead with those promises like Moses did, like Joshua did, like great people in all ages have done.

And then the fourth and final word, thankfulness, thankfulness. Even as we plead and repent and wrestle, we have to be profoundly grateful to God for what he has given us, far more, far more than we ever deserve.

You know, in Deuteronomy 28, back in verses 45 and 46 where the Lord says these curses shall come upon you if you don't repent, till you be destroyed.

“And they shall be upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever.”³²

That means even the heathen nations will look at Israel and say, “You had such a God and you lived in such a way to deserve his destruction of you. You will be a sign and a wonder that you despised such blessings.”

But then comes this verse, verse 47.

“Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things.”³³

³¹ Ezekiel 6:6-8.

³² Deuteronomy 28:46.

³³ Deuteronomy 28:47.

You are going to throw away a land that flows with milk and honey and all kinds of spiritual privileges. Oh, Israel, what fools you are for not serving the Lord with joyfulness and gladness of heart.

That is what this nation needs, Christians who repent, but at the same time are joyful and whose faith is contagious, are joyful in the Lord, are filled with thankfulness of heart, who know the joy of his salvation. That is contagious.

So that the unsaved look at us and say, “There is something those people have at 540 Crescent we don’t have and we need it.”

Dear friends, that is the forward answer. And God, of course, has to bless all of this, but this is what we need: conversion, commitment, Christ centered promises and thankfulness. May God help us to serve him with gladness of heart. Amen.