

MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN

Most of you that have been here for awhile know that when we have a ***national*** holiday, I usually break away from whatever series I am preaching on and ***use the holiday*** as a theme for that particular message. So even though I started preaching from II Peter ***back in October***, I have an excuse for not being done with it yet—there have been a lot of holidays since then!

The ***next holiday***, of course, takes place this ***coming Thursday*** when we will be celebrating our 248th year as a nation. Being that ***the 4th of July*** didn't land close to a Sunday this year, I thought about "skipping it" and just continuing on in II Peter 3. I opted not to do that, though, for ***these 3*** reasons:

1. Someone forwarded me a very ***thought-provoking email*** about a month ago from Jim Schneider, Executive Director of VCY, with the subject: "We Have Forgotten God." I'll be sharing a few quotes from Abraham Lincoln that Jim Schneider shared in that email.
2. After reading that email, I remembered that I had copied a video link from American Pastor's Network entitled, "A Letter from God to America"—not to be confused with one that ***Paul Harvey*** wrote with a similar title. I had not listened to the video in the past but took the time to do so this week. I would encourage you to do the same. It's only 22 minutes in length and I have the link for you in the bulletin.
3. Yet a third reason I decided to preach ***on the state of our nation*** is because in II Peter 3 we have been talking about judgment—and America is certainly ripe for judgment!

In fact, I would argue that God is ***already judging us***—and we just don't recognize it as God's judgment! So this morning, we are going to look at some of what ***God says*** about judgment. I say ***some*** of what God says because there is a lot! I don't do this often, but I'm giving you the main points before we even get started. We're going to look at some ***announcements*** God makes about judgment...and the ***actions*** God performs in judgment...and ***attitudes*** we should ***not have*** in light of judgment.

The subject of judgment is a ***prevalent theme*** in the Bible—especially in the Old Testament. The word itself is used over 400 times, but there are numerous other examples where judgment takes place and the word itself does not appear in the text. Looking at 400 verses is obviously not possible, but I do want us to get a feel for just ***how often*** God talks about it. So we are going to look at a number of passages, mostly from the OT.

First, let's turn to Deuteronomy 29. Here we are going to focus on...

1. Announcements as to why God would bring judgment

In the way of a quick background, Deuteronomy is the last of the 5 books that Moses wrote. The children of Israel left Egypt 40 years earlier and Moses is now 120 years old. The people are about to enter the Promised Land, but Moses won't be going with them. In this "farewell address," Moses recaps the nation's history—and gives them warnings—from God—not to fall into idolatry. If they did, Moses warned, God would judge them.

Please follow along as I begin reading at verse 16.

¹⁶ (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by;

¹⁷ And ye have ***seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold***, which were among them:)

¹⁸ Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, ***to go and serve the gods of these nations***; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

¹⁹ And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

²⁰ ***The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.***

²¹ And the Lord shall **separate him unto evil** out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:

²² So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, **when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord hath laid upon it;**

²³ **And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:**

²⁴ Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto this land? **what meaneth the heat of this great anger?**

²⁵ Then men shall say, **Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:**

²⁶ **For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them:**

²⁷ And the **anger of the Lord was kindled against this land**, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:

²⁸ **And the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day."**

Why would God bring judgment upon the Promised Land? Because they forsook God and served other gods!

Now chapter 31, verses 16-18. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and **this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land**, whither they go to be among them, and **will forsake me**, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

¹⁷ **Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day**, and I will **forsake them**, and I will **hide my face** from them, and **they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them**; so that they will say in that day, **Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?**

¹⁸ And I **will surely hide my face** in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are **turned unto other gods."**

Again, we see God announcing that judgment would come upon His people—whom He calls "the apple of His eye"—because of their idolatry. God has **always** hated idolatry—and God **will always hate** idolatry! Is there any idolatry in the **United States**? Where do we start, right?

Here are **some excerpts** I found interesting from "A Letter from God to America:"

"I knocked down your biggest idols—the god of sports, entertainment, and selfish pursuits. In a moment, I knocked down your god of money and retirement accounts. I removed your god of security...I knocked down your god of independence by keeping you at home.... I destroyed your god of mobility by letting an unheard of virus disrupt your lives and the lives of the world like never before."

--Did losing these things during Covid get our attention? Yes!

--Did they humble us and get us to reconsider our ways? Sadly, I don't think so!

2. Actions God would take to bring judgment

What did God say **He would do** to His people if they forsook Him and served false gods? He said He would bring judgment on them, right? We saw some glimpses of that earlier, but let's jump ahead to chapter 32. Please follow along as I read verses 23-30.

²³ I will **heap mischiefs** upon them; I will **spend mine arrows** upon them.

²⁴ They shall be burnt **with hunger**, and devoured with **burning heat**, and with **bitter destruction**: I will also send the **teeth of beasts** upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.

²⁵ **The sword** without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

²⁶ I said, **I would scatter them** into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men:

²⁷ Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, **lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.**

²⁸ For they are a nation void of counsel, neither is there any understanding in them.

²⁹ O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!

³⁰ How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, **except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up?"**

Here are some more statements regarding God's judgment on His people.

I Kings 9:9 "And they shall answer, Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: **therefore hath the Lord brought upon them all this evil."**

II Chron 28:16-19 "At that time did king Ahaz **send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.** ¹⁷ For again the **Edomites had come and smitten Judah,** and carried away captives. ¹⁸ **The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.** ¹⁹ **For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel;** for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the Lord."

II Chron 33:9-11 "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem **to err,** and to do worse than the heathen, whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel. ¹⁰ **And the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken.** ¹¹ Wherefore **the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria,** which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon."

Jeremiah 12:7 "I have **forsaken mine house,** I have left mine heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of my soul into the hand of her enemies."

What did God's judgment against His people look like?

I just read through quite a list, but in a nutshell, it is this: **God lets the enemies of His people invade them... and destroy them...and scatter them!**

Some of you might be thinking, 'We get it, Pastor—but America isn't Israel and America hasn't replaced Israel! So how does this apply to us?'

Because God pronounces judgment **on all nations** that turn their back on Him—not just the nation of Israel! I found it interesting that **a politician**—not a preacher—stated that very thing in a speech to our nation **over 160 years** ago. The politician was **Abraham Lincoln**, and you can tell from his proclamation that he had **more Biblical insight** than a lot of so-called preachers do today!

Here's an excerpt of what he said on March 30, 1863, in a Proclamation Appointing a National Day of Humiliation, Fasting and Prayer. (As cited by Jim Schneider, "Have We Forgotten God," June 3, 2024)

"Lincoln wrote in part, And whereas it is **the duty of nations as well as of men,** to own their dependence upon **the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions,** in humble sorrow, yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon; and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history, **that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord."**

--Hard to imagine, isn't it? The President of the United States acknowledging that our nation is dependent upon the sovereign rule of God and—in light of that—we need to confess our sins in humble sorrow.

The proclamation continues: "And, insomuch as we know that, by His divine law, **nations like individuals are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world,** may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, **may be but a punishment, inflicted upon us, for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?"**

Lincoln's belief was that not only does the nation need to confess its sins to God, but...

--Nations are subject to judgment and punishment from God

--And that the Civil War—that killed more of our own people than WWI, WWII, Viet Nam, and Korea combined—was probably God's judgment on our nation for its sins!

Sadly, not only is that **not the mindset** of our current-day politicians—it is not the mindset of **God's people or preachers! In beliefs**, we claim to follow the Bible, but **in practice**, we are like the scoffers in II Peter 3 that claim nothing has changed since the creation of the world!

--But God judged the world with a flood...and overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah...and brought both Assyria and Babylon against His people.

--God allowed the Nazi Germany to destroy millions of Jews

--God has judged numerous nations and brought them low because of their sin

--And I believe God is currently judging us!

I mentioned that earlier, but how? How is God judging us right now?

Please turn to Romans 1. Let's start with verse 18. Notice the verb "is revealed." In the Greek, the tense is in the present, which means "is being revealed"—not was revealed in the past.

In other words, God's wrath—His judgment against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men—is **currently being revealed**. How? We can't spend a lot of time on this, but I want to quickly share with you how John MacArthur sees the progression of thought in this chapter.

It goes from a **sexual** revolution in vs 24...to a **homosexual** revolution in vss 26-27...to God giving them up to a **reprobate** mind in vs 28. What is a **reprobate** mind? According to MacArthur, it is a depraved mind—one that doesn't function properly. Isn't that what we are seeing today? Does a **properly functioning mind** really think a girl can be a boy—or that a boy can be a girl? A functioning, rational, properly working mind does not work that way!

So on one hand you can say these **sins of rebellion** against God's natural order are bringing God's judgment. On the other hand, though, you can make the argument that God's divine judgment is allowing people to think this way!

Is America ripe for judgment? Yes, it is!

Are we being judged right now? I believe we are!

Will our nation be judged in the future if we continue on this path? Yes, we will!

So what should our attitude be in light of coming judgment? Instead of looking at what **it should be**, we are going to look **first** at what **it shouldn't be!** **3. The attitudes we should not have in light of judgment**

Please turn now to Jeremiah 36. My guess is that some of you might not be familiar with this account. Although it happened **long ago**—in approximately 600 B.C., making it **2600 years ago**—the attitude displayed towards God's Word is **still happening today!**

--In vss 1-2, we see God speaking to Jeremiah and telling him to write down "all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations...."

--Vs 3. "It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that **they may return** every man from his evil way; that **I may forgive** their iniquity and their sin."

Isn't that a wonderful **glimpse into the heart of God?** 'I want them to hear of the evil that I have planned...so that they stop doing the evil that they are doing...so I can forgive them!

--In vs 4, the words are written and since Jeremiah can't go into the temple for some reason, he asks Baruch to go to the Lord's house (vs 6) and read the words to the people.

--In vs 7, Jeremiah has the same desire that God does: "It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will **return every one from his evil way**: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people."

--In vs 8, Baruch reads "the words of the LORD in the LORD's house."

--Sometime later, a man named Michaiah (vs 11) hears the words from God that Baruch read and told some of the king's princes

--In vs 14, the princes want to hear the words themselves, so they call for Baruch to come and read to them. Now look at vs 16. What was **their** attitude? They **feared!**

--In vs 20, we see the princes telling the king what had been read to them from the scroll that Baruch had. --In the mid of vs 21, we see that Jehudi reads God's warnings in the ears of the princes and the king.

--Now vss 23-24. Quite a picture, isn't it? God is planning judgment because of their wickedness. He warns them—in writing—in hopes that they will turn from their wicked ways so He can withhold judgment.

What is their response? **Burn up** what was written against them!

That works, right? If you don't like what God says, burn it—or ignore it—and it will go away, right?

That doesn't make God's judgment go away, does it? What was God's response to this king's arrogance and disrespect toward God's Word? Look at vs 29. God, in essence, is saying, 'Why are you questioning the judgment that I have declared upon this land and people?'

--In vs 30, God declares **judgment on this king!** Not only will he fail to have a son sit on the throne, his dead body will not be buried. It will lay out in the open!

--Now vs 31. Notice how the verse ends: "but they hearkened not."

So what's the attitude that God does want us to have? We already know, don't we?

--Instead of pride, God desires humility

Numerous places in God's Word emphasize that, but I was really struck by God's heart as seen through the prophet Jeremiah. Please turn to Jeremiah 13:15-17.

"Hear ye, and give ear; **be not proud**: for the Lord hath spoken.

¹⁶ Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

¹⁷ **But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride**; and mine eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive."

We are not "the Lord's flock" per se, which in reality makes us **more a subject** of God's judgment.

--What's in store for our country? I don't know for sure because the Bible doesn't specifically talk about the United States of America like it does other countries!

--But I do know this: God judges sin—and we have left Him!

So what would God have **us do** in light of what we've heard this morning?

--Instead of ignoring God's Word, He wants us to read it—and see our sins—and confess and forsake them.

--Instead of pursuing our pleasure and our kingdom He wants us to pursue His

--Instead of serving the "gods" of our land—entertainment, money, pleasure—He wants us to serve Him

--And He wants us to pray to Him and depend on Him—not our government!

Ezekiel 22:30 "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none."