

This article is reprinted from March 2012. We feel it is more relevant today than it has ever been and needs to be read again.

THE ANGER AND JUDGMENT OF GOD

Much of our Christian thinking and expression is one sided. We speak often of “the goodness of God” but seldom of “the wrath and anger” of God. Our songs and hymns are filled with references to His kindness, grace, love and mercy but never of His severity, yet Paul insisted we “behold therefore the goodness and severity of God” (Rom.11:22). William Page in *the Lordship of Jesus Christ* describes the anger of God as “a fact. More than that, it is a fact that vitally concerns us. ‘You were angry with me’ (Isa. 12:1). God’s anger is not a smoldering emotion within Himself. His anger is direct and directed at us...If God did not feel anger at the sin He sees in the world, He would not be righteous...His anger is toward those who have tampered with His handiwork, frustrated His plans, and ruined His creation. God’s anger has four qualities which are often lacking in human anger. His anger is equaled by His grief. His anger is impartial. God’s anger is also inescapable, and always compatible with all His other qualities.” The judgment of God is always a result of His anger. Sin and disobedience always brings judgment and wrath as a result of God’s anger. Israel is an example of this. When Israel sinned the response was: “Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against His people and He abhorred His inheritance.” Their judgment was: “Then He gave them into the hand of the nations, and those who hated them ruled over them...and so they sank down in their iniquity” (Psalm 106:40-43). The judgment of God upon Israel in the wilderness is seen to be a result of His anger: “For who provoked Him when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt led by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?” (Heb. 3:16-18). Paul makes the anger of God and His judgment immediately applicable, not only to the Corinthians but to us: “Now these things happened as examples for us” (I Cor. 10:6). He then lists the cause of God’s anger and judgment: idolatry, immorality, impatience with God and grumbling (I Cor. 10:7-9), sins as common today as in Israel and Corinth.

A word that seems to sum up both the anger and the judgment of God is the word “wrath”. Paul speaks of “the day wrath” (Rom. 2:5, 8; 5:9; 9:22) which seems to point to the final day of judgment. When Paul faced the heathen philosophers in Athens he stated: “Men everywhere should repent because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). Peter stated: “...this is the One who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead” (Acts 10:42). The eternal judgment day of all men has been “fixed” and “will come just like a thief in the night” (I Thess. 5:2). The Psalmist declared: “He will judge the people with equity...for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness” (Psalm 96: 10, 13). One fact about the coming day of God’s judgment that is overlooked and misunderstood by many Christians is the fact that there is a

difference in the judgment of Christians and the judgment of the unrighteous on the last day. Jesus said: “I say unto you he who hears my word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24). God’s people will not be judged for their sin at the last judgment, for God has already judged and punished them in the death of Christ on the cross. Jesus became our substitute and suffered the full penalty of our guilt; “the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin” (I John 1:7) and “surely our grief’s he himself bore and our sorrows he carried...he was pierced through for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities...the Lord laid all our iniquities upon him” (Isaiah 53:4-6). God will not exact payment for what Christ paid for when “he himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness” (I Peter 2:24). However, in writing to the Christians in Corinth Paul stated: “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for the deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (II Cor. 5:10). A parallel passage is I Corinthians 3:11-15: “No man builds upon the foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay straw, each man’s work will become evident, for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If any man’s work which he has built upon it remains he shall receive a reward. If a man’s work is burned up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, so as through fire.” The believer’s judgment is threefold: At the cross they were judged as a sinner while Jesus took their place and bore the punishment. Today we are judged as sons, being chastened by our Father when we need discipline (Heb. 12:4-8). At the judgment seat of Christ we will be judged as a servant, giving full account of our Christian service. This is for our reward, not to determine our destiny, yet we cannot rule out present manifestations of His wrath. Some other verses explicitly show His wrath to be a present reality. “For the wrath of God is (present tense) revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). This first reference proclaims God giving them up. The judgment that resulted in this unrighteousness was: “God gave them over to the lust of their hearts to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and served the creature rather than the Creator. For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for the women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire towards one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper” (Rom. 1:24-28). One of the severest judgments of God is to be given over to do as we please. Anders Nygren in his *Commentary on Romans* states: “A religion which lives on falsehood, a body which is defiled, a society in which hate and war are at home. These are the revelation of the wrath of God.” A second reference warns Christians concerning vengeance: “Never take your own re-

venge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God for it is written 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay' says the Lord" (Romans 12:19). When we take vengeance, we are taking something ourselves that belongs exclusively to God. Those who deserve punishment will be punished, and the wrath of God will be administered by the One whose exclusive right it is. Wrath belongs to God.

The third reference is in the context of civil authority. God holds governments of the nations and civil authorities accountable, and they will be subject to judgment and wrath as well as individuals. "For it (civil authority) is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid, for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil" (Rom. 13:4). Many laws are unfair and absurd, and we are prone to resist some of them, such as the speed limits, yet "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities, For there is no authority except from God and the existing authorities are established by God...Therefore, he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God"... (Rom. 13:1, 2). Some Christians may find this hard to receive and it's a truth that Christians may overlook, but we must realize God is using these authorities to judge the nation. In Scripture anytime God judged a nation the righteous suffered. One of the primary ways God judges nations is by the rulers He gives them. Few Christians realize the rulers we have are not given by ballot, but by God, and whether their rulership is a blessing or a curse, it comes from God. Note three verses from Proverbs 29: "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan" (ver. 2). "The king gives stability to the land by justice, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it" (ver. 4). "If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his ministers become wicked" (ver. 12). These passages certainly describe the government we are now living under. We need to realize this nation is subject to God's judgment just as much as any other nation in history. Why do we have so few honorable men and women to govern our nation? The answer to this question is found in the example of Israel. Isaiah gives us an example of what happens when a nation rebels against God. "Behold, the Lord God of hosts, removes from Jerusalem and Judah the supply and support, the whole supply of bread, and water"...first of all there is a shortage of food and water; then He takes away...."the mighty men of war, the judge and the prophet, the prudent, the ancient, the captain of fifty and the honorable man, and the counselor and the cunning artificer and the eloquent orator" (Isaiah 3:1-3). In answer to rebellion, God removes all men of integrity and competence to rule. God says: "I will give children to be their princes and capricious children will rule over them" (ver.4).

God's judgment is also administered through judges. Job 12:16, 17) states: "With Him are strength and sound wisdom, the misled and the misleader belong to Him. He makes counselors walk barefoot and makes fools of judges." Note: it is God who makes fools out of judges. Job 9:24 states further: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of the judges". America has been subjected to some of the most foolish judgments imaginable. God seems to have "covered their faces" to the extent they cannot determine right from wrong. God does not make fools of judges and cover their faces (blind their eyes) as judgment upon them alone but through them judgment comes upon the nation because the nation lives by the opinions and

edicts of their courts and judges. This is nowhere more obvious than in the matter of abortion. Concerning the comparable sin of Israel which was: they "sacrificed their sons and their daughter to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood" (Psalm 106:37. 38) God said: "My eye will have no pity upon you, nor shall I spare you, but I shall bring your ways upon you...I will repay you according to your ways, while your abominations are in your midst...Your doom has gone forth, the rod has budded, arrogance has blossomed." (Ezekiel 7:4, 9, 10). It is the judges in modern society that made all this legal by making laws instead of interpreting laws.

God's judgment is administered in the weather. Psalm 107:33, 34: "He turns rivers into a wilderness, and springs of water into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." God warned Israel what would happen if they disobeyed Him. How can it be any different with any other nation? Here are some of His warnings to Israel. "It shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe all His commandments and His statutes...The Lord will smite you with consumption and the fever, and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the word and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. And the heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it will come down on you until you are destroyed" (Deut. 28:15, 22-24).

Both the Old and New Testaments establishes the fact that God uses the weather as Judgment: Famine (Amos 4: 6) "*cleanness of teeth*" (if you have not had anything to eat your teeth don't get dirty). Earthquakes and fire (Isa. 29:6). Hail and frost, and lightning (Psalm 78:47, 48). The sword (war) famine and pestilence (Jer. 24:10). Most records of God using the weather as Judgment are found in the Old Testament and for the most part are clearly addressed to Israel. Do they really apply to nations today? Rousas Rushdoony in *the Institutes of Biblical Law* gives a striking answer to this question: Many passages are "clearly addressed to Israel. Just as clearly, the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to the disciples, and the Epistles to particular churches, but this does not limit their application to particular persons or churches addressed. Either the Word of God is a unity, and is God's word to all men, or it is not. To deny any part of Scripture is to deny all." In Jesus' promise of God's judgment upon Jerusalem, he predicts the use of weather as Judgment (Matt. 24:7; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:11). The weather used as judgment is portrayed in symbolism in the Book of Revelation: (6:1-13; 8:5, 7: 11:13).

Jim Nelson Black in *When Nations Die* has this comment: "Earthquakes, floods, fires, hurricanes, deadly winter storms, and a record number of tornadoes over the past years have aroused deep fears and concerns. Suddenly we wonder if the earth itself has turned against us." Is there any remedy for people when God judges a nation? We usually complain and blame the world, but God puts the responsibility for the healing of a nation in the hands of His people. "If I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence, and My people who are called by my name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways I will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and heal their land" (II Chronicles 7:13,14)