

How to Be Blessed Living in a Nation Under God's Judgment

God is Judging America

Ezekiel 9; Psalm 37

Sunday, November 23, 2008

I. Does God Judge Nations?

This is a passage that speaks about the judgment of God. And the point I would make is that God does judge nations.

We live in a culture that exalts the individual, and we tend to think that God only deals with us individually. In fact, it is not simply God and me, but it is me and God: me first, God second. That is the way we tend to think even within the Church: me and God.

And yet I submit to you that if you look at the Bible, that idea of the individual is foreign to a biblical concept. God deals with people in terms of families. He deals with people in terms of congregations. He deals with people in terms of ethnic groups and communities. He deals with people in terms of nations and cultures.

And we see here in Ezekiel nine—it is just prior to the fall of the city of Jerusalem, and I want you to see something because it is the biblical principle. Those whose hearts really belong to the Lord, those in the case of the Old Testament, not only whose bodies have experienced circumcision, but whose hearts have experienced circumcision, those who have fled to the Lord and repented of their sins—God protects them.

It isn't that God takes people out of the world and protects them that way. It is that God leaves us in the world and protects us while we are in the world.

Notice, for example, those in Ezekiel chapter nine who were spared. He says that it is those who—according to verse four: “And [he] said to him, ‘Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark (*) on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it’” (Ezekiel 9:4). It is people who look at the world around them as they see it falling under God's judgment, as they see it embracing perversion and corruption more and more, whose response is not simply one of anger or indignation, but of grief and lamentation before God.

In other words, there is a picture here of intercession. But the point I want to make is this. It isn't that we escape all the things that happen to people around us. It is that God preserves us. He puts a mark on us. He protects us from those things.

A. God Judged Israel in the Extreme Measure at Least Three Times: 722 B.C., 586 B.C. and A.D. 70.

Does God judge nations? Turn with me, if you will, to Matthew chapter 23. Look at Jesus' words starting in verse 29, Matthew chapter 23 starting at verse 29.

The year is AD 30. Within a generation the city will be destroyed as it had been earlier. In fact, history, it is interesting that the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC, by the Romans in AD 70, and it is interesting that the temple itself—there were two temples. The first temple was destroyed on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av. That is the first temple.

The second temple is also destroyed on the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, the same month, the same day, though many centuries apart.

And listen to these words spoken on the eve to the last generation of that nation as a nation. He says in verse 29:

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, “If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets” (Matthew 23:29-30).

You know, there is this echo of the hubris of history that is there.

We look back from historical distance and we say, “Well, if we had been living in 1840, we would not have held slaves like our ancestors did. Or if we had been living in Germany during the rise of the Third Reich, we would have never gone along with such a horrible thing.”

But that is the hubris of history. It is the hindsight of history that gives us that pride and says we would never do it. And Jesus is saying something to them. He is saying that history teaches us solidarity with history. We do face the consequences of what our ancestors have done. Make no mistake about it.

You know, in the Bible when people begin to repent and they get right with God, they repent not only from what they themselves have done, they repent for what their ancestors have done. Read those prayers of Israel in exile and they begin with saying, “Lord, have mercy.” And they begin to confess not only their own individual sins, but the corporate sins of the nation and the historical sins of the nation: “Our fathers did this,” and so on.

And so, Jesus picks up on that Old Testament point, and he says in verse 31, “So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered

the prophets” (Matthew 23:31). In other words, there is historical solidarity. You inherit from your parents not only lands and houses and money, but you also inherit spiritual things from your parents. And those spiritual things are both for your weal and your woe, for your blessing and for your judgment.

And so Jesus is saying in verse 31, “You testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets” (Matthew 23:31).

Now look at Jesus’ striking words because they echo words from the book of Genesis which we will see in a moment.

Verse 32. “Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!” (Matthew 23:32)

What is that saying? Listen. You have to understand something. God does not judge you and me in terms of heaven or hell based on our behavior. Everyone who is in hell is in hell because of his or her behavior. No one is in heaven, however, because of his or her behavior. We are in heaven when we die and we go there, not because of our behavior, but because of Christ’s behavior. Because he lived a perfect life as our substitute, actively obeying God’s law in our place and because he passively submitted to the decree of God being willing to die as our substitute in our place. He took your judgment. He took my judgment. He took the consequences of your sin and my sin on himself.

So, we go to heaven not because of how we live, but because of how Christ lived and died. But people go to hell because of how they lived.

But—and this is gigantic but—when God deals with people in this life, he deals with people in this life in a very striking way based on conduct, and he deals with ethnic groups based on conduct. He deals with congregations based on conduct. He deals with cultures based on conduct. He deals with nations based on conduct. And here we see this principle enunciated by Jesus in verse 32 and he says, “Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!” (Matthew 23:32)

It is as if there is a scale in view and over here is a nation doing good, a nation obeying the law of God, a nation following justice and those things. And over here in this side of the scale is a nation disobeying God, going its own way, committing acts of injustice. And so there is this scale in terms of God dealing with a nation. And notice what he is saying when he says, “Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers” (Matthew 23:32). He is saying that as the people committed sin, as they violated God’s covenant, as they went against the precepts and commandments of God, the scales were tilting. And he is saying, “The scales are

tilting ,and the nation is ripe for judgment.” And he says, in a sense, almost mocking them, “Go ahead. Fill it up.”

What happens when it filled up? It crashes down in judgment. When the scales get to a certain point the scale crashes and the judgment of God comes down. And that is what he is saying, then.

Verse 32, “Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!” (Matthew 23:32)

Then he goes on, verse 33. “You snakes! You brood of vipers!” (Matthew 23:33)

“How will you escape being condemned [to the lake of fire] to hell? Therefore I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town” (Matthew 23:33-34).

Now notice verse 35. “And so upon you” (Matthew 23:35) . . . Notice, this is a people group. Notice this is a generation. It is a group of people who are listening to Jesus talk. He is talking in the year AD 30. He is talking to a group of contemporaries and he is saying to them, what?

Verse 35. “And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barakiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar” (Matthew 23:35).

Now let me tell you what he is saying there in verse 35. The Bible of the Jewish people which they call the Tanakh (T-N-Ch), that is the Torah (T, תּוֹרָה), the Nevi'im (N, נְבִיאִים), and the Ketuvim (K, כְּתוּבִים), the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, has the same books in the Old Testament that you and I have in the Bible in the pews. Those same books are there. But the order that those books are there is different in the Hebrew Bible than it is in your Bible.

Whereas, in our Bible the order of those books begins with Genesis and ends with Malachi, the Hebrew Bible begins with Genesis, which is called Beresheeth (בְּרֵאשִׁית), and ends with 2 Chronicles. Now that is significant. It is significant that the Hebrew Bible is identical to the Bible you have in the pews in terms of the Old Testament. But it is significant that its division is different. There are books that are part of the Prophets, like Joshua, you wouldn't think of as being in that division that is there. And then in the Writings you do have some prophecies and you have 2 Chronicles, 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Now the significance of that is this. What he is saying is this. If you look at the Tanakh, if you look at the Old Testament—the only Bible they had at that time. When Jesus said these words, that was the whole Bible that God had given.

He said, “If you look at the Bible and you look at people who were faithful to God and were killed by people who belonged to God in an outward way, but whose hearts were estranged from him”—in other words, a true martyr, one whose blood cries out to God. The true martyr begins with Abel killed by his own brother, home schooled, home church, totally protected environment, okay. He is killed by his own brother. Abel is killed by Cain, and Abel’s blood cries out to God. And then the last martyrdom where a person that is killed by the people of God, you see, is in 2 Chronicles. And Zechariah’s blood cries out to God.

And so, he is saying, in effect, “Listen folks.” He said, “All of the murders of the martyrs who faithfully testified the truth from Genesis to Revelation,” you see, it is as if Jesus is saying that from Genesis to Revelation, “All of that that was recorded in the Bible,” he said, “You are going to answer for it.” Who? “You, the people I am talking to now, this generation,” he says, “This group of contemporaries, you are going to answer for it.”

Look at what he says there—verse 36. “I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36).

Now the amazing truth is that generation—and how long is a generation in the Bible? Anyone guess right off hand? Forty years. In exactly 40 years, literally 40 years from the day that Jesus utters these words, by that time Israel is under extreme devastation and by August of that year—this was in April—by August of that year, AD 70, 40 years, the nation as a nation ceased to exist.

“I tell you the truth,” he said,

“... All this will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate” (Matthew 23:36-38).

What is he talking about? He is talking about the temple. He is saying—and it is interesting. This morning I was reading Ezekiel 10. “The shekinah glory of God is departing from the temple,” he is saying. It is departing from the temple just as that shekinah glory of God in Ezekiel 10 departed. And, he says, “It is departing now.”

Why? It is because the purpose of the temple is about to be fulfilled. Before the week runs out, it is going to be fulfilled. And how? When Jesus is crucified, the

purpose of the temple comes to an end, and that is why God himself rips the veil of the temple from the top to the bottom, and the barrier between sinful man and a holy God is forever removed and man can have true communion with God without another priest but Jesus.

And so he is saying, “Now the house is left you desolate” (Matthew 23:38).

And listen to what he says. He says, “I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’” (Matthew 23:39). And he continues his discourse.

That is to the whole group, but then he and his disciples walk away. They begin an ascent up the Mount of Olives. The disciples point back to him and say, “Lord, you are talking about the temple of God. You don’t mean it, do you?”

And he says, “Look.” He said, “Not a stone is going to be left standing on top of another stone. This entire edifice is going to be destroyed.”

And do you know that it was literally, actually destroyed? Within 40 years not one stone of the temple is left. What’s left? What is the wailing wall? I have been to the wailing wall. The wailing wall is not the temple. The wailing wall is what is left of the foundation on which the temple was built, the foundation. When Herod the Great went into his massive program in 19 BC and began to remodel the temple that was rebuilt after the people of God returned from exile, that foundation is still there. The foundation stones are still in place. But the temple itself? Not one stone left on another.

If you look across the page, he says something there and he says in verse 34 of Matthew 24 he says—verse 34, “I tell you the truth,” he says, “this generation . . .” What? Not this group of people, but you folks, you contemporaries of mine. He says, “this generation,” he says,

“...Will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:34-35).

Now you say to me, “Well, yes, I see that God did deal with Israel as a nation and did at times bless them and judge them on other times, but that doesn’t mean that that still happens or that doesn’t mean that he deals with nations generally that way, does it?”

B. God Did not Give the Promised Land to Israel Until the Sins of its Inhabitants Were Filled up.

Turn with me, if you will, to Genesis chapter 15. In Genesis chapter 15 God is promising Abraham that his descendants are going to inherit the Promised Land. And he goes into a wonderful covenant there that we don't have time to look at today, but I want you to hear what is being said. And he tells Abraham in Genesis chapter 15 that his descendants are going to be in bondage in a foreign country for a season.

He says in verse 15, Genesis 15:15, "You, however, will go to your fathers in peace and be buried at a good old age" (Genesis 15:15). And then in verse 16, I want you to notice, here is the key word. "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here" (Genesis 15:16). Notice the last clause. Why was Israel unable to get the Promised Land when God told Abraham they would get it? In other words, why was Israel not able to get the Promised Land immediately when God told them?

And he says they are not going to be able to get it because certain things historically have got to happen first. "I can't take the land of the Canaanites and give it to your descendants lawfully and legally," in a sense, if you want to put it in those terms, "until the Canaanites have done something. It is only when the Canaanites have completed something in history that I can take their land and give it to your descendants."

I want you to look at this very carefully because here we have a basic principle in terms of how God deals with a people group. He says there in verse 16, "For the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16). In other words, the Amorites as clusters of people, the Amorites have been committing iniquity, have been violating the principles of God that every human being knows in his heart. If you are created in the image of God, you know certain things to be true. The Amorites have lived in indifference to the known truth of God. And he says, "As they continue on in this pattern of living," they are doing what? They are going to what? Do you remember Jesus' words to the contemporaries in AD 30 in Matthew 23? He said, "Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!" (Matthew 23:32) Remember that God deals with people groups and there is the scale of justice; blessing as good things flow, as justice flows, curse and judgment as a nation rejects truth and goes its own way. And so, notice what he says.

He said, "The Amorites are in trouble. The scales are tilted." He said, "But the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure" (Genesis 15:16).

What happened when the sin of the Amorites reached its full measure? The scales clashed down again and the judgment of God came. Beginning 1406 BC God

authorized turning the Canaanite civilization into (khay' - rem, חַרֵם). What does that mean, (khay' - rem, חַרֵם)?

Well, the Arabic harem kind of is related to that, and it is something that is set apart, a harem.

The Hebrew word (khay' - rem, חַרֵם) means what? It means to be set apart but devoted to destruction. And so, when the iniquity of the Amorites reached its full measure and the judgment of God came crashing down, God then devoted the entire Amorite, Canaanite civilization to destruction and he authorized the nation of Israel to commit genocide. I want you to understand that.

These are exceptional times. They are not normal times. No nation on the earth today has the authority to commit genocide. But make no mistake about it. You cannot read the Torah and the book of Joshua and fail to understand that God almighty commissioned Joshua ben Nun, Joshua the son of Nun, to commit genocide, to wipe out man, woman and child, the entire Canaanite civilization to be annihilated.

Why? Because they had filled up the measure of their iniquity.

And you see what God is saying there to Abram as he is making this covenant with him some hundreds of years before. He says, "I can't give it to your descendants yet in effect because the iniquity of the Amorites has not come to its full measure."

So what I want you to understand is that nations still are being judged

by God.

C. Certain Sins Bring Down the Judgment of God on a Nation:

1. Turning away from the True God;

Let's ask a question. Are there sins that call down the judgment of God on a nation? Turn with me, first of all, to the gospel of Luke chapter 12. I want you to see a principle, a very important principle.

And I say after a strict gospel message, as last week's message was a strict gospel message, I don't believe there is any more important message that I have preached in this pulpit than the message I am preaching to you now. It comes to me with a great burden.

Luke chapter 12 and beginning at verse 47, a principle, Luke 12:47. Listen to what he says here. In verse 47 he says:

“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:47-48).

What is the principle here? The principle, again, is not what? It is not whether you are going to go to heaven or hell. The question is how God deals with you and particularly how he deals with lost people in hell. Hell is going to be bad for everybody that goes there, but hell is worse for some people than for other people. It is. And here is the principle. And the principle is this. It is not, where are you? It is, where were you? It is not where, are you? It is, where were you? It is, what do you know? It is, what do you know? Where were you, as over against, where are you?

If you have been given a lot by God, God will require a lot of you. If God has not given you very much, God will not require much of you.

Now notice, what does it mean to be given much? Notice it has to do specifically with knowledge. Notice what he says there. He says in verse 47 the servant who knows his master’s will. Contrast that in verse 48 with the one who does not know. You see, knowing doesn’t make you better off. It makes you worse off.

There are people here this morning that will regret in hell that you ever came to church here. Why? Because I shudder before I enter the pulpit because I take very seriously the call to preach the Scripture to you and to speak it faithfully and be true to it and to try to hear from God in terms of the direction that he wants me to go in applying the Scripture.

If you sit under the ministry of the Word here regularly, you obtain knowledge. If you apply that knowledge, you are far better off. But if you spurn that knowledge, your judgment is more severe.

Now I want to throw out something to you about our country. The United States truly has been a nation blessed by God not only with fabulous wealth, with fabulous food and all kinds of things, but America was explicitly founded as a nation—people have been living here for thousands of years. I am talking about the founding of the American nation. Who founded the American nation?

Well, let’s look at it. The American nation was not founded in the southwestern United States. The American nation was founded along the Atlantic seaboard. It begins with two particular colonies the one that was Christian, but not set out explicitly to be Christian and it began to fail miserably when they were practicing

socialism until they began to understand that that doesn't work. It is a nice idea. It is just too bad it doesn't work because we are selfish by nature and we are selfish because that is the consequence of original sin. And so while socialism is a great idea—it is wonderful—it is so Christian as you look at it superficially—but it just doesn't work because that is not how people are.

And so, the colony there in Virginia begins to fail and it is revived, but it is nevertheless a Christian colony.

But the colony that begins in New England, first with the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock whose arrival we celebrate this coming week—in spite of the secularism of our culture, it is what it is really about. But what happens is, that as the Puritan migration begins in the 1630s, why are they coming? They are not coming to escape religious persecution—contrary to what you are taught—they are coming to establish an explicitly Christian republic.

I want to say that again. New England is not established . . . neither of these first two colonies is established to escape persecution as such, not at that time in England. They are established, in order—especially in New England—to establish a distinctively Christian republic. That is why it is established, a distinctively Christian republic, that the whole civil government would be established along the lines of biblical truth, that God's law would be the standard. It would be the foundation. That is why it is established.

But look at the entire Atlantic seaboard as you understand in the centuries that lead up to the establishment of the American republic. And what is it? I think of my ancestors who came to Charleston, South Carolina following the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. They came shortly after that in the next year. And so, they land at Charlestown and they prosper there because they are Christian people, those Huguenots. They want to what? They want to be part of a Christian civilization. They want to establish churches. They want to have Christian schools where they can teach their children about the Bible so their children can read the Bible for themselves.

The idea of a secular education in America is utter nonsense until well into the 20th century. Those schools are established so people can learn the Christian faith, can be taught Christian morality. That is the purpose of education. And so you see it in New England, the establishment of Christian republics: the Massachusetts Bay Colony, then Connecticut. Even Roger Williams with a slightly different bent in things in Rhode Island, and in Virginia and in South Carolina, with the Scottish and the Northern Irish who come and settle in North and South Carolina, the

Lutherans and the Quakers who settle in Pennsylvania, the Reformed Dutch who settle in New York, the Roman Catholics who settle in Maryland and so on. You can look at the entire eastern seaboard and you understand the basic truth.

Listen. Why is it as we come to this Thursday that we think about Thanksgiving? We thank God for the establishment of a Christian republic.

Was it perfect? No. Slavery is a great blight to us, a great blot on our history. But in spite of our sins, how we dealt sometimes with Native Americans, in spite of those things, we see what? We see people by and large who wanted to frame their lives according to Christian precepts.

Did they want to force their religion on others? No, but they did want others to live according to the principles of Scripture in terms of morality. And that is why what? Jewish people were welcomed.

It is interesting to me, for example—and I think of caricatures—I think where did the first United States Senator get elected who was Jewish, from what state? Does anyone know? Louisiana. And what part of the country has a Jewish secretary of state? When was the first secretary of state of a national entity on this continent? When was the first secretary of state who was Jewish? It was in the Confederate States of America. Did you know that? Did you know that the secretary of state for the Confederate States of America was a practicing Jewish man?

But what I am saying is that it wasn't the establishment of Christianity to persecute other people or to limit them in their religious practices, but it was that a Christian understanding of God's law would be the foundation of our philosophy of government, our philosophy of law.

For example, even in our Constitution, we have ensconced in there a Christian understanding of the Ten Commandments. Why? When a bill is passed by congress, and it goes to the President, he has a certain period of time to sign that bill. He can veto it or sign it. But there is a day that is exempted from the count and what day is it? Sunday (**). Sunday is the Christian day of worship in distinction from the Muslim day which is Friday and distinct from the Jewish day which is sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. So, there is a Christian foundation of law in government.

In the Northwest Ordinance passed in 1787, the same year that congress writes the Constitution, sends it down, the Northwest Ordinance—which is not about Oregon and Washington, but it is about places like Ohio, the new territories that are accepted into the United States—they want to set aside a certain part of land in all those new territories for one purpose. The purpose was for public schools. What

was the reason in the Northwest Ordinance for public schools? What did the US Congress say? The same US Congress that gives us the Constitution said that the reason for a public school is that religion—notice it is stated first—morality—state second—and knowledge is stated third (**). Why? Because if you don't have religion, you have no basis of morality. And if you don't have religion and morality, you have no basis for knowledge. It all falls apart.

So I want you to see in the history of the country, the country is founded to be a distinctively Christian republic allowing liberty of expression in various states. The reason the Constitution has the First Amendment in it is not to restrict the individual states in their understanding of the application of Christian principles to their state governments.

Thomas Jefferson explains that very eloquently wherein he says, "In matters of religion, I have left them with the state and church authorities" (****). You see, as over against the federal government which did not have a distinctively denominational perspective since various states had their distinctive perspectives.

What is the point here? The point is, as we look at this principle, is that to whom much is given, much will be required. When you realize that God has blessed America in an extraordinary way, when you live in modern-day America it is . . . you can hardly go to a town where you don't find many churches where you can choose of this stripe or that stripe. We still have gospel radio and gospel television. We have all of these incredible blessings.

What does that mean? It means that no nation is more liable to the judgment of God than the United States because to whom much is given, much will be required. Why did God give us all this food? To share with the world. Why did God give us this wealth? To help people who were poor. God doesn't give you, as an individual, wealth in order to squander it on your own lusts. He gives you wealth to invest in the needs of others to help them come up from where they are.

Do you understand then, to whom much is given much will be required? No nation in history, I submit to you, outside of Israel in the Old Testament, is more liable to the judgment of God than the United States of America.

What then are the things that call down God's judgment on a nation? Well, the first is given right here, and it is having the knowledge of God and turning aside from it, having the knowledge of God and turning aside from it.

Turn with me, if you will, briefly, to Romans chapter one. We are only going to skip through it. Romans chapter one verse 24. Look at what we are told here in Romans 1:24. We are told here that when a group of people—notice this isn't

about an individual. He says when a group of people turns aside from the knowledge of God that they have, he gives them over to something.

This isn't about the individual. This is about a group.

Verse 24: "Therefore God gave them over" (Romans 1:24) . . . Therefore why?

Well, you look back to verse 21.

"For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is for ever praised. Amen" (Romans 1:21-25).

What is he saying? He is saying that apostasy from God calls down the judgment of God. And what is one form of the judgment of God? It is to allow what is in you to come out.

May I say it again? It is to allow what is in you to come out. You need to understand: Every baby born on this planet since Adam and Eve sinned is born with the potential of sexual perversion. It doesn't mean that it grows up into all full-fledged development of it, but it is in there. You need to understand it.

Is there a genetic predisposition of these things? The answer is, yes. But God's grace restrains it. What happens when God withdraws his grace? Then that which is in man as a perversion of nature—but then naturally—he allows it to come to the surface in perversion. That is the thing you need to understand. And so what happens is this. It begins to become what? An epidemic. It isn't that two percent of a population, two out of 100 happen to be this way or one out of 10 is this way. Everybody is this way, dear ones. If you understand the Word of God, everybody is. It is just God's restraining hand does not allow it to grow up in full measure.

But what happens when God says, "Okay. You want to have it your way? Have it your way.

Here it is."

Look at the next verse, verse 26:

"Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one

another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done” (Romans 1:26-28).

So you understand something. Here is a cause of the judgment of God. And here is also an evidence of the judgment of God and what is it?

2. Openly Affirming Sexual Immorality;

It is openly affirming sexual immorality. It is a sin that calls down the judgment of God. All you have to do is read the 18th chapter of Genesis. God wiped out Sodom and Gomorrah because of what? Because there were homosexuals there? No, homosexuals don't call down the judgment of God. What calls down the judgment of God is when homosexuals come out of the closet and flaunt their sin and do it in public. That's what calls down the judgment of God.

Listen. There is an event that is about to happen. If it happens, the clock is going to tick much, much more quickly than it has been ticking, and it has to do with whether the judges will overturn the will of the people in California. Openly embracing sexual immorality brings down the judgment of God on a civilization.

3. Shedding Innocent Blood.

What else? Shedding innocent blood. Why did God judge Israel? Listen to these words for 2 Kings 24 verses three and four.

“Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive” (2 Kings 24:3-4).

So what are three sins that call down God's judgment on a nation? Rejection of the truth and of the true God, the embrace and affirmation of sexual perversion—in other words, gay pride—and the shedding of innocent blood.

January 22, 1973 -- Harry Blackmun, a magician, discovered something in the Constitution that no one had ever seen before. Why had they never seen it before? It is because it is not there. And he extrapolated out of something that is not even written in the Constitution that a woman has the right, under the Constitution, to

have an abortion. And there, by Harry Blackmun's writ, all of the laws of the states are substantially overturned.

Well, I want to tell you something about abortion. Abortion is the shedding of innocent blood. And I want you to understand something else. There is a series of court decisions that have brought God's judgment on America. I'll rattle them off for you, but two in particular stand out before this.

There is *Engel versus Vitale*, 1962. That was the outlawing of public prayer in the public schools. And there was *School District of Abington Township versus Schempp*, where school sponsored reading of the Bible is ruled unconstitutional.

So when I went to public school, the public schools were Christian schools for all practical purposes. It doesn't mean everybody was nice, but it did mean people learned. What happens when the court overturned the entire historical tradition of the American experiment and outlawed prayer and the reading of the Bible in the public schools? The public schools went into decline.

I attended a lecture about 10 years ago at Bolton High School. It was given for educators. I went. And it was a Dr. Kunjufu who gave the lecture, and he began to talk about the decline in education (Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu, author of such books as *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys*).

Did you realize the literacy rate among blacks was incredibly high in the 40s and the 50s and the early 60s? Did you know that? Did you know that the literacy rate among blacks today has plummeted? Do you understand why black males, in particular, begin to want to drop out of school in the third grade, in the fourth grade? He pointed that out and gave us some reasons.

But I want to submit something to you. This has nothing to do with race, black or white. It is true across the board with public schools. I grade papers. And I write papers. And I can tell you this, having proofread papers plenty of times. I will submit to you that my 1965 high school diploma from Myrtle Beach High School is virtually equivalent to two years of a college education today. I am telling you the truth. That is what has happened. America has had its school system cursed by God. You can't outlaw the Bible in a public institution. You can't ban the public recognition of God and fail to experience the curse of God.

Let me tell you. It is going to get worse in the school system in 2009 than we have ever seen it. It is going to get very bad.

And it is interesting to me—though the thing was already in motion—that in the wake of the Supreme Court decision, January 22, 1973, where congress just stood

by and had the power to overturn the courts, and we outlaw all state laws regarding abortion and begin to shed innocent blood. What did God do to us? He let us lose our first war.

Make no mistake about it. In April of 1975, when we left Saigon, we left American prisoners of war behind. We tucked our tails and ran. And the man that engineered that is still influencing government today, Henry Kissinger.

Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, because of their directions, lost that war. My brother was a graduate of the United States Air Force Academy, a major during that war, a B-52 pilot, and he told me again and again, and he brought up the issue with his commanders. Again and again and again the decisions of lower level generals and colonels were overturned by higher ups. We could have won that war. We could win the war in Iraq, but we are not. We are going to lose it. Why are we going to lose Iraq? We are going to lose Iraq for the same reason we lost Vietnam, and we lost it because of the curse of God on our leadership.

Fifty-eight thousand men died from your country and mine—I'm a patriot. I love my county.

Fifty-eight thousand of the best died for nothing! Do you know that? Your politicians betrayed

American soldiers and let them die for nothing! For nothing! For nothing! It is the judgment of God on a nation that refuses to acknowledge him as God, refuses to allow his Word to be read publicly and then authorizes the slaughtering of innocent babies.

Three things bring down the curse of God on a nation: Turning your back on God, the embrace of perversion publicly, praising it. What is the man who more than anyone else—I guess, though I am sure he is not responsible solely—whom we saw on the news with all of this terrible financial mess that is not going to get better? Yeah, the stock market is going to go up next week, but it is going down in 2009, big time. And who was it we saw on television again and again? A man who . . . when he was censured by the House of Representatives for allowing his gay partner to operate a gay prostitution ring out of his own home, turns his back in defiance and arrogance, and he is the one that is chairman of the Banking Committee of the Congress.

Am I for persecuting gays? Absolutely not. Keep your sexual life in the closet. I keep my sexual life in the closet. I am married. I love my wife. I am faithful to my wife. I don't believe in talking about what we do. Obviously we have done some things. We have five children.

The point I am making is: homosexuality doesn't bring God's judgment on a nation. It is the public flaunting of it in arrogance and pride that does it.

So those three things.

D. What are the signs that a nation is under the judgment of God?

1. Foolish, Immature Leaders;

What are the evidences? I want you to look quickly at two passages of Scripture. Look with me to Isaiah three for a moment. These are just further evidence of the judgment of God. Isaiah three.

What does God do when he judges a nation? Well, he sends boys to be their leaders. Isaiah three, verse four. He says, "I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them" (Isaiah 3:4).

When I think about the antics in the White House back during the Clinton administration and what he was doing in the oval office, what I see is an early post-pubescent male with raging hormones and no maturity, no sense of the dignity of the office. I see a child as president.

"I will make boys their officials; mere children will govern them. People will oppress each other—man against man, neighbor against neighbor. The young will rise up against the old, the base against the honorable" (Isaiah 3:4-5).

What does that mean? When children rule the home, disaster is coming.

God appointed men to be head of the home, women under them, and children under the man and the woman. But when the children rise up and demand discretionary income be spent this way or that—and Madison Avenue understands that—a nation is under God's judgment.

2. Flaunting Sexual Sin Openly and Proudly.

We see this same thing again. Look down at verse nine of Isaiah three, just reinforcing what you are seeing going on in New Orleans, Houston, San Francisco, major cities. Two weeks ago today in a 5,000 member church in Lansing, Michigan a group of Lesbians staged a demonstration outside. Their security officers went out to make sure the demonstrators didn't violate the property, but inside the real demonstration was about to happen. They were buried throughout the congregation. At a certain point they jumped up. They ran forward and a 5000-member church and nobody did anything. They put a big banner up across the back

and they began obscenely kissing each other from the pulpit area while others began to throw condoms on the men and women and children assembled to worship (November 9, 2008 Disruption at Mount Hope Church in Lansing, Michigan <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bash_Back>).

And listen to what he says, verse nine. “The look on their faces testifies against them; they parade their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it” (Isaiah 3:9). Notice that. What brought down God’s judgment on Sodom was not homosexuality. It was parading it. It was flaunting it. It was being proud of it. “They do not hide it. Woe to them! They have brought disaster upon themselves” (Isaiah 3:9).

3. The Curse Sections of Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28.

E. The Sealing takes place before judgment.

Turn back for a moment to Ezekiel nine and the thing that I want you to think about and go home and read in Ezekiel nine, is this: that prior to the judgment of God falling, God seals his own.

Ezekiel nine, where he says, “Go . . . put a mark (*) on . . . those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it” (Ezekiel 9:4).

You see, God seals his own. Look at Revelation chapter seven, verse three. Don’t turn there now but look it up later. God seals his own before judgment comes.

II. God has promised to take care of us and those under our care even when the world around us is crumbling under his judgment.

But I want to close by taking you through another passage. And I want you to turn there with me, and I want you to commit this afternoon to read this. In fact, I would like to ask you as your pastor that you read this every day up to Thanksgiving, Psalm 37. It is a terrific Psalm.

So, is America under the judgment of God? Absolutely. Is God’s judgment going to lighten up?

Not at all unless people repent *en masse* and there is a massive overthrow of *Roe versus Wade*, of *Lawrence et al versus Texas*, that’s when we overturned the sodomy law in 2003. Unless we overturn these things and repent it is going to get worse.

2008 is the year of collapse. Let me tell you. It is going to get a lot worse in 2009. If you think 2008 is bad, mark my words, especially if California goes a certain

way, mark these words. You will look back on 2008 as the good old days. I am telling you the truth. 2009 is going to get a lot worse.

So, what do you do when a nation is under the judgment of God and you live in it? Here is what you do. Psalm 37: Go with me verse by verse. We will skip over a bunch so you can read them privately:

“Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong; for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away” (Psalm 37:1-2).

What do you do when all hell is breaking loose around you? Verse three. “Trust in the LORD and do good” (Psalm 37:3). Keep doing good. Do what is right. “Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture” (Psalm 37:3).

Verse four is still true of Psalm 37, whether your nation is going to hell in a hand basket or God is prospering the nation. It is still true. The promises of God are not conditioned by the whims of nations or the foibles of politicians. Verse four is still true. “Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

Verse five is still true.

“Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn” (Psalm 37:5-6).

And so on.

Now listen to some last parts—we are going to skip over some—because they are very, very important and I don’t want to leave without them.

Verse 18, look at it with me. “The days of the blameless are known to the LORD, and their inheritance will endure for ever” (Psalm 37:18).

Now look at verse 19. You know, Psalm 34:19 says, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

Well, the 19th verse of Psalm 37 is a great promise, too. “In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty” (Psalm 37:19). Days of famine are coming to America. There were little hints of that in this past year. They are coming; real food shortages are coming to America. Mark those words. It is going to be bad. It is coming to America. Famine will come to America unless America repents.

I didn’t say famine would come to America. I said famine would come to America unless America repents. But it will come, and you will see it. Unless you are going

to have a heart attack in the next year or two, you are going to see it—a fatal one—you are going to see it.

But look at the promise of God. He says in verse 19, “In days of famine they will enjoy plenty” (Psalm 37:19).

Now sometimes that is because God speaks to people, applying the Word, and gives them wisdom and says, “Now is the time to stock up on rice and beans and other things that can last for 10 or 20 years if you store them right.”

You just—just because a group isn’t truly Christian, like the Mormons, doesn’t mean that everything that they teach is wrong. They tell their people always to have enough food for a year. That is not dumb. That is not dumb. Famine is coming to America unless people repent.

But listen. I’ve got a promise from God that says, “In times of disaster they will not wither” (Psalm 37:19).

Verse 21.

“The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously; those the LORD blesses will inherit the land, but those he curses will be cut off” (Psalm 37:21, 22).

Verse 23.

“If the LORD delights in a man’s way, he makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the LORD upholds him with his hand” (Psalm 37:23, 24).

Are you going to stumble? We are all going to stumble in 2009, big time. Stumbling is coming. But if you know Jesus, if you have fled to the Lord Jesus Christ, if you have cast yourself on God’s mercy, if you have put your trust in Jesus rather than in your own goodness, let me tell you. Here is the truth. Though you stumble, you won’t fall—utterly that is.

Why? Because the Lord will hold you with his hand.

And I close with a verse that is a favorite verse of mine. I quote it in prayer to God again and again and again because it is true, and you can take it to the bank, even banks being bought out by the Federal Reserve which are going to be all banks that continue to exist in America. Here it is: verse 25 and 26.

“I was young and now I am old [and I am], yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They are always generous and lend freely; their children will be blessed” (Psalm 37:25, 26).

Therein I stake my claim for the future. And I close this sermon asking you to ponder it, between now and Thanksgiving Day. I want you to have a troubled afternoon. I want you to have a troubled Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday. Why? I don't . . . I am not talking about external troubles. I am talking about disquietude in your spirit and a heart searching. God wants you to search your heart. He wants you to get a word from him about what he wants you to do about the future. Why? Because unless America repents, 2008 we will look back on as one of the golden times.

But you know what? Am I unhappy? Am I a pessimist? Absolutely not. I am a profoundly optimistic man because I have the promises of God, and I have tested those promises every day of my life since I first came to know Jesus 44 years ago. And his promises are still true today, and they will be true the rest of this year—and things will be okay the rest of this year. But in early 2009, things are going to start happening. You watch it. It is going to happen. Things are going to start happening. You better know the Word of God. You better get your heart right. You better begin to trust the promises of God. If you do, you will be all right.

But a last thing I leave you with is: Pray for your country because, “If my people, who are called by my name” (2 Chronicles 7:14) . . . That isn't the world. That's God's people “ . . . will humble themselves and pray and seek my face” (2 Chronicles 7:14) . . . Then confess their sins, God says he will heal us.

It is not too late for America, if we repent.

But listen—even if America doesn't repent, I am going to be all right.

Let's pray.

Lord, we thank you that we are going to be okay, that if we have been to Jesus for the cleansing power, if we are washed in the blood of the Lamb, we are going to be okay. We are going to be okay.

Lord, even in the midst of famine, your people will have enough, and we will have enough to share with others, Lord, because we don't base our confidence in Dow Jones or the Fed or our leaders, but in your promises, and they are better than gold. Thank you, Lord, that we can be an optimistic, cheerful, joyful people because of the Word of God, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

(*) This mark is a cross, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, ם, ם, written at the time of Ezekiel like the Latin letter, X. “The last letter of the Old Canaanite

alphabet was written in the shape of a St. Andrew's Cross; this amounted to a simple mark." This is behind the tradition of illiterate people's putting an "X" for their signature, as in Job 31:35. "יָדִי כִּי־אֶחָתּוּם here is my sign!; this is the signature consisting of a hand-written sign corresponding to the finger-nail impressions on clay tablets from Babylonia." (Koehler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds. (2000) *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. (Leiden: Brill), pp. 1693–1694.

(**) Article I, Section 7 (1787) of *The United States Constitution* states: "...If any Bill shall not be returned by the President within ten Days (Sundays excepted) after it shall have been presented to him, the same shall be a Law, in like Manner as if he had signed it . . . " What does this reference to Sunday in Article I, Section 7 mean? It is tantamount to what is commonly called a "Blue Law" and demonstrates that the framers of the Constitution did not have a non-theistic, humanistic, abstract concept of law.

(***) *The Northwest Ordinance*, (July 13, 1787) stated in Article 3: "Religion, morality, and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged." The United States Congress passed this ordinance during the time that the Constitutional Convention met (May 29 through September 17, 1787). This is the same Congress that approved the United States Constitution and sent it down to be ratified by the states.

(****) Thomas Jefferson, (1805), *Second Inaugural Address*: "In matters of religion I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the Constitution independent of the powers of the General Government. I have therefore undertaken on no occasion to prescribe the religious exercises suited to it, but have left them, as the Constitution found them, under the direction and discipline of the church or state authorities acknowledged by the several religious societies."