

When Does God Judge A Nation?

Every day the headlines get worse and the future bleaker. My immediate thought was: Is God judging America? Ascribing God's judgment to a person, event, or country can be a precarious endeavor. We live in a fallen world and therefore bad things sometimes happen just because of sinful human nature. However, nothing happens unless God allows it or He causes it to occur. In biblical times a prophet made it clear that God's judgment was coming. He gave the Canaanites 400 years to repent (they didn't). He gave the city of Nineveh 40 days to repent (they did). He told Abraham that if He could find just ten righteous men in Sodom and Gomorrah He wouldn't destroy it (He couldn't). He used the Babylonian Empire to carry out His judgment against a rebellious Israel who wasn't obeying His land Sabbath laws (Leviticus 25:1-8; Jeremiah 25:8-9,11,29:10; II Chronicles 36:20-21). This judgment resulted in the destruction of the Jews' first temple and led to their seventy-year captivity by the Babylonians. Of course the biggest judgment (aside from judging His Son Jesus Christ for our sins) God wrought was when He destroyed the earth with a flood. Are there biblical principles we can use to discern as to when events may be a judgment of God?

Sodom and Gomorrah

Why was Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed? The prophet Ezekiel gives us some reasons:

"49 Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50 And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw good." (Ezekiel 16:49-50)

According to this passage those cities were proud, gluttonous, lazy, and uncaring towards the poor. The other reason God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah was because of the abomination of their homosexual activity:

"22 Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination. 23 Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion. 24 Defile not ye yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out before you: 25 And the land is defiled: therefore I do visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants." (Leviticus 18:22-25)

The Book of Jude confirms their sexual immorality by going after "strange flesh":

"7 Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. 8 Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities." (Jude vss.7-8)

In the Leviticus passage God declared that these sins defiled the land the people were living on and thus removed them through His judgment from heaven. Therefore we could say that if a country is committing these types of behavior God will one day judge it.

Nineveh

The Bible doesn't specify why God was going to judge the city of Nineveh except to say they had committed wickedness:

"1 Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, 2 Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." (Jonah 1:1-2)

God was going to judge the Ninevites because of their wicked behavior but withheld it when they repented.

Canaanites

In the case of the Canaanites mentioned above, God told Abraham that his descendants would be captives in the land of Egypt until the Canaanites' sins had crossed the line of His judgment:

"13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." (Genesis 15:13-16)

This passage illustrates another principle of God's timing when it comes to judging a nation. He allowed the Canaanites to commit a certain amount of sins before He judged them. It would take another four hundred years before the people met that requirement.

Israel's Captivity

Israel had disregarded God's laws concerning the physical land of Israel. He had instructed the Jews to plant and harvest their crops for six straight years on the land but on the seventh year they were not to plant or harvest anything. They were to give the land a rest. The Jews did not obey this law for 490 years which meant that seventy land Sabbaths occurred without the land getting a rest. He told the Israelites that because they did not obey His laws they would be taken captive for seventy years as punishment for the seventy land Sabbaths they had ignored:

"7 Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt. 8 Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, 9 Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. 10 Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle. 11 And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years." (Jeremiah 25:7-11)

The Babylonians destroyed their first temple and took the Jews as captive for seventy years. This story reveals at least two principles of God's judgment upon a nation: The first is that if a country ignores His laws then they will be judged at some point. The second is that sometimes God's judgments have a time frame. In this case His judgment lasted seventy years after which He

brought the Jews back to their land.

The Flood

Lastly, God judged the world:

"5 And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. 7 And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them." (Genesis 6:5-7)

Again, God's judgment will come when the wickedness of a nation's behavior (or the world's behavior in this case) and the evilness of its reasoning crosses the line of God's tolerance.

Flaunting Sin

I want to mention one last biblical principle concerning the judgment of God. This has to do with flaunted or public sin. There are different attitudes people can have when they sin. Some are ashamed of their sins and try to hide them. Others flaunt their sins before man and God because they have no shame in committing them. All sin is destructive but God looks at the heart (I Samuel 16:7). There are some examples of people who committed public, flaunted sins. One is found in the Book of Numbers:

"28 And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sinneth ignorantly, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. 29 Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. 30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of the LORD, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. 32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35 And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. 36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses." (Numbers 15:28-36)

God had just given His laws to the children of Israel. In verse 31 of this passage God stated that those who despise His word are to be cut off from the land. One of the main laws He commanded them to observe was that they rest on the Sabbath and do no work. Here a man was out picking up firewood on the Sabbath in front of the whole camp of Israel. He was despising the word and laws of God in a very public manner. To stop this type of rebellious attitude God had the Israelites judge him immediately.

Another example of public sin occurred very early in the Church's history. The first Christians were eagerly bringing their donations to the disciples to help

finance their ministry. However, one couple decided they were going to try to deceive their fellow Christians:

“33 And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. 34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need...1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, 2 And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles’ feet. 3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. 5 And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. 6 And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. 7 And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. 8 And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. 9 Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. 10 Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. 11 And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.” (Acts 4:33-35; 5:1-11)

This couple wanted to look righteous in the eyes of their fellow believers so they lied to God and the Holy Spirit. God judged them and they both died. They had publicly flaunted their sin before their fellow Christians with a complete disregard for the truths of God. I believe the principle that judgment will result if we despise God’s word and thereby flaunt our sins before Him can be applied to nations as well. America has legalized the killing of unborn babies and is in the process of legally sanctioning homosexual marriages. Sexual immorality and divorce are quite pervasive in our culture. Shame is no longer part of the fabric of our society. We are flaunting our sins before the face of God and have been doing so for some time. How much longer will it be before God judges our public sins?

Is God judging America?

Has America met any of the criteria for receiving God’s judgment that is mentioned above? It has been four hundred years since the first English settlement was established at Jamestown Virginia in 1607. From that time God has prospered America immensely. However, America’s behavior throughout its “young” history has not always been godly. American Indians were massacred and their lands confiscated. Blacks were treated inhumanely during slavery. One could make the case that the Civil War was God’s judgment upon America because more than 600,000 Americans died. The population at that time was 31 million Americans so nearly one out of every fifty Americans died. The result of this war was the abolition of slavery although not racism. At the same time America became a leading propagator

of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christian hospitals, colleges, and missions were built to help people in need. Americans fought in foreign wars to defeat governments bent on spreading evil in the world. Something changed in the 1960s. Authority was being challenged and rebellion in the areas of sexuality and gender roles began taking place. In 1962 the Supreme Court ruled that prayer in schools was unconstitutional. In 1969 a homosexual uprising took place in New York and began an era of normalizing homosexual relationships in the American culture. In 1973 the Supreme Court legalized abortion in America. It is estimated that more than 40 million unborn babies have been aborted since that ruling. That is equivalent to nearly one-seventh of the current American population. The courts have consistently protected pornography as a freedom of speech issue while at the same time removing religion from the sphere of public discourse. Mainline churches have quit teaching the literalness of the Bible in favor of a watered-down social gospel. Although churches are still reaching out to the poor and needy, people are starting to look to the government to feed and clothe them rather than God. All these things would give God the justification He needed to judge America. In the 1960s Ruth Graham, wife of Billy Graham, commented to her husband that if God didn't judge America soon He was going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah. How much worse has America grown since she spoke these words. I believe there is one factor that has stayed God's hand from judging America until now.

Israel

Israel became a nation again in 1948. The United States of America became the first nation in the world to recognize the legitimacy of Israel and its right to exist. Since then we have been its friend and protector. I believe the rebirth of Israel was the beginning of the fulfillment of a prophecy God gave to His prophet Amos:

"13 Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. 14 And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. 15 And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God." (Amos 9:13-15)

God made a covenant with the patriarch Abraham:

"1 Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3)

God promised to give the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants. He also declared that those who bless or help Abraham's nation of Israel will be blessed. Conversely, those who curse or oppose the nation of Israel will be cursed. As long as America protects Israel I believe God will allow America to escape His judgments. The day we turn our backs on Israel will be the day God will remove His protection from America. Are we at that point now? Just

recently our new secretary of State has made disturbing proclamations towards the state of Israel. I wrote an article on my website explaining why I think America does have to turn away from Israel at some point: The Decline and Fall of America. Only time will tell if America stands by Israel or if we turn our backs on it because of military, economic, or policy reasons.

Dangers of declaring God's judgment

At the beginning of this article I stated that ascribing God's judgment can be a precarious endeavor. One example of this occurred after 9/11. Some prominent Christian leaders proclaimed that the terrorist attack on New York City was God's judgment on America because of its tolerance for homosexuality. They were predictably criticized in the media for these statements. You have just read that God will judge a nation because of its sins sexual or otherwise. However, these Christian leaders had no proof that this is why God allowed terrorists to attack America. Therein lies the danger. We have no prophets today that are authorized by God to declare judgment on America. We do have His word which as we have seen declares why He does judge countries. America has met the criteria God requires to bring down His judgment on it and so it may very well be that we are at the beginning of the downfall of America. Only time will tell whether He will restrain His judgment for much longer.

SOURCE: Even At The Doors
