

# Judgment and Joy – A Warning for America

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## Judgment

As I consider the events of the past few months, my heart is very heavy for America. Look at all the things that have been happening! There have been so many natural disasters. Is God trying to get our attention?

In one of the most recent disasters, there was a tornado in Alabama that claimed the lives of twenty-three people. It was a terrible storm that did a large amount of damage. This past week there was flooding throughout the Midwest. Nebraska especially suffered. Half the state is under water. Animals were caught in it. There was no higher place to put cattle. One felt pity seeing photos of the animals trying to get their heads high enough to be out of the water. The cold temperatures caused the water to turn to ice on some of the animals. It was a pitiful site to see animals covered in ice. One friend said, "Pray for God's mercy." That is the best thing we can do -- pray for God's mercy. No other thing can save us during this time of trouble.

Besides the disasters mentioned above, there were fires in California that destroyed vast amounts of land and property. A hurricane nearly destroyed a whole city in Florida. While these things may or may not be the judgment of God for our country, we really need to look and ask ourselves, "Why is this happening?" "What is God saying to us?" "Is He trying to get our attention?"

On the government side, there are scandals and incidences of deceit and misconduct. Even leaders we thought were good are not standing up in times of pressure. Then there are those who go to great lengths to dig up evil against others with the only goal in mind being to tear them down. Those who do so are just as guilty as those who openly do evil. The Bible says these people are ungodly. Consider Proverbs 16:27, "*An ungodly man diggeth up evil: and in his lips there is as a burning fire.*" There is also a going after other gods and a turning away from the true God. Two Muslim women were elected to Congress in Minnesota. But, it is not just the Democrats or the liberals who have gone after other gods. A Sikh woman, Harmeet Dillhon made a prayer to Waheguru at the Republican National Convention. This was the RNC at which Trump was officially nominated. Harmeet Dillhon was an attorney and soon to be RNC member as well. On the same day, the founder of "Muslims for Trump" also prayed, and he made his prayer to Allah. More can be read about this at [Christiannews.net](http://Christiannews.net) and other news outlets. These are not light things, and we cannot expect that God will lightly overlook them. God said to Israel, "*And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.*" (Deuteronomy 9:19) If God dealt so with His own chosen people, should we in America expect anything less? God went on to tell them, "*As the*

*nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.” (Deuteronomy 9:20)*

On the side of society, there is so much evil. Just about every kind of evil is either excused or even looked upon as something good. It is now acceptable to live together outside of marriage. People often think little of it. Homosexuality is considered “normal” and there is a strong push to give them “equal rights.” The truth is that they already have equal rights. They have the same rights as everyone else. They just do not have the right to openly practice their sinful lifestyle. On the Unshackled stories, I have heard over and over again testimonies of those brought out of the gay and lesbian lifestyle. More often than not, unhappiness or the feeling of being unloved drove them into this lifestyle. They openly admitted that they were not happy in this lifestyle. But, they were starving for love and did not know how to find it until they found true love in Christ Jesus. The murder of unborn babies in America exceeds the murders that take place in many other nations. Now, it is OK to murder babies at full term in at least one state. There is talk about euthanasia for the elderly and the mentally ill. How grieved God must be!

Then we look at ourselves, the Christians. Have we not forgotten the holiness of God? God is glorious in holiness. He is to be feared. *“Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”* (Exodus 15:11) Often we excuse ourselves in an action, a style of dress, music, or an activity by saying, “I don’t see anything wrong with it.” Perhaps we should say, “Does this represent God and is it in line with His holiness? Can others see by this that I am set apart to God?”

Often we, as Christians, set aside time that should be spent in worship to God or in increasing our spiritual lives or the lives of others, and use it to do our pleasure. I am often guilty in this. What do we do on God’s holy day? Do we say, “O good, church is done now, I can do something I enjoy doing?” Should we not enjoy worshiping God? Should not Jesus be the delight of our hearts? Should not the Lord’s day be His day, not a time for us to do whatever we wish? Israel had the same problem, and it made God sad. He said, *“13If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: 14Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD.”* (Isaiah 58:13,14a)

What about contentions among believers? There is a YouTube video about contentions in the Baptist churches. It was made to be funny. Sadly, there are far too many

contentions in the churches, including Independent Baptist churches. Some of the issues are serious, and should be dealt with. But I have seen instances where leaders in the church publicly humiliate those who may have taught or did something wrong without first going to that person and working with them to get things right. There are those who are very harsh. Then there are those who would like to gloss over sin and say we should not do anything but just keep “loving” that person. Sadly, to do nothing and allow a person to continue in sin without addressing the issue, is not loving the person. There are those who are so lax, that the churches look like the world. On the other hand, there are churches that are so rigid and put such a focus on “doing,” that it is as if they are wanting people to go back to living by the law. They go around preaching the judgment of God but with no love. In many cases they twist Scriptures to suit their teachings and ideas. One such group is the New IFB. These folks are not conservative Independent Baptists. They are false teachers who may appear good on the outside but inwardly their cup and platter are dirty. The New IFB may do more damage to the churches than many liberals. They are going back into bondage as were the believers in the book of Hebrews. We do right and live right because God loves us and we love Him, not because we are in bondage to the law. We have grace to do what is right, not the law to be our harsh school master.

We would do well to remember God’s words to Israel when He warned them not to go after other gods. He described to them what happens to the people who go after other gods. *“36For the LORD shall judge **his people**, and repent himself **for his servants**, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left. 37And **he shall say, Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted, 38Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you, and be your protection. 39See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. 40For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. 41If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me. 42I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy. 43Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people.”*** (Deuteronomy 32:36-43) God will bring vengeance on those who turn against Him, and He will not hear their prayers. He will tell them, “Let the gods in whom you trusted rise up and help you.” But, He will be merciful to His servants who trust in Him.

In America we need to wake up before it is too late. God hears when people humble themselves and repent – will we humble ourselves and repent in America so that God

will hear us? *“26And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; 27Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. 28Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace... 31And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.”* (from II Chronicles 34)

Wake up, America before the night comes! It is Later than you think!

## **Joy**

Even in times of judgment, the righteous can have joy. Jesus set the example for us. He was bearing the judgment for our sins, yet He looked to the joy that was set before Him. Hebrews 12:2 says, *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame because He knew that joy was coming in the end. We can look to this example and consider Him so that we have strength to endure the trials we are going through. *“For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”* (Hebrews 12:3) We can look forward to the joy that is before us.

Jeremiah was grieved for the judgment of his people. This grief touched him so much that he said, *“Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!”* (Jeremiah 9:1) Yet, in the midst of all this heartbreaking trouble and in the midst of persecution, Jeremiah still had joy. He said to God, *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.”* (Jeremiah 15:16)

The Psalmist was in great affliction as well. He said, *“I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.”* (Psalm 119:107) Even so, in the midst of His affliction, He found joy. He went on to say a couple verses later, *“111Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. 112I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.”* (Psalm

119:111,112) Psalm 119 was written during a time when society had turned its back on God and God's people were being persecuted. Hear the Psalmist pour out His heart to God, *"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."* (verse 136) It is because God's word was so lightly esteemed that the Psalmist loved it so much, *"125I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. 126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law. 127Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold."* (verses 125-127) The Psalmist himself was persecuted. Consider these verses, *"61The bands of the wicked have robbed me... 69The proud have forged a lie against me... 78Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause... 84How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me? 85The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law... 95The wicked have waited for me to destroy me... 110The wicked have laid a snare for me."* Yet, in all this, the Psalmist was able to have joy because He loved God's commandments and they were the rejoicing of His heart.

In I Peter chapter one we see that the "strangers" that were scattered throughout various places, had not lost their joy even in the midst of trials and persecutions. Jesus Christ and the word of God gave joy to them. *"3Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, 5Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. 6Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: 7That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: 8Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: 9Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."* (I Peter 1:3-9) These believers were in "manifold temptations," or great trials. Yet they rejoiced greatly because of Jesus Christ who had given them hope, reserved an incorruptible inheritance for them, kept them by the power of God through faith unto salvation, and who will return again to receive them when He comes back to receive His own.

No matter whether we are in a time when the land is facing the judgment of God or in a time where everything seems to be going well, we can have hope. The words of Jeremiah in Lamentations chapter three are true for all situations, *"21This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope. 22 It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. 23 They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. 24The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him. 25The*

*LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him."* (Lamentations 3:21-25)

So let us humble ourselves and seek the Lord and trust in His mercies by faith so that we can have joy, even in a time of judgment. This can be true for us because God is gracious and merciful and good.