

KINGDOM BIBLE STUDIES

"Teaching the things concerning the kingdom of God..."

FROM THE CANDLESTICK TO THE THRONE

Part 166

THE THREE ANGELS' MESSAGES (continued)

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the gospel of the ages to preach unto them that rule over the earth-realm, and over every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; *for the hour of His judgment is come*" (Rev. 14:6-7).

We now come to what seems to us perhaps a strange, sad, woeful message, and yet is the *good news of the ages*, which an "angel flying in mid-heaven" proclaims to the whole church throughout the entire world. And this is what his voice declares: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His *judgment* is come!" How strange, indeed, that sounds to us, that the hour of God's *judgment* could be characterized as GOOD NEWS!

We are living in a time when the truth about God's judgments is missed by many of the Lord's people, misunderstood by others, and misinterpreted by multitudes. The announcement of *divine judgment* is intended to be GOOD NEWS. Yet many people react in fear to the very thought of judgment, for they associate it with the end of the world, which to them means complete disaster. The picture most people have of "the judgment" is vividly portrayed in Michael Angelo's picture of the Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel at Rome. I have stood there and looked at that picture. The central picture in that celebrated masterpiece is that of our Lord seated upon a throne, with all the host of heaven gathered about Him, and trembling humanity arraigned before Him. The countenance of the Divine Judge is not at all what we are accustomed to associate with Jesus. It is wonderful in its beauty and majesty to be sure, but there is not a hint of mercy or compassion in it. On the contrary, it is menacing and awful in the extreme, as, with uplifted hand, the Omnipotent Saviour consigns to hopeless perdition the multitudes who are falling away downward upon His left hand with every expression of anguish and despair. The only suggestion of pity or compassion the scene contains is to be discerned in the face of the virgin mother, who stands close to her august Son while the fearful sentence is being pronounced; there is none in the face of Christ Himself!

The subject of judgment is a large one in the Bible, running through scripture from Genesis to Revelation, and it is so manifold in meaning, purpose, and application that it eludes simplification. The judgments of God run deep and are so vast and multi-faceted that they lie completely beyond the comprehension of the carnal mind and beyond the grasp of mortal man. As exclaimed by Paul, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how *unsearchable are His judgments*, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33). The Psalmist of old prophesied, "...for He cometh, He cometh to *judge* the earth; He shall *judge* the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Ps. 96:13). Paul urged the Athenians to repent "because He hath appointed a day in which He will *judge the world* in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31). Judgment is inseparably related to the work of Jesus Christ in the earth. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom" (II Tim. 4:1).

Through the cunning of the adversary, and the foolishness of the carnal mind, both the popular church and the world have been robbed of the blessed assurances of the time when God's RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS break forth in the earth. Most people know that the Bible tells of a "judgment day," but the average person, believer or unbeliever, regards it only with a certain sense of eventual fear and dread. Because of this *fear* there is, to them, no more unwelcome tidings that the Lord is coming to JUDGE THE EARTH! Many cower inwardly at the very thought of God's judgments, and in this mind shove them far into an unknown future, preferring not even to hear the subject mentioned. At various times in the past many people have become terror-stricken when some unusual event or a terrible calamity has occurred, because they have supposed that the event signaled the end of our civilization or the finale of our planet with billions of people getting what they deserve for their sins and wickedness — suddenly thrust into horrifying punishments and eternal damnation. They have absolutely no idea, not a clue, of the wonderful blessings in store for all of God's precious people and for a sin-weary world under the glorious reign of the manifest sons of God filled with all the nature, wisdom, glory, and redemptive power of God!

There are many who preach what they call the "end-time message" who capitalize on this emotion of *fear*: "Christ is coming to judge and ***you are not ready!***" That message sounds like something exasperated mothers shout as they shake their disobedient children: "You just wait until your *Daddy* comes home!" Many souls have been scared into the altars and have lived in dread of the end of the age, the coming to the Lord, and the horrors of great tribulation, the wrath of God, and the antichrist ever since. One day, they expect, they will suddenly be yanked up from their world of ease, taken to that great woodshed in the sky, and given the spanking of their eternal life. The threat of the Lord appearing as Judge is somehow supposed to produce righteous living among the saints. Yeah, "JUST YOU WAIT UNTIL YOUR DADDY (JESUS) COMES HOME!"

The vast majority of churches and Christians believe and teach that judgment is ***punishment***. As Ray Prinzing has pointed out, because they view God as a Tyrant, out to "get them," and they are afraid that He will punish them without mercy for every little mis-deed, they shudder with a superstitious fear because of the misconceptions resulting from all the erroneous doctrines and traditions which they have been taught. But let us think sober and godly thoughts about these things. If Jesus was the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of *the world*; if God was in Christ reconciling *the world* unto Himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them*; if Jesus is indeed the Saviour of *all men*, and the Saviour of *the world*; if by one man death passed upon *all men*, and if by one man the free gift came upon *all men unto justification of life*; if Jesus truly "paid it all" and bore the sins of all mankind in His body on the tree; then how could God legally be ***punishing*** any man, or any nation, or the whole world ***for their sins***? To all the above scriptures the members and ministers of the church systems will give a hearty "Amen!" But then by making men ***pay*** for their sins with ***punishment*** for them, either in this world or in the world to come, they repudiate the all-inclusive redemptive price already paid by the Redeemer of the world!

"Jesus ***paid the price*** for all your sins," the churches proclaim, "but God is going to ***punish you*** for them!" Something's wrong with this picture. Are they telling me that human beings on this earth are more just and honorable than God? I make a contract with someone and I pay the price for an acre of land. The person I purchase it from can't come back and take it away from me, can he? These folks are telling me that humanity is more just and honorable than God because He's going to come back and demand payment (punishment) for the sins of the world after the "iniquity of us all" has been "laid upon Jesus"! Not so! No way!

Now — this doesn't mean that there is no ***judgment*** in God! It becomes clear, however, as we compare spiritual things with spiritual things that ***judgment*** and ***punishment*** are NOT THE SAME THING! Punishment, on the one hand, is a *penalty*, a *sentence*, one's *just deserts* for an offence committed. God, under the new covenant of grace, is not in the punishment business! Can we not see that punishment is inflicted only *under law*? Judgment, on the other hand, is God's action to correct what is wrong. Because Jesus paid our debt, taking our penalty upon Himself, God now has a claim upon our life. He has purchased us for Himself! In order to enforce His claim upon us, He brings His *judgments* into our lives, and these judgments are not punishment — they are *remedial*, *redemptive disciplines* — it means that the time of *restoration*, of *correction unto righteousness* has come. Punishment merely pays one back for a wrong, giving him what he deserves. But all scriptures reveal judgment to be a process unto correction, deliverance,

change, rehabilitation, restoration, and redemption. You don't believe it? Thus saith the Lord: "And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin...afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be *redeemed with judgment*..." (Isa. 1:27). We would never think of that! The great Martin Luther said, "If I were God, and the world had treated me the way they treated God, I'd have kicked the whole thing to pieces long ago!" God would have condemned all humanity and left us to go to hell if He had been like unto carnal men. But He's not a negative, unforgiving, vindictive God! He is positive, He is purposeful, He is creative, He is redemptive, and He is constructive, not destructive!

Just as there is a world of difference between God's dealings with His people under the old covenant of law and the new covenant of grace, so is there a vast difference in God's dealings with the *nations of mankind* under the administration of law and His attitude toward the nations under the administration of grace. For remember, "He is the propitiation for *our sins*; and not for *our's only*, but also for the sins of the *whole world*" (I Jn. 2:2). These words are far too potent and full of meaning to be carelessly read over or ignored. Do they not tell us that as God's attitude and dealing is toward His people, so is His attitude and dealing also toward the whole world? Under Old Testament economy God called peoples and nations to account for their actions and executed His punishments by bringing destruction upon them. The best known of these is the world-wide deluge in the days of Noah of which we read, "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. And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; for it repenteth me that I have made them" (Gen. 6:5-7). The destructive judgments of God always came as a result of the *disobedience* of mankind, and the wicked conduct of the people in their daily lives. Sodom and Gomorrah are graphic examples of this. Obviously these cities had knowledge of the Lord and light from Him, just as the civilization of Noah's day had. God inspected those cities and determined that the sin of the inhabitants was very heavy; He judged that the cities must be brought to ruin (Gen. 18:20-21; 19:14). Many hundreds of years later the apostle Jude wrote that those cities underwent the "vengeance of fire" which brought destruction.

Destruction was sent upon the seven nations inhabiting the land of Canaan and later upon Moab, Assyria, Damascus, Egypt, Ethiopia, Tyre, and various other cities and nations of antiquity. Likewise, when the northern kingdom of Israel, as well as Judah and Jerusalem, became unfaithful and idolatrous and merited the Lord's displeasure, He promised to destroy their land and allow them to be carried away captives. This destructive punishment came when the northern kingdom was desolated and the people carried away into Assyria, never to return, and later Nebuchadnezzar came and plundered Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed the city and the temple, and carried the people away slaves to Babylon.

God conducted a legal case against Babylon, the longtime enemy of God and His people. Because of being unnecessarily cruel to the house of Judah, not intending to release them after the seventy-year captivity mandated by God, and crediting the god Marduk with the victory over God's people, Babylon was in line for a destructive punishment. That came to Babylon in the year 539 B.C. when it was violently overthrown by the Medes and Persians.

Let us consider now whether God is dealing in that same way with cities and nations in this dispensation of grace. Nothing is more evident in the scriptures than the fact that God has a great and wonderful plan which He is working out among the nations of earth. Many saints recognize that God has a predestined purpose in the life of each of His called and chosen elect, an appointed end for Israel, a wonderful purpose for the church, and a foreordained plan for the overcoming sons of God. We must also understand that the Lord has a determined plan and purpose for ALL NATIONS; God is actively dealing with NATIONS!

From the first dawn of human history God has had the formation, development, and destiny of nations in mind and purpose. The present nations of earth had their origins in the early days following the Great Flood. In Genesis chapter ten is found a most remarkable and comprehensive list of the descendants of Noah who became the heads of the families and tribes which subsequently developed into nations. Even so-called higher critics have often admitted that the tenth chapter of Genesis is a remarkably accurate historical document. There is no comparable catalog of ancient nations available from any other source. It is

unparalleled in its antiquity and comprehensiveness. You would do well to read the entire chapter. Here is the one link between the historic nations of antiquity and the prehistoric times of Noah and the antediluvians. The grandsons and great grandsons of Noah are listed, each of whom is identified with the city or country established by his descendants. It has been possible in many cases to identify the names in Genesis 10 with peoples and nations known to antiquity, especially as revealed by archeology. Thus this chapter provides the link between recorded history and the period of “prehistory” which is, except for the Bible, preserved only in ancient traditions.

An interesting verse is found in Genesis 10:25. “And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of one was *Peleg*; FOR IN HIS DAYS WAS THE EARTH DIVIDED; and his brother’s name was *Joktan*.” As one has pointed out, Peleg — or rather, the event associated with his name — is of special interest at this point. “*In his days was the earth divided.*” Evidently this was a most memorable event, and Eber named his son in commemoration of it. The name Peleg means *division*. Almost nothing else is said about Peleg apart from mention of his family line and how long he lived. The fact that the earth was divided in his days seems the only possible item of distinction that can knowingly be attributed to Peleg himself. The important thing concerns the meaning of this indicated “division of the earth.” It is obvious that this division was the division of the peoples that took place at the tower of Babel, rather than an actual splitting of the continents. We have such statements as this: “From these were the isles (coasts) of the Gentiles (nations) DIVIDED IN THEIR LANDS; every one *after his tongue, after their families*, in their *nations*,” and again, “These are the families of the sons of Noah, after their generations, in their *nations*: and by these were THE NATIONS DIVIDED in the earth after the flood” (Gen. 10:5,32).

The descendants of Noah migrated over the whole face of the earth, forming tribe after tribe, city after city, and nation after nation. Let all men know that it is the Almighty God who is the designer and architect of all the nations in the world! The time periods and localities in which nations flourish have all been pre-arranged by the will of Him who “worketh *all things* after the counsel of His own will” (Eph. 1:11). The truth of this cannot be made any plainer than it is by Moses in Deuteronomy 32:8, “When the *most High divided the nations* their inheritance, when *He* separated the sons of Adam, *He set* the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.” Paul refers to this verse in Acts 17:26-27, “And hath made of *one blood all nations* of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and HATH DETERMINED THE TIMES BEFORE APPOINTED, and the BOUNDS OF THEIR HABITATION; *that they should seek the Lord.*”

How plain it is that it was GOD who, from the beginning, set the bounds of habitation or the national boundaries of all nations. These boundaries were established in relation to Israel and with a view to their being able to *seek after the Lord*. Yes, God set the bounds of habitation for all nations and planted Israel at the crossroads, to the end that *all nations should seek after the Lord*. The theater was small, but wonderfully suited for the convenient observation of the whole human race — at the junction of the two continents of Asia and Africa, and almost in sight of Europe. From this spot as from a common center the reports of God’s wonderful works, of His mighty power and awesome glory, of the glad tidings of salvation through the obedience, suffering, death, and resurrection of His precious firstborn Son, of the wonder-filled outpouring of the Holy Spirit as the faithful disciples of Jesus were set ablaze by the life and power of their glorified Lord, might be rapidly and easily wafted to every part of the globe. THAT ALL NATIONS SHOULD SEEK AFTER THE LORD! Out of Israel came Christ; out of Christ has come the church; out of the church shall come the manchild, the manifest sons of God who are destined to bring deliverance to the whole creation that it might be fulfilled which was promised to Father Abraham, “And in thy seed shall ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED” (Gen. 22:18). ALL NATIONS SHALL BE BLESSED! What a prospect! Not destroyed — *blessed*! Not turned into hell — *blessed*! Not punished — *blessed*! From the very beginning God not only designed the nations of men that dwell upon the earth; He also planned and purposed to *bless them* — each and every one of them!

Perhaps it was David, the sweet singer of Israel, who intoned these words of hope in the spirit of prophecy: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon the earth, Thy saving health among *all nations*. Let the people praise Thee, O God; let *all* the people praise Thee! O let *the nations* be glad and sing for joy: for Thou shalt *judge the people* righteously, and *govern the nations* upon earth...yea, *all kings* shall fall down before Him: *all nations shall serve Him*”

(Ps. 67:1-4; 72:11). It is obvious that all nations do not today serve the Lord, neither do all kings (rulers) fall down before Him. China does not serve the Lord. Japan does not serve the Lord. The various nations that contain one billion Moslems do not serve the Lord. The Buddhist nations do not serve the Lord. Great numbers of nations do not today serve the Lord, and few of their rulers fall down before HIM. But the day is surely coming when all nations shall be joined to the Lord and shall fulfill their obligations to Him as their Maker and Saviour. If that day never comes, then the Bible will have to be relegated to the scrapheap of ancestral errors. But the promise is sure: "Arise, O God, ***judge the earth***: for Thou shalt INHERIT ALL NATIONS. A-L-L N-A-T-I-O-N-S whom Thou hast made shall come and worship before Thee, O Lord; and shall glorify Thy name. For Thou art great, and doest wondrous things" (Ps. 82:8; 86:9-10). And my spirit shouts a thousand Amens!

Many precious "fragments" reveal God's ultimate purpose for mankind, when "***all*** the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and ***all kindreds of the nations*** shall worship before Thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's and HE is the governor among the nations" (Ps. 22:27-28). For further confirmation of God's gracious intention toward the nations let us read Psalm 2:8. In this wonderful prophecy the Father is addressing His Son (Head and body), saying, "Ask of me, and ***I will give unto thee the nations*** for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Surely the will and plan of God is revealed in this most gracious request, and surely this was the purpose for which Jesus *came* and was *sent*. "Christ Jesus *came* into the world to save sinners" (I Tim. 1:15). "The Father *sent* the Son to be the Saviour of ***the world***" (I Jn. 4:14).

A most marvelous prophecy is found in Micah 4:1-3 which points to the very day in which we are now living. "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain (government) of the house of the Lord (the sons of God) shall be established in the top of the mountains (strong kingdoms, super powers), and it shall be exalted above the hills (weaker kingdoms, third world nations); and people shall flow unto it. And ***many nations*** shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain (government) of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we (the nations) will walk in His paths: for the law of the Lord shall go forth of Zion (sons of God), and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (the church). And He shall ***judge*** among many people, and rebuke ***strong nations*** afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: ***nation*** shall not lift up sword against ***nation***, ***neither shall they learn war anymore***." Blessed beyond my feeble ability to describe shall be that day when it shall come to pass that "He shall sprinkle (cleanse, sanctify) ***many nations***; the kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard they shall consider" (Isa. 52:15). What a word that is!

"Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And ***many nations shall be joined to the Lord*** in that day, and shall be my people" Zech. 2:10-11).

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the ***nations*** of them that are saved ***shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it***. And they shall bring the glory and honor of ***the nations*** into it...and there shall be no more curse" (Rev. 21:24-27; 22:3). As Jerusalem was the seat of the empire, the center of government under the Old Testament typical kingdom of God, so the New Jerusalem must occupy the same position and be the "city of the great King." A city is a symbol of a kingdom or dominion, and so God's kingdom is symbolized by the New Jerusalem, the new dominion coming down from heaven to earth. This is the heavenly city, the heavenly spiritual government embodied in a people, the city for which Abraham looked, "a city which hath foundations" — a government established in righteousness, being founded upon the sure rock foundation of the righteousness and authority of Jesus Christ. This city is composed of a heavenly and spiritual people in and through whom the mind, nature, glory, wisdom, will, and power of God are expressed. This governmental city is being built now in the heavens of God's Spirit as God brings a people into union with Himself, conformed to His image, filled with His life. It is this overcoming body of Christ that shall so demonstrate the fullness of the power and glory of the Lord that ALL NATIONS shall be impacted and swept into the embrace of the kingdom of God. Glory to God!

“At that time they shall call Jerusalem *the throne of the Lord*; and ALL NATIONS SHALL BE GATHERED UNTO IT, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: *neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart*” (Jer. 3:17).

I must admit that for many years I clung to the old Babylonish teaching that God today, in this age of grace, still deals with cities and nations according to their *sins*. I thought that God used natural things or disasters — storms, tsunamis, floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, pestilence, plagues, famines, wars, economic collapse, etc. — to *punish* and thereby *judge* peoples, cities, and nations. How difficult it is for us to *put off* the last vestiges of the old Babylonish garment! Only in recent decades has the understanding crystallized within my spiritual consciousness that ***Calvary brought a great and glorious change in God’s dealing, not only with those who believe, but also toward all mankind!*** “*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of (that) reconciliation*” (II Cor. 5:19).

The question is just this — Do we truly believe that? Do we really believe that God was in Christ ***reconciling the world*** unto Himself, or did He reconcile only those who believe? Can we clearly see that God in Christ is ***not imputing*** the sins of the world unto them? Ah, there is the *difference*, the *change*, my beloved, that came at Calvary! Now don’t misunderstand what I say. The subject here is not salvation, but reconciliation. I do not say that the whole world is “already saved” because of Calvary. But they *are reconciled!* And the action in that reconciliation was on God’s part. HE reconciled the world. It bespeaks a change in God’s manifest attitude and His manner of dealing with mankind. His thoughts toward mankind are not now thoughts of condemnation, punishment, or wrath, but thoughts of forgiveness, mercy, and redemptive activity unto salvation!

Under the old law it was “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” The adulterer was to be put to death. Those nations whose iniquity was “filled up” were designated to be wiped off the face of the earth, even the women, children, babies, and cattle were to be destroyed — nothing spared. God dealt with men and nations by law and punishment. That was one way of restraining evil in the world. But under the new covenant, the new arrangement, the new order, God came in Christ reconciling the world *unto Himself, NOT IMPUTING THEIR TRESPASSES UNTO THEM*. The ***law*** came by Moses, but ***grace*** and ***truth*** came by Jesus Christ, who is ***THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD***. Therefore the law was neither grace nor was it truth! To say God punishes a city today for its sins is certainly not ***grace***, and neither is it the ***truth!*** Now — instead of wrath and vengeance upon the nations the word is, “Go ye and preach the gospel (good news) to every creature...*disciple the nations.*” God is dealing with the nations by that man whom He hath ordained, Jesus Christ, who came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. This is the “good tidings of great joy which shall be to *all people*; for unto you is born this day A SAVIOUR, which is Christ the Lord.” ***That*** is the New Testament message and I fail to see any other message as representing either God’s Christ, His New Covenant, or His Kingdom. That is why Jesus said to the woman taken in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee — go and sin no more.” Our message is not, “Repent, for the punishment of God is at hand,” but “Repent, for the *kingdom* of God is at hand!” There is a great difference!

It is true, nations, like individuals, still *reap what they sow*. There is a law of sowing and reaping, and that is true for every man. If you sow a seed, you will reap that seed, whether it be good or evil. There is a sowing and reaping in my life. I will reap what I sow. If I sow to the flesh, I will of the flesh reap corruption, and it will happen every time. It is an inviolable law. That’s why I tremble today for America, because America is sowing to the wind, and if America continues to sow to the wind, it will reap the whirlwind. Our great land of America is already today reaping many negative things that we have sown as a nation in unrighteousness. But I want you to hear me: that is not the punishment and vengeance of God poured out, that is merely the law of sowing and reaping. Every nation sows; every nation reaps. Every denomination sows; every denomination reaps. But that is not the vindictive wrath of God! *God’s attitude* toward our nation is that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, and therefore only the *gospel* can save America — not punishment! To us is committed the word of that reconciliation, not the word of wrath!

God's method of dealing with the world conforms to the economy of the dispensation according to His purpose. Under law men were **held responsible** for their sins — not only the Lord's chosen people — but all men and all nations! Is that not why God both punished and destroyed heathen civilizations like the Antediluvians, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Hittites, Amorites, Babylon, and numerous others? You can read God's indictment against all these nations in Genesis 6:12-13, Genesis 18:20-21, Genesis 19:1,13, Deuteronomy 20:16-18, Jeremiah 51:24-25, and Ezekiel 7:3,8,27.

Scripture could be piled upon scripture, but these few are sufficient to show that in ancient times God dealt with His people, as well as all the nations of earth, *according to their sins*. He *did* impute their trespasses unto them! And while all men and nations still reap what they sow, according to the law of nature, God is no longer imputing the sins of mankind unto them for He has inaugurated an entirely new provision. We have been prone, in every forward step in God, to bring a lot of baggage out of our former realm along with us. I brought that "apocalyptic" baggage with me into the message of sonship, that end-time mentality of outer world events, of horrendous punishments that God was soon to unleash on a rebellious world, as though that had something to do with the kingdom God is bringing forth! You see, my beloved, I still did not understand that now *judgment is given to the saints of the most High!* God is not in the business today of judging nations in the sense that we think of judgment as punishment and vengeance. That was the old covenant! God is not punishing nations today under the new covenant. So if we have economic collapse, it is not the judgment of God, it is reaping what we sowed. The judgment of God is in His saints.

Now hear me! The wrath of God today is called in the book of Revelation "the wrath of the Lamb." It is a redemptive wrath. It is not vindictive punishment, but purposeful correction! It is a judgment that is unto redemption, for the flying angel says, "Fear God, and *give glory to Him: for the hour of His judgment is come: and WORSHIP HIM!*" And then comes the word, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and *glorify Thy name? For all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest*" (Rev. 15:4). Whoever heard of such a thing, of a lamb that had wrath? It is a redemptive wrath, unto salvation, and that salvation is planted in a people, in a lamb company. God is dealing with the nations today *unto salvation*. And it doesn't matter what happens, God is ministering through His people in judgment and mercy and redemption unto the nations of earth. The judgment of God is the wrath of the Lamb. The judgment of God is the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. That's where the judgment of God is! It is a *spiritual work!* Get your eyes off of the so-called "signs of the times." Those outward events have nothing whatever to do with God's judgment! All who believe that today God is judging nations for their sins and wickedness are still possessed of a legalistic mind-set and are preaching a world view that is under the law covenant rather than the covenant of grace!

With the exception of a few verses in the book of Revelation which are highly symbolic and must be understood spiritually, the New Testament has no message of vindictive judgment by disasters and calamities upon cities and nations! Let us now examine God's gracious attitude toward the nations under the covenant of grace. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. **Go ye therefore and TEACH ALL NATIONS...teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you...**" (Mat. 28:18-20). "By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for **obedience to the faith AMONG ALL NATIONS for His name...**" (Rom. 1:5). "...now to...the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest...according to the commandment of the everlasting God, **made known to ALL NATIONS for the obedience of faith...**" (Rom. 16:25-26). "And the scripture, seeing that **GOD WOULD JUSTIFY THE NATIONS THROUGH FAITH**, preached before the gospel (good news) unto Abraham, saying, **IN THEE SHALL ALL NATIONS BE BLESSED...**" (Gal. 3:8). "And he that overcometh...to him will I give **POWER OVER THE NATIONS: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron...**" (Rev. 2:26-27). "And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword (the living word of God), that with it He should **SMITE THE NATIONS: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron...**" (Rev. 19:15). "And the **NATIONS OF THEM THAT ARE SAVED** shall walk in the light of it: and the **kings of the earth** do bring their glory and honor into it..." (Rev. 21:24). "And the leaves of the tree are for **THE HEALING OF THE NATIONS...**" (Rev. 22:2).

Some years ago when hurricane Katrina brought terrible pain, suffering, devastation, and loss to thousands of people in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana, destroying their homes and businesses, killing hundreds, and scattering the people all across the land, many Christians were quick to view the disaster as some kind of deserved “judgment” upon the people for their many sins — drunkenness, gambling, prostitution, corruption, immorality, and above all the practice and promotion of satanic Voodoo. But that is not the heart of the Father we know! When the firstborn Son of God was told of cruel atrocities committed against the Galileans, He asked the penetrating question, “Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?” The answer, obviously, was No! And when He was asked why the blind man was born blind — “Who did *sin*, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, ***but that the works of God might be made manifest in him!***” Oh, how we want to make men’s *sins* to be responsible for the tragedies that befall them!

“Hurricane judgment.” “Tsunami judgment.” “Earthquake judgment.” If you believe in such things, do you know what that tells me? You know a lot *about* God, but you surely don’t *know God!* If that was God’s judgment on New Orleans, who was it that really got the judgment? It was the poor people. It was the people who couldn’t *afford* to get out of the city! Yet the people who were really responsible for the corruption, sin, and degradation in New Orleans were able to get out! The crooked politicians, the crooked lawyers, the crooked policemen, the drug lords, the voodoo practitioners, the pimps, etc. were able to escape the “judgment” in cars, buses, and airplanes! So God decides to judge New Orleans, but all the people who most deserve the judgment are able to flee from His wrath while the poor, struggling, helpless people were left behind to become the recipients of God’s vengeance. Furthermore, the most sinful and vile part of the city, the old French Quarter, was also spared! Is there not something wrong with this picture? I tell you today, the God who came and revealed Himself in Jesus, who came *not to destroy men’s lives but to save them*, is not in the business of massacring people! That is an Old Testament mentality. The only killing business God is in today is the slaying of the old Adamic life within you — the man of sin sitting in the temple of God. And He does that by the power and dominion of His Spirit and the authority of His Word — not by hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, pestilence, or earthquakes! Let’s get *spiritually real*, beloved!

In this connection, Mildred Garner penned some spiritually perceptive words concerning the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001. “The computer is full of junk about God destroying the World Trade Center and the Pentagon because of sin. And I will agree that they were destroyed because of sin. But when I see the faces of the enemies on television that did this act, I do not see the face of Yahweh. I see the faces of ignorant religion venting out a wrath that did not originate in the heart of the Father. Read the Bible, read history; all the wars against truth in the past were hosted and waged by blind religion. Blind religion is the enemy of civilization and was the foe that crucified our Christ. Blind religious extremists martyred most of the disciples. Religion without a born again experience is a blind religion. If we have an angry deity that is yet struggling against his enemies to gain his supremacy, we are into blind religion. If we are true messengers of Christ, our message should be in harmony with the truth that God was in Christ *reconciling the world unto Himself*.”

“If the disaster in New York and Washington was ordered by Yahweh to punish us, then is not this saying that He sent that bunch of killers to murder 6,633 unsuspecting people? Who is the rogue here? If Yahweh sent Osama bin Laden to kill our people, would this not then suggest that Laden was in touch with Yahweh’s will and we were not? Are these messengers of doom suggesting that we should get behind Osama bin Laden’s effort to judge and destroy civilization and start following him so we can get in tune with Yahweh? I do not think so! What do the children think about their loving Father when they see the horror of this barbarous deed and hear their spiritual leaders preaching that it actually came from the hand of God? Evil men did this. They meant it for evil, but Yahweh will direct our steps to work it out for the good of those that love the Lord, the called according to His purpose” — end quote.

This we do know — God is love, and tragedies always present the blessed opportunity for GOD IN HIS PEOPLE to express, manifest, and demonstrate His beautiful, compassionate, caring, and redemptive nature! Let us all be *sons* in our attitudes and actions that the glory of God may be revealed in the earth. All creation is standing on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of God unveiled in His sons, and truly the hour of

preparation is upon us as our Father raises up His kingdom in the life of each called and chosen son. He is giving us an *attitude adjustment* that we may unconditionally love all men and all cultures and all nations, not imputing their trespasses unto them! That is the spirit of sonship!

I could only say a hearty Amen when I read the following words from brother Carl Schwing: “Recently I was sent an article about the soon coming judgment of God upon the people of the world. The writer’s words were those of anger, wrath, and destruction. The writer touched upon the ‘manifestation of the sons of God’ but quickly adds that before that event takes place the wicked, the evil, and the unbelieving will be destroyed by the wrath of God. I have also read some of the so-called ‘prophecies’ which are being circulated today: prophecies of doom and horror. Their words do nothing for one’s spirit, they accomplish nothing, and they certainly do not edify the body of Christ. Why are these ‘prophets for profit’ sending their prophecies to the saved of the earth, or to the elect of God? They that know the Lord need not fear those who can burn cities, or plunder earthly belongings, or destroy the body...for their trust is in the Lord, and they are prepared and ready to receive all that the Father has planned. Should not these ‘prophets’ be taking their predictions to those they refer to as the ‘wicked and unsaved’ people of the world, warning them of such massive destruction and terror?”

Maybe you’ve heard the story about a boy who was tending sheep in the fields. The villagers told him to call for help in case a wolf came prowling. After some time the boy thought he would test the system. He yelled out, “Wolf!” and the villagers came running. But there was no wolf. After the boy pulled this prank a few more times, the villagers didn’t trust him anymore. Eventually a wolf really did come, and when the boy cried for help, everyone ignored his calls — with devastating results. More often than the boy in this story cried “Wolf!” when there was no wolf, the prophets of doom and gloom have throughout my lifetime cried “Judgment!” upon churches, institutions, cities, and nations, and there has been no such judgment as they described.

It is easy to anticipate, call for, and predict the manifestation of divine wrath upon men and nations. Most Christians certainly believe they *deserve* the outpourings of divine judgments! And it plays perfectly into our fears, as well as our vindictiveness against the wickedness of men. But it is not the spirit of the Lamb of God — Jesus Christ the *Saviour*! Once we adjust our perception to expect doom and gloom, religious zeal conjures up all sorts of apocalyptic visions of the “end times.” I have heard hundreds of “doom and destruction” prophecies over the past seventy-five years. For years I kept a folder *full* of them, checking occasionally to see whether any had come to pass. *None* of them have come to pass! Calamities they did not predict did happen, and the ones they prophesied failed to materialize. Why? Simply because those who said, “Thus saith the Lord,” had not heard from the Lord. They were only parroting the theories of the carnal church systems and speaking out of their own imaginations and fears. They predicted all sorts of horrors to come upon mankind, and completely *missed* the one great work God is doing today by His Spirit as He deals with His elect to bring *many sons to glory*!

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of the nature of the judgment that would be administered through God’s many-membered Christ. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall **bring forth judgment to the nations**. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. **A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth**. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have SET JUDGMENT IN THE EARTH: and the isles shall wait for His law” (Isa. 42:1-4). To understand the things written in this passage is of eternal importance, for until we do understand them we will continue to place an Old Testament emphasis upon the judgments of God. This passage is about God’s Christ, both Head and body. It reveals the nature of God’s judgments through Jesus and through every son of God who is one in His Spirit. Isaiah’s opening word here, “Behold,” signals to his listeners: **“Prepare for a new revelation about God’s sons and God’s judgments!”** Isaiah was saying in essence, “Christ isn’t coming to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. Christ isn’t coming with a loud clamor or noise. He isn’t coming as a ruthless avenger. Oh, no! He comes as a tender, merciful, compassionate, loving Saviour. You’ll hear Him speak with a still, small voice in your inner man.”

David Wilkerson, though he prophesied judgments upon America, also caught a glimmer of this beautiful truth when he wrote, “I hear a question being asked by many believers today: ‘Why hasn’t God

turned America over to judgment? Why hasn't He dealt with us according to our sins? God has suffered America's sins for a long time now, so why haven't we seen His righteous judgment on us?' We're a society completely bruised in its morality. We're also a nation that is depressed and disturbed, with people living in fear and mental agony. There are more psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and counselors than ever in history, yet they can't keep up with all the people begging for just a single hour of help. This is true even in the church: Christian counseling teams across the land are overburdened by the press of people needing help for their problems. Our children are being bruised by broken families, abuse and molestation. Teenagers are being bruised by immorality, materialism and numbness. Satan has unleashed a flood of evil upon the land, and it has left in its wake a bent and bruised people. Most of the church itself has this same bruised spirit. (This is the law of sowing and reaping I mentioned earlier). If we got what we deserved, America should be lying in ruins, devastated by anarchy. But Isaiah says our tender Jesus would not break a bruised reed! And even as America sits in utter confusion, bent over and bruised by our many sins, we are not yet broken. In His tenderness, our Lord has not let that happen!"

Judgment is God's strange work. We have had the idea that if God truly "judged" America we would be laid flat under His avenging hand for our many sins. The reality is, that it is God's judgments in America that will, in our Father's time, *correct* and *restore* America to righteousness and blessing! Men make judgment the end. But judgment is always a *means* to an end — never THE END! No matter how an unbeliever is dealt with, whether he dies as a result of his sin, or by the direct judgment of God; whether he be cast into hell, or turned into the lake of fire — THIS IS NOT HIS END. All men will be raised up either into a resurrection of life or a resurrection of judgment (Jn. 5:29), but for the latter THIS IS NOT THEIR END. All judgments are limited — confined to a day, or to the limitations of prescribed ages. "Because He hath appointed A DAY, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). It gives my heart much joy to know that God will judge the world in righteousness BY THAT MAN whom He hath ordained! He will not judge the world in anger, fury, and vengeance by a tsunami, an earthquake, or a nuclear war! Oh, no! Not in anger — in *righteousness*! Not by a calamity — by *that man, God's Christ*!

The end of divine judgment — no matter its form, no matter its subject — is to bring the whole universe into harmony with His will, nature, and glory. How optimistically did the holy prophets and apostles regard the coming of the Lord in judgment! Note the expectation in Isaiah's voice as he announces: "Yea, in the way of THY JUDGMENTS, O Lord, *have we waited for Thee*...with my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early: for when THY JUDGMENTS are in the earth, the *inhabitants of the world WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS*" (Isa. 26:8-9). Here Isaiah assures us that the day when God's judgments are in the earth will be a most glorious and desirable day, a day in which the inhabitants of the world W-I-L-L LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS! How opposite to the idea entertained by many that when God's judgments come in the earth the inhabitants of the world will be sent into oblivion or eternal damnation.

If the desire of your heart is anything like the desire of my heart, this is a blessed thought and a wonderful assurance: the *inhabitants of the world WILL LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS*! How my ransomed soul yearns to behold such a thing! Every time I scan the headlines of the morning paper I am seized with an intense longing that the inhabitants of the world will *learn righteousness*. Of times as I watch the evening newscast my spirit is mightily moved within to intercede earnestly that the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. As I drive across our great land; as I walk the streets of our towns and cities, observing the condition of those about: neighbors, friends, relatives, strangers, the young and the old, my spirit groans with unutterable supplications that the inhabitants of the world will LEARN RIGHTEOUSNESS! What a marvelous provision of our all-wise and loving Father that, to this very end, He has ORDAINED JUDGMENT to come forth in the earth. Bless His name!

Speaking of the judgment of the Lord, hear the note of triumph and exultation when David speaks by the inspiration the Spirit gives, saying,

Let the heavens be glad
And LET THE EARTH REJOICE;

And let men say among the nations, the Lord reigneth!
Let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof;
Let the fields REJOICE, and all that are therein.
Then shall the trees of the wood (people of the earth)
SING ALOUD AT THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD,
Because **HE COMETH TO JUDGE THE EARTH.**
O give THANKS unto the Lord, for HE IS GOOD;
For His mercy endureth forever! (I Chron. 16:31-34).

Why will the sea of humanity *roar*, why will the fields of kindreds and tongues and peoples *rejoice*, why will the trees of the forest, or the people of the earth, *sing out* at the presence of the Lord, when He comes upon the scene to JUDGE THE EARTH? One would think they might weep, or shrink in fear and consternation at the thoughts of His judgments, but why all the *singing*? David says that it is because God's judgments are an expression of ***His goodness*** and everlasting ***mercy***, designed to teach the inhabitants of the world ***righteousness!*** The earth shall rejoice because this means that we have reached the ***turning point*** in our degeneration, and have come to the times of regeneration. This is true even now for the elect, but must ultimately reach unto the whole world and the entire creation. His presence, while it speaks of His utmost holiness, and will not tolerate the continuance of evil, brings the changes needed for deliverance, righteousness, and harmony. And when the divine disciplines have accomplished their desired results, His new life shall flow in restoration and victory. Oh, the wonder of it!

What a message of hope, then, God's "flying angel company" bears to the leaders of the church world and to all the ends of the earth: "Fear God, and give glory to Him; ***for the hour of His judgment is come:*** and worship Him!" And exactly that will be the result of the message proclaimed!

To be continued...

J. PRESTON EBY