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THE JUDGMENT OF AMERICA

by

Michael R. Gilstrap

The Scriptures tell us that in the year 606 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, laid siege to the city of Jerusalem, eventually capturing it (Dan. 1:1ff). Thus began the singularly most dreadful judgment that God had ever inflicted upon His people (Dan. 9:12). The city was laid waste; the temple destroyed, and the people were taken into captivity. The Lord accomplished the word which He had spoken to the prophet Jeremiah:

Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar 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. (Jer. 25:8-9)

Among those taken by the Babylonians was a Hebrew youth, by the name of Daniel. This young man was one "in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skillful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science." The Lord blessed Daniel above his fellows, and made him a mighty man for the work of his Lord's kingdom. He rose in stature and rank until finally, under the superintendence of God, he was made what we would know today as Prime Minister over the realm of the Babylonians. He held the most important political office, next to the King, in the entire land. Daniel performed his duties well, and when the Babylonian Empire fell, Daniel continued on as Prime Minister under the victorious empire of the Medo-Persians.

These facts alone make this book extremely important for Christians today. The Church was under the temporal judgment of God, being in captivity to a pagan empire. Daniel, a faithful man of God, was made one of the most powerful political leaders in all of the realm. Many, many lessons may be learned from this pivotal period in the Church's history, but one which we must not fail to note is Daniel's action as regards the captivity itself and the prospect of deliverance.

Before we examine the action of Daniel, it will be important to note the parallelism between the Church under the Babylonian captivity and the Church today (an identification of which is made in the book of Revelation). In much the same way that Israel suffered, the Church is suffering today. To be sure, there are degrees of oppression. All will admit that Christians in Russia and under other Communist regimes are suffering greatly for their faith. The Church in those situations has been forced to go underground, and biblical Christianity has been explicitly outlawed. But what of the

Church in the United States? Though we have not (yet!) been forced to go underground, there is an increasing resistance by the State to biblical Christianity. Oppressive legislation and judicial decisions over the past 25 years show in a very clear manner that it is the intent of the federal and state governments to see biblical Christianity outlawed, and the Church placed under the jurisdiction of the State. This wicked design is revealed in a recent Court decision involving the Worldwide Church of God.

At a secret hearing on January 2, 1979, to consider a motion to place the Worldwide Church of God into receivership (that is, the state would seize and administer all properties, bank accounts, etc.), attorney Hillel Chodos argued before a court of the state of California,

"All of those corporations are organized and existing under California law exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes. It is our position that a shorthand way of describing the law applicable to the corporations of that type is that **their property always and ultimately rests in the court's custody**, and that they are always and ultimately subject to the supervision of the court on the application of the Attorney General. In effect, there are **no private interests**" (emphasis mine).

No, my dear friend, that was not argued before a court in Moscow, U.S.S.R., but in the state of California! Isn't California still a part of the land of the free and home of the brave? It hasn't been annexed by Russia has it? A land where there are no private interests, and the Church is ultimately answerable to the state is not my idea of freedom! Breshnev could not have improved on Counselor (comrade?) Chodos formulation.

The attorney continues,

The Court is not taking something away from somebody or interfering with anyone's private rights. In effect, what we are saying is that there are presently trustees who have been allowed to manage the charitable fund on a day-to-day basis. There is reason to believe, as we have shown you, that they have not done their job in a faithful manner. We believe that essentially those trustees serve at the Court's pleasure, and may be replaced with a more trustworthy trustee."

The state court ruled in favor of the state's right to oppress, and they subsequently moved in and did just that. In late May, the Supreme Court of these United States refused to halt this tyrannical oppression, when they upheld the lower court's decision, and thereby established precedent which will plague the Church of Christ for many years to come.

It must be remembered that the orthodoxy of the Worldwide Church of God is not the issue, and it must not cloud the eyes of Christians in looking at this landmark decision. The state could care less if this church is orthodox or heretical. What they wanted, fought for, and finally got was legal precedent which gives the civil government jurisdiction over the Church, so that she can be controlled. No longer does the Church enjoy the inviolable status given it by God in His Word, which was recognized by our Founding Fathers in writing the constitution. On the contrary, we are told that the Church exists at the pleasure of the state Attorney General! If he doesn't like how a pastor is running the affairs of a particular church, he can remove that pastor and replace him with one more to his liking. I ask you, what is the difference in this action and the actions taken by communist dictators? Is this not **an implicit licensing of the clergy** in this country? You'd better believe it!

Is the Church in captivity today? You bet your last ruble that we are! If you are not yet convinced, call up your friendly IRS office and ask for publication 557. In it you will find that not only does the IRS presume to an establishment of religion (listing fourteen criteria for a church to be legally a church), but it also threatens churches with **a loss of tax exemption if their actions or beliefs are contrary to well-established public policy, or if they seek to be influential in the consideration of any legislation before a state or national legislative body.** This means that if a church takes a stand against homosexuality, abortion, oppression of Christian schools, etc., they are liable to lose their tax exemption, and ultimately their property, if they refuse to pay. Just ask Harry Jackson, pastor of the Calvary Baptist Church in Fairfield, California. Solano County has sold his church's property to the state of California because of refusal to pay property taxes! Two months later they were kind enough to notify Pastor Jackson of the transaction, and to assure him that the church could have its property back if they would only cooperate. If they chose to be obstinate, they would be evicted in five years! Do you realize the implications of this statist move? The government has confiscated a church building because Pastor Jackson was faithful enough to labor vigorously for Proposition Six, which restricted a homosexual's rights to force himself upon those who on moral, religious, or other grounds prefer to avoid his company. As Dr. Rushdoony has well observed, "the state is taking a good, Nazi position." What we are seeing today is a calculated, planned attempt at **the obliteration of biblical faith.**

God has placed the Church under an oppressive regime; a political power and godless society which has pledged its life's blood to see the Church outlawed and Christianity destroyed. We are under the judgment of God. That which faces us today is increased oppression at the hands of the State, and the prospect for an even more vivid manifestation of the judgment and wrath of God against a sinful people. What are we to do? How should the Church act in the face of this crisis? It is at this point that a consideration of the action of the prophet Daniel in much the same situation will be of great benefit.

The Message of Daniel

In the 9th chapter of Daniel's prophecy, he records the change in power from Babylon to Medo-Persia. The Jews had been in captivity 68 years when Cyrus marched into Babylon, conquering the city and subduing the empire. This change had tremendous significance for Daniel. Earlier he had interpreted a dream for Nebuchadnezzar, in which the fall of Babylon was predicted (Dan. 2). The God of heaven had correctly given Daniel the interpretation, and now, before his eyes, it was fulfilled.

In verse 2 of chapter 9, Daniel records for us his discovery of the prophecy concerning the deliverance and restoration of the Jews to their land, found in Jeremiah 25. The prophet there

writes that the Lord would accomplish seventy years of desolations upon Jerusalem. Later Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Babylonian captives (Daniel probably had a copy before him) assuring them that the Lord would return and visit them, restoring them to their land. This of course was good news to Daniel. Sixty-eight years had already expired! Only two more to go! We would expect Daniel to cry unto God in exultant chords of praise and thanksgiving; but on the contrary, he turns to God in sackcloth and ashes and confesses the sin of the people.

Daniel recognizes that the captivity has not turned the people from their wicked ways that prompted God to send them into captivity in the first place. Lacking true faith, that which should have led them to repentance had not worked any healing or redeeming experience. He confesses to God his fear and grief for his people, acknowledging that God was righteous in condemning them to captivity (vs. 3-19). Daniel fears further captivity for their obstinate rebellion against God.

The Church today is in the same condition. The wickedness that oppresses her under the chastening of God should have caused her to turn to her Lord in sackcloth and ashes, repenting of her sins, bemoaning her iniquity. Instead she has learned nothing. The local presbyterian church (P.C.A.) of which I was formerly a member is a case in point, though this example could be duplicated in hundreds of other evangelical churches. The elders have consistently taken a compromising position in the midst of controversy. The most glaring instance is their refusal to censure the adult Sunday School teacher for heresy. One day in class Mr.

_____ made the statement that "the kingdom of God could be fleshed out in many secular philosophies, including communism." He went on in his lecture to confirm the fact that he had embraced an amalgamation of modern heresies including the theology (better anthropology!) of liberation. The elders of this evangelical presbyterian church refuse to deal with him. As one elder told me, "The wheels of justice turn slowly." To allow a socialist to remain in the pulpit of the Church of Christ is not a case of the wheels of justice turning slowly, but not at all!

What else can we expect from the Lord except continued judgment and wrath if the more conservative churches are in this shape? If we were to look to the liberal churches, we would find them supporting terrorist activities by Marxist revolutionaries through the World Council of Churches. In the midst of compromise and iniquity, **God's people must be as Daniel** and turn to God in prayer, confessing their sin and humbly begging His forgiveness.

In verses 5-14 of chapter 9, Daniel confesses the sin of all the people of Israel. The over-riding theme throughout this section is that God is righteous and faithful, while Israel is unrighteous and faithless. Daniel confesses their guilt in the strongest terms, referring to them as **perverse men in passionate rebellion against God** (v. 5). He says that their guilt is compounded because they have refused to hear the prophets who have been sent to them by God to point out their sin, and to call them to repentance. Then, in verses 11-14, Daniel acknowledges God's righteousness in punishing them, for He had done only what they deserved. In other words, Daniel looked at the captivity and subsequent persecutions as part of the all-governing providence of God. The Lord had caused the people to go into captivity because of their sin.

God's Controversy With America

The Lord is doing the same thing to America today. It is not only the sins of the churches that is bringing God's curse, but the accumulated rebellion of our nation as a whole. All men and nations are in covenant with God (Gen. 9:8-17). God has promised blessings to those who are faithful to His covenant, and curses to those who rebel (Deut. 28). The United States is in open rebellion against God in refusing to be governed by His laws;

therefore, we are under His curse.

The Lord commands us to worship Him, and Him alone. What has America done? She has established Humanism as our national religion. Archaeologists who study ancient cultures write that the procedure in determining the religious faith of a particular culture is to study its law structure and its educational system. Humanism is very obviously fundamental to the law structure as well as the public school system of America. In schools all across the nation children are being taught that by using the scientific and technological advances of man they can control the environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend the average life span of men, modify behavior, alter the course of history, discover vast new powers, and provide humankind with all that is required for enjoying an abundant and meaningful life. Children are taught that man is the god of this age. That he is creator, sovereign, predestinator, saviour, etc., ad nauseum.

Not only is our public school system possessed with this demonic wickedness, but the civil laws of America also reflect this humanistic, antichristian philosophy. In some places it is illegal to cut down a tree without a permit, and yet perfectly righteous to murder ('abort' is the quaint expression currently used) babies. In fact, over 1,000,000 murders (abortions) were committed in 1979. Since 1973, when this form of murder was legalized, 8,000,000 infants have been executed, because of the sins of their parents. We are living in the midst of one of the greatest revivals of the art of human sacrifice in history. Unwanted children are sacrificed to the desires of ungodly parents. With the blood of these infants crying out to God for vengeance, and the unmitigated evil that daily confronts the Lord, is it any wonder that God has not wiped this nation out as one might wipe a bowl clean? Is there anyone so naive as to believe that God is not now setting this nation up for the greatest fall in the history of the world? If so, please, read on.

The Scriptures teach that God in His providence governs all things to the most minute detail (Heb. 1:3; Ps. 103:19; Matt. 10:29-31). He is at this moment so ordering events that within one or two years America may very well fall prey to Marxist Communism. Consider for a moment the world-wide advances of Communism. Since 1945, twenty-plus key nations have fallen to Communism in one form or another. Russia may take its theory from Marx, but its strategy is Leninist. In the 1920's Lenin called for the Soviets to capture eastern Europe first, then Asia, and finally to encircle and isolate the United States. At which time Lenin predicted that the U.S. would fall into the hands of the communists like over-ripe fruit. Russia has followed the directions of her patriarch very well. She captured Eastern Europe after World War II (with American help) and quickly moved into Asia. Along with Red China, she controls most of Asia. South Korea is on the ropes, and the only other major Asian countries which are non-communist are Indonesia, the Republic of the Philippines, Japan, and Taiwan. And even these nations are in a most precarious position, being virtually unprotected from an aggressive military attack, since the U.S. was forced to move her aircraft carriers to the Middle East after the fall of Iran.

In our hemisphere, the picture could not be much bleaker. Carter has turned over the Panama Canal to a Marxist regime led by Castro's colleague Omar Torrijos. It has now become a stopping place for Marxist guerrillas heading into South and Central America. At present, only two governments remain non-communist in Central America, Honduras and El Salvador.

In March 1979, a small island in the Caribbean was taken over by Cuban supported revolutionaries, and is now being governed by Cuban secret police and advisors. The island of Grenada is now the "command post" of the Caribbean in the Communist effort to export the Grenadan revolution to other islands in the Caribbean. Yet we have heard virtually nothing about it. A small

island has been raped by the Communists and our liberal press, in liaison with the U.S. State Department, have been silent. What happened to Carter's human rights platform? Wouldn't a Caribbean full of Cuban and Soviet satellites make a wonderful haven for a Soviet naval force?

Within our own nation, that the providence of God is setting the U.S. up for judgment can best be seen in Zbigniew Brezinski, the National Security Advisor, and one of the key voices in all foreign policy decisions made by the present administration. In his book, *Between Two Ages*, he writes, "In a word, America is undergoing a new revolution, whose distinguishing feature is that it simultaneously maximizes America's potential as it unmasks its obsolescence." In other words, **America is on the way out; it is becoming obsolete.** What will replace it? "Marxism represents a further, vital and creative stage in the maturing of man's universal vision." **What will replace America? . . . a Marxist state.** Brezinski writes on, "It has been said earlier that Marxism, disseminated on the popular level in the form of Communism, represented a major advance in man's ability to conceptualize his relationship to his world. . . . In spite of its materialistic determinism, it carried—and that was the source of much of its appeal—an essentially ethical message. . . ." That's right, friends . . . Essentially to the man who is responsible for the protection of the U.S., Marxism is a significant advance in the universal world and life view of Western man! What's more; Marxism is ethical! Who is Brezinski protecting America from? Why, the arch-enemy of Marxism; biblical Christianity!

Finally, God has stripped America of her military superiority which she once enjoyed. General Lewis W. Walt, former Marine Corps Assistant Commandant, states it succinctly in his book *The Eleventh Hour*.

The facts are these: the United States has been brought by its own civilian leaders, to a position of military inferiority to the Soviet Union. At this moment, you and your loved ones stand exposed to physical destruction. The option of whether you shall live or die rests primarily with the hardened men who occupy the Kremlin. If they should choose tomorrow or next year or the year after to annihilate you and your family, there is little the U.S. government could do to stop them, except surrender.

No generation of Americans has ever before been so recklessly placed at the mercy of so pitiless and powerful an enemy. What's worse is that at this moment of greatest danger the men who are responsible for having placed us in the kill zone are still calling the shots in Washington.

There are no incoming missiles in our skies because the Soviet leaders believe that with patience they can in a short time force us to surrender. I am not talking about some date in the far distant future, but some day within the next four or five years. Their ultimatum, when it comes, will place on the shoulders of our leaders the terrible decision to fight a thermonuclear war we cannot win or to hand over the American people to an oligarchy of tyrants whose viciousness and brutality have no match in the long, bloody history of man's cruelty. As Ernest Hemingway wrote at the beginning of World War II, there are several things worse than war and they all come with defeat. (p. xi-xii).

Judgment! Or Repentance?

The sword of God's judgment is well on the way. America is directly in its path. What are we to do? What **can** we do?

The first thing that Christians must do is **pray**. They must be willing as Daniel was to beseech God for deliverance. Putting on sackcloth and ashes, Christians must pray that God would do for America as He did for Nineveh. His regenerating Spirit must descend upon the nation or America is lost.

Secondly, Christians must **labor** to do all that they can to **avert the coming judgment**. Has God not given His marching orders? "Go ye therefore into all the world and preach the gospel . . . disciple the nations . . . teach them to observe all things that I have commanded." (Matt. 28:19-20) All authority has been given to the Lord Christ. He can curse, or He can bless. He told Abraham that He would avert His judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah if there could be found but ten righteous men. Will He not also do the same for us if we will but seek His face? The Word of the Lord in the prophecy of Joel must be thundered throughout America.

For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil. (Joel 2:11-14).

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mr. Gilstrap is entering the newly-formed Geneva Divinity School, (708 Hamvasy, Tyler, Texas 75701) to prepare for the ministry.

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