

DOES GOD JUDGE HIS CHILDREN?

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It seems like a no-brainer, doesn't it? God's not in the judgment business anymore! That's why Jesus came, wasn't it? Haven't we read that "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through Him" (Jn.3:17). It is clear that Jesus has forever "canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us... having nailed it to the cross" (Col.2:14). We're living in God's favor (Isa.61:2; Lk.4:19), and all God's responses to us are "Yes!" (2Cor.1:20).

But we do see a few "preemptive strikes" in the New Testament, don't we? And included in these are administrations to believers! The instance we often remember is Ananias and Sapphira, who wanted honor and recognition in the Church so much that they falsely presented themselves to the Body of Christ in the Presence of the Lord. Being-- in principle as Paul would later describe-- "guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (1Cor.11:27), and of lying to the Holy Ghost through whom the Body functions (Acts 5:4,9), their participation with the Apostolic Church (& the world God had made) was immediately canceled.

Just as telling, there is an instance in 1Cor.5:1-6 where Paul instructs those at Corinth, that when his anointing is present (see v.4), to administer his Apostolic judgment (5:12,13) for the sake of preserving the church's purity (v.6), and to set in motion a series of events that will provide the jeopardized one an opportunity for salvation as well (v.5). And whereas in the case with Ananias and Sapphira we are offered no closure as to their ultimate fate, in Paul's writing(s) we are made to understand that God's motivation for Apostolic judgment is redemptive-- both for individuals and the church.

In fact, later in that same letter, Paul makes it clear that "if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the rest of the world"(1Cor.11:31-32). God intends to assist us through His periodic "evaluations," keeping our walk with Him "on-line." Such "reviews" are His kindness to us (Ro.2:4). And when we fail to receive the chastening work of God by either disregarding what Scripture teaches (Heb.12:6), or by misinterpreting it as an enemy attack-- we actually war against the Father's hand of correction and improvement.

Why is the prospect of God's corrective discipline so important right now? At the end of January 2000, I sent a summary of a strong, distinct prophetic experience to 40 pastors, leaders, and intercessors in the southern Ohio area. Without realizing, I was "checking" with the body of Christ before expanding and further circulating what had been shared with me. Every response to that letter-- whether by phone, note, or in person, was positive and in full agreement with what I had experienced. Here are the first the first three paragraphs:

"Over nine months ago I received a visitation from the Spirit of God. . . In sharing that message with approximately 600 ministries in southern Ohio, it was made very clear (and later reiterated in a follow-up): "the miraculous will indeed come, but first there will be judgment for some, for it is time to righteously fear my love and honor my anointing and those who will bring it forth."

On the afternoon of January 6, while in prayer, the Holy Spirit said: "THE JUDGMENT IS ABOUT TO FALL. IT'S GOING TO FALL . . . BUT I'M GOING TO

SPARE YOU AND YOUR HOUSE." That experience led to much more seeking and prayer, which led to this God wants you to be reminded that this was the gateway (and indication) of His beginnings for us. Prepare yourself. Ready or not; like it or not, the outer edge of the movement God has promised our area is making its way in, but the first wave will be one of strong chastisement. Previous efforts made in fasting, prayer, and repentance were not sufficient to prevent the Church from being immersed into this move by the experience of this Divine discipline (Heb.12). It's starting, and we will not stop it.

What many are about to experience is Biblical; what is moving in among us is necessary and essential for the body of Christ in southern Ohio. Individuals who are in jeopardy need the strong hand of God to help them 'get in, get out, or get run over.' The church needs to be purified of every source of poisoning, whether it be from leaders or from Jezebel-type influences on them. God is removing that which is defiling the body in the presence of Jesus the King. And it is no secret that this "judgment" is coming first upon those who Oversee. Then, after also being felt by others close to them, this purging will be experienced throughout the Church in southern Ohio.

God's intent, however, is to further prepare His people for the restoration that so many are crying out for, and for the Move that will propel the church into not just fruitfulness, but righteous witness and representation of Jesus Christ in signs, wonders and miracles. The Lord will not be without a people who demonstrate and establish the Kingdom in the hearts and presence of those who will completely honor God-- demolishing the idols of false worship, self-glory and religious success. His goal is to bring the best to the top through an intense qualification process. But His desire is to qualify, not to disqualify!

In Hebrews 12:4-10 we read the Holy Spirit's admonition and inspired application of Proverbs 3:11-12 to the church: "You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood, in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON HE RECEIVES. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; For what son is that his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much more be subject to the father of (our) spirits, and live? for they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness."

Discipline, scourging, judgment-- these are unavoidable for the Body of Christ . . . here and now! But since He is after our good, then we should all the more trust Him and invite the process (Ps.26). If we will submit to this discipline now, we will not only avoid the more permanent forms, we will be positioning ourselves to go through not only the unavoidable discipline of God, but go forward into the Supernatural Move that has been promised. And for those who successfully persevere, it will be truly Glorious!

Early in March-- as I was in prayer before daylight-- I heard the Spirit say: "Joel 2:1." There I found the words: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; surely it is near." I was reminded of the January 6 experience, and I took it

as a call to get this to you.

We need to differentiate between the willful action of the Devil and the intentional lack of protection from God in order to refine us and strengthen our resolve to follow Him and only Him. We need to know when it's time to rightly apply the words "you meant it for harm, but God meant it for good." True, it is the enemy who is let loose for a season, and there will be buildings that burn, hearts that fail, marriages that crumble, and even ministries that dissolve (Editor note: this was written in March 2000 & there have been many instances of the above in this region since that time). But in the same way the law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, so is our trouble a crucible of refinement and an incentive to keep the hedge of protection fully in place through repentance, persistent pursuit of holiness, and proclaiming the Word of God in an uncompromised manner. And let us not forget that although the enemy wants to use our trial as an indictment against us, the passage above shows that throughout the progressive revelation of God the trial is the assurance of our authentic-standing as Sons and Daughters.

Our difficulty-- our "light and momentary affliction,"-- is the assurance of our coming restoration and double-portion blessing for all that's been lost (2Cor.4/Job 42). Our challenge is to render the efforts of the Devil fruitless and make everything he tries play into the hands of God by a faithful, consistent, and intentional resolve to see all that God wants accomplished. Regardless.

So we must draw near to God with all sincerity and truthfulness, realizing that He is issuing the call to come unto Him (Isa.65:12; 66:4). We need to forget our grocery list of wants, set aside what we believe we need (Isa.58:3-14), and come unto Him for His sake. Until His purpose is more important than the religious offering of our various works, we will neither be in the proper renewal of mind for understanding His ways, nor be authentically released for going forth according to His purpose in southern Ohio! The defining characteristic of His purpose is the work He wants to accomplish in us, which then supernaturally flows through us (2Cor.1:3-5).

He always- especially as ministers of the Gospel- prioritizes participation with Him above productivity for Him. Until we learn this lesson (once and for all), we will not move forward as He intends.

The judgment that is already beginning among us will continue to separate those who go forward from those who wish to stay as they are. God is not allowing anyone to stay in their rut, however. And those who wish for everything to be better-- but are without a vision or willingness to put themselves into position with God so improvements can be made, are simply fooling themselves. It's time to seek the Lord with humility, and not be surprised by what He will require.

(Editors note: What God is after is the Apostolic ministry of the Acts Church. The following is offered not only as an introduction for understanding this type of leadership, church, & ministry, but as foundation for the rest of the teachings contained on this webpage).