

Be Careful What You Call 'Divine Judgment'

I absolutely believe that divine judgment is in the earth today, and I reject the teaching that states that from the cross until the Second Coming, God's wrath will not be poured out on the earth. There is a substantial amount of New Testament evidence that stands against this doctrine.

At the same time, we better be very careful before we start calling specific events "divine judgment." It is dangerous and unwise to bear false witness about the Lord.

Recently, a caller to my *Line of Fire* radio broadcast stated that the Boston Marathon bombing was a divine judgment, one of the main causes being the legalizing of same-sex "marriage" in Massachusetts in 2004.

This reminded me of the statement made by one of our most respected, national Christian leaders immediately after the 9/11 tragedy in 2001. He said, "I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists and the feminists and the gays and the lesbians who are actively trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who try to secularize America ... I point the finger in their face and say you helped this happen." (He quickly issued an apology, saying, "I would never blame any human being except the terrorists, and if I left that impression with gays or lesbians or anyone else, I apologize.")

To be sure, our nation has been sowing to the flesh for decades. As a result, we are reaping destruction on many fronts (Gal. 6:7-8). And I don't argue with those who believe that God's hand of blessing has lifted off of us in significant ways. Proverbs 14:34 remains true, whether people believe it or not: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is

a reproach to any people.”

It is a painful fact that we have aborted more than 50 million babies (a sin that contains its own judgment on several levels); that we are the world leader in the production and distribution of pornography; that we have birthed and exported a man-centered, carnal prosperity message around the globe; that we have celebrated homosexuality and denigrated freedoms of religion, speech and conscience—and on and on the list goes.

Because of all this (and so much more), I tremble for our nation, knowing that Paul’s words are absolutely true: “On account of these [speaking of various sins of the flesh, all of which are practiced in abundance in our country] the wrath of God is coming” (Col. 3:6, ESV). At the same time, we must be very careful about our prophetic proclamations, lest we be guilty of misrepresenting the Lord before the church and before the world.

Of course, when a powerful hurricane wipes out a massive, highly immoral gay pride event (as happened with Hurricane Katrina and the Southern Decadence event in New Orleans in 2005), it’s easy to pronounce this an act of divine judgment, especially if you were a local street preacher. Who couldn’t recognize a seemingly obvious connection like this?

But was it an act of divine judgment on the 1800+ people who were killed by Katrina, not to mention the tens of thousands who were left homeless?

Yes, I understand that many innocent people perish when judgment falls on a nation. But shall we tell Bill Richard in Boston that his 8-year-old son, Martin, died, that his 6-year-old daughter, Jane, lost her leg (and endured 11 surgeries in the first 23 days after the bombing), that his wife, Denise, suffered brain and eye damage, and that he himself suffered burns, shrapnel injuries and hearing loss because his state

redefined marriage in 2004? (I made this point strongly to the very sincere but misguided caller who shared his views about the bombing with my listeners.)

A few years ago, I did a radio survey, asking my listeners, "Does God send hurricanes as divine judgment?"

Based on the Word, I had no problem saying that He might well do so, but that certainly does not mean that we could assume that every destructive act of nature was an act of divine judgment.

One caller wisely asked, "Didn't Katrina happen in a region that often has hurricanes and during the season when hurricanes commonly occur? So, if God wanted to get our attention, wouldn't he send a hurricane to an unlikely place at an unlikely time?" (John Piper believes that this is exactly what happened in Minnesota in 2009, when a totally unexpected tornado blew through the city and toppled part of the Lutheran church steeple as the national church leaders were meeting nearby, getting ready to affirm practicing homosexuals for ministry.)

Today, as rescue workers dig through the rubble of an elementary school in the Oklahoma City suburb of Moore, looking for any signs of life, and with overall fatalities currently placed at 24, including at least nine children, who will say that the massive tornado that brought such deadly destruction was a judgment from the Lord? In conservative, God-fearing Oklahoma? In the buckle of the Bible belt? With little children as some of the main victims?

To be sure, I do not doubt that God's wrath is coming to the earth, and I do not doubt that His judgment is already in our land. I am simply calling for wisdom and caution, especially when terrible devastation strikes the heartland of America rather than the casinos of Las Vegas.

At times like this, we do well to pray rather than

prognosticate, crying out to the Father of mercy to bring healing to these gaping wounds, with each of us serving as agents of compassion in any way that we can.

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