

Judgment in a 'Don't Judge Me' Culture

Few things rile Christians more than talk of God's judgment in the wake of disaster. When mass tragedy hits it's become routine for some prophet, preacher or politician to stir up controversy by pronouncing God's role in the matter. The problem for believers, however, is discerning exactly *what* that role is.

After Haiti's earthquake in 2010, multiple leaders in the prophetic movement declared God had judged the already poverty-stricken country for its spiritual ties with witchcraft. Japan's quake and tsunami last year yielded similar "words from the Lord," some of which harkened back to warnings issued decades earlier. Yet these prophetic responses also drew the ire of fellow leaders upset by those whom they felt were misrepresenting God's heart as if He were gloating over the millions suffering through these tragedies.

Around the same time another judgment prophecy warned of a massive earthquake that would hit California and the West Coast. When catastrophe didn't come as predicted, many local believers—particularly those who feel called to California—not only questioned the prophecy's source, but also took issue with the implied theological ramifications.

This is nothing new, of course, as divine judgment prophecies have been issued—and challenged—since the days of Noah. As Christians, we're continually challenged by our limited understanding of how God's mercy and judgment work in tandem, and what that means in a world facing the consequences of its own sinful nature. But we confuse the matter by invariably equating disaster with judgment.

Jesus addressed this when referring to the 18 "on whom the

tower in Siloam fell and killed" (Luke 13:4). His answer to whether disaster proves God's judgment: "Do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish" (vv. 4-5).

The real issue to be concerned about, as Jesus indicated, isn't judgment but repentance.

And that's what intrigues me with *The Harbinger*, a prophetic message delivered via a New Jersey Messianic rabbi and the focus of our cover package this month. Though Jonathan Cahn isn't naturally a fire-and-brimstone kind of guy, it would be easy to interpret *The Harbinger* as just another doomsday prediction were it not for two things: 1) the profound correlation it establishes between ancient Israel and modern-day America; and 2) its overarching reminder of God's ceaseless love.

The Harbinger is an actual book written as a story, but it's far from fiction. Cahn weaves the factual details surrounding 9/11, the current recession and a handful of other nation-changing events into the underlying fabric of an ancient Jewish mystery that seems to be replaying itself with uncanny precision. Yet behind every revelation emerges a love-drenched clarion call to America from God: *Repent!*

This call is steeped in love, not indictment. It perfectly balances—as only God can do—mercy and judgment, which explains how the Lord has continued to bless our nation while also issuing warning after warning to "turn from our wicked ways." So while *The Harbinger* speaks of judgment, it doesn't pronounce it in the questionable way many prophetic types do. Instead, Cahn asks questions that connect the dots between God's past judgments upon Israel and our nation's current state—and the conclusion reveals itself.

Regardless of the economic climate, the U.S. is in a crisis

like never before, as evident by our Isaiah 5:20 culture that “calls evil good and good evil.” For this reason, I pray *The Harbinger* wakes up a nation called by God to repent—whether that’s in the face of disaster, judgment or both.

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