
It's Time to Weep for America!

By David Wilkerson

July 29, 1996 I have never claimed to be a prophet. But there comes a time when the Word of God becomes such a fire in my bones, I have to speak out what I see and hear. Call it a watchman's message, or whatever you will - but I have to tell you what God has put on my heart concerning this nation!

I do believe God has true prophets - those who are occasionally moved upon by the Holy Spirit to foretell future events and coming judgments. Indeed, on a few rare occasions, the Spirit has compelled me to warn of impending judgments. But the prophecy I bring you now is not predictive.

Rather, I want to take you straight into God's Word - to show you a few eternal principles of how the Lord works. Any Bible student can know how God intends to deal with America - or any other nation - by studying the history and patterns of God's workings in the Old Testament. We can know the future by studying the past!

The fact is, God's ways are absolutely unchangeable when it comes to His dealings with sinful nations. There is no shadow of turning in His ways; He works the same way in every generation - because He is just. In short, He will deal with our generation in the same way He has dealt with every other generation that sinned as we are sinning. And by learning these principles of His ways from Scripture, we can deduct exactly how He will deal with us today.

For example: The apostle Paul predicted to the Corinthian church what would happen to them if they continued to tempt Christ. Those Christians were murmuring and giving themselves over to unbridled lusts. So, Paul simply looked into history and saw what God did to Israel when they committed the very same sins. Paul told the Corinthians: "Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:9-11).

The apostle was saying, "This is a clear pattern in Scripture. It tells you what God will do to you if you continue to sin as Israel sinned!"

The apostle Peter also warned his readers by invoking an example from the Old Testament. He said God would judge them for their covetousness and unbridled lust, just as He had judged past generations: "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes [God] condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after would live ungodly" (2 Peter 2:6). Peter warned, "If you sin as Sodom and Gomorrha did, the Lord will destroy you just as He destroyed them!"

Like Paul and Peter, I bring you a warning based on my study of the Old Testament - specifically, the book of Isaiah. As I read through this book recently, the Spirit stopped me in chapter 22. Suddenly, I began to see how judgment came upon Jerusalem in Isaiah's day - in spite of all of the prophet's warnings!

Isaiah 22 contains a shocking account of a society that had sinned away its day of grace. Jerusalem and Judah had crossed a line - and there was no turning back! The people had backslidden completely and were living as though they were atheists. So God instructed Isaiah to prophesy to His people - to pronounce a "dread release" to judgment!

You see, God's call to repentance in Judah was over. There would no longer be a prophetic voice in the land, crying, "Return and be healed!" Now it was too late. This people had done something so brazen, God could not endure it one more day!

Tearfully, with a crushed heart, Isaiah brought this awful message: "And it was revealed in mine ears by the Lord of hosts, Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till ye die, saith the Lord God of hosts" (Isaiah 22:14). He was saying, in essence, "You've committed a sin that God won't forgive. You've crossed a line - and it's too late to turn back!"

When You Fully Understand What This Society Did to Provoke God to Release Them to Judgment, You Will See How Their Actions Mirror American Society Today!

What Jerusalem and Judah did to bring judgment upon themselves is exactly what America is doing right now. And if the wicked behavior of God's people signaled the imminent destruction of that society, then our sinful behavior clearly signals the death throes of our nation!

If the prophet Isaiah were living today, beholding the wickedness of our nation, he would cry out, "It's time to weep for your nation! History is repeating itself. Your cup of iniquity is full and overflowing!"

Chapter 22 of Isaiah is called "The Valley of Vision." And Isaiah's message here is so clear, so easy to understand, there can be no doubt about its meaning.

According to commentators, Isaiah was evidently standing on a rooftop (or some other high elevation), looking down over Jerusalem and the surrounding valley. What he saw was so appalling, it broke him. He wept convulsively, saying to all who passed by, "...Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people" (verse 4).

The prophet was saying, "Don't look at me. You won't like what you see! My heart is about to break, and my insides are about to pour out. I'm sorely pained, and I can't take it. My people are about to be destroyed!" "My heart panted, fearfulness affrighted me...my loins [are] filled with pain...I was bowed down...dismayed..." (21:4, 3).

This clearly was not patriotism on Isaiah's part. It was the burden of the Lord! Here is a picture of a man broken over his society's sin - something we don't often see in the church today. There simply aren't many pastors or Christians in America who see judgment coming and who are broken over it.

Yet, for a long time, Isaiah had been speaking of a vision of judgment he had received from the Lord. He had foreseen a huge army - a contingent of chariots, cunning archers, powerful horsemen, men on camels - all coming against the city!

Now, Isaiah's prophetic vision was unfolding before his very eyes. Enemy armies had surrounded Jerusalem - and a siege was under way! The noise of military movements echoed over the hills: The terrible, famed horsemen of Elam and hand-to-hand fighters of Kir were marching in the vanguard. War horses groaned and grunted, their hooves pounding the earth. Chariot wheels rumbled over the countryside, churning up great clouds of dust. Infantrymen had approached Jerusalem's wall, and now were noisily picking away at it with their spears and crowbars. It must have been a fearful, awesome sight!

As Isaiah turned from this frightful scene, he looked upon the flat rooftops of the city - and he could not believe what he saw. The citizens of Jerusalem were on the rooftops - drinking and partying! The people had gathered to entertain themselves by gazing down on the Assyrian army as it prepared to attack.

Isaiah was incredulous at what he saw - and he cried out, "Thou that art full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city..." (22:2). All this time the prophet had been walking up and down the land, warning God's people, "Your idols will be brought down. The city walls in which you trusted will be breached. Your glory shall fade. Time is running out!"

Yet, how did the people react? They jostled each other on the rooftops, trying to get the best view of the approaching enemy! The whole city was stirred up, full of excitement, joy and exuberance. The Bible uses a word here that means "boisterous, loud, excited."

People whose dwellings were closest to the wall had good views of the valley below, and they hosted their friends for "viewing parties." They cried, "Come on up - you've got to see this. Pack your lunch and bring the family!" Children screamed with delight: "Look at all the big white horses! Look at all the sleek chariots, and the mighty soldiers oiling their shields. What a sight!"

They were all feasting, getting drunk, celebrating. And Isaiah could not contain himself. He cried out: "...What aileth thee now, that thou art wholly gone up to the housetops?" (verse 1).

I can see this prophet of God in my mind's eye - screaming from the rooftop: "Are you people crazy? What kind of spirit has possessed you? What kind of disease would drive you to your rooftops to party, while destruction sits at your gates? Judgment is at the door - and you're getting drunk!"

I have a question for you: What ails our American society? How can our whole nation party, dance, drink and be saturated with entertainment, while thousands of babies are being aborted? What kind of disease has so blinded our nation that the President could veto a bill outlawing doctors from sucking out the brains of babies just weeks before they're born? What horrible sickness allows our society to continue merrily in its sordid pleasure-seeking, while the elderly are being assisted in suicide?

America is under siege by an army of abortionists, pornographers, drug pushers, murderers of the elderly, coming at us from all corners of the earth. And yet, only a few prophetic voices can be heard!

I am sure Isaiah's voice was drowned out by the partying crowds: "Oh, it's only that old man, Isaiah - the gloom-and-doom preacher. Don't pay any attention to him." And so it is today: Prophetic warnings are ridiculed and ignored!

I Ask You: Where Are Those Who Grieve for America - Who Are Broken Over the Sins of God's Church and Our Nation?

Consider that stupid, blind, stoned rooftop crowd in Jerusalem, celebrating on the brink of their own judgment. Beloved, this is where you discover the flash point of destruction!

What was their sin, which God would not forgive? It was much more than just shutting out God's

warnings. They had hardened their hearts in the face of the predicted judgment!

Judgment was already taking place; it was evident all around them. And yet the people hardened themselves, knowing full well the hand of God had brought down this judgment upon them. Their hardness was the unforgivable sin!

Yet Isaiah was further incredulous: Not only were the people mocking judgment at the door, being entertained by it - but they were celebrating and feasting in the midst of a plague!

People were falling dead because a plague had swept the city: "...thy slain men are not slain with the sword, nor dead in battle" (verse 2). Historians confirm that Jerusalem was hit by a plague at this time. Refugees had fled there before the invading army, crowding into a city with little food and water. Health conditions were awful, resulting in the plague. People began dying left and right. The stench of death was horrible.

But the citizens of Jerusalem became accustomed to the plague. They became hardened to the death all around them - so much so that they could entertain themselves on rooftops while just below them people were dying. They carelessly wasted the city's scarce water, food and wine on their own pleasure!

I ask you: Doesn't this sound awfully familiar? It is a picture of America, in this generation!

We have become like Germany just before that nation fell in World War II. I have a book at home with vivid photographs of the drunken parties that took place throughout Berlin. Hitler was in his bunker, close to suicide, as Allied forces made nightly bombing raids. Yet in between the waves of bombs, people rushed out to makeshift bars, to dance and drink the night away! Berlin became one massive party. And it all happened just before the city was annihilated - with the people staring into eternity.

Even now, here in New York City, fund-raising for AIDS research consists mainly of all-night dancing and drinking parties. I see posters all over Greenwich Village and Soho that read: "AIDS Research Party. Free drinks." Skeletal men, looking like death, dance the night away, racing from one party to another - all in the name of raising money for AIDS research. They're dying of the disease - but they go on partying!

Right now an AIDS plague is spreading throughout America. But I believe something even worse could happen to this nation - because of something I see in Isaiah 22!

Suppose the awful, flesh-eating illness called ebola strikes with a fury in America. (This is the flesh-eating disease that can kill a person within a week.) Or perhaps one of the newly discovered, exotic diseases begins to snuff out life in mere days. Thousands of Americans would begin dying quickly.

Our country would be as it was during the nineteenth century, when smallpox raged through the streets. During that awful plague, people fled the cities. But after a while, when the sight of funerals and hearses became commonplace, the people grew enured to it all.

If such an outbreak were to decimate the United States today, do you think our nation would turn to God? Would we wake up and repent? Would the ungodly cry out for mercy and healing?

No! On the contrary - America would be swamped with the most wild, unbelievable orgies and parties in the history of our nation. Indeed, that has been the history of every nation that turned from God as we have!

As everything neared collapse in Jerusalem, the rich and influential made provisions to flee to safety: "All thy rulers are fled together...all that are found in thee are bound together, which have fled from afar...." (verse 3).

Those seeking to flee were leaders, people "in the know." And they knew Isaiah was right - that society had reached a point of no return: "For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains" (verse 5).

These people raced about, looking to make one last financial "kill" by which they could secure themselves against society's breakdown. Their attitude was, "I've got to make a bundle quickly. Then I'll find a safe, secure place to hide."

Yet Isaiah knew exactly what they were up to. He pointed out that the city treasurer, Shebna, had "...hewed him out a sepulchre on high, and that graveth an habitation for himself in a rock..." (verse 16). The prophet was saying, "Look! Your city treasurer is up in the hills, building himself a rock shelter. He says it's a sepulchre - but he's going up there to hide!"

Beloved, that is the American dream for multitudes right now! The saying among Wall Streeters, businesspeople and politicians today is, "Get a golden parachute!" In other words: "Make a killing - and then head for the hills!"

Think about it: Why are so many wealthy people buying up isolated ranches and farms in Utah, Nevada, Wyoming, Montana? What do they know that the majority of Americans don't know?

They see the enemy gathering at the gate! They know America can no longer carry out its suicidal economic policies without crashing. This is not simply a gut feeling on their part; they know the end is near. They are not partying, but preparing!

Yet there is no safe place to hide! Isaiah said to the unscrupulous escapees in Jerusalem: "He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country: there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down" (verses 18-19). In other words: "God is going to kick you like a football, out into the open. There is no safe place outside of Jesus Christ the Lord!"

God, in His Mercy, Made One Last Attempt to Save Jerusalem!

The Lord sent His Spirit upon the people while they were partying. Suddenly, their eyes were opened to the danger they were in: "And he discovered the covering of Judah..." (verse 8).

We are not told exactly what happened when the Holy Spirit came down and interrupted the party. We don't know if anyone went to the temple to pray, or if anyone went to Isaiah and asked what to do. But there probably was a brief period when people at least thought of God and said a few prayers.

Deep inside, they knew God's hand was in this judgment.

Perhaps you remember a similar scene in our nation a few years ago. When the war with Iraq broke out, it was reported that President Bush spent hours face down on the floor, praying with Billy Graham. Congress called for a national day of prayer. Churches were packed. Even the newspapers in New York City called for prayer.

Yet, this lasted all of one week! What happened? The same thing happened in our nation as had happened in Jerusalem: "...thou didst look in that day to the armour..." (verse 8).

When the Lord exposed the people of Jerusalem to danger, they should have turned to Him. Instead, they turned to their own resources - the strength of their armor! They told themselves, "We have good, sturdy shields. And the city wall is strong. We have all the materials we need to fill the breaches. We can fortify ourselves." Simply put, they didn't need God!

And that is just how we reacted during the Gulf War. Television provided daily reports on the mighty exploits of our military. We watched as U.S. tanks rumbled swiftly through the desert, overwhelming the enemy. We watched in awe as our planes shot off laser-beam bombs, hitting pinpoint targets. One general boasted, "We're capable of putting a missile down any smokestack in Iraq!"

It all ended with a ticker-tape parade down Broadway. But was it to honor God, to whom we prayed? No - it was for our generals! God was pushed out of the picture completely!

I am not belittling our military. I thank God they were successful. And I thank God for the soldiers who served their country so well. But the fact remains that America trusts more in its military might than in almighty God! "...but ye have not looked unto the maker thereof, neither had respect unto him that fashioned it long ago" (verse 11).

This is why Isaiah wept so hard: A false security had gripped the people, and God was no longer even in their thoughts. Instead, everyone clung to a brazen self-confidence that said, "We will go it alone!"

America today is caught in the deception of a similar false security. The Russian empire has fallen. Iraq has been defeated. And now we think, "Who is strong enough to challenge our mighty army? There is no one left to bomb us. There is no longer a hydrogen scare." We have trusted in our armor!

But beware - Russia is not dead! The bear that the Bible said would be wounded will come back to life. And that Russian bear is stirring right now. I don't know whether it will happen by coup or by election - but the two or three men who are in line for leadership in Russia are all anti-Christian, anti-Semitic and anti-American. Communism is still very much alive!

These men who will come to power shortly will not be afraid to threaten America or the world. They will not take their finger off the hydrogen button. And right now, the Russian army is licking its wounds, itching to remove its shame before the world. Once it is finally released, it will conquer its former states - and then threaten Europe with a hydrogen holocaust!

A dictator is going to arise overnight - a man who threatens the whole world. Hitler rose up out of chaos, and so will a new, belligerent Russia. Just watch, as emissaries from all over the world start flocking to Moscow. Don't be deceived by the relative peace our nation now enjoys. It is merely the calm before the storm!

What Triggers God's Dread Release of a Society to Judgment?

What final indignation, what brazen act, sets God's judgment into motion? What was Israel's iniquity that triggered judgment? What made God say, "That's enough. Now you've crossed the line!"

Isaiah gives us the answer: "And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine: let us eat and drink; for to morrow we shall die" (verses 12-13).

Even in the midst of their brazen rebellion, God's Spirit was calling people to repentance. Up to the very end, the holy cry was heard in the streets: "Weep, mourn, put on sackcloth!"

But instead of mourning, the people partied on! Instead of grieving and weeping, they reveled with food and wine. They reasoned, "By this time tomorrow we'll all be dead. Why should we save any of the livestock? Let's slay all the sheep and have one final, gluttonous feast. Quick - bring out the wine barrels. We'll go out stoned!"

So they danced and drank on the rooftops, watching as the enemy moved into place: Chariots lined up in row after row. Battering rams rolled into position. Legions of cavalymen stood battle ready. Already, breaches were being made in the wall. In just a few more hours, it would all be over. The citizens of Jerusalem knew they were going to die - that they were facing eternity.

I would like to tell you that at the hour of the reality of death, people flocked to the temple to pray. I would like to tell you that they sought out Isaiah, begging him to tell them how to change God's mind and remove the enemy from their gates. But they didn't! Fatalism had already taken over - and the people preferred to face death as atheists!

Up to this point they could have been saved. The Spirit was still calling them to repentance. But now, no amount of mercy, fear or warnings could move them. It was as if they lifted their wine glasses in a toast to God and laughed in His face: "Here's to You, God. See you in hell!"

This was the final indignity against God - the trigger of judgment! And, beloved, the very same attitude is rampant in America today. Our nation is characterized by what has been called the "sensuality of despair." The thinking is, "I know I'm going to hell. But I don't want God in my face!"

America has stuck its nose up at God!

Why Such a Message? It Sounds So Gloomy!

You may be wondering: What is the purpose of a message like this? Why would God want me to share such a prophecy? I believe there are several reasons:

1. To keep us focused on things above, so that we don't become entangled with the world.

2. To remind us that God is always seeking out people who will stand in the gap, praying for the nation and their fellow human beings.

3. To awaken us to the shortness of time.

4. To remind us of Jesus' words to His disciples: "And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe" (John 14:29). "And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares" (Luke 21:34).

Perhaps you're thinking, "Brother Dave, I don't know how to react when I read this. I feel so downcast."

No! That isn't the reaction of one who is prepared to go home to be with the Lord. Dying is a promotion. Jesus lovingly told us that when we see these things beginning to happen, we are to look up and rejoice - because our redemption is drawing close!

There is no need to be afraid. God hasn't given us a spirit of fear about such things, but a spirit of power, love and a sound mind. Look up - your Savior is drawing near! Hallelujah!