

Judgement begins at the House of God

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Preacher: Iain T. Campbell

[0 : 00] Now, turning back to the portion of scripture we read, and I would like this evening to focus on the verses that we have, from verse 5 down to verse 15, and especially looking, especially taking the first two verses there as a text for the evening, verses 5 and 6.

Sa, Syria, the rod of my anger, the staff in their hands is my fury. Against a godless nation I send them, and against the people of my wrath I command them, to take spoil and cease plunder, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

And the passage we have is a passage, of course, of judgment. And we can first look at judgment and the church.

Judgment and the church of God. And secondly, we can look at two sovereignties. And thirdly, we can look at God's anger.

God's anger. And first coming to judgment and the church of God. Very often, very often, we very often look upon our own nation.

[1 : 32] And we look at the flood of secularity that is breaking in upon our nation. And we come to the conclusion, maybe, that this is a nation that is deserving of God's judgment.

However, scripture tells us otherwise. Judgment begins with the church of God, as this passage clearly reveals to us.

Judgment begins with the church of God and not with the government. Especially when that church is astray from God's word.

We see laws being passed today by our governments in both the UK and our national parliaments that are completely contrary to the world of God.

And are completely in opposition to God's word. And we think to ourselves, no wonder God's face is sitting from this nation.

[2 : 56] However, secular governments will pass laws that seem right in their eyes. They pass laws that seem right in their eyes.

But it is when the church of Jesus Christ is out of step with the word of God. And when the fear of God is not preeminent within that church.

That is what brings the judgment of God down upon a nation. You see, everything flows from the relationship that exists between God and his people.

And that is what this passage makes very clear. It was not the world that God was churching near. It was his own church.

The people of Israel. Now, the church of God, the church of Jesus Christ is not one denomination. But the church of Jesus Christ is made up of every denomination that names Christ.

[4 : 10] And that acknowledges Christ. As Lord and God over the church. That acknowledges Christ as their Lord and Savior.

And as Paul says, as Paul says, If the trumpet, he says, gives forth an uncertain sound, then who will be called to the battle? We have that in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 7.

Now, you imagine yourself. Or I can imagine myself. Going back to the times before the 1900s.

And say you were visiting the mainland. And you went into a church building. Without even thinking what denomination was represented by that church building.

And you could be almost 99% sure. But you would hear the same gospel being preached within that building as you were hearing within your own congregation.

[5 : 21] As you were hearing within your own congregation. But since the 1900s. That's when liberal theology started. Started taking hold within the church of Jesus Christ in this nation.

So that one can say going back to the 1900s. So of course things weren't exactly perfect. We know that. But that's why the free church split away from the church of Scotland.

But from the time the free church split away. And it was. It was in a measure instrumental in bringing the church of Scotland back to the world of God. And from that time onwards. One could say. That the gospel trumpet was giving off a certain sound. The gospel trumpet was giving forth a certain sound. And many were being called to the battle. Many were being called to the battle. And when I walk around the streets of Edinburgh today. And I see these big buildings. [6 : 36] That are churches. And they were built. They were built to the measures that they were built to. Simply because.

They needed to be big. Because of the number of people. That were coming out. To be under the preaching of the gospel. But that is not. The good gospel trumpet giving forth a certain sound. Is sadly not the case today. It is sadly. Not the case. Today. And these big buildings. Are simply albatrosses. Around the necks. Of the denominations. To which they belong. Because. There isn't enough people. Coming out. To provide for their upkeep. There are certain exceptions. We agree. There are certain exceptions. [7 : 35] But you will find. Around the country. Where. There are big congregations. But. Mostly. There has simply.

Been. A decline. There has simply been a decline. And the amazing thing is. That that decline started. After the last war. After the last war. Which is amazing. When we shoot as a nation. Have been praising God. For his providence. During that last war. Certainly. Certainly. What we find. Was a decline. In the numbers. Attending and being under. The preaching of the gospel. But. Before the 1900s. The gospel was. Giving forth a certain sound. And many. Were being called to the battle. The churches. Were more. Or less. Fool. They were more. Or less. Fool. And you see. [8 : 32] This is what gives. Secular governments. The boldness. To pass laws. That they would otherwise. Be very careful about.

Why do they have this boldness? Simply. Because the church. Is no longer speaking. With one voice. The church. Is no longer. Speaking. With one voice. You see. The church. In interpreting. God's world. In different ways. Is revealing. A church. That is no longer. Certain. Of the infallibility. Or the inerrancy. Of God's word. And another thing. That is taking place. Today. Is. That the demarcation. Lines. Between the church. And the world. Are becoming. Increasingly. Blurred. [9 : 27] I don't think. That I am taking. Myself. Out of this. I am involved. In it. Just as much. As everybody else is. But this is. What is happening.

As well. The demarcation. Lines. Between the church. And the world. They are becoming. Increasingly. Blurred. Holiness. Of life. Holiness. Of life. No longer. Distinguishes. The church. From the world. Because the church. Is worldly. The church. Itself. Is worldly. We have a church. That no longer. Represents. Christ. Within the world. As it ought to. And as David Platt. An American. Preacher. And theologian. Said recently. At a conference. He put it. This way. He put it. This way. The church. Today. He said. Is trying to do. The work. [10 : 25] Of the Holy Spirit. With her. Activities. And her. Programs. And what he was. Meaning is. That we are. Trying. Through our.

Own works. To draw. People. To Christ. Now he wasn't. Meaning that. Congregations. Have to have. Their activities. They have to have. Their programs. But what he was. Meaning is. That they were. Putting these. Activities. And programs. In the place. Of the work. Of the Holy Spirit. And we are. Trying. To bring. Draw people. To Christ. Through. Our own works. Without giving. Any place. To the work. Of the Holy Spirit. Their society. Is confused. The world. We live in. Is confused. Because of the. Mixed messages. They are hearing. Coming forth. From the church.

[11:19] And some. Within the church. Itself. Fully believe. That pursuing. A holiness of life. Is simply. Pure legalism. With the result.

With the result. That the garment. Of Christ. Christ. Likeness. No longer. Adorns. The church. As it once did.

As it once did. Which brings us. To the passage. That we have here. And to the second thing. That we have. Two. Sovereignities. It's the absolute.

Sovereignty. Of God. That Isaiah. Has in view. In these verses. From verse 5. To verse 15. In chapter 10.

And when the church. That when the church. Of God. Is confronted. With something. Similar. To Assyria's power. Let us.

[12:20] Always remember. That such. Is nothing. But a tool. In the hands. Of God. It's nothing. But a tool.

In the hands. Of God. And this passage. Is of great. Significance. In relation. To the sovereignty. Of God.

God. And we can ask. The question. What is. The sovereignty. Of God. Well. The sovereignty. Of God. Is his.

Absoluteness. In reigning. As king. Over the whole. Of the universe. And when we talk. About his absoluteness.

We are talking. About a. Reign. That cannot. Be challenged. It was. Challenged. By Satan. And the rest.

[13:14] Of the fallen angels. It was. Challenged. By humanity. In our. Falling. To sin. And yet. We know. That both. Attempts. Ended. In miserable.

Failure. God's. Sovereignty. Is his absoluteness. As king. In reigning. Over the whole. Universe. And he is. Reigning. From this. Glorious.

Throne. Of which. The mercy seat. In the tabernacle. And the temple. Was simply a symbol. You all know. That the high priest. Went into the holy of holies.

Where the mercy seat. Was to be found. Once a year. And the mercy seat. Was nothing. But the lid. Of the ark. Of the covenant. And the high priest. Went in.

With the blood. Of the sacrifice. And scarred. Sprinkled that blood. On the mercy seat. But. Above the mercy seat. Were two cherubim. Shining.

[14:07] And shining. From between. These two cherubims. Was the shekinah glory. The presence. Of the lord. Within the tabernacle. Of the temple. And the high priest.

Had to go into. The holy of holies. With a censer. Of incense. So that the cloud. Of incense. Would obscure. That shekinah glory.

He wasn't allowed. To look upon. But that throne. And it was called. The throne of God. Within the world.

The throne of God. On earth. It was only. A symbol. A pale shadow. Of the glorious throne. From which God reigns.

Over all things. In. Unhindered. Supremacy. There is no. No one. Who can hinder.

[15:02] God's supremacy. Or frustrate. God's purposes. Our God. Is in the heavens. He does. All that. He pleases. Psalm 115.

And verse 3. And the amazing thing. That we find here. Is. That this. Very nation. That he is using. To discipline. His own people.

Evil. This very nation. Is evil. Of itself. It's evil. Of itself. Hitler's chairman.

Had nothing. On the Assyrians. When it came. To brutality. And torture. They were. Absolutely. Ruthless.

Absolutely. Ruthless. And no doubt. That the church. In Isaiah's day. Would have complained. That they were not. A godless. Community.

[15:57] They weren't. A godless. Community. As we have it. In verse 6. Against a godless. Nation. I sinned. They would have been. Complaining. We are not. A godless.

Community. Same. Probably. As the church. Today. Would complain. When the. When the discipline. And judgment. Of God. Came upon us. We are not. Godless.

But yet. This church. Against. To me. Was sending. The Assyrians. They were. Our only church. They were.

Mixing. Their worship. Of God. With the worship. Of the idols. That the other nations. Worship. Why were they doing that? Because. They did not.

Want to be seen. To be too different. From the world. What I'm afraid. Is creeping into. The church. [16:52] Of Christ. Today. We are. Absolutely. Afraid. To be seen. To be too. Different. From.

The world. In other words. They were. Double-minded. They were. Double-minded. And as James. In his epistle. Points out to us.

A double-minded. Passion. Is unstable. In all of. Whose. Of her ways. Double-mindedness. Is nothing. But hypocrisy.

And that. Is what the church. Is. When we mix. A worship. Of God. With the idolatry.

Of. The world. And as we see. From this passage. The Lord's people. Are not free. From God's judgments. Except.

[17:47] In their case. These judgments. Take the form. Of discipline. For there is no. Partiality. With God. Romans. Chapter 2. And verse 11.

Belonging to God. Does not protect. Me. And you. From. His discipline. In fact. It makes us. The more. Accountable.

To be. Obedient. To his word. And when you. And I. Rebel. Against. God's. Disciplines. It means. That we are. Ruled. By a.

Godless. Spirit. And that is. Why. God. Could accuse. Israel. Of being. A godless. Nation. A godless. Church. How many.

Times. Had he. Disciplined. Israel. And how many. Times. Had she. Kicked. Against. God's.

[18:44] Discipline. Many. Many. Times. And Israel. Is very. Like. Ourselves. Israel. Is very. Like. Ourselves. And this.

This passage. This passage. Here. Reveals. To us. Two. Sovereinties. At work. Within the world. We have. God's. Sovereignty. And we have.

Human. Sovereignty. And we see. God's. Greater. Sovereignty. Using. Human. Sovereignty. To discipline. His own. People. Without.

That. Human. Sovereignty. Having. Any. Say. In it. And probably. Being. Very. Much. Aware. Of what. God's. Purpose. Of what. The purposes.

Of God. Was. In. Using. Them. In. Using. Them. What. Was. Behind. God's. Purposes. In. Using. Them.

[19:37] And what. This. Reveals. To us. Is. God's. Supremacy. In. The. Outworking. Of. History. In. The. Outworking. Of. History. Human. Beings. Can. Never. Outflank.

This. God. No. Matter. How. Hard. We. Try. No. Matter. How. Hard. We. Try. And. Furthermore. Just. Because.

God. Employs. Human. Ambition. And. We. Must. Remember. Assyria. We. A. Very. Ambitious. Nation. A. Very. Ambitious. Nation. When.

You. Read. In. Verse. Thirteen. My. By. The. Strength. Of. My. Hand. I. Have. Done. It. And. By. My. Wisdom. For. I. Am. Understanding. I. Remove. The. Boundaries. Of. Peoples. And. Plunder. The. Treasure. Like.

A. Pull. I. Bring. Down. Those. Who. Sit. On. Throne. They. Were. A. Very. Ambitious. Nation. And. They. Were. Wanting. And. Desiring. That. They.

[20:30] Would. Rule. Over. The. Whole. Of. The. Civilized. World. Of. Their. Day. And. There. No. Doubt. That. They. Built. Up. A. Great. Empire. Through. Their. Ambition. They. Built. Up.

A. Great. And. Terrifying. Empire. Through. Their. Ambition. But. God. In. Employing. Human. Ambition. In. Order. To. Discipline. His. Own. People. That. In. No. Way. Excuses. Human. Arrogance.

And. We. Find. Two. Truths. Brought. Before. Us. In. This. Passage. The. First. Truth. Is. Human. History. Confuse. As. It. May. Be.

Is. Very. Much. Under. The. Influence. Of. God's. Will. It's. Very. Much. Under. The. Influence. Of. God's. Will. This. Was. God's.

[21:24] Will. This. Was. God's. Will. In. 722. BC. This. Was. God's. Will. That. Israel.

Would. Be. Conquered. By. As. Syria. It. Was. Also. God's. Will. In. 586. Or. 587. BC. That. Babylon.

Would. Capture. Judah. And. Raise. The. Holy. City. And. The. Temple. To. The. Ground. Empty.

The. Promised. Land. Of. God's. Covenant. People. This. Was. God's. Will. Which. Brings. Us. To. The. Final. Thing. That.

We. Have. Here. God's. Anger. The. Second. Truth. That. Is. Brought. Before. Us. In. This. Passage. And. It's. A. Very. Precious. Truth. For.

[22:17] God's. People. It. Is. This. When. The. Church. Seems. Defeated. As. Was. The. Case. Here. God.

Is. Not. Defeated. And. The. Other. Truth. That. You. Can. Tie. To. This. One. As. Well. Is. That. When.

That. It. Seems. Here. As. If. God. Is. On. The. Side. Of. The. Victar. Yet. He. Is. Not. Yet. He. Is. Not. And. As. We. See. This. Flood. Of. Secularity.

Breaking. In. Upon. Our. Own. Nation. And. We. Question. Where. Is. God. Why. Is.

He. Remaining. Silent. And. We. Look. At. The. Providence. As. It. Is. Outwork. Within. Our. Nation. And. It. Seems. As. If. God. Is.

[23:10] On. The. Side. Of. The. Victar. Outwork. In. His. Providence. To. The. Advantage. Of. The. Powers. Of. Darkness. Of. The. Worldly.

Powers. When. We. Cry. To. Why. Aren't. you. Blessing. The. Gospel. Why. Aren't. you. Visiting. Us. With. Days. Of. Revival. But. We. Are. Getting.

The. Answer. Well. Let. Us. Take. Courage. From. These. Two. Truths. But. When. The. Church. Seems. Defeated. As.

She. Seems. Today. As. It. Seems. The. Case. Today. God. Is. Not. Defeated. It. When.

God. Seems. To. Be. On. The. Side. Of. The. Victor. As. He. Was. Here. Yet. He. Is. Not. When. We. Could. Look. At. The.

[24:02] Providence. As. The. To. Is. Being. Outworked. And. The. The. Advance. That. Is. Made. By. The. Secular. Poish. Within. Our. Midst. And. We. Think. God. Is. On. The. I.

Will. Not. Leave. You. Nor. Forsake. You. And. He. Remains. Present. With. His. Own. You. See. God. Judges. Arrogant. People. And. Nations. Even. When. He. Seems. To. Be. Using. Them. For. His. Own. Higher. Purposes.

Assyria. As. We. Find. Here. Became. Arrogant. And. Boastful. Thinking. That. There. Was. No. Nation. On. Earth. That. Could. Stand. Up. Against.

Them. And. We. Find. That. In. Sennacherib. Speech. To. The. People. Of. Judah. When. He. When. The. Assyrians. Laid. Siege. To. Jerusalem. And.

[25:03] Sennacherib. Says. To. Them. Look. He. Said. What. Happened. To. The. Gods. Of. The. Other. Nations. We. Brought. Them. To. Nothing. And.

Do you think, he said, that your God is going to be any different? That your God is going to help you? No, he is not. We will reduce him to nothing just the same as we reduce the gods of the other nations.

Where Zanaharab was making his mistake was here. That the gods of the other nations were simply dumb idols. But the God of Israel was a Persian.

Was a Persian. Who had great care. And who showed great concern for his people. And he soon showed Zanaharab and Assyria.

That he could bring them to nothing. In the blinking of an eye. And that is exactly what happened. But Assyria here had become boastful, arrogant, thinking that there was no nation on earth that could stand up to them.

[26:10] And you see, God brings to judgment. Every form of human deceit and pride. Because he alone knows the heart as we have it in verse 12.

God alone knows the heart. He will judge. And he will take to judgment. Every form of human deceit and pride. God has appointed within.

This passage reveals to us. That God has appointed within history. He will take to the day. He will bring his people face to face with their disobedience.

There is a day of final judgment awaiting us all. At the end of history. Because he has fixed a day. On which he will judge the world in righteousness.

By that man whom he has appointed. By the man whom he has appointed. Acts chapter 17 and verse 31. And the ruins of Syria. The ruins of Syria that we see on our television screens.

[27:20] Evening after evening on the news. The ruins of Syria in our own day. Testify to God's wrath. And you might say to me.

You might say to me. Well is that not just a consequence of. Two. Opposites coming together. And fighting one another. But there is nothing happening in providence.

Without the finger of God being behind it. And the ruins of Syria today. Testify to God's wrath in our own day and age. But the thing is.

Syria has been given another opportunity. To repent. Another opportunity to repent. God's wrath from that final day.

Will not be for correcting or purifying purposes. But it will be eternal ruinous. Eternally ruinous. To the proud.

[28 : 24] And to the boastful. To the proud and to the boastful. God simply will not give place to human pride. Or human arrogance. As scripture makes very clear.

In verse 15. Of this passage. Christianity. Christianity you see. Is not a game. That you or I can play.

To amuse ourselves. God is not a figment. Of our imagination. But is a real person. Who exhibits. Real anger. And real love. God. And he has gifted to me and to you. A wonderful and glorious gospel. Where he reveals that through his grace.

He can recover. What we. Have failed to be. But he can recover what we have failed to be.

However. He refuses.

[29 : 28] Point blank. To negotiate. With my stop on pride. And your stop on pride. And he refuses. Point blank.

To negotiate. With my seeking after vainglory. Or your seeking after vainglory. God judges. His judge.

Why? Why? Why does God judge his people? Because he loves them. And because they matter to him.

And because he wants them to reach that goal. That he has in view for them. The goal of Christ likeness. The goal of Christ likeness.

So. Let's put the question. What is God's wrath? What is God's wrath? What is God's anger? Well. As one theologian put it.

[30 : 25] God's wrath is his active. Determined opposition. To all that is evil. To all that is evil. God's wrath is there.

As a result of old defiance to his will. You might be thinking. Well. That should not be there at all. Surely a God of love should not be angry. Well. His wrath is there as a result of old defiance. To his will. God's love you see.

Or let's. Sorry. God's holiness. Can never be at peace. Without sin. God's holiness. God's holiness can never be at peace.

Without sin. And his wrath is not vengeful. In relation. To. His people. So why does he use his wrath against his people?

[31 : 29] Why does he from time to time use his wrath against his people? Does he use. Does he use. Why does he use his judgments against his people? He does it. To cut away.

Every sore. That is still to be found in me and you. That is offensive to his holiness. His wrath you see acts like a surgeon cutting away a deadly tumor.

God as we know. Removed the guilt from sinners through the cross of Jesus Christ. And through his judgments.

He will remove. All of sin. That still remains. Within his people. That still remains within his people. You see. Every injustice. Every suffering. That we find within this world.

[32 : 36] Will be no more. When Christ's kingdom. Is consummated. And at the consummation.

Of Christ's kingdom. A better world. Will be brought in. And our imaginations. Can never perceive. And God's judgments.

And disciplines. Against his people. Is to prepare them. For that better world. And to make them fit. To take their place.

In that better world. That is to come. Are you a part of God's church today?

And after hearing all that. You might be thinking to yourself. Well I'm just as well out of it. No you're not. Do you desire. To be part of God's church.

[33 : 40] Do you desire. To be in fellowship. With this God. Who works all things together.

For the good of those who love him. And who are the called. According to his purpose. Even his discipline. Even his judgments. Are for the good of his people.

Do you want. To know this God. And do you want to be under. Whose guidance.
And whose care. And whose protection. Well may it be so for you. And may you be found. Along
with God's people.
Inhabiting this. Better world. That is to come. When Christ's kingdom. Is consummated. Let us pray.