

GOD HAS HIS OWN JUDGMENT CLOCK

Psalm 75: 1-10, Isaiah 11: 1-5 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

How many of you have been in an earthquake? Have you felt the mountains tremble? In San Francisco on October 17, 1989, the brown hills surrounding the city shook. People of all ages cowered and ran for cover. The 7.1 quake collapsed a section of the Bay Bridge. The earthquake killed 62 people, injured 3,757 people and left 12,000 homeless. Beloved, a great day is coming when the Risen Christ will appear the second time and the world as we know it will end. The mountains will tremble. All marketplace trading will cease. Justice will be weighed in the balances once for all. For all those who know Jesus personally, those who have rounded the bases of faith, they will know they are headed for home. This will be our hope, our blessed hope—the hope for which we have longed. But for those warming the bench in the dugout of doubt and skepticism, it will be a frightful doubleheader. A returning King of Kings will climax a cataclysmic Armageddon. When will this happen? We don't know, but we see the signs and it may well not be very much longer. Interestingly, at the moment of the earthquake in San Francisco, the Oakland Athletics and the San Francisco Giants were playing Game 3 in the 1989 World Series. Tragically, while death struggles were being fought and lost across town, the World Series umpires yelled, "Play ball!" The game kept going with shouts of joy from the stands which were mixed with tears of grief and loss in many homes. The mountains had trembled. When God's judgment clock is full, there will be no more earthly cries of "Play Ball!" God will call the shots.

As we turn to Psalm 75, the background of the words of Asaph is the dramatic, miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the King of Assyria, Sennacherib's army when he threatened to annihilate Judah's King Hezekiah and his army. Hezekiah turned to the Lord and that night the angel of the Lord struck down 185,000 men without a fight. Sennacherib retreated home to Nineveh. But let's go back a moment. Sennacherib's General Rabshekah had taunted all Israel and promised them that they soon would be eating their excrement and drinking their own urine. For Assyria, the mountains were to rumble and tremble that night and God came down in judgment to defeat them. The writer of the psalm, Asaph wanted the psalm sung to the tune of "Do Not Destroy." Why? It was because the children of Israel had pleaded with God, "Do Not Destroy!" It appears this tune was to remind all Israel of their song that awful day which they sang to the Lord when they were oppressed and appeared to have no hope. Turn for a moment with me to the Book of Isaiah 36: 10-12. These are the words of three leaders of Judah who was screaming his threats against King Hezekiah. Listen! "Moreover, is it without the

LORD that I have come up against this land to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it.” Then Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah said to General Rabshakeh, “Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it. Do not speak to us in the language of Judah within the hearing of the people who are on the wall.” But General Rabshakeh said, “Has my master sent me to speak these words to your master and to you, (alone) and not to the men sitting on the wall, who are doomed with you to eat their own dung and drink their own urine?” To think of Judah winning the battle and of God judging the nation of Assyria was then almost unthinkable.

You may say, “Well, pastor, we don’t face hard times in America like that. The stock market fluctuates, but we’ll be okay. Oh no! The Rabshekah of our day has targeted those of us in ministry and all of us in Bible believing churches. At the graduation of Phoenix seminary, the president quoted just how bad it was for students getting their masters of divinity and going into the pastorate. He quoted from a brand new book this year called “Why Pastors Quit.” Let me quote a paragraph: “Fifty percent of all ministers starting out will not last 5 years. One out of every ten ministers will actually retire as a minister in some form. And 4,000 new churches begin each year while 7,000 churches close. The statistics speak for themselves. Working in ministry – whether you’re a full-time pastor or a bi-vocational pastor balancing a job and a church – can be challenging. Families suffer discouragement and depression – amongst a gamut of other things that run like a river in the lives of those who sacrifice their own life to the cause of the church. Most pastors are overworked. 90% of pastors report working between 55 to 75 hours per week and 50% feel unable to meet the demands of their job. 70% of pastors feel grossly underpaid. 90% feel they are inadequately trained to cope with the ministry demands and 90% of pastors said the ministry was completely different than what they thought it would be like before they entered the ministry. Many pastors struggle with depression and discouragement. 70% of pastors constantly fight depression and 50% of pastors feel so discouraged that they would leave the ministry if they could. Most pastor’s families are negatively impacted. 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. 80% of spouses feel the pastor is overworked and feel left out and under-appreciated by church members. Many pastors are lonely. 70% do not have someone they consider a close friend and 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month.” What kind of a president of a seminary begins his graduation charge reporting to pastors graduating about a future this bleak? Why do I report this? I do so to let you know that there are many more kinds of battles than just those fought by swords and spears and catapults and vulgar threats. When battles

rage, has God forgotten He is the Judge? Never! Nevertheless, God has His own judgment clock.

Be certain of the one big idea in this psalm. God is coming soon as Judge to put down the wicked and to reward and exalt the righteous. Notice in verse one, the righteous anticipate God's judgment with shouts of praise—"We give thanks to you, O God." The righteous proclaim the presence of God as being near. "We give thanks, for Your name is near." The righteous know that God's judgment is included in God's wondrous works, saying, "We recount Your wondrous deeds." As I have meditated on this psalm, I see three strong assurances in Asaph's words—strong assurances related to who He is as God the Judge. What are they?

GOD THE JUDGE CONTROLS THE FINAL JUDGMENT. (I.) Notice verses 2, 3. "At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars. Selah." Beloved, God is in control of the final judgment and He has set the time. Do you remember the disciples speaking to our risen Lord just before His ascension in Acts 1: 6, 7? We read, "So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them, 'It is not for you know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority.'" Notice these words in Psalm 75: 2—"At the set time that I appoint, I will judge with equity." The time of the judgment is here given, (a set time) along with the principle of how He judges, (with equity) along with the certainty of His judgment is declared—I will appoint the set time." When God's time for judgment comes, He will act, and not before this schedule and not behind this schedule. God has His own clock, His own internal and eternal clock, His own chronology. Sometimes His delays seem to go hard on us as saints, when we think of those 248 Nigerian young ladies 12-14 who have been abducted and held and assaulted and sold into slavery as one of many multiple wives. Many of them are Christian young ladies praying to God for help. Sometimes, it seems to go easy for the wicked, but in truth, there is nothing about the judgment of the wicked that will go easy. Nothing! The assault on the fifteen year old young lady assaulted and left outside of Rock Springs this week, does God care? Is God going to respond? He will on His timetable. May it be soon, Lord!

When the time for God's final judgment comes, He will judge uprightly with equity. He will judge swiftly. Wickedness will never go unpunished and righteousness will never go unrewarded. Further notice how God calls attention to Himself in verse 2. Repeat the verse. "I...appoint... I will judge. God can afford to wait, but don't listen to the mockers about His delays. His delays should never lead

us to be despondent. His delays should never lead sinners to presume, for when the hour comes, at the set time that God appoints, judgment will fall. Nations today are challenging God just like Assyria did in King Hezekiah's day. These challenges will only end in God always having the last word. There are two great truths in verse 2—(1) There is an appointed set time for judgment, and (2) that judgment will be with divine equity—righteous judgment. Be certain during this time of nearing judgment, that we are in for a bumpy ride. Hold on! God won't be early, and He's never too late. God will not send a designated judge when the Day comes. He Himself will sit on the throne of judgment. And when He judges, Isaiah 11: 3-4 states it clearly, "He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear, but with righteousness He shall judge the poor and decide with equity for the meek of the earth." Asaph continues in verse three to present all things as rushing to ruin—He says, "When the earth totters, and all its inhabitants, it is I who keep steady its pillars." God is the Master of intervention and He knows just when to intervene in your life and mine. One thrust of His hand can grasp earth's tottering pillars, and stay them so they cannot fall. What encouragement for God's saints. In the presence of moral collapse and moral order disintegrating, in all the confusion, God reaches out His hand in just in time. Selah. Think of it! Where God is, disorder and chaos cannot and will not reign forever. God's righteous laws are forever making sure that no matter how bad it gets before the judgment, our world cannot get completely out of hand. God is still on the throne, and He is not the author of confusion. Yes, God the Judge controls the final judgment, and verse one calls you and me back to knowing this Judgment coming is part of our recounting of God's wondrous deeds. We need to sing about this coming Day. When I was a boy, we used to sing, "There's a great day coming, a great day coming, there's a great day coming by and by, when the saints and the sinners shall be parted right and left. Are you ready for that day to come? Are you ready, are you ready? Are you ready for that judgment day? I'm glad after 50-60 years of silence in singing about the judgment, Matt Redman has written such a song for our day.

Matt Redman wrote, "Did you feel the mountains tremble? Did you hear the oceans roar When the people rose to sing of Jesus Christ the risen one? Did you feel the people tremble Did you hear the singers roar When the lost began to sing of Jesus Christ, the saving one? And we can see that, God, You're moving A mighty river through the nations When young and old return to Jesus...Fling wide, you heavenly gates Prepare the way of the risen Lord Open up the doors and let the music play Let the streets resound with singing Songs that bring Your hope Songs that bring Your joy Dancers who dance upon injustice Do you feel the darkness

tremble When all the saints join in one song And all the streams flow as one river
To wash away our brokenness And here we see that, God, You're moving A time
of jubilee is coming When young and old return to Jesus Fling wide, you heavenly
gates Prepare the way of the risen Lord Open up the doors and let the music play
Let the streets resound with singing Songs that bring Your hope Songs that bring
Your joy... Open up the doors and let the music play Let the streets resound with
singing.” Praise the Lord with Asaph—God the Judge controls the final judgment.
He controls the timing—an appointed time, He controls the criteria, He judges with
equity. He controls the world when everything totters. God’s right to control the
final judgment finds its reason in creation. The One who firmly set the pillars of
the earth knows how to steady them. Hold on, saints-God is seated at the controls.

GOD THE JUDGE IS WARNING THE WICKED TO REPENT OF THEIR

PRIDE. (II.) Notice verses 4-7 “I say to the boastful, ‘Do not boast,’ and to the
wicked, ‘Do not lift up your horn; do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with
haughty neck. For not from the east or from the west and not from the
wilderness—to Asaph, that was the south, comes lifting up/promotion, but it is
God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.” What’s
this talk about horns? The horn is one of the Jews favorite symbols. It is their
symbol for strength. The symbol was taken from oxen whose great strength was in
their horns. As the Hebrew word, **qaran/qeren** is the symbol of strength, let’s
translate what is meant here. “I say to the wicked, “Do not lift up your strength --
don’t raise your fists at Me.” Don’t raise your strength, your fists in defiance at the
heavens or speak with such arrogance.” Those who lift up their heads or their fists
against God will be cast down. God won’t allow us to exalt ourselves—Jesus said
in Matthew 23: 12, “Those who exalt themselves will be abased and come to ruin.
Those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

So where does exaltation come from? Who decides who gets a promotion and who
gets a demotion? It’s the Lord! Notice verse 6—Lifting up and promotion is not
from the east, or from the west, or from the south, the desert or the wilderness.
Why did Asaph leave out the north? He knew! Let us never forget the terrible
decision of that Daystar, that son of the Dawn, Lucifer. Isaiah 14: 12-15 tells the
story. You remember, don’t you? “How you are fallen from heaven, O Day Star,
son of Dawn. How you are cut down to the ground, you who laid the nations low!
You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God. I will set
my throne on high; I will sit on the mount of assembly in the far reaches of the
north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the
Most High.’ But you are brought down to Sheol/Hell, to the far reaches of the pit.”

Beloved, God will not share His glory with any other. God says to us through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 42: 8, “I am the Lord; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to carved idols.” Beloved, this is a great warning not just to wicked sinners, but backslidden believers who decide we want the glory, who want the controls. The Judge will have none of it. Boasting, arrogance, exalting of self, and speaking with insolent pride is foolishness even believers decide to do. Ultimately, all those who refuse to repent of insolent pride, God will break their horns and roll their glory in the mire. Those who speak with a haughty or stiff neck will be lifted even higher temporarily as Haman who hung on a 75 foot high gallows. Let me tell you the “dimmer switch principle.” The principle is clear. If we ignore God’s warnings, His Word, His promptings and fail to obey, the dimmer switch will turn off the light of God’s light dimmer and dimmer. But if we obey, praise God, it gets brighter and brighter. Proverbs 4: 18, 19 states, “But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until the full day. The way of the wicked is like the deep darkness: They do not know over what they stumble.” Larry Osborne tells of being in the Sierras early in the morning and seeing a boulder and heading towards it to go lean against it, until it moved. It was a grizzly bear cub, and the mother grizzly stood tall. What if he had walked over to lean against this cub? God help our dimmer switch to listen to God’s warnings so the light gets brighter and brighter. Thirdly, and lastly,

GOD THE JUDGE IS THE ONLY JUDGE WHO MATTERS. (III.) Look at verses 7-8-10. “For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs. But I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns/strength of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns/strength, of the righteous, those whose strength has been made perfect in weakness, they shall be lifted up/promoted/called Home to glory.” This is a graphic picture of God mixing a cup of red and mixed wine with intoxicating spices by His own hand—and compelling, requiring, yes commanding and not allowing any of the wicked to get out of drinking their fill, to the dregs to the bottom of the cup. This judgment is a terrible judgment, terrible for those who refuse to give God the glory. The alternatives here are clear—deliverance or damnation. Those of us who give God the glory and let Him have the controls will escape having to drink this terrible cup of wrath and damnation—this foaming wine in the hand of the Lord. When will the whole earth come to discover and believe that self-exaltation is utter and eternal foolishness, the height of folly? Sooner or later, sin and selfishness brings what it deserves and saving faith and humble submission and obedience brings its reward.

The chalice in the hand of the Lord is ready. Those who scoff at the feast of love will be taken by God's hand to the table of justice and made to drink God's terrible retribution, His foaming vengeance with spices of God's anger, justice, and His final refusal to listen to "too late" cries for mercy. Beloved, notice Asaph's words, "I will declare it forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. The horns of the righteous shall be lifted up. Don Moen said it well in his great song, "Think about His love, think about His goodness Think about His grace that's brought us through For as high as the heavens above So great is the measure of our Father's love Great is the measure of our Father's love. In his book, *The Preaching Event*, John Claypool tells a poignant story about identical twin brothers who never married because they enjoyed each other's company so much. When their father died, they took over his store and ran it together in a joyful collaboration. But one day a man came in to make a small purchase and paid for it with a dollar. The brother who made the sale placed the dollar on top of the cash register...and walked the customer to the door to say goodbye. When he returned, the dollar bill was gone. He said to his twin brother, "Did you take the dollar bill I left here?" "No, I didn't," answered the brother. "Surely, you took it," he said, "There was nobody else in the store." The brother became angry: "I'm telling you, I did not take the dollar bill." From that point, mistrust and suspicion grew until finally the two brothers could not work together. They put a partition right down the middle of the building and made it into two stores. In anger, they refused to speak for the next 20 years. One day a stranger pulled up in a car from another state, and entered one of the two stores. "Have you been in business very long here?" the stranger asked. "Yes, 30 or 40 years," was the answer. "Good," continued the stranger, "I very much need to tell you something... Some 20 years ago, I passed through this town. I was out of work and homeless. I jumped off a boxcar. I had no money and I had not eaten for days. I came down that alley outside and when I looked into your store window, I saw a dollar bill on the cash register. I slipped in and took it. Recently I became a Christian. I was converted and accepted Christ as my personal Savior. I know now it was wrong of me to steal that dollar bill...and I have come to pay you back with interest and to beg your forgiveness." When the stranger finished his confession, the old storekeeper began to weep as he said, "Would you do me a favor? Would you please come next door and tell that story to my brother?" Of course, with the second telling, the two brothers were reconciled with many hugs and apologies and uncontrollable tears. Sometimes, we don't have to wait for the final judgment. God gives us a foretaste here and vindicates the righteous, wiping the tears from our eyes, and yes, the truth finally comes out. The Judge uses His own time clock. Do we need to get something right with God today before the judgment? Let's pray!

