

Let me share with you what I believe God has shown me about His judgments on America - judgments that have already begun. Recently, while deep in prayer, these words rang over and over in my spirit: "The beggars are a sign! The beggars are a sign!"

I thought of the more than 60,000 homeless people, many of them beggars, roaming the streets. If you stop your car at an intersection in New York City, beggars swarm around the car, blocking the road with signs, wiping your windshield with filthy rags and begging for small change. Many are becoming increasingly belligerent, menacing and violent.

Thousands of these beggars are just kids - teenagers who sleep in abandoned cars and trucks and dilapidated, rat-infested buildings. They are lost in a drug-crazed world of crack and AIDS. Many sell their bodies for a fix, offering sexual favors for as little as 25 cents!

When you look into their eyes and sunken faces, you see a picture of hell. Some long for death, in order to escape their prison of drugs. Others are dying already, consumed with AIDS, chlamydia, tuberculosis, pneumonia and all kinds of cancer.

Poverty alone hasn't driven them to the streets - it has also been the work of a demonic spirit! A perfect example of this is Billie Boggs, a homeless woman from Manhattan. She has made international headlines by collecting welfare and refusing any kind of shelter. Even when she's given money, she prefers the streets. Right now, she is sitting on a subway grate on the Upper East Side, cursing passers-by - insane and still begging.

The Beggars Are a Sign!

This city and all its agencies are dumbfounded. "What is going on?" they're asking. "Why this sudden appearance of an army of hopeless beggars in the last two years?"

During this judgment brought upon Israel, Isaiah cried, *"Thy sons have fainted, they lie at the head of all the streets [intersections], as a wild bull in a net; they are full of the fury of the Lord, the rebuke of thy God."* (ISA 51:20).

This is a divine rebuke - a witness of the full fury of God. The young are lying in the streets as a visible sign that cannot be ignored! During the most prosperous time in American history - a period of our lowest unemployment - a period of our lowest unemployment - an army of homeless beggars has arisen. How true it is that *"...righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."* (PROV 14:34).

Before I go any further about the fact that these beggars are a sign of judgment, let me show you from Scripture how anxious God is to get His warnings across to us.

Old Testament Signs

The Old Testament is full of vividly illustrated sermons by the prophets. For example, God told Isaiah to warn Egypt and Ethiopia that Assyria would soon attack and take them captive. To illustrate this, Isaiah was to walk around barefoot for three years, clad only in an

under tunic. *"And the LORD said, Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token [warning] against Egypt and Cush."* (ISA 20:3 NAS).

On another occasion, God clearly foretold what He would do to a disobedient Judah: *"...I will do in thee that which I have not done, and the like of which I will not do any more, because of all thine abominations."* (EZEK 5:9). Jerusalem would be surrounded and besieged: One-third of the people would die by plague or famine; one-third would fall by the sword; one-third would be scattered to every wind.

So God gave them a sign, an illustrated warning. He told Ezekiel to lie before the people of the city for 390 days on his left side and for 40 days on his right. He was also to get a clay tile and inscribe on it a picture of Jerusalem. *"And lay siege against it, and build a fort against it, and cast a mount against it; set the camp also against it, and set battering rams against it round about. Moreover take thou unto thee an iron pan, and set it for a wall of iron between thee and the city; an set thy face against it.... This shall be a sign to the house of Israel."* (EZEK 4:2-3).

The crowds wondered if the prophet had gone mad! There he was playing war! Toy soldiers, toy instruments of battle - all aimed at the city. What kind of a sign was this?

Then Ezekiel shaved off his hair and divided it into three parts: One-third he burned, one-third he struck with a sword, one-third he threw to the wind.

God was saying, "you won't listen to my prophecies and my warnings. So look at this illustration, so simple a child can understand it: Those toy weapons represent a real army. Those hairs divided and destroyed speak of what is going to happen to the masses. The iron plate is your hard hearts - which, like iron, are unmovable and stand between My prophet's warnings to you." God provided a sign to Jerusalem!

On yet another occasion, the Lord again illustrated the judgment that was coming upon the people. Almost with resignation, he said, *"It may be they will consider, through they be a rebellious house."* (EZEK 12:3). This time the Lord instructed Ezekiel to gather all his belongings into the street and prepare to move out - becoming an exile. At twilight he lifted the baggage on his shoulder and headed for the wall. He was to *"dig... through the wall in their sight."* (EZEK 12:5)

When onlookers asked the meaning of the prophet's strange actions, Ezekiel answered, *"I am your sign: like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them: they shall remove and go into captivity."* (EZEK 12:11). So we see that God did send His people signs of judgment, as Ezekiel acted out the things that were soon to come.

Jesus said, *"An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas."* (MATT 12:39). This was spoken to scribes and Pharisees who wanted a sign from Christ to prove His divinity. No sign, however, will ever be given to validate His Godhead. The sign given to all men was the resurrection; no other sign of His divinity is needed.

Yet Jesus did call upon the people to discern the signs of the times. *"O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"* (MATT 16:3). Jesus also warned: *"And great earthquakes shall be in divers places,*

and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven.... And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity." (LK 21:11,25). *"And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath."* (ACTS 2:19).

The Growing Army of Beggars Is One of the Lord's Illustrated Sermons

The beggars are a great and obvious sign of oncoming judgment. Even if the government locked them all away - shutting them up in institutions - yet another, bigger army would spring up within days! And now we're even seeing baby beggars: kiddie addicts, coming by the thousands!

No one yet has properly calculated how widespread the use of crack has become. Our government seems blind to and totally ignorant of its dangers. Three years ago the drug was unheard of. Today it is overtaking millions - from age five on up. Even corporate heads now walk the streets as beggars, destroyed by crack in just a few months' time.

In this war, no bullets are needed, no tanks, guns, planes or bombs. Just tiny vials - millions of them - full of little, white rocks of crack: a frightening sign of God's judgment!

Let me illustrate for you what happens when a nation refuses to discern the signs of the times:

In the book of Lamentations, all the catastrophes prophesied by Jeremiah have already occurred. Jerusalem has been besieged by the plundering Chaldeans, resulting in starvation and finally, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. All has happened just as the prophets had warned, and the people have been carried away into exile.

Jeremiah records all this dreadful misery - but he doesn't go about gloating, saying, "I told you so!" No! He weeps and laments and cries out to God to have mercy on the people. Still, Jeremiah has a duty to be blunt: *"The LORD hath done that which he had devised*

[purposed]; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old; he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee." (LAM 2:17). Not one word of God's prophecies had failed. And they will not fail regarding His warning to America.

You see, Jeremiah was saying that the curses God had brought down were only those which Moses had previously warned the people of in Deuteronomy: *"The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high, and thou shalt come down very low... he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail."* (DEUT 28:43-44). In fulfillment of that very prophecy, Jeremiah says, *"Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper; for the Lord hath afflicted her for the multitude of her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy."* (LAM 1:5).

You don't have to be a mystic or a seer to know what God is about to bring upon America - it's all in Deuteronomy 28. The curses prophesied by Moses brought down Israel, and they are also bringing down America!

One of the First Signs of Judgment: The Young That Are Cast Into the Streets

When judgment comes upon a people, the young men become crushed (see Lamentations 1:15).

"Virgins and... young men are gone into captivity." (LAM 1:18); *"In the street the sword slays; in the house it is like death."* (LAM 1:20). And again, *"My children are desolate because the enemy has prevailed."* (LAM 1:16).

In America the enemy has prevailed over our children through the plague of drugs. How could anyone say that all these people lying in the streets, both young and old, hold no prophetic meaning for us? How wrong are those who believe that! *"On the ground in the streets lie young and old."* (LAM 2:21 para.). The prophet is crying, "Look at what is happening to our little children! He says, *"Lift up your hands to Him for the life of your little ones who are faint because of hunger at*

the head of every street." (LAM 2:19 para.).

Jeremiah traced these judgments back to dreadful changes that had come upon the nation. Terrible decay had set in and a moral landslide had occurred. The people had fallen from a moral, upright society into incredible depths of degradation. *"How dark the gold has become, how the pure gold has changed. The sacred stones are poured out at the corner of every street."* (LAM 4:1).

Here the prophet is speaking of the changes among the people and the institutions of society - as well as the decay of the sanctuary. The precious stones of the people, once morally pure as gold, now lay in intersections like broken pottery.

"They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: that they were brought up in scarlet embrace dung-hills (garbage)." (LAM 4:5). The prophet weeps over these young men and women lost in the streets, walking as skeletons with sunken cheeks, dying on their feet. "Their visage is blacker than a coal [filthy]; they are not known in the streets: their skin cleaveth to their bones; it is withered, it is become like a stick... They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments." (LAM 4:8,14). "As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near." (LAM 4:17-18).

As the nation's end drew near, judgment accelerated. Society reached a point where no one had solutions, and changes increased rapidly. The streets became filled with skeletal, hungry poor - formerly moral, well-to-do youth - who now rummaged through garbage, looking for food. These desolate beggars hunted down the rest of society, making the streets too unsafe to walk. Is this not America today? Look again at the young beggars. What do you see? I see a sign from God, warning and pleading us to take note: This image of a beggar is America under judgment. He is a prophetic

picture of what America is becoming - and will be: a lost, drug-crazed nation that's going insane, rejected by the rich nations who have raised themselves higher than us by draining our wealth. God is saying, "Look at the beggars! Look at their faces! That is the future of America without repentance."

The New York Daily News recently ran a cartoon that portrayed children facing the American flag, wearing helmets, shields and full armor. They pledged, "One nation, under siege, indefensible with liberty and AK-47s for all..."

How did this happen to our once-righteous nation? Who is to blame for our downfall?

Jeremiah Blamed the Prophets and Preachers For the Downfall of Israel.

"For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her." (LAM 4:13). Earlier, Jeremiah tells us, "The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?" (JER 5:31, NAS).

The preachers have been telling the Church "all is well" because they are "greedy of (for) gain" (PROV 1:19). They have sinned by not preaching truth, by not warning the people - by putting Christians to sleep on the brink of judgment!

One young man broke my heart as he prayed in our Friday night prayer meeting: "Dear Lord, I named it, I claimed it, I framed it - but when the storm hit my life, I wasn't ready. Positive confession didn't work, and I was left shipwrecked. My pastor had lied to me. I had been deceived!"

"Oh, God! All my friends are still in that church, deceived and not knowing it. They love it! But when the storms come, they'll have no roots, no foundation. They will fall!"

The "peace and prosperity" ministers also mocked Jeremiah. They undermined his message and prophecies in two ways, saying, in effect, "We have heard this for years and nothing happens. Instead we are prospering! Things have gotten better, not worse!"

And, "Yes, it may happen - and probably will - but a long way off, sometime in the future."

Ezekiel addresses these excuses: *"And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, what is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth? Tell them therefore, Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will make this proverb to cease, and they shall no more use it as a proverb in Israel; but say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect of every vision. For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.... Therefore say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; There shall none of my words be prolonged any more, but the word which I have spoken shall be done." (EZEK 12:21-24, 28).*

In other words - God's judgment is now at the door!

America is Going to Experience A Judgment For Worse Than Sodom's!

"For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." (LAM 4:6).

I am going to make a statement that may anger some of you - but it is true, based on what God is saying here: I BELIEVE THAT IF WE ARE TO BE JUDGED, THEN THE MOST MERCIFUL THING GOD COULD DO TO AMERICA IS TO PERMIT THE SOVIET UNION TO RAIN ITS BOMBS UPON US - TO WIPE US OUT AS HE DID SODOM, IN A MOMENT OF TIME!

"They that be slain with the sword are better than they that be slain, with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through for want... The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people." (LAM 4:9-10).

We often talk about God judging us as He did Sodom. Beloved, that judgment was merciful compared to what happened to Jerusalem! Sodom had no famine, no mothers eating their babies, no skin-and-bones beggars eating garbage - no

generation of youth slowly dying, tortured by sin, ravaged by disease. Jerusalem was humiliated, starved, burned, emaciated, tormented, bound and imprisoned.

God Himself destroyed Sodom in an instant, whereas Israel was delivered into the hands of ungodly men. And America's judgment is at Satan's hand: *"Woe to the inhabitants of the earth... for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath."* (REV 12:12).

AIDS is yet another sign to America - a slow, agonizing death that speaks of our loss of immunity, our susceptibility to every kind of immorality. Is it just hearsay or plain fact that in but a few years the multiplying numbers of AIDS patients will bankrupt our hospital system?

Is it just gossip that our jails now operates at 110 percent capacity, and that soon we will have no more prison space?

Is it but a rumor that thousands of children are being molested? That wild, beast-like men are raping female babies?

Is crack just going to "go away"? What about the three-year-old child in Brooklyn who was picked up and used as a shield during a recent drug-war gunfight - and shot dead? What about those six-to ten-year-old drug pushers - including the New York City boy caught at school with 400 virals of crack in paper sacks, all of it for sale?

Can these things be called just some kind of a passing nightmare? Is the rampaging, murder, rape, robbery, pornography, greed, violence and perversion just another American cultural stage we're passing through?

Never! We are now witnessing the total breakdown of our gates and walls - an outbreak of divine judgment on a nation that has grieved God.

But what about the Church? What about the holy, repentant remnant?

What will happen to God's people when judgment has come in full fury? How will the elect survive?

I've sought God about this. I've asked Him, "Lord, will I have what it takes to endure suffering and hardship, with fear pressing in on all sides? I feel so weak. I don't want to fail as so many have!"

His answer to me was this: "David, you don't have what it takes - not now! But when it breaks in fury, you will have all the grace and strength you need to go through it victoriously. When you need it, I will supply it!"

If in prosperity you humble yourself, repent and turn to the Lord with all your heart - then in troubled times you will receive a double portion of strength from God. The Christ Who called you in prosperity will hide you in times of judgment.

In Judgment, God's People Will Rejoice In His Faithfulness!

While He judges the wicked, the Lord Himself becomes our refuge. *"Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee."* (PSA 50:15). *"And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee."* (PSA 7:8-10).

So what if we have to go to jail? A beloved Chinese man, Pastor Gu, spent more than 20 years in a Communist prison without a book or Bible - but Jesus appeared to him daily and taught him the Word! And jail is where the Apostle Paul wrote his epistles!

What if we lose our jobs, our money, our houses or apartments? Then we will all go on Holy Ghost welfare and Jesus will be our social worker! Jesus said, *"Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet*

for your body, what ye shall put on... Behold the fowls of the air... your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (MATT 6:25-26).

We will live as Israel did, on miracles and manna. We will lie down in peace, and our sleep will be sweet. We will become evangelists as did the Twelve and the early Church. We will share what we have with one another - and it will be glorious!

For 40 years our God kept hundreds of thousands of His people in the wilderness. During that expanse of time they had no jobs, no income, no stores, no malls, no cars, no houses or apartments, no bank accounts, no new clothes, no stocks, no air-conditioning, no heaters, no refrigerators or deep freezers, no ovens, no electricity, no indoor plumbing, no stored-up food, no weapons, no mountain hideaways, no doctors, no hospitals, no medicine.

They were constantly surrounded by snakes, wild animals and ferocious enemies, continually subjected to extreme heat and cold and shortages of water - and all they had for shelter were flimsy tents!

Yet God carried them in His arms as little babies. Moses said, *"For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing."* (DEUT 2:7).

And about our children, He has promised, *"Your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, them will I bring in, and they shall know the land."* (NUM 14:31).

He is the same today as He was then - a faithful God!

by David Wilkerson
March 13, 1989

Copyright © 1989 by World Challenge, Lindale Texas

CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLIES INTERNATIONAL, P.O. BOX 888, COFFS HARBOUR NSW 2450, AUSTRALIA