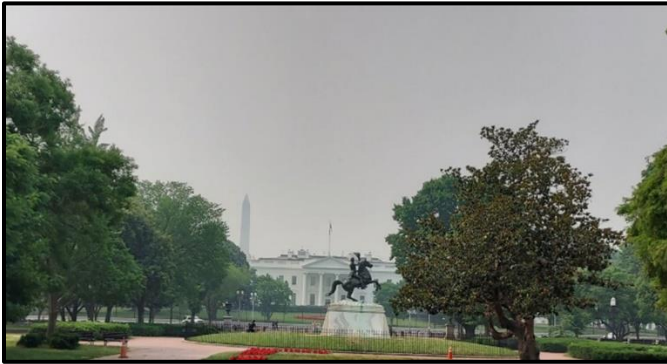


The Smoke of Their Judgment

In the first week of June, my family and I took a trip to Washington DC. We arrived Monday evening and checked into our hotel in Virginia. The next morning, while eating breakfast, we watched the weather report for the day and saw that the DC area was under an air quality alert due to smoke from the Canadian wildfires. We could tell it was smokey as we took a shuttle to the Metro Station, purchased all day passes for several days, and went down to the train platforms to await our train into DC proper. On the ride in the smoke was very evident across the Potomac River, blanketing Washington DC, as we were approaching Reagan National Airport.

Each day, as we rode the train into DC we marveled at the continuous blanket of smoke over the whole area. In fact, on Thursday, the smoke was so bad that a number of places, such as the National Zoo, closed down and people were urged to avoid being outside for long. However, since it was our last



day in DC we braved the smoke and ventured forth to see the White House.

We were not sure how close we could get to the White House but figured that we could at least view it from Lafayette Park. However, when we arrived in the vicinity, we found that most of the area around the White House, including Lafayette Park, was closed off and security was tight. Apparently, Joe Biden was supposed to give a brief speech in honor of Pride Month and then welcome thousands of

guests to what the head of the White House Domestic Policy Council, Neera Tanden, described as the *“largest Pride celebration in White House history, with LGBTQ families from across the country demonstrating that LGBTQ people belong in the people’s house.”*¹ Consequently, we could not get very close to the White House but had to view it from the far side of Lafayette Park.

Despite the smokey conditions we went on with our last day of sightseeing. However, White House officials decided that conditions were too unhealthy for the Pride celebration and decided to postpone it until Saturday. (Ironic, considering it was a celebration of a profoundly unhealthy lifestyle to begin with.)

That prompted me to post on social media:

“Visited Washington DC last week and walked by the Whitehouse Thursday morning. Lafayette Park was closed off and security was tight because Biden was supposed to make a speech for Pride Month and welcome thousands of guests to a Pride celebration on the South Lawn. However, due to poor air quality because of the Canadian forest fires, the festivities had to be postponed to Saturday. The smoke was bad each day but without a doubt it was the worst on Thursday. I doubt that was a coincidence. ‘But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.’ (Psalm 59:8)”

Since returning from our trip the smoke has continued unabated all month, prompting some of the worst air quality alert days across the eastern United States that I can remember. That got me thinking again that it is no coincidence; that perhaps God might be trying to send a message to a nation that has thumbed its nose at God and devoted a whole month to the celebration of debauchery, immorality, and abominable acts: Pride Month.

Consider, for example, Genesis 19:27-28:

“²⁷And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: ²⁸And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.”

In this passage we see Abraham viewing the smoke arising from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Previously, God told Abraham that He was going to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah *“Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous”* (Genesis 18:20). Abraham had argued with God about sparing the city, probably because his nephew, Lot, was living there, getting God to agree to spare the city if as few as ten righteous people could be found there. Surely, he must have thought, his nephew, whom Peter describes in 2 Peter 2:7-8 as a just and a righteous man, must have been able to point at least ten people to the Lord.

Unfortunately, for Sodom and Gomorrah, Lot had been unable to reach anyone, not even his married daughters and their husbands. Instead, only four people, Lot, his wife, and their two unmarried daughters, fled Sodom with the two angels who came to warn them of the coming destruction. And, even out of the four of them, Lot’s wife turned back and became a pillar of salt according to Genesis 19:26, leaving only Lot and his two unmarried daughters to escape.

Consequently, when Abraham looked out over the plain at the smoke ascending up from the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah it was a reminder of God’s judgement and His divine wrath against sin.

There is another coming judgement of a great city for its wickedness and sin prophesied in Revelation 18:1-10. During the coming Tribulation period, the city of Babylon will be rebuilt as a center of commerce, trade, and pleasure. It will also be a center of sin, perversion, and the persecution of God’s people. Like as in Sodom and Gomorrah, the smoke of Babylon’s destruction will be seen by others as a reminder of God’s judgement and His divine wrath against sin:

“¹And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. ²And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. ³For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. ⁴And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. ⁵For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. ⁶Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double. ⁷How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. ⁸Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her. ⁹And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, ¹⁰Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

There is yet another case in Scripture where the smoke ascends up as a reminder to all of God’s judgement and His divine wrath against sin. This case is perhaps the saddest and most solemn of all. It is found in Revelation 14:9-11:

“⁹And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, ¹⁰The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: ¹¹And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

This, like the destruction of Babylon during the Tribulation, is also a future event. In fact, it is further in the future than Babylon's destruction, after the seven-year Tribulation period, after the 1000-year reign of Christ on Earth, and after the Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20:10-15 where the unsaved are cast into the Lake of Fire for all eternity:

¹⁰And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. ¹¹And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. ¹⁴And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. ¹⁵And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

What is interesting about this smoke, however, is that, according to Revelation 14:11, it "ascendeth up for ever and ever". It "ascendeth up for ever and ever" as an eternal reminder of God's judgement and His divine wrath against sin. That, along with the scars in the hands, feet, side, and brow of Jesus Christ, will be a two-fold testimony throughout eternity, serving as a continual reminder of the awful cost of sin to God, man, and angels.

And that leads to a very important question that every person needs to consider: From what perspective will you view the smoke ascending upward for ever and ever? Will you watch it ascend up from within the Lake of Fire as you suffer the consequences of your sinful and rebellious life? Or, will you view it from outside with God, the holy angels, and the redeemed of all the ages?

Afterall, Jesus says in Revelation 21:6-8:

⁶And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. ⁷He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. ⁸But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

###

¹ "White House announces new resources to support LGBTQ community ahead of Pride celebration," Brett Samuels, 6 June 2023, <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/4039668-white-house-announces-new-resources-to-support-lgbtq-community-ahead-of-pride-celebration/>