

PRAY FOR RAIN

By Steve Schmutzer

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It has been a record hot summer and we've had no rain.

My lawn is drier than I ever remember it being. If I sprayed for weeds, I'd lose the only green it has. Each day, I review the newspaper's weather forecast with the sort of interest I usually reserve for the sports section during a Broncos playoff season. I don't need a scientist's opinion to convince me we are in a serious drought.

What is God trying to say?

I'm struck by the Biblical association between God's judgment and rain. Before Noah's day, nobody on the earth had ever seen rain. Water from the sky was unknown, but God sent it anyways, for 40 days and nights. That rain came in judgment.

In Elijah's time, rain was withheld by God for three and a half years. That too, was judgment. Just as too much rain can harm and destroy, not enough rain does the very same thing. It seems that just the right amount of rain at just the right time is what is needed. That prescription is a narrow window.

It suggests to me that God is reminding us of three important things.

First of all, God is looking for our faithful obedience. Secondly, God remains in absolute control. And thirdly, God is calling us to better discernment. All these points are evident in Deuteronomy 11:13-17. Here we find the right amount of rain at the right time is provided or withheld as a direct result of a nation's behavior. Whether we like it or not, there are consequences to the choices we make.

Am I taking this idea too far?

Maybe. Maybe not. The Old Testament has several examples of God withholding rain in judgment. Furthermore, in Revelation 11:6, the Two Witnesses "...have the power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain," and this is clearly done to call an unbelieving world to repentance.

As it was in the past, so it will be in the future. This makes a strong case for the present too. Just as God never changes, so we should acknowledge that some of His methods don't change either.

So, are we in the proper condition to listen?

That's the burning question right here right now. As a child I learned, "If God seems distant, guess who moved?" And because God sends us messages when we stray – including too much or too little rain - I believe we'd all be the wiser to soberly examine our hearts when we become uncomfortable. That's true for rain and for every other element we take for granted.

We must cultivate spiritual sensitivity to God's ways.

It is the right response to all adversity to appeal to the Lord for His mercy and grace. It is the appropriate response to petition Him on behalf of those who are under His judgment and don't even know it.

I drove by a church's sign this week which simply stated, "Pray for rain." I think they nailed it.

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