

JESUS IS COMING IN WRATH

- A. Introduction: Jesus' first message to His followers after He returned to Heaven was: I'll be back (Acts 1:9-11). Jesus is coming back to complete God's plan of salvation—His plan to redeem (or deliver) this world from sin, corruption, and death.
1. Remember the big picture. Almighty God created human beings to become His sons and daughters and He made this earth to be home for Himself and His family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:5-4; Isa 45:18; Gen 3:17-19; Rom 5:2; etc.
 - a. Jesus came to earth two thousand years ago to pay for sin through His death on the Cross. By doing so He opened the way for sinners to be transformed into sons and daughters of God through faith in Him. Heb 9:26; John 1:12-13
 - b. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death and restore it to a fit forever home for God and His redeemed family. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:13
 2. The Bible makes it clear that perilous (fierce) times will precede Jesus' return to this world. II Tim 3:1
 - a. Shortly before Jesus was crucified He made a lengthy statement about signs that will indicate His return is near, comparing many of them to birth pains. He spoke of pestilences, along with ethnic groups rising against each other. Jesus also stated that lawlessness will abound. Matt 24:7, 8, 12
 - b. We're experiencing unprecedented racial strife, along with lawlessness, in our country—on top of the pandemic and its related economic and social issues which are affecting most countries
 1. Even people who don't believe the Bible recognize that we are entering frightening times. It's going to get worse before it gets better. You and I must learn how to navigate through this.
 2. It is critical that we learn to see the big picture and keep our minds focused on the end result. Jesus said: When you see these things begin to come to pass, be elated in joyous expectation because the completion of the plan is at hand (Luke 21:28).
 3. We are working on clearing up misunderstandings about Jesus' return that rob us of hope and joy and make us afraid when there is no reason to fear. You need to know that God is not behind the turmoil.
 - a. The chaos that this world will continue to experience is not from God. God is good and good means good. Jesus shows us this. Jesus is God become man without ceasing to be God.
 1. Jesus said: If you've seen me, you've seen Him because I do His works and speak His words by His power in me. I only do what I see my Father do (John 14:9-10; John 5:19; etc.). If Jesus didn't do it, then neither does God the Father. Jesus sent no diseases or economic woes.
 2. (Lots of lessons for another day!) It would help you to read my book: *God is Good and Good Means Good*. This book will answer many of your "Yes, but what about?" questions.
 - b. This brings us to tonight's topic: Yes, but what about all the chaos recorded in the Book of Revelation? Isn't that a description of God, in wrath, punishing the world for its wickedness?
 4. Let's briefly review what we've covered about God's wrath thus far. God's wrath is not an emotional outburst at sin. It is His righteous and just response to man's sin. (We'll get to the Old Testament statements about His wrath in later lessons.)
 - a. Of course God is displeased by man's sin. But He expresses wrath by carrying out the right and just penalty for sin not blasting people. The penalty for sin is death or eternal separation from God.
 1. However, God's wrath for our sin (His just and right response to sin) went to Jesus on the Cross. Justice was carried out in regard to our sin, and we've been delivered from the wrath to come. I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9; Rom 5:9
 2. God's wrath has been expressed, but you must receive this expression in order for His wrath to be removed from you. If you have not accepted Jesus and His sacrifice then God's wrath (eternal separation from Him) awaits you when you leave this earth at death. John 3:36
 - b. God is not presently dealing with men in wrath. He is dealing with humankind in mercy, giving

them a lifetime to repent. II Pet 3:9; Luke 6:35; Matt 5:45; Acts 14:16-17

- B. We need to begin with some general comments about the Book of Revelation. Revelation is primarily an eyewitness account of the seven years leading up to the return of the Lord to this world.
1. Jesus showed His apostle John the culmination of God's plan of redemption in AD 95 or 96 while John was exiled on Patmos, an island in the Aegean Sea (off the coast of modern day Turkey).
 - a. Jesus appeared to John and instructed him to write down what he saw and heard. Chapter 1 records John's vision of Jesus. Chapters 2 and 3 are specific messages for churches in existence at that time. Chapters 4-22 contain prophetic or predictive information and describe events leading up to the establishment of God's kingdom on this earth once it has been renewed and restored.
 - b. The Greek word translated revelation (*apokalopsis*) means an uncovering, an unveiling of God's purposes. It is the revelation of Jesus Christ—who He is and what He has done and will do.
 - c. Just like everything else in the Bible, the Book of Revelation was written by a real person to real people to convey pertinent information. It was meant to bless the people who first heard and read it—not scare them. Rev 1:3
 2. There are some challenges to reading the Book of Revelation, but none of them are insurmountable.
 - a. John used at least 300 symbols in his account. But 9/10s of them are defined either by the context in Revelation or somewhere in the Old Testament. Many Old Testament prophets spoke of the coming of the Lord or as they called it—the Day of the Lord.
 1. Revelation has more references to the Old Testament than any other New Testament book because God has been talking about the end almost since the beginning of time. Acts 3:21
 2. Many of the symbols found in Revelation were first used in Daniel. They are repeated and explained in Revelation. This was not brand new information. It was additional information.
 3. The first readers and hearers of Revelation were not terrified because they already knew from the Word of God (through the prophets) that no matter what happens, God will get His people through. And, they knew that they will have part and a place in God's kingdom on earth.
 - b. John was describing scenes for which he had no words—21st century life, technology, and warfare.
 1. For example, in Rev 9:1-11 John describes what looked to him like tormenting bugs. But, in the light of God's character, it makes no sense that the Lord would send torment bugs on people. John (a 1st century man) was describing 21st century military technology (such as helicopters equipped with guns) and he used terms that he and his readers were familiar with.
 2. Reading Revelation is like reading Isa 53 which was written 700 years before the crucifixion. For many centuries it wasn't clear who was pictured or what happened—until Jesus went to the Cross. When the events described in Revelation happen it will be obvious what it all means.
 3. In much of the Book of Revelation the scene switches back and forth between what is happening in Heaven and what is happening on earth. As the action and events are being described, informational chapters are inserted at various points, so the chapters aren't all in chronological order.
 - a. Chapters 6, 8, 9, 15, and 16 are a chronological description of a series of increasingly catastrophic events on earth that are commonly referred to as judgments or expressions of wrath.
 - b. The troubles begin when John sees Jesus open seven seals on a scroll, one at a time. The opening of each seal is followed by an event on earth. Then John sees seven angels blow seven trumpets, one at a time. Each trumpet blast is followed by an event on earth. Finally, John sees seven angels go forth and pour out seven bowls of wrath. Each bowl is followed by an event on earth.
 1. Since we have a 1st century man describing 21st century events, exactly what the events are is unclear. However, much of what John described is consistent with what we now know about the effects of nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare on human beings and the planet.
 2. The Book of Revelation describes unprecedented suffering on earth during this period. By the

time the 6th trumpet sounds half the population of the world will be dead.

- C. To understand what John is describing in the Book of Revelation we must go back to before mankind or the earth existed. Before time began, God created hosts of angelic beings. In prehistory there arose angelic opposition to God's rule and a rebellion occurred. Ezek 28:1-19; Isa 14:12-14
1. Lucifer (an archangel now known as Satan) challenged God's right to rule and lured many angels to join him in rebellion. Satan set up his own counterfeit kingdom in the unseen realm.
 - a. After God created this world, Satan enticed Adam and Eve to join him in rebellion against the Lord through sin. And Satan's kingdom was established on earth. Gen 3:1-16; Luke 4:6; II Cor 4:6; etc.
 - b. Immediately following Adam's sin, God promised the coming of the Redeemer (Jesus) who will break the power of the devil and carry out judgment (justice) on Satan and his followers. Gen 3:15
 1. Satan was judged at the Cross but has not yet been subjugated or made subservient. Jesus is coming back to earth to bring an end to this rebellion that occurred before time began, remove the counterfeit kingdom, and forever banish all rebels from His presence.
 2. The Lord will renew and restore the earth, establish His visible kingdom here, and He and His family of redeemed sons and daughters will live on earth forever. Life will finally be what it was always meant to be—no more tears, sorrow, pain, loss, or death. Rev 21:4
 2. Satan will attempt to prevent Jesus from returning. He tried to stop the Lord's first coming by inspiring a wicked king to kill babies in the area where Jesus was born, and then inciting wicked men to crucify the Lord. Matt 2:16; Luke 22:3; Acts 2:23; I Cor 2:7-8
 - a. Prior to Jesus' return Satan will offer the world his counterfeit of Jesus, a man known as Antichrist. Through this man Satan will entice the world to submit to him, worship him, and help him hold on to his kingdom on earth.
 1. This Satan inspired and empowered man will preside over a worldwide system of government, economy, and religion. II Thess 2:3-4; II Thess 2:9; Dan 7:9-28; Dan 8:23-27; Rev 13:1-18
 2. Satan has attempted to control the world through one man in the past with men like Napoleon, Hitler, and Stalin. But the time of the end was not yet and Satan was unsuccessful.
 - b. This anti or in place of Christ man will seem to have the answers to the world's problems and offer what turns out to be a false peace. Through peace he will destroy many. Dan 8:25
 1. The actions of this final ruler and the responses of the people of earth to him will cause much of the destruction in these final years, the destruction described in the Book of Revelation.
 2. This man will bring the world to battle at a campaign known as Armageddon (WWIII). There will be nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare and millions will suffer and die.
 - c. Jesus called this period a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. If Jesus did not intervene, every human on earth would die. Matt 24:21-22
 3. Back to the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Jesus opened the first seal on the scroll and initiated the process of events. The events that occur are referred to as the wrath of the Lamb. Rev 6:16-17
 - a. When the first seal is opened a man on a white horse (identified elsewhere as Antichrist) goes forth and begins his destructive work. Does Jesus make it happen? Does He bring Antichrist to power? Of course not! It is through the cunning of Satan that this man of sin will come, and Satan will furnish him with every sort of power and with pretended signs and miracles (II Thess 2:9, Norlie)
 - b. If God is not behind all the suffering of this period of tribulation, then why is the appearing of the Antichrist and all that follows connected to something Jesus does?
 1. God wants it clearly understood that the calamity the people of earth will experience, the ruin they will reap, is a direct result of their rejection of Him.
 2. God wants John and his first readers, along with the people who will live through the tribulation (and us) to realize that nothing is out of control in the sense that it took God by surprise.

- c. Rom 1:18-32—When God judges people He gives them over to the consequences of their choices.
 - 1. In the context of the wrath of God the apostle Paul described a downward spiral that begins with willful rejection of God. This leads to increasingly debased behavior and produces a reprobate mind that is unable to make decisions in its own best interest.
 - A. Note God’s reaction to this rejection of Him. He gives the people over to their choice (v24, 26, 28)—gave them up to be the playthings of their own foul desires (J. B. Phillips).
 - B. At the end of this age the world community will reject the Lord and embrace a false christ. God’s response will be: You want it? You’ve got it, along with all the consequences.
 - 2. Before this final ruler comes on the scene, Jesus will remove all believers in Him from this earth. At that time the Holy Spirit’s ministry will change and the restraint on evil that He exercises through believers will be gone. I Thess 4:13-18; II Thess 2:6-8.
 - 3. Without this restraint Satan’s wickedness and the wickedness in human hearts apart from God will be demonstrated as never before in human history.
 - 4. This will be unique period of time. Once it begins, in just seven years, this present age will end. Billions of people will not have the opportunity to live out a natural life span before big changes occur. Men will have only a short time to make a definitive choice for or against their Creator and Savior.
 - a. Because time is coming to an end, radical action is necessary to win as many people as possible to the Lord so that they can become part of His family.
 - b. Despite the horror of this period, God’s grace will be demonstrated in a mighty way because He wants to draw as many people as possible to Himself before He comes to reclaim this earth. He will still be dealing with men in mercy, giving them time to repent along with a witness of Himself.
 - 1. There will be more supernatural signs of the reality of God given during this tribulation than ever before in the history of man. They will be like the plagues of Egypt, demonstrations of God’s power designed to draw men to Him. Here’s a partial list.
 - A. The instantaneous removal of all believers from the earth at the outset will testify to people. John being taken up into Heaven before the events began to unfold pictures this. Rev 4:1
 - B. Two witnesses with supernatural powers will oppose the Antichrist. He will kill them but God will raise them from the dead in front of the whole world. Rev 11:3-12
 - C. An angel will preach the gospel. All will hear him so they can make a deliberate choice. This is the only time in human history such a thing has happened. Rev 14:6-7
 - D. There will be a book available which describes to people exactly what is going on, telling them what will happen before it happens—the Book of Revelation.
 - 2. The result? There will be a great harvest of souls out of the tribulation. Multitudes will be saved by acknowledging Jesus as Savior and Lord. Although many will lose their lives, they will return from Heaven to live forever in the restored family home. Rev 7:9-14; Matt 24:14
- D. Conclusion: We’ll continue our discussion next week. For now, let’s close with several points.
- 1. The completion of God’s plan takes place over a period of time and a number of events take place during that time period. People tend to want to talk about the individual people and events. And they get caught up in the details and miss the big picture. Our focus should be on the end result. Jesus is coming to make this world what He always intended it to be! Our future is bright! II Pet 3:13
 - 2. You have to come to terms with the fact that times will grow increasingly challenging. The system that Antichrist will rule over is setting up now as the world moves increasingly toward globalism and away from Almighty God as He is revealed in Jesus. It’s hard to watch and hard to live with.
 - 3. Keep your priorities right. We’re not here to fix up the world; it can’t be fixed because the root problem is spiritual. We’re here to shine the light of Jesus so that as many people as possible can come to saving knowledge of Him. God will get us through whatever is ahead until He gets us out. More next week!!