

THE DAY OF HIS WRATH

- A. Introduction: Jesus Christ's return to this world draws closer with each passing day, and the Bible makes it clear that the years leading up to His return will grow increasingly challenging. We're taking time to talk about what is happening and why so that we can better deal with the difficult months and years ahead.
1. We must know that God is not behind the chaos and calamity coming on this earth. It will be the result of the actions of a final world ruler and the responses of the people of the world to him.
 - a. The Bible reveals that shortly before the Lord returns, a Satan inspired and empowered man known as Antichrist will become leader of a world system of government, economy, and religion. II Thess 2:3-4; 9; Dan 7:9-28; Dan 8:23-27; Rev 13:1-18
 1. Just 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.
 2. Without this restraint Satan's wickedness and the wickedness in human hearts apart from God will be demonstrated as never before in human history.
 - b. This will be unique period of time. Once it begins, in seven years, this age will end. Billions of men and women won't have the opportunity to live out a natural life span before big changes occur. They will have only a short time to make a definitive choice for or against their Creator and Savior.
 1. Jesus called this period a time of tribulation unlike anything the world has ever seen. If Jesus did not intervene by returning to earth, every human being would die. Matt 24:21-22
 2. These circumstances won't come out of a vacuum. They are setting up now as the world moves increasingly toward globalism and away from Almighty God as He is revealed in Jesus. These changes will make life on this planet increasingly difficult for everyone.
 2. This brings up a question: What about the Book of Revelation? Doesn't it vividly describe God, in wrath, judging and punishing the world for its wickedness at the end? We began to answer this question last week and have more to say tonight. Before we add new information let's review some major points.
 - a. First, we must remember the big picture because that tells us why Jesus is coming back to earth. He's coming to complete God's plan for a family with whom He can live forever.
 1. God created humans to become His sons and daughters and He made earth to be a home for the family. Both the family and the family home have been damaged by sin. Eph 1:4-5; Rom 5:12
 2. Jesus came to earth 2,000 years ago to die for our sin and make it possible for sinners to be transformed into God's sons and daughters through faith in Him. Heb 9:26; John 1:12-13
 3. He will come again to cleanse the earth of all corruption and death, restore it to a fit forever home for God and His family, and establish His kingdom here on earth. Isa 65:17; II Pet 3:13
 - b. The second coming—or the completion of God's plan to deliver His creation from sin, corruption, and death—takes place over a period of time and involves a number of events and people.
 1. Christians tend to want to talk about the specifics without first understanding the big picture. They get caught up in details (many of which are not yet fully clear) and fail to realize what the second coming is all about. Consequently, they end up confused and afraid.
 2. Our focus should be on the end result—Jesus is coming back to restore this world to what He always intended it to be. The end result is our hope and joy in the midst of turmoil.
 3. The Book of Revelation is the record of a vision given to the apostle John by Jesus. John was shown the seven year period that will immediately precede the Lord's return to reclaim the earth.
 - a. Chapters 6, 8, 9, 15, and 16 is a chronological account of a series of increasingly catastrophic events on earth that 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, followed by seven angels who blow trumpets one at a time, and seven angels who pour out seven bowls of wrath

one at a time. Each seal, trumpet, and bowl is followed by an event on earth.

1. These various events lead to unprecedented suffering on the earth. By the time the 6th trumpet sounds half the population of the world is dead. The chaos and destruction is not from God.
 2. The opening of the first seal releases the final world ruler (Antichrist) who eventually brings the world to battle at a campaign known as Armageddon (or WWIII, centered in northern Israel). There will be nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare and millions will suffer and die.
- c. The chaos on earth is connected to actions in Heaven—not because God is behind it or causing it—but because He wants it clearly understood that the calamity the people of earth experience, the ruin they reap, is a direct result of their rejection of Him.
- d. Human beings have free will, and with free will comes not only the choice, but the consequences of the choice. When this final world leader comes onto the world stage, the entire world will reject Almighty God in favor of Antichrist. God will give them over to their choice and all the ensuing consequences. Rom 1:24; 26; 28
1. Despite the horror of this period, God’s grace will be demonstrated in a mighty way. He will still be dealing with men in mercy giving them time to repent. There will be more supernatural signs of the reality of God given during this tribulation than ever before in the history of man.
 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
- B. Revelation is not a freaky book added to the end of the Bible to frighten people. It’s a description of the culmination of God’s plan of redemption. It ends with this world transformed and God and His redeemed family together on earth forever. Rev 21-22
1. Rev 1:3—As with every other book in the Bible, Revelation was written by a real person to real people to convey pertinent information. It was meant to bless the people who first heard it, not scare them.
 - a. John’s vision encouraged his original readers because they understood the vision in terms of the rest of the Bible. In other words, the Book of Revelation wasn’t new information for them.
 - b. It was additional information that confirmed what they already knew from Old Testament prophets. Revelation has more references to the Old Testament than any other New Testament book.
 2. Rev 6:12-14—For example, in Revelation, John wrote that when Jesus opens the sixth seal the sun will be darkened, the moon will become like blood, and the stars will fall from the heavens.
 - a. Matt 24:29—This was familiar information. Not only did Jesus make such a statement about His return, several Old Testament prophets made similar statements. Consider one, the prophet Joel.
 - b. Joel 2:10; 2:31; 3:15—Joel spoke of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord. Note these points.
 1. The prophets were not clearly shown that there would be two comings of the Lord separated by 2,000 years. The Day of the Lord was their term for what we call the second coming.
 2. Remember what the Day of the Lord meant to them: The Lord will come to deal with the ungodly, deliver His people, restore the earth, and come to live with His people forever.
 - c. Acts 2:17-21—Peter quoted from the prophet Joel in his sermon on the Day of Pentecost and clearly connected Joel’s words to the Lord’s return.
 - d. Note that Peter cited the entire passage. He knew that there will be a time of calamity associated with the Day of the Lord (the second coming), but wasn’t afraid because he knew that whoever calls on the Lord will be saved. God will preserve and deliver His people. Joel 2:28-32
3. Why will the sun be darkened, the moon become like blood, and the stars fall out of the sky? John was not describing some supernatural, freaky “throw down” from an angry God. He was describing nuclear, biological, and chemical warfare and the resulting effects on humanity and the earth itself.

- a. Remember what we pointed out last week. John was a 1st century man describing 21st century warfare in terms that he and his readers would have been familiar with. Let's reread Rev 6:12-14.
 1. John speaks of a great earthquake (*seismos*). This Greek word means a terrible shaking, not necessarily an earthquake. However, if the earth shook due to nuclear holocaust John would have no words to describe it but earthquake.
 2. John saw the sun become black and the moon become red. This resembles a description of the nuclear winter that scientists say will follow a thermonuclear war. The debris blasted into the atmosphere will blot out light and heat from the sun and moon.
 3. John describes stars falling. John saw multiple warheads streaking through the sky as they fell upon their intended targets. They looked like falling stars.
 4. John saw the sky rolled up like a scroll. We now know from observing the effects of nuclear weapons tested during and after WWII that in a thermonuclear explosion, the atmosphere is pushed back on itself creating a vacuum. Then it rushes back into the vacuum with almost as much force, producing much damage. This violent movement of the atmosphere could easily be described by a 1st century man as the sky rolling up like a scroll.
 - b. Since the production of the first atomic bombs in WWII there have been two wartime explosions (in Japan) as well as many tests. So we have a lot of data about the effects of such weaponry. If we were to describe it in 1st century terms, much of it sounds like the Book of Revelation. Consider:
 1. Rev 8:10-11—John saw a great burning star fall from the heavens and poison a third of earth's water. John saw a nuclear warhead reentering earth's atmosphere and the radiation released by the impact explosion poisoned the waters.
 2. Rev 14:20—John reported that he saw blood for 200 miles (the length of Israel), standing up to horses' bridles (five feet high). Although fighting will center in the northern part of Israel, it will cover the entire nation. Blood exposed to intense radiation (a by-product of nuclear war) doesn't coagulate.
 3. Rev 16:2 says grievous sores form on men. Serious damage to the ozone layer because of the nuclear explosions could produce cancerous sores.
 4. Rev 16:21—John wrote of 100 pound hailstones falling out of the sky. Open air hydrogen bomb tests not only produce intense fireballs and radiation, they have also produced hailstorms. The hailstones put large dents on the upper deck armor platings of the test ships.
- C. Breaking seals on scrolls and angels blowing trumpets and pouring out bowls of wrath sounds strange to us, but not to John's first readers.
1. Scrolls, trumpets, and bowls of wrath would have been familiar language to first century men and women who were familiar with the prophets.
 - a. The prophet Zechariah was given many details about the coming kingdom of God and the events that will precede it. His book is sometimes called the Book Revelation of the Old Testament.
 1. Only the Book of Isaiah has more prophecies about Jesus, both His first coming as a humble servant and His second coming as a conquering king. Zech 9:9-10; Zech 14:1-4; 9; etc.
 2. Zechariah was given a series of visions. In one of them he saw a flying scroll containing a curse or God's judgment on sin going out over the whole land for its wickedness. Zech 5:1-4
 - b. Trumpets were blown throughout the Old Testament period for a variety of reasons—to call people to assembly, give signals in battle, and announce approaching danger. The prophet Joel connected the blowing of a trumpet with the Day of the Lord. Joel 2:1
 - c. Bowls of wrath was also familiar imagery for first century people. The prophets pictured God giving His wrath to the nations as an intoxicating cup so that they reel and stagger to destruction. Jer 25:15-17; Jer 51:7-8; Ezek 23:32-35; etc.

1. The original hearers and readers of Revelation understood that the wicked must drink from the cup of judgment but that the righteous have a different destiny.
 2. Ps 75:8-10—For the Lord holds a cup in his hand; it is full of foaming wine mixed with spices. He pours the wine out in judgment, and all the wicked must drink it, draining it to the dregs... For God says, “I will cut off the strength of the wicked, but I will increase the power of the godly” (NLT).
2. Rev 6:16-17—This period of the seals, trumpets, and bowls is referred to as the wrath of the Lamb or the day of His wrath. That means a lot of things, more than we can discuss now. It’s going to take several weeks to work through it. But in consider these points.
- a. John’s first readers understood that the wrath of the Lord would mean the removal of the wicked from God’s creation (Isa 13:9; more about this next week).
 1. They also knew that the Lord would provide them with a righteousness that would keep them from experiencing the wrath of God. Jer 23:5-6
 2. When Jesus rose from the dead He explained to them that He had in fact provided His righteousness for them. Luke 24:44-47
 - b. Remember what we’ve already said about wrath. Wrath is not an emotional outburst at humanity because of our sin. It is God’s righteous and just response to man’s sin. Righteous means right and just means doing what is right. It is right and just to punish sin.
 1. The word wrath means passion or desire and came to mean anger because anger is the strongest passion. Wrath is used as a figure of speech for the Lord’s punishment of sinful men.
 2. In other words, it doesn’t mean that He’s ticked off. It means He’s carrying out the penalty of the Law. The right and just punishment for sin is eternal separation from God.
 - c. The punishment due us for our sin went to Jesus on the Cross. God’s wrath was poured out on our Substitute. If you’ve accepted Jesus and His sacrifice, then there’s no more wrath due you for your sin. You are delivered from the wrath to come. I Thess 1:10; I Thess 5:9; Rom 5:9
 - d. Matt 26:39-42—Jesus drank from the cup of God’s wrath. The wrath that was due to you and me for our sins went to Jesus. God’s judicial response to our sin went to Jesus. The first readers of the Book of Revelation understood this and they were not afraid of the wrath of God.

D. Conclusion: We have a lot more to say next week, but consider these thoughts as we close.

1. Although all believers in Christ will be taken off the earth prior to the final seven years described in the Book of Revelation, the events of those years will affect us. The world conditions that will produce most of the catastrophe of those years are setting up now—and it’s hard to watch.
 - a. People must be willing to believe a lie, reject God, and worship a Satan inspired man as they turn their national sovereignty and economy over to this wicked world leader.
 1. Those attitudes are already present and growing in multitudes of people—with troubling consequences. This shouldn’t surprise us or freak us out.
 2. Things aren’t going to get better. They are going to get worse. But none of this has surprised God. None of this is bigger than God. His Word assures us of that.
 - b. Don’t feed your fears by meditating on all the ills of society. Feed your faith by meditating on what’s ahead and on God’s promises of provision, protection, and deliverance.
2. The Book of Revelation is meant to give us hope. The plan of God will be completed. This world will finally be made right, restored to what God always intended for Himself and His family—I (John) heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever” (Rev 21:3-4, NLT).