

## OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S WRATH AND JUDGMENT

Revelation 16; text: Revelation 14: 6- 7

October 4, 2020

### I. Realizing God's Wrath and Judgment

#### A. In the Old Testament

**Deuteronomy 20:16-18 (NIV)** However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them--the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.

1. **As we read those words, many of us may become confused as to why a loving God would command his people to do such a thing.**
2. **Some of the new atheists today, like Richard Dawkins and the late Christopher Hitchens, have seized on the verses like this to try to attempt to show that the God of the Bible is a bloodthirsty tyrant, who should not be worshipped but condemned.**
3. **But even Christians are bothered by this command of God.**
4. **And some have said that this was the Old Testament, and that God in the New Testament would never do anything like that.**

#### B. In Revelation 16

1. **But how do we respond to the verses we just read from Revelation 16, where God promises to send painful sores, to turn the seas and rivers to blood, and to send deadly heat, hail, and war?**
2. **Granted these verses are symbolic, and commentators and Bible scholars have different ideas about what these symbols mean.**
3. **But no matter what these bowls symbolize, they sure point to great suffering for many people.**

#### Questions

- 1) **What are my thoughts when I read God's command to his people to kill all the Canaanites, including the infants and children? According to the Deuteronomy 20: 18, why did God command his people to do this rather than to destroy the Canaanites in another way?**
- 2) **Why is it wrong to make a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament?**
- 3) **What are some modern catastrophes that God has allowed or perhaps even caused that trouble me? Why does he allow innocent people and Christians to suffer and die in these catastrophes?**

### II. Understanding God's Wrath and Judgment as the Good News of God's Justice

**Revelation 14:6-7 (NIV)** Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth--to every nation, tribe, language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

#### A. We must see this from the perspective of the Christians who were being persecuted.

1. **They were crying to the Lord to bring justice, and their prayers were joined by those who had been martyred.**

**Revelation 6:9-10 (NIV)** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

2. **The God of justice was pouring out his anger on those who made his people suffer.**

#### B. Now some might object and say that there is no historical evidence that God ever rained down such punishment on the Romans for doing this to his people.

#### C. The bowls of wrath in chapter 16 should also remind us of God's eternal punishment.

**Galatians 6:7-8 (NIV)** Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows the one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

#### Questions:

- 1) **Why does it comfort me to know that God is a just God and will bring justice to all, including those who have hurt me and my loved ones? Why should remove any desire for revenge? (See Romans 12:19) Why else should I not seek revenge? (See Matthew 18: 21- 35)**
- 2) **Does the thought of God eternally punishing people give me comfort, or does it trouble me? Why? Is God's eternal punishment about more than just his about his bring justice to people? Why?**

### III. Responding to God's Wrath and Judgment with Godly Fear

#### A. As we reflect God's justice, we also must reflect on our sin and its consequences.

1. **We are all sinners who deserve punishment.**

**1 John 1:8 (NIV)** If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

2. **And as the prophet Ezekiel declares, the soul who sins will die. (Ezekiel 18:4)**

#### B. So, we, must hear and heed the angel's call in verse 7 of our text.

**Revelation 14:7 (NIV)** He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."

1. **When we read the words "fear God," we certainly should hear a call to repent and obey, but we should hear a call to do more than that.**

2. We should also hear a call to this with a little chill going down our spine and with a gasp at the judgment of a holy Creator who is far above us in all things.
- C. We are in no position to judge God's rule or his justice, but rather we must bow before him in godly fear.
1. In the Old Testament book of Job, it didn't seem fair that God allowed Job to suffer, when he had spent his life seeking to honor and obey God.
  2. And Job challenged God on that.
  3. God's answer is found in Job 38.

**Job 38:2-7 (NIV)** "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone-- while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

4. God continued for a couple chapters, concluding in Job 40:1-2

**Job 40:1-2 (NIV)** The LORD said to Job: "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

5. As we read those verses, we should see ourselves as standing by the ocean with a pail full of water.
    - a. The pail represents all the knowledge we possess.
    - b. The ocean represents all that there is to know about this universe.
    - c. But we must remember, we are not just trying to figure out the ocean, but God who made it.
  6. He calls us all not to figure him out, but to fear and worship him.
- D. Yet there are so many who refuse to do so.
1. The bowls of wrath sound very similar to plagues God sent upon Egypt.
  2. These bowls certainly may symbolize some events past, present, and future, but they also clearly remind us of the consequences of Pharaoh's hard heart, and his refusal to bow before the one true God.
  3. God promises similar suffering to all who respond arrogantly to his judgments.
- E. The seven bowls of wrath, which correspond to the seven trumpets in chapter 8, are also calling this evil world to repentance.
1. When we studied about them, we heard Jesus' words about the disasters which happened when he visited our world.

**Luke 13:2-5 (NIV)** Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish. Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them--do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

2. As Christians we should remember that the warnings given in the 7 letters were not really aimed at unbelievers, but at those who were part of the church.
3. Revelation was written for those in the church then, and for us in the church today.
4. Although our scripture for today shows us that the world often ignores God's call; it also calls us to continually confess our sins and turn in fear and faith to Jesus.

#### Questions:

- 1) Why is it also important for me personally to hear God's call to fear and worship him?
- 2) Is there a right and wrong way to fear God? How would I explain that?
- 3) Why might it be it unwise to try to defend God judgments? Why is it unnecessary?
- 4) Why are so many who hear about and even experience disasters and tragedies often reluctant to change their ways and respond to God with fear and worship?
- 5) As I consider God's wrath and judgments, how have I responded?

#### IV. Realizing the Good News of God's Grace in Christ.

- A. As we read again about those bowls of wrath, and as we see ourselves as also deserving that wrath, we should think about how Christ suffered God's wrath to atone for our sins.

**1 Peter 2:24 (NIV)** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.

1. He bore our sin, and the bowls of wrath that should have been poured out on us were poured out on him causing him to cry-out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me.
  2. He was forsaken and he died to satisfy God wrath against you and me.
  3. Now that is good news!
- B. As we think of Christ, who is the Creator who made the universe, coming to this speck of planet to suffer and die for, we stand again at the ocean with our bucket of water in awe and wonder.
- C. And as we wonder let us fall down in godly fear to worship him with our heart, soul, and mind.

"Were you there they crucified my Lord? Were there when they crucified my Lord. Oh, Oh, Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble! Were you there, when they crucified my Lord?"

#### Questions:

- 1) When have I ever been struck with fear and wonder, because God's great love for me in Jesus Christ?
- 2) How does this chapter about God's wrath and judgment also help me to do so?