

My 4 year old Grant often uses words that I do not expect and consider quite grown up.

The other day he let me know that when his lego blocks would not stay together it was "enraging." I don't think he actually knows what enraging means, but I am sure he feels it often.

This morning we are going to talk about wrath.

Not the wrath of children, but the wrath of God.

Because the wrath of God is one of the most objected to and controversial parts of the Bible.

People will say they like the Bible or Jesus but they cannot stand this God who is so vengeful and wrathful.

Revelation 15 teaches us some and talks about the wrath of God.

But when we talk about the wrath of God.

We need to understand that God does not have anger.

He does not lose His temper.

Instead, we are like Grant trying to use words to explain things we barely understand.

God's wrath is really His justice.

It is His disposition towards sin and His obligation to deal with sin and to punish evil and wickedness.

We use wrath to do our best to describe the indescribable God.

So, keep that in mind as we unpack it.

The wrath of God is His justice and is not like ours.

I. God's wrath will be finished (v. 1, 5-8).

This is the finality of God's plan.

We have been studying Revelation for a lot of this year.

We are coming now to the very end.

We are entering the last phases of the Tribulation.

In fact, these plagues are some of the last things that will fall on the earth.

Verse 1, **"Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished."**

Again, we have the number 7.

This number has appeared over and over in the book.

It appears here again at the end.

Seven different angels come with seven different plagues.

Much of Revelation has been filled with plagues and punishments.

We have seen death and devastation.

From the four horsemen and to the bowls and the trumpets.

Now we have the final seven plagues.

We will actually talk about what these plagues are next week.

But for us today, the important thing we are to note is that this is the end.

God's wrath will not go on forever.

His punishment on the earth does have an end.

He will not go until the entire world is destroyed and there is no one else left alive.

We will skip ahead a little bit to verse 5.

Verse 5, **"After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,"**

The attention turns back towards the heavens.

The tent is opened.

Which tent does John see?

This appears to be the tabernacle.

The tent Israel made while they wandered the wilderness on their way out of Egypt.

It was the sanctuary.

And it was often called the tent of meeting or the tent of witness.

Because it was the presence of God among them.

It represented and was the place God dwelled.

Literally at the center of their camp.

Here, John sees the true sanctuary.

The true tent.

The true dwelling place of God that is not made with human hands.

It is opened up and something emerges.

Verse 6, **"and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests."**

But listen to the way they are described.

Because it is not how we would picture it.

If I hear of someone carrying plagues, I am picturing the plague doctors from the Middle Ages and the black plague.

That is the dark and dastardly image that I have in my head.

And we know angels can have different appearances.

Plenty of heavenly beings can be scary and terrifying like the four creatures.

But these angels are not described that way.

They are clothed in pure and bright linen.

Their clothes are perfectly pure and bright.

And around them are golden sashes.

Why would they be described this way?

Because they are pure and holy.

These are not demons doing evil work in the world.

These are holy angels, who are clothed with holy garments, doing the holy work of God.

Verse 7, **"And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever,"**

Each of these bowls is full to the brim.

And they are full of God's wrath.

because lots of these last few sections have been about the wrath of God.

And here it continues.

Notice though, how God is described here.

It is the wrath of God.
But it is not the wrath of an angry God.
It is the wrath of the God who lives forever and ever.
It is the wrath of the eternal God.
The wrath of the Creator.

His wrath is a different category than ours.
It is not like the wrath of a human parent.
It is not like the wrath of an angry spouse.
It is certainly not like the wrath of the Roman gods.
It is not like those gods who get angry and throw storms or lightning bolts
anytime someone angers them or forgets to make a sacrifice.
The God who lives forever does have wrath,
But His wrath is slow and it waits until the end.

Verse 8, **"and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished."**

Here before the bowls are poured out.
The sanctuary begins to fill with smoke.
Maybe you have been in a worship service filled with smoke.
This would be kind of like that.
Except this smoke seems to be so much that no one can see.
It billows and fills the place so that no one is able to walk inside.

And where does the smoke come from?
You see it is not described as coming from smoke machines.
It does not come from some torches inside.
It does not come from incense or the seven lamps from earlier in the book.
It actually comes from two places.

The smoke comes from the glory of God and from His power.
It comes out of God's very essence.
He is so glorious that the smoke just emerges.

Can you think of other times in Scripture it has done that?
Isaiah 6, when Isaiah sees a vision of the heavenly throne room.
It is also described as being filled up with smoke.
Because God is so glorious.
He is so full of power.
He is the burning and purifying fire.
He is so glorious it is as if the atmosphere around Him cannot help but be changed.

There is a purpose behind these descriptions.
Sometimes you read some books and authors can get accessed of just padding space.
Like some author is just going on and on describing the scenery, the flowers, and the sky, and you just want to hell get on with the book.
I don't want to hear descriptions, I want to see the plot move forward.
We want to read something more important.

Now, if the author is bad and not talented then that is fine.
But if the author is good, or even great, there is a purpose behind those descriptions.
And there is no better author than the Divine author.

There is no better author than God Himself.
And every description in the Bible is significant and important.
it is all there on purpose.
Our job is to ask why.
To search the Scriptures and to pray.
To try and figure out what God is doing.
So, why do we get all these descriptions of the angels before the wrath?
Why do we get all of this before the plagues are poured out?

Because God is reminding us of His character.
He is reminding us of His holiness and purity.

Remember where John is.

In all of Revelation since chapter 4, He is in the throne room of God.

He is standing in the presence of the lamb who was slain.

Every vision and every thing that He sees comes in the context of God's presence.

We read these descriptions to remind us that God is holy.

To remind us that God is just.

Because as we think about the wrath of God.

We have to remember who God is.

We have to remember who we know Him to be.

He is holy.

He is pure and good.

He is righteous and awesome in power.

Two times it mentions that this will continue until the wrath is finished.

Why would that be mentioned repeatedly?

It must be important.

And it bookends the chapter.

It is mentioned once in the first verse and then again in the last one.

I don't think it is because John is worried we might forget.

It is hammering home the finality of it.

To let us know that this is the final outpouring of His wrath on the world.

This will not just be the final outpouring of wrath in the tribulation.

This will be the last of God's wrath upon the earth.

There is more to come in the book.

But this will finish God's wrath.

Now, the fullness of God's wrath is something we might object to.

Those who are not Christians will certainly object.

There are those who do their best to explain away the wrath of God.

Every time it appears in the Scripture, they cringe and interpret every word as strange as possible to try and make it seem not wrathful.

I understand that passages like this are hard for us to read.
They are hard for us to comprehend.
And when our friends ask us about them we might not always know how to respond.

And a lot of times it is because we picture ourselves.
Or we picture the world generically.
Or we picture a neighbor or family member we know who is not a follower of Christ but is pretty nice.
So, all of this seems like an overreaction.
Or like these plagues are unjust or unfair.
But it comes from His glory and holiness.

What we need to understand is the depth of human sin.
We are often thinking far too small.

II. God's wrath is righteous and worthy of worship (v. 2-4).

God is worthy of worship.
This is what comes in the center of the passage.
Right in the middle is a section of worship.
In the middle of our discussion on the wrath of God, we get worship.
A worship service and songs of praise echo out.
And we can praise God that He does do something.
He does not allow the wicked to go unpunished.
He does not just let everyone get away with all of their sin.
One day His wrath comes and it is not just right.
It is not just something that makes us uncomfortable and we have to explain.
It is a reason to worship God.
Because it is right and just.

Verse 2, **"And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and**

the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands."

Here we see another sea.

But this is not the same kind of sea where the dragon and beasts emerge from.

This sea has been conquered and covered.

This sea is like glass and fire.

And standing there are all who have conquered the beast.

All the believers who conquered in the tribulation.

And they have conquered the enemy.

Satan and his antichrist have been defeated.

His image and the beast are gone.

And the people of God are standing strong.

And they stand with their instruments.

They are ready to perform and play.

This is a rousing band ready to worship God through song.

Verse 3, **"And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,"**

So they begin to sing.

And they do not just sing a new song.

They sing the old songs.

They sing one of the oldest songs there is.

One of the first songs of worship written about our God.

They sing the song of Moses.

You can read about that song in Exodus 15.

This song is similar even if some words have been changed.

But it is fitting they sing the songs of Moses.

Because they sang that song after the ten plagues.

After God freed his people from a serpent trying to destroy them.

After delivered them through the waters.

They stood and sang to God for what He did.

"Great and amazing are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!"

They do it again.

They praise God for His great and amazing deeds.

For the works that He has done amongst His people.

For how He has worked in the world.

Think of the context.

What are the deeds they are praising?

They are praising God for the plagues.

They are praising God for His work at the end of the world.

They are praising God for what He has done in Revelation.

They believe it is worthy of praise.

God's ways are true and they are just.

This is what we always have to remind ourselves as we read through things in the Bible that are hard for us to understand or hard for us to stomach.

Our God is a God of justice, our God is a God of righteousness our God is a God of holiness.

Every single thing that He does is just true and righteous and good and loving and gracious and right.

And everything that God does is worthy of our praise.

Everything that God does, including what He does here.

And what God does is worthy of our worship

There is nothing that God has done. There is nothing that God is doing, and there is nothing that God will do that we need to be embarrassed about.

Instead, we should be willing to stand and to sing, and to praise our God for what he has done what he will do.

Verse 4, **"Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."**

This is the song and this is what we worship because how can you not fear God?

If your eyes could be opened so that you could see, even a glimpse of who God is, the grandeur of His power and His mind and His glory, it will lead all the world one day to bow down before Him to bend their knees to proclaim Him God.

And in the final days, when he displays who he is in his power, there is no one will be able to deny it

There is no one who will not fear Him.

And there is no one who will not glorify the name of our God.

Why? Because He is the only one who is holy

There's plenty of people in Tyre who have had power.

There are plenty of demons and spiritual beings who have walked around the Earth and done mighty acts.

Plenty of people who are great teachers, and good and nice and kind.
But there is none who is holy like God.

There is none when you see him. You know that this is what we have always look to. This is what we have always longed for, and this is true purity and holiness of beauty.

On that day, all of the nations and all of the peoples will come and they will glorify God.

Every single people will come and they will worship.

Not just some not just Christians in our country but Christians and every country and Christians and countries that may not exist yet

People will come to worship God from countries that have not existed for thousands of years

Every people will come and acknowledge this God is worthy of worship. And they will do it after seeing his wrath be finished on the Earth and know he is worthy of our worship

There will not be anyone standing there raising a hand saying I this wasn't right this wasn't fair. This wasn't just you should've done something else. I'm not sure you're the right God.

Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess.

They will do it on the day that his righteousness is revealed

I remember reading a story years ago that has haunted me.

It was a story about those in law-enforcement whose job it is to track down predators and those who abuse children.

And one of the particular jobs is that somebody has to spend all of their time watching videos and looking at pictures of children, being sexually abused.

That they have to look through it and they have to listen to it and they have to pay attention.

They look to try and find clues to find ways that they can identify. Who are these children.

So that they can look for tattoos or clues in the background in the marking or in the sound of where this is so they can find out and try to stop it.

And a lot of it was talking about the unbelievable mental toll that it took on someone to have to witness these things.

As you imagine, most people couldn't last very long doing this work even though it's needed.

Because to watch some of the most horrific things that human beings can do to each other is so crushing and rage inducing.

When we think about that, it should rightly fill us with a righteous wrath that wants to see justice done, and that wants to see anyone who would

dare to do something so evil and wicked and despicable get everything that they deserve.

And to feel that desire is deeply human.

Because we are made in the image of God and that is just a fraction of how He feels.

Now for a moment, I would like you to imagine how much God has seen.

God has seen every child who has ever been abused at every single moment throughout all of human history.

God has seen every woman who has been raped and assaulted.

God has seen all of the times that no one believed the abused.

God has seen every murder from Abel to Noah Pressgrove and the ones tomorrow and all in between whose blood cries out for justice.

God has seen everything that happens in the shadows

God has seen every act of genocide that human beings have right against one another.

He have seen us sell each other into slavery.

God saw every horror in the holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda, the genocide happening on the earth in China, and other places.

God is not just seen how we have treated each other. He seen how we have treated the world that he created.

I have seen every animal that has been abused and kicked.

He has seen every blade of grass and flower and tree that we have not used rightly, but I've just destroyed.

He has seen every square inch of earth that we have polluted and ruined and wrecked with our greed, and are never ending consumption

God has seen it all.

And it is a wonder and it is a mercy that he does not cast down both of lightning on earth at every moment, although if he did, if we could see what he has seen, we would know he has just right to do so.

But one day in these last days in the days of the tribulation, and especially at the end of the seven plagues, God's wrath will come, and it will be finished.

And will be finished because God will not be out of control He will not have lost His temper

He will bring exactly what is deserved upon the Earth and upon humanity through the seven plagues not one more, not one less and it will be exactly what is right it is just.

If we could see what God is saying, we would never dare to question if he's right to have wrath or not.

Instead, we would probably just question why he is merciful and gracious to any of us.

III. Jesus took God's wrath so we could be righteous.

We will end with the gospel.

Because Jesus satisfied the wrath and justice of God on the cross.

It's hard to read this passage and repeatedly hear that the wrath of God will be finished and not think about Christ's words on the cross.

Jesus as He hung dying for our sins and in our place.

He said **"It is finished."**

The work of salvation had been accomplished.

Jesus had purchased our forgiveness with His blood.

He brought about what was just and right.

Now, it is important to understand how this worked.

We need to remember that Jesus Christ is a part of the Trinity.

God the Father is not an abusive, angry Father and Jesus does not stand in front of Him to take the beating so that we can be safe.

The Godhead, together before time began came up with the plan of redemption.

They decided that the cross would be how justice would be satisfied.

Some people do not like how much the Bible talks about God's wrath.

But the wages of sin are death.

Sin and wrong doing demands justice.

When we see all of the wickedness in the world, we know that something must be done.

Remember, if we could see what God sees we would burn it all down and send another flood.

And God will bring the fullness of justice when it is time.

But first, He sent His son.

God saw all of our sin all of our wickedness, and He decided to save us anyway.

He decided to offer us a way out.

And the grace and mercy of Jesus are available to anyone who wants them.

To the worst of all sinners.

It is available to the people we hate and the people we pray God would destroy.

Even they can experience the mercy of God.

The reality is justice must be done and sin must be dealt with.

We can either try to face it ourselves.

Or we can accept that Christ has done it already on our behalf.

And He can make us righteous.

Where have we been?

God's wrath will be finished (v. 1, 5-8).

God's wrath is righteous and worthy of worship (v. 2-4).

Jesus took God's wrath so we could be righteous.

You might not be able to see it today.

Maybe I haven't done a good job explaining it maybe the Holy Spirit hasn't opened it up to your heart to allow you to understand what it is.

God is doing here.

But there is one day that you will, and there is one day that you will worship God for what he has done.

One day it will all be revealed.

But for now we can come and worship God.