

The Wrath of God & The Depravity of Humanity

Revelation 6:1-17

As we continue through Revelation this morning, we have come to one of the key doctrines of the Bible, the Doctrine of the wrath of God. The wrath of God is part of the absolute justice of God.

No sin can go unpunished with God's absolute holiness and justice. So, even though there may be little or no evident response from God for most of the sins being poured out by fallen and sinful humans, God's justice has kept track of every sin ever sinned against the Infinite, All-Knowing God Almighty.

But a moment is coming when the river of humanity's sins, piling up behind the dam of God's patience will reach the limit, and the righteous, infinite, just wrath of Almighty God bursts forth.

Wrath is one of God's eight moral attributes, described in the Bible. Here is a list that we have studied as the elders and deacons of Calvary, from Grudem's Systematic Theology:

Wrath: One of God's Moral Attributes

The Moral Attributes of God may be described as: 1. Goodness; 2. Love; 3. Mercy (Grace, Patience); 4. Holiness; 5. Peace (or Order); 6. Righteousness (or Justice); 7. Jealousy; and 8. Wrath. The most vivid illustration of that final moral attribute, is where we have arrived in Rev. 6.

God's wrath, is not only one of His attributes, this wrath He has is one of the major doctrines in the Bible.

In the Old Testament more than twenty words are used to refer to God's wrath. (Other, very different words relate to human anger.) There are nearly six hundred important passages on the subject. These passages are not isolated or unrelated, as if they had been added to the Old Testament at some later date by a particularly gloomy redactor. They are basic and are integrated with the most important themes

and events of Scripture.¹

The first time God's wrath shows up in Revelation is right here in Revelation 6. God intensely hates sin, and here in Revelation 6 we are introduced to the long awaited "Day of the Lord" and the pouring out of the stored up wrath.

God's Future Wrath in Revelation

There are actually two different Greek words that the Spirit of God moved John to use for explaining God's wrath in the book of Revelation; and each of these words shows how greatly God hates sin.

First we see God as having: **Fierce Rage**. The first original word is *thumos* and that word is used 7x to describe God in Revelation², and when it describes God He is shown "to rush along fiercely", "to be in a heat of violence", or "to breathe violently".

A way to imagine the meaning of this word is to think of someone panting with an incredible rage. Only in Revelation it is not some sinful human, it is the very God of the Universe who steps onto the scene at the end of days, panting with holy and just rage against sin.

Next we see God as having: **Smoldering Wrath**. The second, and even stronger word is the Greek word *orge* which carries the meaning "to grow ripe for something". This word describes wrath as something that builds up over a long period of time, like a river that flows into a vast lake behind a mighty dam, and then finally when full, a devastating flood breaks loose.

That is how Revelation portrays God who after "storing up" His holy, just, and perfect wrath against sin, finally starts to unleash it. Here we have the God of the Universe not suddenly flaring up, but holding a long standing and ever increasing hatred to sin, that is part of His very nature as God³.

So Almighty God is viewed as stepping into Earth's events, panting with rage, and with a deeply settle and long built up wrath against sin and sinners who refuse to repent.

In the New Testament, the wrath of God is most displayed here in the book of Revelation.

¹ Boice, J. M. (1991). *Romans, Volume 1: Justification by Faith* (p. 131). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

² Revelation 14:10, 19; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15.

³ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), pp. 162, 163.

So to set the stage for this doctrine, we will read the verses in chapter 6 that explain these two elements of the wrath of God.

Please stand with me and join me in reading these words portraying the Doctrine of God's Wrath.

Rev. 6:12-17 (NKJV) I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. 13 And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. 14 Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place. 15 And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, 16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from **the wrath of the Lamb!** 17 For the **great day of His wrath** has come, and who is able to stand?"

As you can see, the word wrath and the events that are prompted by the wrath of God begin with the sixth seal, starting at verse 12. As we saw last time, the sixth seal most likely portrays the period after the mid-point of the Tribulation.

What that means is that all the awful events of the first 42 months of the Tribulation (seals one through five) are not directly prompted by God's wrath. We will explore the implications of that next week. But, starting with the sixth seal, the wrath of God begins to be directly poured out. Note with me as we walk through these passages in Revelation that:

God Has Three Types of Wrath

We can see three simple types of God's wrath in Revelation, and then in the rest of the Scriptures.

First we can see **God's eternal or ultimate wrath** (eternal conscious punishment in hell) in Rev. 14:10, and then in Rev. 20:15.

Secondly, there is what is often warned about, **God's coming future wrath** (the bursting of the dam, when God smites the earth in the tribulation) in Rev. 6-19, plus many other parts of the Bible;

Finally, there is also a constant warning of **God's present wrath** (the consequences of sin as seen in Romans 1, plus many others).

But starting with Rev. 6:16, watch how God pants with rage poured out (*thumos*), and then bursts out with long standing, built up wrath (*orge*) in these verses describing:

The Time of the Lord's Wrath

Re 6:16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from **the wrath** (*orge*) **of the Lamb!**

Re 6:17 For the **great day of His wrath** (*orge*) has come, and who is able to stand?"

Re 11:18 The nations were angry, and **Your wrath** (*orge*) **has come**, And the time of the dead, that they should be judged⁴, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth."

Re 14:10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of **the wrath** (*thumos*) **of God**, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His **indignation** (*orge*). He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Re 14:19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the **wrath** (*thumos*) of God.

Re 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the **wrath** (*thumos*) of God is complete.

Re 15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the **wrath** (*thumos*) of God who lives forever and ever.

Re 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the **wrath** (*thumos*) of God on the earth."

Re 16:19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of **the fierceness** (*thumos*) **of His wrath** (*orge*).

⁴ Theologians call the judgment wrath retributive justice, and the rewards remunerative justice. God rewards both good and evil based on a just system where rewards are not the same but weighed according to what the person individually did, good or bad.

Re 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of **the fierceness** (thumos) **and wrath** (orge) **of Almighty God.**

So 13 times in ten verses, God's pent up, fierce wrath is bursting forth. But this wrath is not surprising if the words of Christ are noted.

God's Eternal Wrath is a Constant Theme of Christ's Ministry

The Lord is announced by a messenger of wrath named John the Baptist (Matthew 3); and in Christ's very first recorded personal soul winning conversation in John 3, wrath is the theme He uses for describing salvation.

Mt 3:7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from **the wrath** to come? (and Luke 3:7)

Jn 3:36 He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, **but the wrath of God abides on him.**"

Then, over and over again Jesus used the picture of future wrath often as illustrations to His teachings as He warned people to think about their future.

In Matthew 8:12 Jesus said beware of the **wrath that will cast rebels into outer darkness.**

In Matthew 13:42 Jesus said beware of fake followers of Christ, such tares will be **cast into the burning furnace of God's wrath.** Again he says the same of the wicked in Mt. 13:50.

Maybe Christ's most dire warnings came in the twin references of Matthew 18:8-9 (NKJV). Listen to how clear the impending wrath of God will be, upon those who refuse to repent of their sins.

"If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to **be cast into the everlasting fire.** 9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, **to be cast into hell fire.**

God's Eternal Wrath is a Strong Warning in Paul's Epistles

But the most frequent usage outside of Revelation is by Paul in his epistles. God guides him to use the concept of God's wrath saving us from both present and future wrath.

Ro 1:18 For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Ro 2:5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are **treasuring up for yourself** wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of **the righteous judgment of God**,

Ro 2:8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness— **indignation** (thumos) **and wrath** (orge),

Ro 5:9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, **we shall be saved from wrath through Him**.

1 Th 1:10 and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even **Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come**.

1 Th 5:9 For God did not **appoint us to wrath**, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

So God is by nature, characterized by a perfect, holy, and just hatred against sin, that leads Him to store up great fury and settled wrath against that sin. What a dreadful thing as the Jonathan Edwards immortalized, to fall into the hands of an angry God (Deut. 32:35).

No sin can go unpunished with God's absolute holiness and justice. So, even though there may be little or no evident response from God for most of the sins being poured out by fallen and sinful humans, God's justice has kept track of every sin ever sinned against the Infinite, All-Knowing God Almighty.

But a moment is coming when the river of humanity's sins, piling up behind the dam of God's patience will reach the limit, and the righteous, infinite, just wrath of Almighty God bursts forth. We would live in constant fear of messing up and facing that furious wrath if not for the glorious truth of the Cross of Christ, our Savior.

This morning, the great application of the truth of the wrath of God from Revelation 6, is to renew our thanksgiving for what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. There we see in the great doctrines of justification that:

In Christ the Wrath of God was Satisfied

Look with me at these familiar words, that were so well stated in the hymn by Townsend & Getty in 2001, In Christ Alone:

In Christ alone my hope is found;
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My comforter, my all in all—
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, Who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe!
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones He came to save.
**Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied;**
For ev'ry sin on Him was laid—
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain;
Then bursting forth in glorious day,
Up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory,
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me;
For I am His and He is mine—
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death—
This is the pow'r of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.

No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from His hand;
Till He returns or calls me home—
Here in the pow'r of Christ I'll stand.⁵

That is the Gospel.

That is all that matters forever!

⁵ "In Christ Alone", Words and Music by Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, Copyright © 2001 Kingsway Thankyou Music