

# THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 15:1-8

Topic

The Tribulation martyrs sing  
the Song of the Lamb in anticipation  
of the Lord coming to reign over "all the nations"

Title

***"Singin' of Your Reign  
What a Glorious Savior, You're Coming Again"***

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## ***Wrath of Man. I Am Wrath.***

The titles of those feature films signal what is coming. Someone was wronged and seeks revenge. They will take matters into their own hands - violent, vengeful hands that viciously murder those who have wronged them.

We shouldn't, but we cheer them on. Who doesn't like a righteous vigilante?

## **The Wrath of God.**

Our popular use of the word "wrath" can leave us thinking God is a cosmic Punisher seeking revenge. He is not. He is compassionate, seeking repentance.

It is an essential doctrine in both Testaments. We are told, "For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth" (Romans 1:18).

The phrase “the wrath of God” appears several times in chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen. In the first verse of chapter sixteen we read “Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.”

Let’s talk about the Wrath of God. I’ll organize my comments around two points: **#1 God Shows You His Righteousness By Delaying Wrath,** and **#2 God Shows You His Righteousness By Displaying Wrath.**

### **#1 - God Shows You Righteousness By Delaying Wrath (v1-4)**

Here is a simplified but accurate working definition of what we mean by the Wrath of God:

**The Wrath of God is His divine response to human sin and disobedience.**

The very first time God responded to human sin and disobedience was the afternoon of Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden tree in the Garden of Eden.

**Whatever else we discover about the Wrath of God must be governed by God’s first display of wrath.**

God warned our original parents that if they disobeyed Him, the consequences would be death. As you read past Genesis, you discover other consequences:

- All Adam and Eve’s descendants are born with imputed sin, spiritually dead in trespasses and sin.
- All are born with a sin nature.
- Creation was ruined and requires restoration.

### **What was God’s divine response?**

Instead of killing them, the Lord sacrificed animals in their stead to temporarily cover their sin and shame. He promised to come to Earth as a human to offer

Himself as the permanent, once-for-all sacrifice for sin. His only ask is that we believe Him.

God delayed His wrath, at least to a certain extent:

- He did curse the ground and tell Adam his labor would be difficult.
- He did tell Eve that her childbirth would be painful and that she would find within herself the desire to overthrow her husband's authority.
- God did banish them from the Garden of Eden.

He did not, however, kill them. They would die, but not right away.

The Bible tells the story of God's delay from the Garden of Eden, to the Cross upon which He died, through the Great Tribulation and the Millennial Kingdom, into eternity.

Because God delayed His wrath, we are here today - either saved or lost.

Rev 15:1 Then I saw another sign in Heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

Previously in the Revelation:

- Jesus opened seven seals on a scroll He was uniquely worthy to receive and execute.
- The seventh seal revealed seven angels with seven trumpets to blow.
- The seventh trumpet revealed seven angels with seven bowls to pour out.

The seals and trumpets take us from the beginning of the seven-year Great Tribulation, past mid-way, into the last half of it. The bowls are poured out rapidly during the months before Jesus returns.

They are "last... for in them the wrath of God is complete." That is to say the centuries of delay will be over. This is it - the completion of God's plan.

Has it taken a long time? Only by our standard of measuring time. Seven thousand years are like a single day to the Lord.

Rev 15:2 And I saw *something* like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

There are similarities between this chapter and the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt:

- The “sea of glass” in Heaven was represented in the Tabernacle and Temple on Earth by a bronze washbasin called both the Laver of Bronze and the Sea of Bronze.
- In verse three, they sing “the Song of Moses,” commemorating Israel’s deliverance. The Great Tribulation is the Day of Jacob’s Trouble when God will deliver Jews to safety and salvation.
- The seven angels in Heaven with the bowls are dressed similar to an Old Testament High Priest on the Day of Atonement.

In the Exodus, God delivered the Jews from Pharaoh’s fury. They crossed over the Red Sea on solid, dry ground.

In the future Great Tribulation, God delivers Jews from Satan’s fury. We read earlier in the Revelation that the devil sends a flood to drown Jews fleeing into the wilderness. God has the Earth swallow the waters. Jews will get to safety on solid, dry ground.

“Those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark *and* over the number of his name” are martyrs from the Great Tribulation. Their “victory” was to obey unto death.

### **God gives you grace sufficient to obey unto death.**

Does it not follow that a believer can trust grace sufficient to obey in circumstances less than life-and-death?

Family and government were persecuting the recipients of the Letter to the Hebrews in the New Testament for believing Jesus. In one place, the author indicates their possessions were being seized. Listen to this piece of godly advice:

Heb 12:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Heb 12:4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

The author advised them to be more like Jesus because, after all, *they hadn't shed blood yet.*

Our advice to one another ought to be that, like Jesus, we can find and follow the leading of God the Holy Spirit. We need to toughen spiritually.

A.W. Tozer said, *"We want to be saved, but we insist that Christ do all the dying."*

Have you ever had a nightmare vacation where everything went wrong? A *Planes, Trains & Automobiles* experience?

Delays, difficulties, even disasters are to be expected. Eventually, you got home.

We are on a nightmarish camping trip as we walk on Earth as strangers and pilgrims. *Of course you will have trials and troubles. It would be weird if you didn't.* We need to keep our thoughts and affections on our homes in the future New Jerusalem.

The "Beast" is the person we commonly call the antichrist. He is never called antichrist in the Revelation. Neither is he called by most of his other names, more than thirty of them mentioned throughout the Bible.

In chapter thirteen, we saw him as a world leader coming back to life after being assassinated. He comes directly from the Abyss (11:7), which is a prison

for evil supernatural beings. It suggests that the Beast will have a supernatural body because a 'regular' body cannot exist in the Abyss.

His "image" seems alive. If I had to guess, I'd say it will be advanced Artificial Intelligence.

We suggest the "Mark" is something *on* you or *in* you, a biometric identifier, that will enable a global, cashless, contactless economy. Mid-Tribulation, the Beast will desecrate the re-erected Jewish Temple, demanding to be worshipped. Fail to swear allegiance to him and it will be simple for his government to lock you out of everything, track you down, incarcerate or kill you.

In chapter thirteen, we talked about the dreaded "number of his name," 666. We suggested it was symbolic of the failure of mankind to establish a permanent kingdom. There are, in the Bible, six nations that impacted Israel in prophecy: (1)Egypt, (2)Assyria, (3)Babylon, (4)Medo-Persia, (5)Greece, and (6)Rome. In the last days, there will be a revived (6-6)Roman Empire. The revived (6-6-6)Roman Empire will be taken over by the Beast.

### **666 is the sixth empire, Rome, repeating itself.**

The martyrs stand on the Sea of Glass in the heavenly Temple.

The Bronze Sea on Earth was a large basin of water where the priests washed themselves and the sacrifices to signify their being "clean" to God. Standing on the Sea communicates they are permanently washed and clean.

Rev 15:3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God... (Stop there)

I don't think of Moses as a singer. After all, he complained to God that he had slowness of speech. Maybe he was like Jim Nabors (Gomer Pyle), who talked one way but sang another.

Turns out, stuttering and singing are a right brain/left brain thing. Stutterers *are* often able to sing clearly.

I do not wish to alienate fans of Dolly Parton, but you have to admit Whitney Houston's cover of *I Will Always Love You* is superior.

The martyrs will 'cover' the Song of Moses. Scholars split as to which song because the Old Testament records two, one in Exodus chapter fifteen and another in Deuteronomy chapter thirty-two. The Exodus song best fits the context.

Rev 15:3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints!

Rev 15:4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

The "Lamb" the martyrs sing to is Jesus. A few thoughts about the lyrics:

- His "works" include creation. All things were made by Him and for Him. His most significant work, however, is you (and me). We are His workmanship, His masterpiece. Do you ever marvel at the beauty, power, and downright awesomeness of nature? It is nothing compared to what Jesus is making you.
- As "Lord Almighty," He cannot fail to accomplish all He has prophesied and promised.
- His "ways" are "just and true." The death penalty for sin is just and true, and so is His taking our punishment upon Himself. In so doing, He justifies a believing sinner, declaring him or her righteous while remaining just in executing the death penalty.
- He is, and is coming, as "King of the saints," and all the Earth shall bow before Him.

One of the resources I consulted said, "God tolerated those who would remain in evil for the sake of those who would be saved, rather than ending the world immediately."

God's wrath could have ended the world in the Garden of Eden. Instead, He revealed His plan to redeem sinners by dying in their place and calling upon them to repent of sin and be saved.

In wrath, our God remembers mercy. The grace of His wrath is calling sinners to repentance.

## **#2 - God Shows You Righteousness By Displaying Wrath (v5-8)**

History reveals moments in which God displayed His wrath:

- Adam and Eve's exile from Eden (Genesis 3).
- The global flood (Genesis 6-9).
- The confusion of language at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11).
- The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19).

God also meted out wrath upon individuals:

- Nadab and Abihu were incinerated in the Old Testament after offering "strange fire" to the Lord (Leviticus 10).
- God struck dead Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament for lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5).

Rev 15:5 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven was opened.

We inaccurately call the entire compound on Earth the Temple. The Temple consisted of two small rooms, the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. A veil separated them.

John can see into the Holy Place and Holy of Holies in Heaven. When Jesus died on the Cross, He cried out in a loud, authoritative voice, *"It is finished!"* The veil that separated us from the presence of God was torn by Him from top to bottom. In Christ, we have immediate access to God.

**Do not allow yourself to be drawn into any rite or ritual or religious rule that adds a layer of separation.**

Rev 15:6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

The angels didn't hang out in the Holy of Holies. It would seem that they entered for a specific purpose and will exit.

They wear garments that would remind Jews of the ministry of the High Priest on the annual Day of Atonement. The High Priest entered and exited the Holy of Holies three times.

The vision thus gets us thinking about the Day of Atonement. These "plagues" give those who inhabit Earth their last opportunity to believe the Gospel and be 'at-one' with God.

Rev 15:7 Then 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.

Ceremonies are meant to be moving. The funerals I have officiated that have military honors can take your breath away in their solemnity.

In Heaven, the coming "plagues" are put into "bowls." It is solemn, for sure, anticipating the coming calamities.

Rev 15:8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

God's glory filled the earthly Tabernacle, and later the Temple. Here it manifests as "smoke."

Smoke signals are an ancient form of communication. They are still in use today, e.g., the Vatican's announcing the election of a new Pope.

The smoke from Heaven 'signals' the action of chapter sixteen, "Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth" (v1).

"No one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed." Whatever else this may signify, it focuses our full attention on the pouring out of the plagues described in detail in the next chapter.

**E**arlier I said that His first response to human sin should govern our understanding of the Wrath of God. It may sound as if I am minimizing God's wrath.

It is a common criticism leveled at evangelicals that we minimize wrath. One Reformed pastor wrote, "God's wrath [has been] eliminated from many (or most?) twentieth-century pulpits."

### **We do not minimize God's wrath.**

It's sort of difficult to minimize (or maximize) it if we go verse-by-verse through the Bible. Doing so, we get all aspects of the Wrath of God, from its compassion to its condemnation and everything in-between.

We read in John 3:18 & 36, "He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.... He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Our holy and therefore perfect God will pour out his wrath upon those who have sinned against Him without repentance or faith in His Son. Those who never believe Jesus for salvation face judgment followed by eternal, conscious torment in the Lake of Fire.

On the Cross, Jesus volunteered Himself to drink the full cup of God's wrath. As we learn from His prayers in Gethsemane, there was no other way for wrath to be removed except through His death on the Cross.

- For all those who trust in Christ, this punishment is removed.
- For those who refuse Christ, God's wrath remains.

If you are in Christ, Jesus has taken the Wrath of God you deserved upon Himself.

Furthermore, He has promised you that you will not endure any portion of His wrath in the Great Tribulation. He said, "I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10).

**You should be *Singin' of His Reign.***