

The Voice Of Coming Judgement

Revelation 14:14-15:8

Pastor John Miller

I heard the story of a couple of country boys in North Carolina, who were going to go fishing in the Smoky Mountains. There was a mountain road, and they put up a sign on the road before they dropped their poles in the water. It said, "The end is near. Turn around." Then they went fishing. Along came some city folks driving up, and they saw the sign. They stopped and rolled their windows down and said, "You crazy Christians! You're always prophesying doom and gloom and the end of the world! Get a life!" They rolled their windows back up, stepped on the gas, went around the curve and there was this big crash and then a big splash. The one country boy turned to his friend and said, "I told you we should have just written on the sign, 'The bridge is out.'"

No matter how many times God warns us that "The end is near," we don't want to listen. God is going to judge the world, and the end is indeed near. Even in our study of the book of Revelation, we are approaching the culmination, the conclusion or the finality of God's judgment, His righteous wrath, being poured out on the world.

And I remind you that God has done it once before. It was the flood of Noah. God had Noah build a big boat, and for 100 years Noah preached to his wicked generation. He warned them that a flood was coming, but they wouldn't listen to him. So Noah and his family went into the ark, and God shut the door, which means that there is a time when God will judge. There will be an end to God's patience and longsuffering.

We'll see that in this passage; the wrath of God will be completed and finished. God will pour out His wrath. He destroyed all wicked men on the earth by a flood, but Peter tells us that He'll do it again by fire. "The elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up." The Lord is coming back with His mighty angels to judge righteously upon the earth, and we'll see that in our text.

In our study of the first part of Revelation 14, we saw that it is still part of the parenthetical section of the book. It is part of the second parenthetical section of Revelation. This section is from chapter 10 through 15. These parenthetical sections stop the sequential or chronological flow of the book. They go deeper into characters and events that will happen during the tribulation. And now we come to the end of this parenthetical section.

In Revelation 14:1-13, we saw the five visions or voices of prophetic anticipation. They are voices and visions of what God is going to do in the future. The first was the vision of the 144,000 standing victoriously on Mount Zion, verses 1-5. The second was the vision of the Gospel-preaching angel, verses 6-7. The third was the voice of the fall of Babylon, in verse 8. The fourth was the voice of the beast worshippers who were judged by God, verses 9-12. And the fifth was the voice of blessing on those who die in the Lord, verse 13. Actually verses 12-13 are a little parenthesis within this parenthesis, encouraging the saints to be patient and that

those who die during the tribulation are indeed blessed.

Now we come to Revelation 14:14 to another prophetic anticipation of God's coming judgment of wrath. Everything we will cover in this text is anticipating coming judgment. Then when we get to chapter 16, the chronology of the book of Revelation begins again with the seven angels with bowls full of the wrath of God to be poured out on planet earth. So our text could be describing in anticipation the judgment of chapter 16. But we will see, in our text, the details in these visions and anticipated voices that kind of picture the coming again of Christ, the battle of Armageddon, the judgment during that time and the harvest that will be reaped.

Three times the phrase "the wrath of God" is appearing in our text: in chapter 14, verse 19; in chapter 15, verse 1; and in chapter 15, verse 7. Some modern translations rightfully translate it "the anger of God." That indicates God's personal indignation of sin. "The wrath of God" has the idea that God will judge righteously and judicially the wickedness of man.

The first section of our text in chapter 14 is in verses 14-20. This coming judgment is pictured as a harvest. It isn't the harvest of saved souls, but it is the harvest of judged sinners. This first harvest is of grain, in verses 14-16. Then the second harvest is of grapes, in verses 17-20.

Starting in verse 14, "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, 'Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.' So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped."

I want you to note several things in these verses. In verse 14, we have the reaper. "Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man." I believe that this reaper with the sharp sickle, in verse 14, is none other than our Lord Jesus Christ. "Son of Man" is a clear Messianic title that comes from the book of Daniel, which also is a prophetic book. "Son of Man" is the most popular title that Jesus used for Himself.

This title actually points to Jesus' humanity. We know that Jesus was a man. But He was born of a virgin, so He was more than a man; He was the God-man. Theologians call it "the hypostatic union," meaning two natures in one person; one person, Christ, in two natures—fully divine and fully human. But in His humanity, there was no sin. Jesus is totally unique; no one before Him and no one after Him was the God-man suited to redeem man back to God, as our Savior indeed did do. So here is this Messianic title that would identify Jesus as the "Son of Man."

Notice also that He comes on "a white cloud." I believe that this is a reference to His glory and His majesty.

I remember being a very young and immature believer thinking that the Lord couldn't come back unless there were physical clouds in the sky. If it was a clear day, Jesus wouldn't come

back that day. And then I realized that this was actually referring to clouds of His majesty and glory. We call it the “shekinah glory of God.”

When Jesus ascended in Acts 1 and a cloud received Him out of the disciples’ sight, the angel said, “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.” The angel was actually predicting the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. So Jesus ascended into heaven, is seated at the right hand of God the Father and He is coming back. And He is coming back in power, majesty and glory.

Jesus, in His Olivet Discourse, said, “As the lightning shines from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of...”—and He used His own term—“...the Son of Man be.” So when He described His Second Coming, He used the title “the Son of Man.” And He is also the Son of God.

And notice on His head there is “a golden crown.” What a picture that is of Christ. When you see the word “crown” in the New Testament, there are two different Greek words used for crowns. One is “diadem,” which means a kingly crown, and there is “stephanos,” which is a victor’s crown. “Crown,” in verse 14 is referring to “stephanos” or the victor’s crown.

Also note that Jesus is coming in judgment; He has “in His hand a sharp sickle.” It would be enough to say He has a sickle in His hand, but it says that it’s “sharp.” It speaks of Him coming in certainty, power and thoroughness. He will adequately mete out the judgment He brings upon the earth with the sharp sickle. The sickle is sharp, because it will be effective. So He is coming to harvest, and it is a picture of judgment.

What does this picture? I believe it pictures the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But don’t be confused; this event is not fully described until we get to chapter 19. Remember that when you’re reading Revelation, it is not all in chronological order. Revelation 14:14 is a detail or a facet of His Second Coming that’s in a parenthetical section. This is a prophetic precursor or prelude of His Second Coming. The actual order of events happens in chapter 19.

It’s interesting to contrast the actual comings of Christ. When He came the first time, He came to die for sin; in His Second Coming, He will come to judge sin. When He came the first time, He came as a humble, little baby. When He comes back the second time, He’s coming back as a risen, conquering, glorified Savior. So He came the first time to pay the penalty for sin, and He comes the second time to judge and to punish sin. Christ will return to judge sin and unrighteousness.

Matthew 13:39 makes reference to Jesus coming. He’ll come with angels and separate the wheat from the tares. Psalm 1:4 says that the ungodly are not like the righteous but that they “are like the chaff which the wind drives away.” The chaff would be burned. So Jesus is coming with His sickle, and He will separate and judge the wicked but take the righteous to His eternal kingdom.

Now we move from the reaper, in verse 14, to the ripeness of the harvest, in verse 15. There

will be “another angel.” There are a series of angels—in verse 15, verse 17 and verse 18. All through this passage, there are angels flying everywhere. When Jesus comes back to judge, He will come back with His mighty, powerful angels.

Verse 15, “And another angel came out of the temple.” The references to the temple, in all the verses of our text, are to the “holy of holies” or to the “holy place” or sanctuary. So what was on earth is now pictured in the heavenly scene.

The “angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud...”—who is “Christ”—“...‘Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come...”—or God’s appointed time of judgment, when God’s patience is expired—“...for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe.”

The word “ripe” here doesn’t mean like grapes that are ripe and ready to eat. It means dried, withered, rotten and even dead. This is why God’s time has come; man’s sin has gotten so rotten and so bad that God has to come with His sickle and destroy wicked men on the earth. This is at the end of the tribulation prior to the Second Coming. The last half of the tribulation will be seven angels pouring out the bowl judgments of God’s wrath upon planet earth. So the time has come, God’s patience and long suffering has ended and He will judge the world.

A lot of people say, “I don’t think Jesus is going to judge anybody. He’s too loving and kind. He’s too wonderful.” But in John 5:22, Jesus said, “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son.” So Jesus Himself actually said that His Father had given judgment to Jesus. Jesus is the one coming back to judge. He’s the one sitting on the great white throne. He’s the one who is going to judge the wicked who are dead and alive at that time.

Then we move to the reaping, in verse 16. “So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.” This is a picture of Jesus with His mighty angels. 2 Thessalonians 1:7 and Matthew 13:39 are two references to Christ coming back to judge with His mighty angels.

Verse 16 also references that Jesus is coming back to reap. Matthew 25:31 says, “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.” So He’s coming back to judge in a reaping harvest of grain.

The second imagery of reaping, in verses 17-20, is that of grapes. So we switch from a grain harvest to a grape harvest. “Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.” So this time, it’s a mighty angel. “And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’” This second word “ripe” here is a different Greek word from the first word “ripe” appearing in our text. It means “full of juice” in the sense of grapes that are full of juice and ready to harvest.

“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 of God.” So this is a picture of harvesting grapes. “And the winepress was trampled outside the city...”—which would be Jerusalem—“...and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.” This measurement would be approximately 170 miles long. Some say a couple hundred miles or the length of the land of Israel. A horse’s bridle would be four to four-and-a-half feet high.

Again, this is a picture of Christ’s Second Coming with all of His angels in power and glory. When we get to chapter 19, where it is described more fully, He comes with His eyes “like a flame of fire.” His hair was “white like wool” in His holiness. And “Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.” These are all pictures of how He comes to judge. “His feet were like fine brass,” which is the metal of judgment.

Not only is the Second Coming a glad day for the people of God, but it will be a sad day for people who reject God and refuse to repent of their sins. So we look forward with gladness to Christ’s coming. We sing at Christmas, “Joy to the world; the Lord is come.” But it’s really not going to be joy to the whole world when the Lord comes; there will be terror and fright because He will come back in power and glory to judge.

So you have the reaper being the angel, in verse 17; you have the ripeness, in verse 18, because man’s sin is fully ripe; and you have the reaping again in verses 19-20.

I believe that this reaping in the closing verses of chapter 14 is a prophetic anticipation of God’s judgment at the time of the battle of Armageddon or World War III. The verses that describe it are Revelation 16:14 and 16. In Revelation 19:17-21, all the birds are gathered together in the valley of Megiddo, and after this battle, they are told to eat the flesh of kings, captains and men.

In Joel 3:12-16, Joel prophesied about what we are reading in our text in Revelation, the coming of the Lord to judge. “Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat.” That’s the valley where Armageddon, World War III, will take place. All the armies of the earth will be gathered together in the last world war before Christ returns. “For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow—for their wickedness is great.” This is almost a commentary on what we are reading in Revelation. So it is partially fulfilled in the prophetic anticipation in our text. The winepress overflows and the reason is that man’s wickedness is great.

Verse 14, “Multitudes, multitudes in the valley decision! For the day of the Lord...”—that’s a title for the tribulation period—“...is near in the valley of decision. The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.” Jesus also predicted that in Matthew 24:29. Verse 16, “The Lord also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” So these verses in Joel are a prophetic statement about our text in Revelation.

Thus, Jesus Christ will come during what we commonly call “the Battle of Armageddon.” It will

be a series of battles with all the world's armies gathered together in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There will be so much blood that it will be as deep as a horse's bridle and as long as about 200 miles. It's possible that he is speaking here in hyperbole. But even if he is, he is trying to convey the idea that God is coming to judge and destroy wicked men.

People get bothered by this, even Christians. But we'll see in chapter 15 that the martyred, tribulation saints in heaven, as they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, sing, "Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!" It's impossible for God to do anything contrary to His nature. God is love, holy, righteous, merciful and just. Everything He does is consistent with His nature; He will not violate His own nature. So I believe that verses 19-20 is a picture of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when He comes back to judge in righteousness.

Now let me remind you that right now, here, today is the day of salvation. The Bible says, "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." We live in what is called the dispensation or age of grace. It doesn't mean that God won't judge sin; it means that God has given us a grace period during which we can turn from our sins, believe in Jesus and be saved. But sooner than we think that door will be closed. We're going to see in Revelation 15:8 that the door is going to be shut in heaven, and the culmination of God's wrath will be poured out. Judgment is the final conclusion of man's sin. There no longer is any hope, because God's patience comes to an end.

So if you say, "Pastor, I don't know if I'm ready to meet the Lord. The idea of Christ coming scares me," then you need to make sure that you've been forgiven, that you've repented of your sins, that you've trusted in and believe in Jesus Christ and that you've been born again. You're not a Christian because you come to church, because you've been baptized. You're a Christian because you've been born of God's Spirit by repenting and believing in Jesus and being given the gift of the Holy Spirit, which brings new life. It's called "regeneration." He indwells you and gives you His Spirit. So a Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. He's not one who just goes to church and even believes that there is a God, but as a sinner, they have repented and trust Jesus Christ as their Savior. Then, and only then, are you ready to go up in the rapture, which will happen before this time we are studying about.

If you are freaking out about what we are reading in Revelation, get saved, get right with God. Then you have nothing to worry about; you'll be ready to go. In chapter 15, we'll see that the Lord will come to take His people to heaven. What a glorious truth that is!

Let me remind you that the judgments of God in the tribulation period come in three sets of seven. It starts with seven seals as the scroll is opened and the seals are loosed. Out of the seventh seal judgment comes the seven trumpets. Out of the seventh trumpet judgment comes the seven bowls. The King James Bible calls them "vials," but the better rendering would be "bowls." They are pictured as bowls of God's wrath. The angels are like priest-angels. The priest would have a censer or bowl, but these censers are not filled with the prayers of the saints but rather with the wrath of God that will be poured out on this Christ-rejecting world.

The second vision, in Revelation 15:1-8, is of the seven bowl judgments. In verses 1-4, it is the prelude to the bowl judgments. "Then I saw another sign in heaven." This is a repeated phrase in the book of Revelation. So this is another vision, and John hears another voice. The voice and the vision go together. This vision is "great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete." This is one of the most ominous and frightening verses in all the Bible. The heavens open and seven mighty angels have these seven bowls of God's wrath waiting to pour them out upon the world. We'll read in detail about that in chapter 16. This is the prelude to judgment. So we have the sign in heaven.

Notice the statement here that in these seven bowls "is filled up the wrath of God," it says in the King James Bible. The words "filled up" mean "completed" or "finished." When Jesus hung on the Cross and took God's wrath and the sin of the world, He cried, "It is finished!" or "Tatelestai!" Here it is the same concept: complete, it's done. So here we have a clear reference in the Bible to God's wrath coming to completion. So I believe this is a picture of the completion of God's judgment in these seven bowl judgments.

Either you trust God to save you by receiving Christ, who finished the work on the "Cross, or you will experience that judgment yourself because you have rejected Christ.

Let me make a couple of points on this. I believe this supports what's called "a pretribulation rapture of the church." There is a lot of confusion in the church today about the rapture. "Is there a rapture? Is it the same as the Second Coming? Does the rapture happen before, in the middle of or after the tribulation?" I'm convinced that the rapture will happen prior to the tribulation. And I believe that the rapture happens in order for the Antichrist to be revealed. He makes a covenant with Israel for seven years, which starts the tribulation. So the Antichrist can't be revealed until the church is taken up, because the Holy Spirit working in and through the church is a restraining force. Once the church, being "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," is removed, it will get very corrupt and very dark in the world.

Try to imagine right now in the United States of America that every Christian is snatched up to heaven. There may be some people who will be happy about that. But it's going to get very dark. When I watch the news now, I think, How much darker can it get?! How much more corrupt can it get?! Wait until the rapture when God's people are taken off planet earth. I say that because of 1 Thessalonians 5:9, which says, "God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ."

In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11, this whole passage is Paul explaining that the church will not go through the tribulation. Everybody wonders about that. Paul is saying that "You, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness." Then he said that we are not appointed to wrath but to salvation. Not just in verse 9, but this whole text is saying that the church will not be here at "the Day of the Lord" of God's wrath, the time of "Jacob's trouble."

I also don't believe in a "prewrath rapture." That belief is supported by our text in Revelation

15:1, because it says that “The wrath of God is complete.” That implies that it had existed before this is complete. The seals, the trumpets and now the bowls are all part of God’s wrath.

But some say, “Well, I believe we’ll be here for the tribulation, that we’ll see the Antichrist, we’ll see the temple rebuilt, we’ll see him make a covenant with Israel, and before God pours out His wrath, in the beginning of the second half of the tribulation, we’ll be “caught up...to meet the Lord” and be in heaven.

The problem with this theory is that all the way through, you have the seals, the trumpets and the bowls. And it’s not until the very end that God’s wrath is completed. So I don’t believe we’ll go through a “partial wrath,” partially going through that time. We won’t be “caught up” prewrath; we’ll be “caught up” pretribulation in the rapture of the church. When he says “complete,” it is the completion of God’s wrath on the earth.

Now notice that the saints of the tribulation are pictured in heaven, in verse 2. So you have the sign in heaven, verse 1, and now the tribulation saints in heaven. “And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire.” This is a vision within the vision. Earlier we saw the sea of glass, but now it is “mingled with fire,” indicating that God is coming to judge. “...and those who have the victory over the beast...”—who is the “Antichrist”—“...over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.” So these tribulation saints are standing victoriously.

These are not the church, the body of Christ that got “caught up” in the rapture; they are people who after the rapture and during the tribulation, repented and believed in Jesus Christ and got saved. So they are now in heaven and worshipping around the throne of God.

Notice they “have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name.” Make note that this is God’s perspective from heaven. From earth’s perspective, people think, Oh, it’s so sad; they were put to death. Unbelievers may even think, Those foolish Christians! They wouldn’t take the mark of the beast and worship his image! They couldn’t buy and sell. These tribulation saints will be persecuted, imprisoned, martyred, beheaded, the Bible indicates; it will be a horrible time for them. They will suffer and die, but the Bible says that they got “victory over the beast.” That’s awesome!

So keep your focus on heaven’s perspective. From earth’s perspective, “Oh, how sad to be put to death.” But from God’s perspective, they got “the victory over the beast.” Jesus said, “Do not be fear those who kill the body....” After they kill you, there is no more they can do.

“Uh, run that by me again, Lord! Are you sure you know what you’re talking about here?”

But then He went on to say, “...but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” When you are killed as a Christian, “To be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.” The moment we die, we go immediately to the presence of Jesus Christ. In 2 Timothy 4, in Paul’s swan song, he said that he was in prison facing Nero and he knew he would die. Paul said that he was ready to die: “already being poured out...and

the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord... will give to me...and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."

If you know the Lord, you run the race and finish the course, there's a "crown of righteousness" waiting for you in heaven. That's the "stephanos" or the "victor's crown" in heaven.

I also want to point out that these tribulation saints aren't in purgatory—that's not taught in the Bible. They are alive in heaven, and their souls are not sleeping. Some people teach that we sleep in death and we will be awakened in resurrection. They are standing in heaven and singing songs.

Then notice the song these saints sing, in verses 3-4. They are in heaven, standing on the sea of glass and singing a song. "They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God..."—or "doulos, the bondsman of God"—"...and the song of the Lamb." So they're singing two hit tunes in heaven. The first is "the song of Moses," where we read about that in Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32. It's a song of victory in conquering the enemy and coming out of Egypt into deliverance. "The song of the Lamb," which no doubt is a song of worshipping the Lord, is described here in our text. Here are the words of their song: "...saying: 'Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!'"

Notice two things. They sing, "Great and marvelous are Your works...Just and true are Your ways." As God's people, we worship Him for His works, and we understand in His Word His ways.

Verse 4, "'Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?'" That seems to be coming from Jeremiah 10:7. "For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You..."—that's why He is called "King of the saints" or "nations" at the end of verse 3—"...for Your judgments have been manifested."

The substance of both their songs is the mighty works and ways of God. What the songs describe of God is interesting. In verse 3, He is the "Almighty" God. They are worshipping the Lamb, who is Jesus, and they ascribe to Him "Almighty." There are those who say that Jesus is not God, but the Bible teaches that He is "Lord God Almighty."

Not only is He "Almighty," but He is "just" or righteous and "true" in all of His ways. Keep that in context. We're reading about the wrath of God. God's wrath is "just" or righteous and "true." Whatever God does is righteous or right.

Then notice in verse 3, He is "the King of the nations." The King James has "saints," but it's better rendered "nations."

In verse 4, He is "holy" or "You alone are holy." Not only is God declared to be "holy," but He is the only holy one. The number one attribute of God, by which He reveals Himself in His Word, is His holiness. It's what sets God apart. God is perfectly, absolutely, totally holy. That is a

communicable attribute; we can be holy, too, but we'll never be perfectly holy like God. So God has no sin and is perfectly righteous. That means the absence of all sin, all darkness, all evil and the presence of perfect righteousness. He is our holy God. His wrath is a holy wrath. As a result, we should "fear" Him and "glorify [His] name." We should reverence Him and glorify Him.

And we should "worship" Him, because His "judgments..."—or "righteous acts"—"...have been manifested," verse 4.

This is an awe-inspiring text. We see these tribulation saints, who no doubt have been martyred, have now gotten victory over the beast, and they're triumphantly in heaven worshipping as they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

In closing, verses 5-8, we have the preparation. So we had the prelude, in verses 1-4, and now we have the preparation of the seven bowls of wrath, in verses 5-8. "After these things I looked, and behold..."—again, this is an expression of another vision within this vision—"...the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened." That is a direct reference to the "holy of holies" and the ark of the covenant. The elements in the ark were the golden pot with the manna, the Ten Commandments and Aaron's rod that budded. They are all symbolic of God's covenant promises to the nation of Israel. This is the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle in heaven.

Starting in verse 6, "And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen..."—these are priest-like angels—"...and having their chests girded with golden bands." So they come with their censers or bowls out of the "holy of holies" to pour out God's wrath. "Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God..."—here is the third reference to "the wrath of God"—"...who lives forever and ever." So God is eternal. "The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power." This indicates that before His judgment is poured out, the glory of God filled the temple.

Verse 8, "And no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed." In the Old Testament, when the glory of God filled the temple, no one could go in to do the service to God. It meant the doors were shut, so there was no access to God. That is the same implication in our text. It means no one can any longer petition God for mercy, for salvation, because judgment is coming upon the Christ-rejecting world.

As your pastor, I've been studying and meditating on these verses all week and then preaching them, and I'm overwhelmed. It's so amazing to me to think that this is going to happen. This isn't a fairy tale or fiction or made up; this is God's inerrant, inspired, infallible Word. It's going to happen in the future. Jesus Christ is coming back in His wrath, in His anger, in His righteous indignation. When I get angry, it's not righteous. But when God gets angry, it's holy and righteous.

And when the smoke filled the temple, no one could enter in or have access to God. So the

time of His patience has expired. The bowl judgments will be poured out in chapter 16.

In closing, John shows us two very different groups in our text. One group reveres God and worships Him. The other group rejects God and receives and experiences God's righteous wrath. One group is saved, and one group is lost. One group goes to heaven, and one group experiences judgment and goes to hell.

But judgment is unnecessary, because Jesus died on the Cross. He took God's wrath, the penalty and His judgment toward you. Jesus cried, "It is finished!" It's done and there is nothing more for Him to do. But you need to trust Him and to come naked, humble and broken before a holy, righteous God. Say, "God, I'm a sinner. Have mercy on me. Forgive me."

Right now the door is wide open; it's the age of grace. You will be forgiven. "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." If this concept of God's wrath scares you, then you need to get right with God. You need to run to Him. Flee to Him. Repent. Believe in Jesus Christ.

Let's pray.