

The Final Wrath of God, Part 1

Scripture: Revelation 15:1-2

Code: 66-54

Tonight we return in our study of God's Word to the book of Revelation. What a marvelous and thrilling thing it is to be able to look into the future. It's been so many weeks since our last study of Revelation that I feel a little bit of a prompting to sort of reposition us in our understanding of this tremendous place where we find ourselves, namely in chapter 15.

For many months we have been face to face with the reality that the future for the world is tragically bleak. The news is bad, very bad. And I'm not talking about the social problems, and I'm not talking about the moral problems, and I'm not talking about the environmental problems. Oh certainly the situation may be bad, there may be some severe fallout from those categories of human life.

But what is really fearful and frightening and what is really serious and foreboding and what is really dreaded about the future is really nothing that man will do, but it is what God will do. The New Testament says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." That's the real terror in this world. Not what man will do, but what God will do. The anger and the fury of God is a devastating reality that lurks on the edge of human history. God like some massive and devastating and deadly lion crouches ready to pounce and kill at the appointed moment.

And there have been plenty of warnings, plenty of previews of coming attractions. In fact, God has clearly delineated the nature of His holiness and righteousness and justice. He has given us many evidences that He will act against sin. All the way back in the book of Genesis, the very beginning in Eden, all was bliss until God's law was violated and wrath fell on the sinners and destroyed the human race by plunging all of us into iniquity. In Noah's day all was going along well until sin reached its maximum in the sight of God and His wrath destroyed the whole world...with the exception of eight people.

And throughout the rest of the Old Testament there is expression after expression of the wrath of God on sinners. And not only is that wrath expressed, but it is illustrated. Often in the Old Testament, as we read the history of God's people Israel, we read about the anger of the Lord, sometimes kindled against them and many times against the nations around them. In fact the Bible says He is angry with the wicked every day. Second Samuel 16 says there is wrath gone out from the Lord.

In the ministry of the Old Testament prophets there was the constant theme of wrath from God. The prophets constantly warned about the day of the Lord, whether it was some temporal day of the Lord

or that final eschatological day of the Lord yet to come, it was always a terrible time of judgment when sinners were to be destroyed and damned. All of those historical days of the Lord, those times in history when God intervened and great judgment were nothing but previews of the final wrath, the last and greatest day of the Lord.

Isaiah said, "Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, cruel with fury and burning anger and He will exterminate sinners." Amos cried in chapter 4 verse 12, "Prepare to meet your God." Ezekiel, the prophet, looked ahead to the frightful day of the Lord and perhaps summed it up as well as it's summed up anywhere in chapter 18. "Behold, all souls are Mine, the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine, the soul who sins will die." The person who sins shall die, says verse 20. "The son will not bear the punishment for the father's iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son's iniquity, the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself. But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, rather than that he would turn from his ways and live? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed, for them he will die. Yet you say the way of the Lord is not right. Here now, O house of Israel, is My way not right? Is not your way that is not right? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he's committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die."

The ways of the Lord are right. He rewards the righteous and He punishes sinners. That sums up God's perspective on judgment. Even the oldest book in the Bible, Job, says, chapter 21 verse 30, "The wicked is reserved to the day of destruction. They shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Reaching all the way back into that period of time, the period we know as the patriarchal period, people knew there was the wrath of God on the horizon. As I said, not all wrath is future.

There have been historical interventions of God demonstrating His wrath on sinners throughout all of human history. And all through history wrath falls into several categories. There is sowing and reaping wrath, whatever a man sows he'll reap. That works all the time. You sin and there are consequences built into that iniquity. That's a form of wrath. There is cataclysmic wrath, such as that kind of wrath by which God destroys the whole world or destroys Sodom and Gomorrah or Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum. Cataclysmic wrath by which He engulfs a whole village or town or city in some major holocaust in which hundreds or thousands of people perish. Then there is the

wrath of abandonment, that wrath indicated in Romans 1 when God turns them over to their sin and its built-in consequences engulf them. And there is temporal wrath, those days of the Lord, those times of judgment that would pick up all the pieces of what's left. And then there is eternal wrath, that eschatological final wrath that is coming on the whole world, and ultimately results in eternal hell.

It is the final eschatological and then the eternal wrath of God that ends human history that is on the horizon. And the longer I live, obviously, the closer we get to it. The longer you live, the closer we get to it. But more than just the time factor, it seems to me that all of the necessary elements leading to the wrath of God are finding their place in the puzzle of human history.

But trekking our way all the way from the initial introduction to the wrath of God in the oldest part of the Old Testament, down to the inevitable coming wrath of God that lurks on the horizon, perhaps of immediate history to end human history. Throughout all of that period the strangest paradox is working. And that very strange paradox is this, that all the way through the expression of God's wrath up until His ultimate final and eternal wrath, God is busily working to save sinners from His own wrath. Therein lies the marvelous reality of the nature of God that encompasses both righteousness and holiness alongside mercy and grace that makes justice and judgment the twin of love and kindness. And as we've learned in the book of Revelation, even up to the very last scene, judgments falling all over the place in the world, all of the sealed judgments and the trumpet judgments, all through that period of time right down to the shattering of the universe, the devastation of the earth and the final bowl judgments we shall see in chapter 16, all through all of this final expression of judgment that is coming in a time called the Tribulation, God is calling sinners to salvation.

He does it with a hundred and forty-four thousand. He does it with the two witnesses. He does it with witnessing Christians who have come out of every people, tribe, and tongue and nation. He does it with an angel in the heaven who twenty-four hours a day in the mid heaven is preaching the gospel to the whole world. He is always calling people to be delivered from the wrath which He himself will inflict. In fact, as wrath escalates in the period of time called the Tribulation, evangelism escalates as well. And you have the greatest harvest of souls in human history.

Now as we have learned, the final elements of wrath begin to unfold during a seven-year period called the time of Tribulation. That's where God's wrath reaches its eschatological end, the final wrath. It is immediately preceding the coming of Jesus Christ to establish His kingdom in the world, to set up His one thousand-year Millennial reign, in which He reigns on the throne of David in the city of Jerusalem over a restored earth and universe. That thousand years is followed by a creation of a new heavens and the new earth which is the eternal state in which glorified believers will live forever.

We're at this particular point in the book of Revelation in the middle of this period called the Tribulation. Actually not in the middle, we're near the end of this period called the Tribulation. We have been there since Revelation 6. We're going to get out of there in Revelation 19, for all these

chapters have been describing the wrath of God that unfolds in that seven-year period.

So many details are outlined that no one need to error. While the time of Tribulation is a time of joy and a time of redemption, it is at the same time a period of unmatched horror for those who reject Christ and side with the devil and his demons.

First of all, we saw that the seven-year period unfolds in its first description in a seven-sealed scroll. A scroll unrolling sealed seven times on the edges so that it can only be opened so far and then further and as each seal is broken, it ultimately is fully opened. And that started in chapter 6, the seven seals were opened.

And what did those seals describe? Well, they described the Lord taking back the universe to Himself from the sinful usurper Satan and his demonic hosts and from wicked and sinful men. The seals describe things like false peace, war, famine, disease, death, the collapse of the sky in the sixth seal. We saw men in frozen terror crying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of the wrath has come and who shall be able to stand? The sixth seal then introduced to us that great period known as the day of the Lord, that final explosion of wrath from...directly from the hand of God that unfolded, starting in chapter 8 with the seven trumpets. You go to the seventh seal, the seventh seal then is the seven trumpets that describe the initial judgments of the day of the Lord.

First, you remember, as we went through the trumpets in chapters 8 and 9, Christ cast a fire-filled censer to earth, producing thunders and lightnings and earthquake, hail and fire mixed with blood and destroyed a third of the earth's vegetation. The second trumpet blew and a third of the sea was destroyed by a flaming mountain that fell out of the sky into the sea. The third trumpet blew and a star called Wormwood poisoned a third of the fresh water. The fourth trumpet blew, a third of the stars, moon and sun were blackened, and the chaos in the universe, the chaos on the earth escalated. Then it got even worse. The fifth trumpet blew and all hell was turned loose to torment men, as bound demons were unlocked to run over the earth, inflicting pain on human beings. Then the sixth trumpet blew and a third of the earth died by fire and smoke and brimstone. And then the seventh trumpet blew and announced the final full wrath. And the final full wrath that ends the seven-year period is bound up in the seven bowls of wrath that we'll get to in chapter 16.

Now chapter 15 introduces these seven bowls...the last wrath, the final wrath. Chapters 15 and 16 deal with the last seven plagues which are bowls of judgment poured out. We remember also that back in chapter 11 and verse 14 the seventh trumpet is the same as the third woe.

So chapters 15 and 16 record in prophetic truth the end of the world...the end of the age. After the bowls, Christ comes. In chapter 15 the preparation for the bowls. In chapter 16 the execution. And so there is a very definite setup in this chapter for what is to come. The bowl judgments are the last

plagues that make up the seventh trumpet that finishes off the seventh seal.

And God is so gracious because this is marvelous warning of God's wrath, down to the very details. His holiness demands that He judge and His love demands that He warn. This is the shortest chapter in the book of Revelation because it is really preliminary to the sixteenth.

Now let me say this, the chapter is not a defense of what God's going to do. It is not written to defend God's wrath, He doesn't need any defense. He doesn't need any explanation. He doesn't need to provide for us some specific notation on why it is legitimate for Him to do this. And even though this is not an overtly written chapter to defend the wrath of God, it is simply a setup for what's going to come in the final judgment, at the same time you can see in this chapter the motives for His judgment. It takes you right, as it were, behind the scenes and let's you feel why God is going to do this. The theme is introduced in verse 1 and then in verses 2 through 8 you see the reasons for His wrath. Let's read the chapter.

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished."

Now that introduces to us the preparation for the last plagues, the seven bowls poured out in chapter 16. Then John says:

"And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty, Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed.' After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright and girded around their breasts with golden girdles. 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. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished."

That's the introduction. It is introduced, as I said, in verse 1. Let's go back to verse 1 and look to this very direct introduction. "And I saw another sign in heaven." And I saw another sign in heaven. This is the third sign, by the way, that has been mentioned in the book of Revelation. The other two are in chapter 12 verse 1, "A great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun and moon under her feet, on her head a crown of twelve stars and she was with child." And you remember that represented Israel. And then in verse 3 of chapter 12, "And another sign appeared in heaven.

Behold a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns and on his head were seven diadems and his tail swept away a third of the stars of heaven," and that is Satan.

This is the third time there is a sign. Chapter 15, "I saw another sign in heaven." Once he saw the sign of the woman in heaven. The second time he saw the sign of the dragon in heaven. And now he sees another sign in heaven, the third one. This one he describes as great and marvelous. It expresses the magnitude of it...mega, the word great, large, massive, overwhelming. And thaumaston, from which the term amazement comes in the English language, thaumazo, to be amazed, to be startled. This was overwhelming, massive, huge, shocking, startling, overwhelming. And these terms are to express the enormity of this sign, its enormity being related to the fact that it is the last of the wrath of God.

Seven angels, he says, who had seven plagues. Here we again meet the angels, so often met in the book of Revelation. Angels, you remember from Hebrews 1:14, have been given a wonderful purpose toward believers. They are ministering spirits sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation. Angels, holy angels, designed by God to serve believers, to care for them, to give them power and resources. And all of a sudden now these angels of mercy, angels of care, angels of kindness and protection and strength become agents of deadly wrath. In fact, if you were to go back to Matthew chapter 13 and there you see in the parables of the Lord the description of final judgment, you would see Him discussing the fact that the angels are the reapers, the angels are the ones who come in and do the devastation and the destruction. And the duty of these seven holy angels is to inflict seven plagues.

The word "plague" is quite an interesting word. Because the Greek word is plegos, it means a blow, or a stripe, that is a wound, a scar. It can even mean a calamity. We think of the word plague, we think of some kind of illness usually, some kind of disease. The term is used, for example, in Luke 12:48 of flogging someone, where you take a whip made of leather with pieces of glass or stone or shell and you flagellate someone until their back is beaten down to the very end of their tissue and even leaves their organs exposed. In Acts 16:23 and once again in the chapter later on it is used of inflicting blows and wounds. In 2 Corinthians 6:5 it is the term used for beatings. And in Revelation 13:3 and 12 it has the idea of a death blow.

So we're not just talking here about some kind of illness or some kind of epidemic, there's not time for that. These are rapid-fire things that come, these final seven judgments that are poured out in hours and days, right at the very end in rapid succession. And they are death blows, mortal wounds that come with deadly force.

The term is not here for the first time used, it has been used earlier. Back in chapter 9 verse 18, a third of mankind was killed by these three plagues. That would happen under the sixth trumpet. These three blows, fire, smoke and brimstone, none of those are diseases, those are wounds, blows,

calamities, death strokes that come from God. Verse 20 says, "And the rest of mankind who were not killed by these blows," they are deadly blows, they are killing blows.

You find in the end of verse 6 of chapter 11 that the two witnesses are going to smite the earth with every such death blow as often as they desire.

So we're talking about something that is deadly. And he says seven angels who had seven plagues, the last, the end, the final ones. These are the worst. These are the most severe. These are the deadliest that God can send.

Now calling these the last plagues from God, calling them the last calamities from God, the last blows, implies that the trumpet judgments and the seal judgments were also plagues. These are not the plagues, these are the last plagues. They've all come from God. It's wrong to think that the seals and the trumpets are anything other than the judgment of God Himself. These are after those, these are the very end, these sum up those, these are the worst because...verse 1 says...in them the wrath of God is finished.

Now we've been anticipating this since chapter 14 verse 10 where we read about the wine of the wrath of God, where we read about the cup of His anger going to be poured out, where we read in verses 14 to 16 about the reaping, and verses 17 to 20 about the vintage. Chapter 14 has already anticipated this tremendous outpouring of final fury. And now these seven spirits stand ready to pour out the last calamities and to finish up the wrath of God.

But we have anticipated this from long before chapter 14, though it was referred to there. We have anticipated this since chapter 6 verse 17. In chapter 6 and verse 12, the sixth seal was broken and the great day of wrath has come. We've been waiting for this final culmination of wrath since way back in chapter 6. We've been waiting for it since chapter 11 verse 14 when it said the second woe is past and the third woe is coming. The third woe being the seventh trumpet, the seventh trumpet being made up of these seven-bowl judgments.

Notice the word "wrath." It means rage, anger. It is a passionate outburst of anger. In fact, in chapter 16 verse 19 this anger and this wrath at the end of verse 19 is called "God's fierce wrath." His wrath unmixed with grace or mercy. The end of verse 15 in chapter 19 talks about the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty.

Here will come in rapid fire, I believe in a staccato fashion right near the end of the seven-year period, perhaps in just a few days, these horrifying judgments. But even in the midst of that final pouring out of judgment, there will still be opportunity to repent and embrace the Savior. There will be grace to the very end. God is loving and gracious and merciful. God is long-suffering, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance as He inspired Peter to write. Yet, when all His

love is refused, when all His grace is rejected and all His mercy is scorned, the only thing left is His inevitable and final wrath.

The prophet Zephaniah wrote this in chapter 3 verse 8, "Therefore wait ye upon Me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey, for My determination is to gather the nations that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them Mine indignation, even all My fierce anger for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of My jealousy."

And so here in chapter 14...here in chapter 15 verse 1, the stage is set. The actual wrath is going to unfold in chapter 16 but before we get there in verses 2 through 8 we see three great reasons why this wrath comes. I only have time to give you the first one tonight. Three reasons that demand the wrath of God.

The first reason is the vengeance of God...the vengeance of God. "And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name standing on the sea of glass holding harps of God."

In the vision that John has he sees some astounding and amazing things. We have gone through many of them in this book. But here is quite a remarkable thing. He says, "And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass." It isn't a sea, it's not H₂O, fresh or salt. It's not water, as such because chapter 21 of Revelation verse 1 says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth, the first heaven and the first earth passed away and there is no longer any sea." There's no longer any separation of nations by virtue of seas that have been known in the past. Whatever the eternal state is, it's going to be different. He's not actually seeing a sea as we know it. There will not apparently be a sea as we know it in the eternal kingdom, and yet there will be a river of life, whatever that may be in its uniqueness. But this is, as it were, a sea of glass. Sometimes we look at the sea and we say it's shimmering and tranquil as glass. Well here is a shimmering tranquil, transparent, glistening, crystal platform. Perhaps the best way to comprehend this is to remind yourself of something from months and months ago back in chapter 4 verse 6. In John's vision there he said that before the throne there was...here's the same phrase...as it were, a sea of glass like crystal. Now crystal is not flat glass, is it? It is what? What's the right word? Cut glass, isn't it, so that it refracts light. That's what makes crystal magnificent. It shines and gleams and when it's cut it refracts off those cuts in a diamond-like way its magnificence and its brilliance.

Before the throne of God in heaven there is some kind of a crystal platform, some kind of a transparent glistening crystal platform, perhaps so transparent that John is looking up through it and seeing the throne of God.

Moses, you remember, back in Exodus 24, went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel and they saw the God of Israel. And under his feet there appeared to be a pavement

of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Perhaps it was the color of sapphire because it was refracting off the brilliant blazing light of the glory of God in all of its marvelous red and golden tones.

Here John sees the same thing that Moses saw, the same thing that he saw in an earlier vision, this incredible platform. Ezekiel saw it. He described the floor on which God's throne sat in Ezekiel 1:22 with these words, "As the color of awesome, dazzling crystal stretched across the sky." This is the base of God's throne. This is incomprehensible to us and makes me long for the day when we shall see it.

In chapter 21 of Revelation and verse 21, describing heaven, it says, "There were twelve gates, each made from one pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold like transparent glass." So heaven is a crystal, transparent, shining sapphire, golden place, majestic, incomprehensible. And sitting on that magnificent brilliant transparent shining refracting crystal base is the throne of God.

Let me tell you something, heaven is no shadow world. There will never be a shadow in heaven. Do you ever think about that? No shadows. Let's go, you ready?

But, back to verse 2, "I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire." Here comes the gold and here comes the sapphire, here comes the red. He sees this mingled perhaps with the fire of judgment. Judgment is about to be turned loose from heaven. Hebrews 12:29 says, "Our God is a consuming fire."

John sees that accumulating fire, a fury of divine judgment. And notice this, he says at the end of verse 2, "Standing on the sea of glass." Just prior to that introduces us to a group. Those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name were standing on the sea of glass. Gathered around the throne of God were some people, the people who had triumphed over the beast. Who's the beast? Antichrist. Who are these? Well these can be no other than the triumphant saints who have come through the time of the Tribulation. Like their brothers who went to heaven when they were raptured with the church, these saints are seen in a vision of glory as well. These are those saints who were triumphant, whose faith overcame, who believed in the Savior, who believed in the Messiah from every tribe and tongue and people and nation, including Israel. This is a picture of these triumphant saints who have overcome by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and are victors. And there they stand. They, it says, came off victorious from the beast.

Back in chapter 13 verse 5, the beast comes, he speaks arrogant words, blasphemies, for forty-two months, that's three and a half years. He opens his mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and those who dwell in heaven. Verse 7, "It was given to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them, and authority over every tribe and people and tongue and nation was given to him." But they're being overcome was only temporary, and in the end

those who believed triumphed over the beast.

They also triumphed over his image. Chapter 13 says that the false prophet comes along and performs great wonders, signs down in verse 13, even makes fire come out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. He deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs given to him to perform in the presence of the beast. Verse 15, he gives breath to an image of the beast and causes the whole world to worship in anybody who doesn't worship the image of the beast to be killed.

They triumph over the image, too. They triumph over the beast. They triumph over the image. They triumph over the number of his name. Remember down in verses 17 and 18 of chapter 13 he has a number attached to his name and the number is the number of a man 666? These are the believers who triumphed by God's power over the whole enterprise of Satan, the beast, the false prophet, the image and all that was associated with it.

They can be no other than the believers from the time of the Tribulation. And I think what you have here is this tremendous glorious picture of all of the believers, triumphant believers in the time of the Tribulation, gathered around the throne of heaven. And as you well know, they were massacred for their faith. We see them as far back as chapter 6 under the altar already having been martyred for their faith. We see them being slaughtered all through the time of the Tribulation, as well as some of them being protected, including the nation Israel so they can enter into the promised kingdom.

But here the triumphant saints are gathered around the throne of God. And the point I think this wonderfully makes is this, God sends His wrath as an act of vengeance for the way His own people have been treated. Do you remember what our Lord taught back in Matthew 18? In no uncertain terms did He warn the world about how to treat His people. In Matthew chapter 18 verse 7, He said woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks...woe to the world. He says if your hand or your foot cause you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you, it's better for you to enter into life crippled or lame than having two hands or two feet to be cast into the eternal fire. If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you, it's better for you to enter life with one eye than having two eyes to be cast into the fiery hell.

He's saying you better do whatever necessary to make sure you don't stumble or make somebody else stumble. Somebody who causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drown int he depths of the sea. You'd be better off dead than have lived long enough to cause a Christian to be offended. God will wreak vengeance on those who have offended His people. You remember in the judgment of the sheep and the goats that is described for us in Matthew chapter 25? He takes those on His left who are the goats and casts them into eternal fire for the way they treated His people, because whatever they did to them they, in effect, did to Him, right? In Psalm 94, another very important statement of God's vengeance on those who afflict His people. "O Lord God of vengeance, God of

vengeance, shine forth," says the psalmist. "Rise up, O judge of the earth, render recompense to the proud. How long shall the wicked, O Lord, how long shall the wicked exalt? They pour forth words, they speak arrogantly all they do, wickedness, all who do wickedness flaunt themselves, they crush Thy people, O Lord, and afflict Thy heritage. They slay the widow and the stranger and murder the orphans and they have said, 'The Lord does not see nor does the God of Jacob pay heed.' Pay heed, you senseless among the people, and when will you understand, stupid ones, He who planted the ear, does He not hear? He who formed the eye, does He not see? He who chastens the nations, will He not rebuke? Even He who teaches man knowledge? The Lord knows the thoughts of a man that they are a mere breath."

Down in verse 21 of the same Psalm. "They band themselves together against the life of the righteous. They condemn the innocent to death. But the Lord has been My stronghold and My God, the rock of my refuge. He has brought back their wickedness upon them and will destroy them in their evil. The Lord our God will destroy them."

Frightening terms. In Romans chapter 12 we remember these words, don't we? "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." God is going to come in an avenging hour. One of the reasons that the Lord is bringing His wrath is to avenge His own. In chapter 6 we saw saints under the altar pleading for that vengeance. In chapter 7 we saw an innumerable host of believers gathered out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation in heaven who had been martyred for their faith by senseless unbelievers. In chapter 12 we saw the efforts to massacre Israel and we were introduced to those who had shed their own blood and didn't love their life even to death and were killed because of the word of their testimony. It is the saints who are faithful and triumphant during this time who are gathered in heaven and they're there to watch as God inflicts the just vengeance on those who inflicted His beloved people.

When you touch My people, God said in the Old Testament, you touch the apple of My eye. That's simply a Hebrew way of saying you stick your finger in my eye and that irritates me. The apple of the eye is the pupil. God will avenge His people.

So the first reason for wrath is implied in the scene of glorified saints who overcome the power of Satan and Antichrist and the false prophet and triumphant faith brings them to the very throne. And there they stand on the crystal platform. Isn't that marvelous? These dear people who lived during that period of time will go through such frightening and inconceivable terrors and their lives will be taken from them in ways that, no doubt, are excruciatingly painful. And they will endure the severest persecution that the world has ever known. And when it's all said and done and the smoke clears, they'll be standing on the crystal platform around the throne of God triumphantly watching as God comes to avenge His beloved people.

This is the theme, isn't it, over and over and over again in the Psalms. And here again it will come to pass. And I believe that these dear people will be reciting and praying through the Psalms as a common matter of life in those days. The first reason then for the wrath is implied in the scene of glorified saints who overcame the power of Satan. The first reason, the vengeance of God against those who afflicted His beloved.

Two more, for next time.

Father, we thank You for just these brief two verses and how much marvelous and thrilling truth they open to us. We thank You that in spite of Your wrath, You're not willing that any should perish, You have no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Jesus wept over the lost. In wrath You remember mercy. And, Lord, we know in a serious time. Israel is in the land. Lawlessness abounds. The old Roman Empire territory of Europe rises in ascendancy. Russia reaches out to the Middle East. One-world currencies and one-world government lurks. All these things, the capability for everybody across the face of the earth to see any single event because of satellite television. It seems like everything is in place. And, Lord, we know that the footfalls of the coming King could be very near. But all of this has to happen first before He comes to set up His Kingdom. So, Lord, we must be very near. We thank You that Your own church will be snatched before the storm breaks. We thank You that even during that period You will redeem many. And in the end You will avenge all Your beloved. And there will be even at the time that that vengeance starts to unfold, mercy and grace and the call of the gospel across the earth so that those who feel the wrath feel it because they've chosen it.

Lord, we pray that You will help us to live in the light of this reality, and to do those things which will bring people to the knowledge of Christ before they are engulfed in the terrors of the coming days. We thank You that You've saved us and You've saved us from the wrath to come. We give You praise in Christ's name. Amen.

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