

**Intro.** Do any of you currently or have any of you served as a restaurant waiter/waitress before?

It can be a good job, but it also has its challenges with a wide variety of customers. You may get tipped well or not at all. But one thing you know about waiters is when they take your order, your food will be coming—part of their job is to turn in your request & maybe even deliver it to your table. In the final days, God will respond to the prayers of His people in vindicating His righteousness on earth through judgment & wrath. One of the first lessons we learn from Revelation 15 as it introduces the last set of judgments in chapter 16 is “God’s Great Wrath: It’s Coming.”

Theme: God’s wrath

Background: While John the Apostle was in exile for his faith toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Jesus Christ gave him the Revelation of things which would happen in the last days.

**Brief overview of background:**

- Since we’ve taken a few months off from Revelation, let me take a few moments & bring you up to speed with the book & my view of it:
- Chapters 1-3 introduce the book & inform the reader of the original audience as the 7 churches in Asia Minor (modern-day SW Turkey). It begins with a vision of Christ & each letter ends with a note of triumph.
- Chapter 4 through 8:5 is a series on the first set of judgments, called the seals. This section begins with visions of God & Christ, followed by elements of tribulation. Toward the end there is a note of hope with believers from every tribe in heaven & God answering the prayers of the saints.
- 8:6-11:19 is another section of judgments called the trumpets. It begins with God hearing the prayers of the saints & ends in victory as the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of our Lord
- Chapters 12-14 begin with a great sign in heaven & shows Satan trying to kill Christ & his Church. Though there is great persecution, God’s people triumph through the gospel
- Now we come to chapters 15-16 & the third & final set of judgments, called the bowls. There are at least 3 views of these series of judgments (show slides)—some see them as chronological with 21 different judgments; others see them as a chronological intensification, where the 7<sup>th</sup> of the first two sets actually comprise the next set of 7. Finally, I’m in the minority by viewing them as overlapping intensification where each set actually describes the end, but each set strengthens in its severity of judgment (1/4, 1/3, all)—the 7<sup>th</sup> of each one is the end

Illus: You know for certain we are in the end times because the Bible says “In the last days the trump will sound” & the (Donald) Trump is doing a lot of sounding these days!

➤ **With these things in mind, I want to share with you 3 Truths we learn about God’s great wrath & our appropriate responses to it:**

**I. God’s great wrath is coming to creation, so be ready (15:1; cf. 16:1-21)**

- When John uses the word “sign in heaven,” he is talking about something significant (cf. 12:1)—in this case it is the final set of plagues in the full wrath of God being poured out on the earth & affecting the rest of creation
- The reason for judgment is man’s sin, started all the way back in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3)

Illus: If parents are consistent in their discipline with their children, kids learn pretty quick about getting in trouble for doing certain things—they know the spanking is coming, so they get ready... by hiding! But just as you can't hide from your parents for long, you cannot hide from God's wrath

## **II. God's great wrath is consistent with His character, so praise Him (15:2-4)**

- The sea of glass is before God's throne (4:6) & being mixed with fire here, it probably refers to the crystal clarity of these judgments coming from God—the whole world will know these judgments are coming from God
- Though 2 songs are mentioned, they probably reference the same thing—the song of Moses most likely hearkens back to the first song recorded in Scripture in Exodus 15, where Israel praises Yahweh for using Moses to deliver them from Egypt & overthrowing Pharaoh's army
- The song of the Lamb probably points to God's work in Christ as the sacrificial Lamb who brings redemption from sin's bondage—one is a physical deliverance & the other is a spiritual deliverance & both come together in the end for God's people
- Notice how this song underscores who God is (Almighty, King of the nations, holy) & what He has done (great & amazing deeds, just & true ways, righteous acts)

Illus: I don't know all the songs we'll be singing in heaven, but they will be praising our Lord—"great & mighty is the Lord our God, great & mighty is He;" "we will glorify the King of kings, we will glorify the Lamb, we will glorify the Lord of lords, Who is the great I am"—one of the reasons you ought to sing out in worship here is to prepare you for your singing in heaven

## **III. God's great wrath is continual throughout eternity, so fear Him (15:5-8)**

- The sanctuary is the Holy of holies in the heavenly tabernacle
- Since God's Presence resided in the Holy of holies, when it opens, God is sending out 7 angels, clothed in white as His pure messengers, with golden sashes to represent their pure work they are carrying out
- One of the 4 living creatures (probably representing the completeness of God's creation, see chapter 4) gives these 7 angels 7 golden bowls (or chalices) full of God's wrath (His righteous anger toward sin)—to be poured out in chapter 16
- The reference to God living "forever and ever" is literally "to the ages of the ages" & points to God's wrath being eternal—hell is a place of everlasting punishment
- The Holy of holies is filled with smoke from God's glory & power, symbolizing the awesomeness of His Presence

Illus: Too few people fear the Lord today & use His name in vain & live as though there won't be any consequences to sin, but if they could get 5 seconds in hell, they would live drastically different lives in fear of the Lord

- That no one can enter heaven here may mean the time of salvation is over or it may mean God puts things on pause before one final opportunity for repentance

**Conc.** One of the nice things about going out to eat is knowing you don't have to prepare the meal & wash the dishes. But the one part people don't always look forward to is when the waiter brings the bill, but you know it's coming. Because "God's Great Wrath" is coming, you cannot escape it. You can either deal with it now & be ready for it through repentance of your sins & faith in Jesus Christ or you will be forced to deal with it at Christ's return, without the option of salvation. So why would you wait? Do what you know you need to do to be right with God.