

The Wrath of God is Finished

Text: Revelation 15.1–8

Theme: All who patiently endure by trusting Jesus will be saved from God's wrathful judgment

Introduction — It doesn't get any better than this

- tag line of several Old Milwaukee beer commercials in the 90s
- usually guys, after fishing, sitting around a fire, swiggin' a few
- also the title of George Jones 55th and final album as a country singer
- actually, changed the words just a bit to fit in with the country style
- It Don't Get Any Better Than This

What if you won the Heisman Trophy, College Football's highest accolade?

- or were chosen as the World Series Most Valuable Player?
- or were given the Medal of Honor for heroic military service to our country?
- or the physician who discovered the cure for every single type of cancer?
- surely, you would think: it can't get any better than this?

Let's try just one more...

- you die, and find yourself being raised from the dead
- you discover that you are standing with the multitudes before Almighty God
- when some of the singing and shouting dies down, you see King Jesus
- and He looks out over all those who have trusted Him and lived for Him
- and He says: "Well done, good and faithful servant"
- none of the other things I've just mentioned will even come close to comparing to that

So, what motivates you to live for that commendation from our Lord Jesus?

In Revelation 4–16, we are being shown the judgments that issue from God's throne

- ch 4 & 5, we saw the heavenly throne room just as John saw it
- there, we also saw the opening of the seven seals, along with the sealing of the saints (6, 7)
- in ch 8–11, we heard the seven trumpets, saw the true prophet John given a message
- that message is proclaimed by the church, depicted as the two witnesses
- that witness, hated by the dragon as it is born by the woman, tells us why the devil hates the church so much
- after that picture in ch 12 & 13, we came to ch 14
- there, we're given to behold the harvest of the earth: both righteous and wicked
- what we're about to see and hear in ch 15 is the buildup for ch 16
- and ch 16, as we'll see, Lord willing, next Sunday is God's wrath poured out for the last time
- so, ch 15 sets the stage for ch 16 and the seven bowls of plagues, the wrath of God
- ch 15 heightens the magnitude of God's wrath in ch 16

Let's look to God in His Word and how He challenges and motivates us to patiently endure to the end

First, we see...

I. ANOTHER SIGN IN HEAVEN, v. 1

- John is given to see the third of these signs in heaven
- the first sign he saw was back in ch. 12.1

- a pregnant woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.”
- we learned how this ultimately pointed to God’s people: both OT & NT church & saints
- the second sign John bore witness to came in 12.3
- this sign was a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads seven diadems
- here we see Satan, the ancient serpent, the accuser of the brethren, the devil
- these two signs point to the great cosmic conflict between the righteous and the wicked
- the woman and the serpent, the church and Satan
- now, John is given to see another sign, connected with the first two signs
- this sign points to the outcome of that great conflict between holiness and wickedness
- read v. 1
- *“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.”*

(Revelation 15:1 ESV)

1. Why do we have to talk about the wrath of God?

- think about Adam & Eve for just a moment
- there they are, new creatures, in this perfect place, the Garden of Eden
- they themselves and everything around them, created by the Creator, God Himself
- they had perfect fellowship with their Creator, He came and walked in the Garden with them
- imagine it
- now jump ahead: they have two sons, Cain & Abel
- the boys play together, share their work loads as they grow
- the two boys seem to grow apart, one shepherding, the other tilling the soil
- the tension between the two comes to a head when bringing sacrifices to God
- imagine being Adam, one moment living in perfection
- the next, being expelled from that glorious place
- the relationship with your Creator spoiled by your desires
- and now...and now, your oldest son has killed the younger brother
- all because of your sin

2. Consider this, as best you can, from God’s perspective

- God makes everything perfect, pristine, pure
- He pronounces it all very good when He is finished
- He watches over His creatures, especially man and his wife
- God gives them everything they need for life and happiness
- He tells them: be fruitful and multiply in this place where we fellowship together
- only one restriction is placed upon them: Do not eat from a certain tree; just one tree
- and what do they do: they eat of that very tree
- from the moment they do so, everything is broken
- creation is broken, relationship as man and woman is broken, relationship with God is broken
- they begin trying to hide from God, lie to God, scheme against God
- on and on it goes: stealing, boasting, murdering, lusting, sinning in a 1,000 different ways
- it gets so bad that this is how it is described:
- “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

(Genesis 6:5 ESV)

3. Remember God is just and holy

- He is so holy, sin is not allowed in His presence
- thus the need to punish sin, the sin in Adam and Eve
- thus the need to banish them from the Garden, the place of His presence
- God is perfectly holy, completely righteous, absolutely good and truly just
- consider this for a time, then consider how much sin is in the world to offend this holy God

4. The places you will go, the sins you will commit

- told that sum of all God's commands come in two great commandments
- the first is: love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, souls and strength
- now, take a few seconds and think over the past seven days
- how many minutes of these past 5,760 minutes have you obeyed that command?
- then think about how many minutes you were not given over to that obedience
- no walking in fellowship with God, loving Him with all that you are
- that's sin, according to God's Word: whatever is not from faith is sin—Romans 14.23
- take all your personal sins and multiply them by the current world population: 8 billion
- but wait, there's more! Not done yet
- multiply that number by the 6,000+ years of human history
- you should be thinking now: that is a whole lot of sin!

5. What will it take to finish God's wrath against sin?

- no wind could be colder than what we deserve
- no snow too deep for what should come against us
- no terror too haunting
- no night too dark
- no accident too gruesome
- that's just some samplings of physical suffering
- what about emotional anguish?
- you have been given everything you needed to please God
- God's Word is so plentiful, most of us have several in our homes
- churches abound; true, maybe not all good ones, but plenty of good ones
- gospel preached from these pulpits Sunday after Sunday
- people in these churches for you to serve, lay down life for
- but just think: instead of living to please God, you lived for something, someone else
- you feared man more than God and spent life trying to make others like you
- you cared more for your pleasure than for God's promises
- all that selfishness and sinfulness has made you miserable
- and if you do not repent and trust in Christ, love God, love others...
- then all that will make you miserable forever and ever

6. Wrath of God will be finished some day

- He will be satisfied
- unregenerate, unrepentant sinners will not escape
- these are the last plagues coming, in ch. 16
- when they are poured out, conflict will be over
- serpent's head ultimately & finally crushed
- God's justice will be fulfilled
- what is it that you want—life or death? Joy or pain? Satisfaction or anguish?

- what do you want to hear on that day: Well done, faithful servant? Or Depart from me, I never knew you”?
- on that final day of justice, God’s people, redeemed by Christ’s blood, sealed by Holy Spirit...
- will be completely free to worship Him in Spirit and in full truth
- this vision is meant to make us want to be among that number of the redeemed

The worship of the redeemed will be given over to...

I. SANCTUARY SONGS, VV. 2–4

- read 15.2–4
- *“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.
And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!
Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

(Revelation 15:2–4 ESV)

- John sees two things in verse 2: what appears to be a sea of glass, and all the overcomers
- then he tells us of the song they sing, and show us those who will not suffer God’s wrath

1. Sea of glass

- we first saw this same sea back in Rev 4.6
- *“and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.”*

(Revelation 4:6 ESV)

- there is no reason to think this is not the very same sea of glass
- now, John sees it mingled with fire, most likely displaying the power of God’s holiness
- it could represent the fire of God’s wrath about to fall, even while heavenly worship happens
- no matter what, these gathered around it are safe, in the very presence of God

2. Those who had conquered

- these are the overcomers, just as Jesus exhorted believers and churches earlier in ch 2–3
- how did they manage to overcome such horror as the beast himself?
- ch 12.11 told us how that happens
- *“And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.”*

(Revelation 12:11 ESV)

- the two witnesses of the church: the gospel and our changed lives
- trusting Jesus Christ is the only way to overcome the devil; can’t do it otherwise
- add to this that they bore testimony and witness to Jesus Christ and you overcome
- then, the last line of 12.11: they loved not their lives even unto death
- add 15.2: they conquered the beast—because they trusted Jesus
- there’s all the exhortation you need to carry on and endure
- trust Jesus, testify to Jesus, live and die for Jesus...and you will conquer the beast

3. Don’t be afraid of death

- if you understand the severity of God’s holiness and wrath, Jesus is more precious than life
- if you comprehend the awfulness of God’s wrath, gospel is more to be treasured than life
- as we saw back in ch 13: going to prison is simply opportunity to testify to Jesus
- giving your life for Jesus’ name is far better than losing it for all eternity

- there is nothing you can imagine that is worse than God's wrath—nothing whatsoever
- trust Jesus; testify of Jesus; trust the gospel; give your life to Jesus every moment
- overcome, patiently endure, conquer

4. Image and numbers

- recall the deceptive power of the second beast?
- he makes an image of the first beast, appears to make it speak, and deceives even more
- how do God's people see through this unholy sham?
- know the Word of God; know that the wrath of God is going to fall
- and what about the number of the beast? Referring to 666, the number of man
- man will do anything to not come to or recognize God
- and, driven by the beast himself, they will hate God's people so much, try to starve them
- without the number, we're told, cannot buy food even
- how do you overcome that?
- by knowing that God's wrath is far, far more dreadful than even starving

5. Singing the song of Moses

- these words make us recall the song of Moses by the Red Sea following God's deliverance
- God saved Israel by judging Egypt; so here, God's people will all be saved when wrath comes
- the entire song points to the redemption that is in Christ Jesus alone
- He was and is the true Passover Lamb, His blood covering and keeping us from wrath
- hear the song:

*Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!*

- God's works are truly amazing for He is the Lord God Almighty—none like Him

*Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!*

- the voices declare God for who He is: just and true—again, none like Him
- He is the only King of all the nations, all the earth
- then they ask a question in this song

*Who will not fear, O Lord,
and glorify Your Name?*

- fearing the Lord is the same as glorifying His name
- then they sing the reasons for all this

*For You alone are holy,
All nations will come and worship You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed.*

- no one else is holy like the Lord
- all the nations will finally come and worship the Lord
- this is the scene around the great throne: from every nation, tribe, language and people
- God is fully and finally made known, fully revealed: all His deeds are so great
- we sometimes get emotionally charged when we sing
- and we love to sing here at Albion
- imagine what that day will be like: all singing, all perfect voices, all with one heart

All this prepares us to see the...

II. PLAGUE PREPARATIONS, VV. 5–8

- does the drama revealed so far in Revelation give you hope or terrify you?
- when the sanctuary of the tent in heaven reveals God's abiding presence...

- will you long to see it? Or will it cause dread to swell in you and wish you were hidden forever?

1. Seven Angels, v.6

- there is beauty here, mixed with a sense of formality and authority
- these angels come from God dressed like the royal Son, bright linen and sashes
- this is because they represent Jesus, their task is holy, their errand is righteous
- they have a zeal to carry out their task in devotion to God the Father

2. Commissioned

- commissioned by God thru the four living creatures around God's throne
- this living creature gives these angels the bowls of God's wrath
- we know it is all about to end at this point: God's wrath is about to be finished
- these bowls are filled with the wine of God's wrath
- the wicked, the unrighteous, the unsaved will be trodden in God's winepress
- again, the number seven tells us how complete this will

3. The heavenly temple

- this is where God is, He is present
- because His holiness is to be shown, His righteousness and justice vindicated, we read v. 8
- the OT helps us see the picture here
- *“And when the priests came out of the Holy Place, a cloud filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord.”*
(1 Kings 8:10–11 ESV)
- this final purifying judgment will purify the world
- only the redeemed will be able to stand in God's presence
- the wicked will be trodden down and cast in the lake of fire
- now the whole earth will be filled with God's glory as the waters fill the seas

Conclusion – Do you see this as good news? Or bad news

- will God's justice mean deliverance or judgment for you?
- are you filled with hope or dread as you hear these words

Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news

- the One who was rich became poor, so that we by His poverty might become rich
- He took our transgressions upon Himself, endured the wrath of God
- God's wrath has been propitiated, satisfied in Christ for you
- Christ did not fail in one single thing the Father sent Him to do
- He will not fail when He comes again
- He crushed the serpent's head
- He satisfied God's righteous and holy demands
- He drove Satan from the heavenly field
- Christ secured redemption for all who call upon His name

Won't you call upon Him

Won't you look to Him to be saved?

Jesus Christ is your only hope

Come to Him today