

The God of Glory and Wrath

Revelation 15:1-8

INTRODUCTION

- A. Whenever someone dies, regardless of how evil he may have been, we hear about how much better off he is.
 - 1. There is no doubt but that when a child of God passes from this life, he goes to a glorious reward.
 - 2. But, there is also no doubt but that when someone alienated from God passes from this life, he has misery incomparable.
 - a. The idea that whenever anyone dies he is better off arises from the mistaken belief that God is just a God of love and mercy.
 - b. Although God is a God of immense love and mercy, he is also a God who executes vengeance.
 - 1) The author of Hebrews reminds us, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31). If God is just a God of love and mercy, why is it fearful to fall into his hands?
 - 2) “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12: 19).
- B. Our text this evening speaks of God’s wrath but it also speaks of God’s glory.
 - 1. John does not present a one-sided view of God; we, therefore, cannot just look at one side of God’s character.
 - 2. Let’s examine both God’s glory and his wrath.

THE GLORY OF GOD, vv. 1-4

- A. John saw seven angels, having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete, v. 1.
 - 1. Throughout Revelation, we find seven as a number of perfection, of completion. That there are seven plagues shows that God’s wrath is complete; it has been perfected.
 - 2. The wrath of God is complete through these plagues in that he has no more judgment to bring against Rome.
- B. John saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over the image and over his mark and over the number of his name standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God, v. 2.
 - 1. There is a sea of glass mingled with fire.
 - a. Jewish texts often spoke of rivers of fire proceeding from God’s throne because of Dan. 7:9-10.
 - b. The sea’s being mingled with fire may or may not have significance.
 - 1) Some have wanted to take this as a symbolic “Red Sea” through which these Christians have passed and their enemies vanquished.
 - a) It’s based upon the color of fire being red.
 - b) That’s seems quite a stretch to me, especially since the Hebrew does not refer to the “Red Sea” but the “Sea of Reeds.”
 - 2) The color red may add brilliance to the scene John beholds — this may simply add to the majesty and glory of God John witnesses.
 - 2. Standing on the sea were those who had victory over the beast and all his wiles.
 - a. These early Christians had overcome. and because they had overcome they are blest in the presence of God.
 - b. If we overcome. God will bless us, as well.
 - 1) Each of the epistles to the seven churches of Asia ends with a promise to the one who overcomes.
 - 2) For example:
 - a) “To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God” (Rev. 2:7).
 - b) “He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life” (Rev. 3:5).
 - 3. Those standing on the sea have harps of God.

- a. Harps symbolized praise, for they were the chief instrument used in praising God under the Old Testament.
 - b. However we are to understand these harps, they were suitable for heavenly worship. This, of course, does not imply that they are proper for earthly worship,
- C. This multitude sings the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, v. 3.
- 1. The reference to the song of Moses certainly has reference to the song Moses sang after the Egyptians had been overthrown in the Red Sea (Ex. 15:1-18). That is a song of praise for divine protection and deliverance — the same theme we find here.
 - 2. This is the song of Moses and the Lamb, for redemption began with Moses and ended with Jesus.
- D. Examination of the song itself, vv. 3-4.
- 1. The Lord God Almighty's works are great and marvelous.
 - a. We should not at all be surprised that the Lord is described as the Lord God Almighty in a hymn praising his victory over his enemies.
 - b. The works referred to here are the plagues about to be unleashed — they are great and marvelous.
 - 2. Just and true are the ways of the King of the nations.
 - a. God is just and true — he never does anything that is not just; he never does anything that is not true.
 - b. He is the King of the nations.
 - 1) We should not be surprised to find God portrayed here as the King of the nations, for this text demonstrates the power God had over the Roman Empire, and indeed all nations.
 - 2) God does have power over all world powers.
 - a) “He brings the princes to nothing; He makes the judges of the earth useless” (Is. 40:23).
 - b) Nebuchadnezzar would dwell among beasts until he knew “that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men and gives it to whomever He chooses” (Dan. 4:25).
 - 3) God's being the King of the nations must have encouraged the early Christians; God, not the Romans, had ultimate control.
 - 3. God should be feared and glorified.
 - a. All men should honor God for all the reasons these saints enumerate.
 - b. God should be honored because he alone is holy.
 - 1) God is unlike anyone or anything, for he alone is holy. Neither Roman emperor nor idol was holy; simply God is holy.
 - 2) God is holy.
 - a) “Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Ex. 15:11).
 - b) “So I will make My holy name known in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not let them profane My holy name anymore. Then the nations shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel” (Ezek. 39:7).
 - 4. All nations shall come and worship before God, for his judgments have been manifested.
 - a. The Jews believed that in the time of the Messiah all nations would come and worship their God.
 - 1) This idea was largely based upon Ps. 86:9-10.
 - 2) It is my contention that when Jesus returns all nations — when they are gathered before him (Mt. 25:32) — shall worship (Phil. 2:9-11).
 - b. All nations shall worship before God because his judgments have been manifested — his righteous judgment will be plain to all.

THE WRATH OF GOD, vv. 5-8

- A. After the hymn of praise, John looked and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened, v. 5.
- 1. The “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” is the tabernacle the Hebrews used in the wilderness.
 - 2. We should not be surprised to find the temple of previous chapters replaced by the tabernacle here because of the reference to Moses.
- B. Out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands, v. 6.
- 1. These angels came from the temple, and they had seven plagues.
 - a. Since the angels came from the temple — here the tabernacle — they have been in God's presence.
 - 1) God's presence dwelt in the tabernacle — “The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle” (Ex.

40:34).

- 2) Since the angels come from God's presence, we understand their mission to have originated with God.
 - b. The angels have seven plagues — they will be the means of executing God's wrath through these seven plagues.
2. The angels were clothed in pure bright linen, and their chests were girded with golden bands.
 - a. Ancient Jewish texts spoke of angels in white linen, but these texts also spoke of priests wearing the same clothing — this could show that these angels are both angels and priests.
 - b. Golden bands are symbolic of priestly and royal function — again these angels are pictured as divine servants.
- C. 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, v. 7.
 1. Each angel was given a bowl full of God's wrath.
 - a. The image of golden bowls is probably taken from the use of golden bowls in the temple.
 - b. Golden bowls are only mentioned in connection with saint's prayers (Rev. 5:8). Thus, as we've seen before, God's executing wrath seems to be an answer to the saints' prayers.
 2. These bowls are full of God's wrath - God's wrath will be poured out on the world in full strength.
 3. This is the God who lives forever and ever.
 - a. What a comfort this must have been to the Christians who were putting their lives on the line for their faith — if God lives forever and ever, he could bestow eternal life on these martyrs.
 - b. It ought to be a comfort for us to think about God living forever and ever, for he will be able to give us eternal life.
- D. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues were completed, v. 8.
 1. Just like the tabernacle of old, God's glory rested upon the tabernacle and no one was able to enter it while God's presence was there.
 2. Ex. 40:34-35.

CONCLUSION

- A. Our text this evening closely connects God's vengeance and his glory.
 1. I have a strong suspicion as to why that it — God's glory will be clearly seen when he executes vengeance.
 2. When God executes his wrath upon the ungodly, his glory will be plainly manifest.
- B. What will you see on that day? Will you just see God's glory, or will you see God's wrath and his glory?