

**Why is God so Angry**  
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*Please read Revelation 15:1-8 before going further in this transcript.*

Have you ever been in one of those places or situations where it just feels like if you make a noise, it will somehow desecrate the experience or the place? Early in my ministry I served as Pastor in a small mountain community in north Idaho. I loved to hike, I was younger then. I found a trail that I had been told outlaws used to use in the old days. As I was hiking up that trail I came to an area of large trees, little underbrush, and absolute silence. A woodpecker tapped on a tree and it echoed through the forest. Other than that, it was absolutely still. It felt like any noise I made would somehow violate the place. You just wanted to kind of tiptoe through there in absolute silence. It felt like a holy place. Take that experience and multiply it exponentially and that's what it must have been like back in chapter 8 when there was silence in Heaven for half an hour. It is also, I think, how John must have felt when he sees this vision of glory in chapter 15. Our passage today, Revelation 15 and 16, starts out with this incredible vision of glory. John writes,

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.

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,

The text then goes into this song of worship,

“Great and amazing are your deeds,  
O Lord God the Almighty!  
Just and true are your ways,  
O King of the nations!  
[4] 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.”

This is called the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Then out of the sanctuary — this is the heavenly sanctuary after which the tabernacle was patterned — out of the sanctuary come seven angels. They are dressed like priests with pure,

bright linen, and golden sashes around their chests. The four living creatures — these are the cherubim, the living creatures that attend the throne of God in Ezekiel — the living creatures hand golden bowls to each of the seven angels. Now here is the interesting thing. The golden bowls are filled with seven plagues, one plague for each bowl. The sanctuary is filled with smoke from the glory of God. It is so filled with smoke that no one can enter it until the angels are finished with their bowls. The sanctuary is where the priest approached God with the prayers of the people twice each day, evening and morning. The fact that no one can enter the sanctuary until the angels are done seems to indicate that the world's fate is sealed. It is too late for prayers on their behalf. There comes a time when we have crossed the line with God and he says, "Too late."

When my children were small there were times when I would say, "Stop or else." Usually they stopped when I moved to the "or else." They would start crying, "I'm sorry . . ., I won't do it again . . ., I'll stop . . ." But my response was, "Too late. I gave you a chance and you didn't listen. I appreciate that you are now willing to obey, but it's too late." The same is true with God. There will be a day when God says to the world, "It's too late." At that point it will be too late for prayer, too late for repentance, too late for "I'm sorry."

Notice the bowls the angels receive. In Chapter 16, verse 1 They're called "the seven bowls of the wrath of God." The wrath of God. And in chapter 15, verse 1 is says that "with them the wrath of God is finished." Those standing around watching this all take place are "those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name." These are those who conquered the beast by remaining true to the Faith at the cost of their lives. They are standing next to "a sea of glass mingled with fire." So, we have saints martyred for their faith, fire, an unapproachable God, and God's wrath.

The Song of Moses and the Lamb says of God, "All nations will come and worship you." If all nations will bow and worship before him —that's what the word worship means, to bow the knee — If all nations will bow and worship before him then why is he angry? Let me suggest three reasons revealed in chapter 16 for why God is angry with the world.

### **I. Because God is just and holy - Rev 16:1-7**

First, it is because God is just and holy. In Revelation 16:1 a loud voice comes out of the Sanctuary telling the angels to pour out their bowls of wrath on the earth. It's not just a voice, but a loud voice. The word "loud" is the Greek word *megales*. It's a mega loud voice. That word is used repeatedly throughout this chapter. A mega voice announces God's wrath. That same mega voice is heard in verse 17. In addition, this chapter refers to mega heat in verse 9, a mega river in verse 12, a mega earthquake in verse 18, a mega city and mega Babylon in verse 19, and mega hailstones and a mega plague in verse 21. What is happening in this chapter is big. This is not just

judgment; this is mega judgment. This is not just God's wrath; this is God's mega wrath.

Look at Revelation 16:1-7. "Harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image" (verse 2). These plagues are reminiscent of the plagues that God sent against Egypt when he called his people out of slavery in Egypt, only bigger. They don't just affect one country. They affect the entire earth. The second bowl affects the sea, causing it to become like blood.

Josephus, a Jewish historian who wrote for the Romans, described the Sea of Galilee after a battle between Vespasian's Roman army and the Jews in this way, "One could see the whole lake red with blood and covered with corpses, for not a man escaped." He goes on to describe the scene as so disgusting that even the Romans who killed all those Jews were repulsed by it. That is the kind of thing verse 3 is describing. Verse 4 affects the rivers and springs in the same way.

Then we come to verse 5. Revelation 16:5-7 says,

[5] And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,  
"Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,  
for you brought these judgments.

[6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
and you have given them blood to drink.

**It is what they deserve!"**

[7] And I heard the altar saying,

"Yes, **Lord God the Almighty,**  
**true and just are your judgments!"**

God doesn't send these plagues against the world because he is just a really grumpy god. No! He is just. He is holy. And what the world receives they receive because, according to verse 16, "It is what they deserve!" All of creation was designed to reflect the glory of Creator God. People, uniquely made in the very image of God, were assigned to care for God's creation. But rather than being good and grateful stewards, we destroyed the world in which we live, defaced the image of God in all of creation, and shed the blood of those who were faithful to God. Were God not holy and just we might expect a different outcome. But to be holy is to be separated from all that is unclean, all that disfigures God's character, and purpose. Why is God angry? He is angry because he is holy and just. And the world has called evil good and good evil. From Genesis 3 on, we have turned God's entire creation upside down and, as Romans 1 says, we have worshipped the creature rather than the creator.

Imagine you are a pen and ink artist. You have painstakingly drawn your pen and ink masterpiece. It's taken days, even weeks to perfect. It's the pinnacle of your work. The culmination of years of training and drawing. It reflects the essence of who you are. You entrust your child to guard your masterpiece and make sure no one touches it

while you run into the other room for a moment. But instead of guarding it, your child picks up your pen and “fixes” it, completely defacing and destroying your drawing beyond repair. Now it’s no longer a masterpiece. It’s simply the scribbles of a child. It’s totally unrecognizable. You love your child but your masterpiece is your life’s work and all you can do is scrap it and start over. Might you be just a wee bit upset? God is a holy God who poured out his glory in creation culminating with humanity, people designed in the very image of God himself. He gave us the privileged task of overseeing and caring for this masterpiece of creation, but we turned it upside down, spurning God, and worshipping the very creation we were designed to oversee. Why is God so angry? Because he is just and holy.

## **II. Because the world refuses to repent - Rev 16:8-11**

Verses 8-11 bring us to the fourth and fifth bowls of wrath. The fourth bowl is poured out “on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.” This mega heat scorches the earth. So, are we talking about major and instantaneous climate change? Are we talking about some man-produced, violent, scorching heat like nuclear war? It’s not clear, although the text seems to indicate the sun is the cause of the scorching, but who knows what causes the sun to scorch like this. The intriguing thing is not the sun, or the scorching, or even the cause of the scorching. The intriguing thing is the response of the people. Verse 9 says “They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.”

The recognized the source of the plague, but rather than give God glory they curse him. Rather than repent, they rebel. I’ve got a scar on my finger here on my left hand. It makes for a rather unique fingerprint. When I was maybe four years old, I remember standing in the kitchen of our house. My Mom and my aunt were there in the kitchen, and they were talking, or cooking, or something. I really don’t know, but somehow, I found a razor blade. You know those old, two-edged razor blades? I was playing with the razor blade, mostly just looking at it, when one of them saw what I had and demanded that I give it to them immediately. In my stubbornness I closed my fist around that razor blade and refused to give. They had to pry my hand open. It left a pretty good scar. That’s a scar I carry to this day. Every time I see it, I’m reminded of how I got it. I wasn’t about to give in even when that razor blade was slicing into my hand. That’s just a razor blade and a scar, but it reminds us that we, as sinful, broken people are stubborn. The world will recognize God as the source of their pain, but they will not repent.

The fifth bowl is poured out specifically on the throne of the beast and its kingdom. There is a similarity here to the ten plagues God sent against Egypt through Moses. If you remember the ninth plague, the plague of darkness, God sent that plague only against Egypt. Israel still had light. Here in Revelation, there seems to be a similar partial application of the fifth bowl of wrath. This too is a judgment of darkness,

but it doesn't affect the entire earth. In this case it affects the throne of the beast and its kingdom. But the result is the same. In Exodus, the heart of Pharaoh was hardened. In Revelation, the people of the kingdom of the beast do not repent. The plague of darkness in Egypt seems to have been an inconvenience for the most part. Exodus 10:23 says, "They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days." But in Revelation it says that the "People gnawed their tongues in anguish." They are experiencing darkness on top of scorching heat, but they refuse to repent. It reminds me of a little 4-year-old boy playing with a razor blade, a little stubborn.

So, why is God so angry? Because he is a just and holy God. And because the world is hard-hearted and self-centered refusing to repent. But there is a third reason as well.

### **III. Because the world is under demonic influence - Rev 16:12-21**

The sixth bowl of wrath is poured out on the mega river Euphrates. Its water dries up preparing the way for huge armies to come across to battle. But notice what accompanies the drying up of the river. Verses thirteen and fourteen say,

And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

The dragon and the beast are demonic. These demons perform miraculous signs. This is the same word used repeatedly in the gospels for the signs that Jesus performed to validate his ministry. Here in Revelation the signs impact the kings of the world and bring them together for battle. The kings of the world are assembled in battle "on the great day of God the Almighty." The Bible Knowledge Commentary says that "Though the nations may be deceived in entering into the war in hope of gaining world political power, the satanic purpose is to combat the armies from heaven at the second coming of Christ." These armies are all assembled at Armageddon, prepared for battle.

But verse fifteen is parenthetical. While these demonically motivated armies are gathered for war, Jesus says, "Behold, I am coming like a thief!" They are expecting to go to war against one another. They have no inkling of what is about to happen. Jesus will come against them with the armies of Heaven. But we don't see that until chapter 19. Jesus goes on to say in verse 15, "Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!" In the midst of a demonically controlled world there is a word of hope. Jesus is coming. Again, let me quote the Bible Knowledge Commentary,

Believers at the time of the Second Coming will be anticipating His return. Blessing is promised to the one who is prepared for the coming of the Lord **by being attired in the righteousness or clothing which God Himself supplies.**

That's the gospel. Preparation for the return of Christ is about being clothed with his righteousness. It's not about being righteous ourselves. It's not about turning over a new leaf, changing our ways, trying hard. The Good News is that we are saved by the grace of God through faith. When we get to Revelation 16 verse 15 we ought to stop and ask, "Am I clothed with the righteousness of God?" The world is naked before God, and their shame will be exposed. But for those who put their trust in God to save them because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, they are clothed in righteousness. As Jesus said in Matthew 5:8, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

In Revelation 16:17 the seventh plague is poured out into the air. A mega voice from the temple calls out, "It is done!" Jesus hanging on the cross said, "It is finished." Everything we need for salvation was completed through Jesus's death. Now, for those who refuse to trust Christ, the wrath of God is done. Lightning, thunder, earthquakes like mankind has never seen wrack the earth. The mega city, Babylon, is split into three parts as God remembers Babylon.

That word "remembers" doesn't mean that he forgot. The only thing God ever forgets is our sin when we put our faith in him. He removes it as far as the east is from the west. Micah 7:19 says that God "will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea." In Jeremiah 31:34 God says, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." So, when it says that God remembers Babylon it is not that he has forgotten it. Rather, now is the time when he will visit their sin against them.

Babylon has been the seat of evil in the world throughout the Scriptures starting in Genesis 11 when the tower of Babel was built. Babel was later called Babylon and throughout the Scriptures it is considered the seat of evil. In Revelation 16 the time has come for Babylon to face the consequences of its sin. In chapter 19 the Babylon will fall, but that fall begins in this chapter. Babylon falls and the cities of the nations fall with her. The earth is shaken, mega hailstones fall from the heavens, but the people do not repent. The demonic influence that caused Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit continues to this day. Because of that, God's wrath is poured out on the earth.

### **Conclusion:**

The wrath of God is poured out on the earth for three reasons. Because he is a just and holy God, he cannot overlook sin. Because the world is so hard-hearted and self-centered that they refuse to repent God cannot overlook sin. Finally, because the

earth in under demonic influence God cannot overlook sin. The time for judgment has come.

Revelation 15-16 start with the Song of Moses and of the Lamb that celebrates the greatness, glory, righteousness, and justice of God. The song includes the statement that “All nations will come and worship” God. To worship means to bow the knee before. The nations will bow the knee before God. So we asked that if this is true, then why is he so angry? God is angry because he is just and holy. He cannot abide sin. He is angry because people are hard-hearted refusing to bow the knee even in the face of unimaginable, world-wide destruction at the hand of God. He is angry because rather than caring for his creation as we were designed to do, we abdicated our responsibility and submitted to the rule of Satan, the accuser, the tempter, the liar, the destroyer. It is only when the earth has experienced the full force of God’s wrath that the nations are finally brought to bow the knee before God.

The publication *Bits & Pieces* tells the story of President Calvin Coolidge. He didn’t like to attend dinners, but he was prevailed upon to attend one function at which he was to be presented with a cane.

The man making the presentation went on at great length and finished up by saying, “The *mahogany* from which this cane is fashioned is as solid as the rock-bound coast of Maine, as beautiful as the sun-kissed shores of California!”

Mr. Coolidge accepted the cane, posed for a picture, then stood there for a few moments, staring at the cane. The audience sat hushed. Finally, the President spoke.

“*Birch*,” he said, and sat down.<sup>1</sup>

The world has been saying “mahogany.” They have been proclaiming their independence from God, their self-sufficiency, their freedom from the confines of a God with rules. But for all of their boastfulness, there will come a time when he will set the world straight. And when that time comes, he won’t just say, “Birch.” When that time comes it will be too late to pray, too late to repent, too late to submit. It will be too late. God is rightly angry with sin, but the time of his wrath has not come yet. So let me leave you with three applications.

1. Trust Christ
2. Pray for the lost
3. No matter what happens in our world, don’t lose hope.

There is coming a day when all things will be set right. Our hope is not in politics. Our hope is not in getting out the vote. Our hope is not in coercing the world to live right. Our hope is in a just and holy God. Trust Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Bits & Pieces, January 5, 1995, (NJ: The Economics Press, Inc.), pp. 1-2, as found at <https://bible.org/illustration/birch-cane>, accessed November 1, 2022.