

REVELATION – SERMON 35

THE WRATH OF THE LAMB

Revelation 6:12-17

INTRODUCTION

- Recently a world leader claimed that the answer to the world's problems "lies in our humanity."
- The world's greatest problem is sin, and the only solution to our sin problem is the Lord Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:6)
- Yet man in his pride, in his blindness, and in his love of sin, chooses "humanity" over Jesus Christ
- As we consider today the opening of the sixth seal, we are confronted with a demonstration of divine wrath
- God's wrath is his anger and indignation against sin and his punishment of it
- Romans 1:18 says "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness"
- Right now, every unbeliever is condemned already (John 3:18), and has God's wrath abiding on him (John 3:36)
- At times God pours out his wrath on sinners during this life (Genesis 6:7; 19:24; Exodus 7:5)
- But the ultimate and eternal execution of God's wrath will not be in this world, but the next, when sinners are damned to the lake of fire (Matthew 25:46)

- The whole of the seven year tribulation period is one of God's wrath upon the earth, beginning with the first seal and progressively intensifying with each successive seal, trumpet and vial
- At different points during this time, God's wrath is highlighted (Revelation 6:16-17; 11:18; 14:10; 15:1,7; 16:1,19; 19:15)
- While the fifth seal revealed the altar in heaven where the holy martyrs rest in God's presence, the scene now shifts back to the earth to the spectacle of the ungodly crying out in terror under the judgments of God and the Lamb.

I. THE CALAMITIES IN THE WORLD AND HEAVENS (12-14)

A. These events align with other prophecies in scripture regarding the day of the Lord

1. Earthquake (Joel 2:10)
2. Heavens darkened (Isaiah 13:9-10; Ezekiel 32:7-8; Joel 2:10,30-31)
3. The stars falling like figs from the tree (Isaiah 34:4)
4. The heavens dissolved and rolled as a scroll (Isaiah 34:4)
5. Men hiding in caves for fear (Isaiah 2:10-21)
6. Men calling on the mountains to fall on them (Hosea 10:8)

B. In contrast to the previous five seals whose judgments related to man's activities, the sixth seal has God directly intervening

C. These descriptions should be understood in their literal sense

1. Preterists see this as being already in history, representing the removal of paganism and establishment of “Christianity” by Constantine in the fourth century
2. Many futurists also attempt to interpret these events metaphorically
 - a. Ironside sees it as the unravelling of the present order – political, social, ecclesiastical
 - b. Yet the response of men in vv.15-17 in hiding underground, wishing for death, and attributing the events to God’s wrath do not accord with such a view
3. Though what is described in these verses may seem extraordinary to us, there is no valid reason for not understanding in a plain, literal sense

D. Earthquake

1. This is the first of five earthquakes that will occur the tribulation (Revelation 8:5; 11:13, 19; 16:18)
2. The word for “earthquake” is *seismos* and is derived from a root meaning “to shake”
3. The entire planet will be affected
4. The topography of the earth will be drastically altered (v.14)

5. It seems with this global earthquake during the tribulation, it is not so much the loss of life that is the focus, but the chaos and fear that results from it
6. God will shake the earth and heaven “that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Hebrews 12:25-29)

E. Sun darkened and moon to blood

1. God created the sun, moon and stars on the fourth day to be for “signs” – marking divisions of time, and to guide location and navigation (Genesis 1:14)
2. Some think that the darkening of the heavens may come as a result of earthquake/volcanic activity as well as the impact of meteorites on earth sending material into the upper atmosphere (cf. Revelation 9:2)
3. This could drastically affect temperature, climate, agriculture, communications and navigation
4. Modern man is increasingly idolising the earth and heavenly bodies (Romans 1:25), and as God did with Egypt, he will manifest his power over the gods of the heathen (Exodus 10:21-23)
5. The ungodly hate the light, and love darkness, and God will give them darkness (John 3:19)
6. The removal of light also indicates the absence of God’s favour, the turning away of his shining face, as took place for three hours during the Crucifixion (Matthew 27:45)

F. Stars falling

1. The word for star, *aster*, can refer to any celestial body

2. It may be a great number of asteroids or meteorites collide with the earth at this time

G. The heavens departed

1. This is difficult to picture or describe this in natural terms, but should still be understood literally
2. It may be that God will unveil the heavens so that the earth dwellers may for a moment see beyond the first and second heavens, into the third, to see the throne and know from whom these judgments are coming

II. THE CONSTERNATION OF WICKED HUMANITY (15)

A. Every class of people will be affected

1. The kings of earth who fornicate with Babylon (17:2), war against the Lamb (16:14; 17:14; 19:19), and will be slain by the Lamb (19:21)
2. Great men – officers of state
3. Rich men – the wealthy whose riches cannot deliver them from judgment
4. Chief captains – military commanders whose bravery evaporates
5. Mighty men – those with strength, yet will be powerless to deliver themselves (Psalm 33:16)
6. Bondmen – the servants
7. Freemen – all people alike will be found on the same level in this day

B. Hid themselves

1. This is sinful man's response when confronted by a holy God (Genesis 3:8)
2. Yet there is no place that man can hide himself from God's presence (Psalm 139:1-12)
3. As the ungodly had persecuted and hunted believers, causing them to flee to dens and caves (Hebrews 11:38), so they will themselves be forced into such places when God avenges his people

III. THEIR COGNIZANCE OF THE WRATH OF HEAVEN (16-17)

A. They cry out

1. The martyrs (v.10) cried to God, "Avenge us!", but the unbelievers on earth will cry to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us!"
2. These unrepentant heathen call not on the Lord, and therefore his fury is poured out on them (Jeremiah 10:25)

B. They desire death

1. The godly, like their Father, love life; while the ungodly, like their father, love death
2. Wisdom says, "All they that hate me love death" (Proverbs 8:36)
3. Later, in Revelation 9:6, God will withhold death from those who seek it
4. The wicked, in their folly, think that death will end their torment, yet it will only intensify in hell

C. They recognise divine wrath

1. A “Lamb” is not usually associated with “wrath”, yet this is the preferred title of Christ in Revelation
 - a. It points to his sacrifice for the salvation of sinful men
 - b. The Lamb’s wrath is altogether justified, for he has done everything necessary for man’s salvation, yet they despise and reject him
 - c. The same “meek and lowly” Jesus (Matthew 11:28-30) is coming in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)
3. Their knowledge of God and his anger at sin makes their condemnation greater (cf. Matthew 11:24)
4. Rather than repenting, the ungodly during the tribulation will blaspheme God (Revelation 16:9,11,21)

D. “Who shall be able to stand?”

1. This question has been posed before (Psalm 76:7; Malachi 3:2)
2. When God’s judgment comes, only the sinner who has found refuge in Christ will stand
 - a. Only those who boarded the ark could stand through the flood (Genesis 7-9)
 - b. Only those who had the blood on their doorposts could stand against the angel of the LORD as he passed by (Exodus 12)

- c. Only those who looked to the brazen serpent could stand against the fiery serpents (Numbers 21)
- d. Many mistakenly think they are safe and secure, but will ultimately fall on the day of judgment (Matthew 7:24-27)

CONCLUSION

1. This passage is a solemn warning to all unbelievers
2. Every day, the sinner is “treasuring up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath” (Romans 2:5)
3. There will be no place to hide on the day of wrath for the sinner who dies in his sins
4. “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.” (Psalm 130:3-4)
5. Only those who “Kiss the Son”, who submit themselves to his rule, trusting in his blood, can stand on that day (Psalm 2:12)
6. It is by God’s grace alone that we stand justified in God’s sight (Romans 5:1-2)