

The Song of the Lamb

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 April 2024

Preacher: Shawn Woo

[0 : 00] Good morning, it's wonderful to worship with you. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean, and I'm one of the pastors of Trinity King's Church, and it's my joy and privilege to preach God's word to you this morning.

We are in the book of Revelation, we've been here for some months. Return to chapter 15 with me. If you don't have a Bible, please raise your hand, we'd love to bring a copy for you to have as a gift from us to you.

Revelation is the last book in the Bible, it should be easier to find. Revelation chapter 15, we'll go through the whole chapter, but it's a short chapter, verses 1 to 8.

Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's word. Heavenly Father, we come once again to a sobering passage, but won't you please impress upon our hearts?

How high is your glory? And how deep and dark is our sinfulness?

[1 : 28] So that we might understand how your holiness and your righteousness expresses itself in wrath and judgment.

And as we are confronted with that terrible, the terrifying reality, won't you drive all of us who are in unrepentant sin to repentance?

So that we might be recipients not of wrath, but of mercy. Exalt the grace and mercy that you've revealed to us in Jesus Christ in our minds and our hearts this morning.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. We stand to honor the reading of God's words. Please stand if you are able. Revelation chapter 15, verse 1 to 8.

God's holy word for us. Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing. Seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last.

[2 : 57] 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, 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.

After this, I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened. And out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.

[4 : 12] And 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. And the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power.

And no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. This is God's holy and authoritative word. May be seated.

May be seated. If we believe that God is the God of love, we must also necessarily believe that God is the God of wrath.

God's love for His people blazes out in fiery wrath toward those who oppress His people.

In order to save Israel from their slavery in Egypt, God must smite the Egyptians with the plagues. And if God did not have wrath toward sin and sinners, He would not be worthy of our worship.

[5 : 30] Because the wrath of God reveals the righteousness or the justice of God. Romans 2.5 says, The unrepentance, the unrepentance, the impenitence, the recurring sin, the lingering sin in our midst, in our hearts, it gets stored up as wrath until the day of God's judgment, His righteous judgment.

And so we see here that the wrath of God is proportionate to the sinfulness of humanity. And righteous anger is the appropriate response to evil.

Imagine if you have a child in school and your child is being bullied in the classroom viciously, and the teacher sees it and does nothing about it.

That's not kindness. That's callous indifference. That's or cowardice. If a wrongdoer is let off free by a judge who should be sentencing evildoers, that is not mercy.

That's injustice. Imagine if a drunk driver wrecked your car and killed your loved one, and then the judge said, It was just an accident.

[7 : 06] They're good people. Just forget about it. Because that's not mercy.

That's injustice. We tend, I think, as people, to misunderstand the wrath of God because we fundamentally misunderstand what humans are like on the one hand and what God is like on the other hand.

We misunderstand humans in that we think that we humans are intrinsically good. And relatedly, we think that because we are intrinsically good, that most people are basically good people.

If they do bad things, it's because of their unhealthy environment or because of the oppressive systems or because of miseducation. When you think of people that way as basically good people or intrinsically good, then God's wrath against them is going to seem unwarranted and disproportionate.

But that's not what the Bible teaches. Human beings are not intrinsically good. We are intrinsically evil. Ephesians 2.1 teaches that we are by default dead in trespasses and sins.

[8 : 20] Romans 3.10-11 says that none is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks God. Now, this is the natural state of humanity.

We don't start as good. Contrary to popular belief, our babies are not angels. We don't start as good. We don't even start as neutral.

We start as evil. We start as sinners. 2 Timothy 3.13 says, Evil people and imposters will go on from bad to worse.

This is a natural progression of sinful humanity. And until that progression is arrested by divine intervention. We are not basically good people.

We are basically evil people who rightly deserve the wrath of God. So that's one thing we misunderstand humans. Another thing we misunderstand is God.

[9 : 20] What God is like. We wrongly assume that God is like us. Sinful human beings. And we imagine that God's wrath is the same as man's wrath.

But God's wrath is not irritable or capricious. God doesn't fly off the handle like man does. His wrath is not selfish or disproportionate.

It is measured and principled and just. In fact, the wrath of God, as we see in this passage, reveals the glory of God.

So that the redeemed people of God sing the song of the Lamb. That's the main point of this passage. The wrath of God reveals the glory of God. So that the redeemed people of God sing the song of the Lamb.

This passage is written in the language and imagery of the Exodus. To convey that this is the ultimate end time deliverance and exodus of God's people from their enemies.

[10 : 20] And we can see parallels with the Exodus in the mention of the plagues in verse 1. The sea in verse 2. The song of Moses in verses 3 to 4. And the tent of witness or the tabernacle of witness in verses 5 to 8.

And we'll talk about each of those features in turn. He says in verse 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. The word another sign alludes to the preceding signs that we have seen in the book of Revelation. And so far we've seen two things that were named as signs.

And so this is the third sign. The first sign was in Revelation 12, 1 to 2. And a great sign appeared in heaven. A woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet.

And on her head a crown of 12 stars. She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. This recalls Genesis 37, 9 to 10 where Joseph has this dream.

[11 : 19] And his sun, moon, and the 11 stars are bowing down to him. Joseph is presumably the 12th star. His father is the sun. His mother is the moon. And the 12 sons of Jacob or 12 sons of Israel, the 12 tribes of Israel.

So this woman is a picture of the covenant people of God. And that's why she's pregnant. It's because out of the covenant people of God that the Messiah is born. Jesus the Christ, the king, who was the savior of the world.

So she's pregnant. So at first she is the old covenant people of God. A symbol of the old covenant people, the Israel. But as she gives birth to the Messiah, it says in verse 5 of chapter 12, a male child wants to rule all the nations with the rod of iron.

She then also becomes the new covenant people of God. And her and her offspring together represent the entire people of God. That's why in 2 John 1, the church is figuratively referred to as the elect lady and her children.

So this is the church. That's the first sign. The second sign was also in Revelation chapter 12, verse 3. And another sign appeared in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon with seven heads and ten horns.

[12 : 32] And on his heads were seven diamonds. This is the dragon that tries to devour the Messiah. And after failing, makes war on the woman's offspring.

On those who keep the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. And hold on to the testimony of Jesus. This is the one that was described in chapter 12 as the ancient serpent, who is called the devil, Satan, the deceiver of the world.

And he's also called the accuser of our brothers. This is the arch enemy of God's people. He's the fiend behind all fiends. This is the dragon that gives his power and authority to the beast with seven heads, which represents the worldly rulers and the kingdoms that oppose God and persecute his people.

And so this beast is a combination of the four beasts that you find in Daniel 7, Babylon, Persia, Macedonia, and Rome. And it's a composite picture of all four of those beasts.

So it's the beast of all beasts with seven heads. Because all those beasts, if you add up their heads, you get seven heads. And so that was the second sign, the dragon. Dragon, the enemy of God and his people, and his beast.

[13 : 43] So then the first two signs depicted the woman and the dragon. The church and Satan who are at war with each other.

And if you think about that war, the outcome seems bleak. Who wins in a fight between a dragon and a woman.

But here, the Lord God enters the fray, the other's messengers. Seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

The word plague here doesn't mean what it typically means in English, like pestilence or an epidemic disease. The word plague here means blow or strike or wound.

It's the exact same Greek word that's used to describe in the Greek translation, the Old Testament, the ten plagues of Egypt. The ten blows or strikes of Egypt.

[14 : 48] So this is the first allusion to Exodus in this chapter. But this, why is there ten, not ten plagues like Egypt, why is there seven? Because the number seven, as we've seen over and over again throughout the book of Revelation, symbolizes fullness or completion.

Because God completed his creation in the course of seven days. But not only that, also because the dragon and the beast, as I mentioned, each have seven heads.

The Lord God enters the ring, so to speak, and delivers seven fatal blows to the seven heads of the dragon and the beast.

Seven mortal wounds from which the dragon will never recover. This is the final fulfillment of the promise of Romans 16, 20, that God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.

These seven plagues are called the seven bowls, full of the wrath of God in verse 7. So this presents the last of the seven series of judgments that we've seen throughout Revelation.

[15 : 55] We saw the seven seals in chapter 6, that was the first, and then the seven trumpets in chapters 8 and 9, and then we saw the seven thunders, which were not given details about the thunders, but they were mentioned in chapter 10.

And now we are introduced to the seven bowls, which will be detailed in chapter 16. And I've said to you before that these series of seven judgments are not meant to be understood in a linear chronological way.

If you try to interpret that way, you run into some contradictions and problems because things that should have already happened happen again later on in the other judgments. For example, sun's blackened in the seals, but then it's again darkened by a third later on in the trumpet judgments of Revelation 8, 12.

Every mountain and island is removed in the sixth seal of chapter 6, but then the island and mountains flee again in chapter 16. So these are not meant to be linear chronological events, but rather they are kind of cyclical.

They're recapitulating the judgment that happens throughout the church age. However, they're not endlessly cyclical. They do have a progression. They have an end point, a climactic point.

[17:12] So each seventh judgment, the seventh seal, the seventh trumpet, and the seventh bowl all climaxed with the presence of God, the full presence and appearance of God in judgment.

And that's accompanied by peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

And John, in order to convey the fact that the judgments of God, even though they're presented in this cyclical way here, that there's a progression and that they intensify throughout the church age, he kind of chains these sevens together in interlocking formation.

So the seventh seal opens the way for the seven trumpets, and then the seventh trumpet opens the way for the seven bowls, as I've mentioned before, like the Russian dolls. You open one and there's another one.

But in Revelation, it's a reverse Russian doll, because when you open it, the doll gets bigger, and it intensifies. In the seals, it's just that the judgments only affect the fourth of the earth.

In the trumpets, the judgments affect the third of the earth. And in the final bowls, it affects all of the earth. So it's coming, crescendoing, coming to that climactic end point.

[18:21] It's like the Lord God who has entered the ring is circling the dragon, the enemy, and gradually narrowing and narrowing and narrowing until the dragon has no place to go before he can inflict the final blow, the knockdown blow.

And with this, the bowls, and Charlie will preach on this so I won't get into detail next week, it's the wrath of God is finished.

But the plagues are not the only thing that's reminiscent of Exodus. Verse 2 also mentions a sea, like the Red Sea of Exodus. It says in verse 2, 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. The sea of God is happening back to the glorious throne vision that John had in chapter 4 where he said that before the throne of God there was as it were a sea of glass like crystal.

It's not a coincidence that Jewish rabbinic commentary on Exodus, Exodus 15.8 for example, says that God, quote, froze the Red Sea for them and he became like vessels of glass.

[19:41] So this is again an allusion to Exodus. The sea, as I've mentioned throughout Revelation, is a frequent symbol of cosmic chaos and evil. So in the Old Testament, the sea was the abode of the ancient serpent, the sea dragon, Leviathan.

This is why in Revelation 12.17 and 13.1, both the dragon and his beast, they emerged from the sea, out of the sea. And that's why when God comes in his final judgment and brings about the new heavens and the new earth, in Revelation 21.1, he says the sea was no more.

So instead of the sea, we find here in Revelation 22, there is the river of the water of life, bright as crystal.

That's what we see in the end. So the sea of glass, like crystal that we see here in chapter 15, is a symbol of God's victory over evil. It's a sea that has been frozen or a sea that has been vanquished and tranquilized by the fire of God's judgment.

That's why verse 2 says, it's a sea of glass mingled with fire. It is a serene sea of glass because there's no longer any struggle or contest. The cosmic forces of evil have been vanquished.

[20:59] So there's this beautiful sea of glass, like crystal underneath God's feet before his throne. A crystal, as you know, is a clear, transparent mineral. It looks like glass, it looks like ice.

It reflects light into resplendent colors. You might recall from Exodus 24 that when Moses and Aaron and Nadab and Abihu and the 70 elders ascend the mountain to see the God of Israel, it says, they don't get to see the fullness of God.

They don't get to see God's face, but they do get to see God's feet, what's underneath God's feet. And this is what it says in Exodus 24.10, under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.

Similarly, in prophet Ezekiel's vision of the throne room of God, in Ezekiel 1.22, he sees the four living creatures who are attending to God and serving him, and over the heads of the living creatures, he says, there was the likeness of an expanse shining like awe-inspiring crystal spread out above their heads.

So I think all of these prophets are reporting the same breathtaking vision of the throne room of God. Underneath his feet is a translucent sea of sapphire blue crystal, symbol of his conquering of the sea and the dragon.

[22 : 27] And because God has conquered, all those who belong to him, his people, have also conquered. So it says in verse 2 that John saw 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.

Who are these people? This is the same group that we saw earlier in chapter 14, the 144,000 who are singing a new song that only those who have been redeemed from the earth can learn and sing. And he said there that their voice was like the sound of harpists playing on the harps. And so these are the saints of God, the elect from every age, the church of Christ.

Those who Revelation 12, 11 describe as those who have conquered the dragon by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they love not their lives even unto death.

What does that mean? Not all faithful Christians are martyrs, but they all love Christ more than life itself. As Jesus said in John 12, 24-25, Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone.

[23 : 44] But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life will lose it. And whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Christians are those people who are persevering by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony. They hold on to the gospel of Jesus that we are cleansed and washed and forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ, that good news that Jesus was the sacrificial lamb who died on our behalf.

And they also bear testimony to Jesus with the word of their testimony by sharing that good news of Jesus Christ with others. And because of the dragon and his beast, in this world, we face tribulation and distress and persecution and famine and nakedness and danger and sword.

We're regarded as sheep to be slaughtered. But still, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Jesus who loved us. Why?

Because nothing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. It's from Romans 8. Even though the beast might conquer us temporally in this life, we will conquer him eternally.

[25 : 03] Our future victory is seen in the fact that we are standing beside a sea of glass in the throne room of God, in the very presence of God, with harps of God in our hands.

We are not fallen by the sea. We are standing by the sea in the same way that the Lamb who was slain in chapter 5, Revelation, the Lamb who had been slain, Jesus Christ, was seen standing before the presence of God in chapter 5.

Likewise, God's people will be standing in resurrection power in eternity. And we're not standing idly by. We have the harps of God in our hands.

There are two primary instruments that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. One is trumpet and two is harps. Trumpets, in view in scripture, are generally ram's horns, not like the musical instruments and the trumpets that you guys play.

Those are great instruments. But these trumpets in the Bible are not nearly as versatile or useful. Their main function is just being loud. And so the trumpets are used usually in scripture in the context of war.

[26 : 15] trumpet blasts to threaten and to warn enemies you're coming. Trumpet blasts to rally your troops to come. So it's no surprise when the trumpet blasts in Revelation announce the judgments of God over and over again.

Harps, however, are different. They have a different purpose. You never play harps during war. Right? He says in 1 Chronicles 15-16 that the purpose of harps is to, quote, raise sounds of joy. He says in 2 Samuel 6-5 that the purpose of harps is to celebrate before the Lord. The Psalms are full of exhortations to praise God with harps. So the fact that the saints of God are holding harps in their hands by that crystal seed before the throne of God is a representation of our victory celebration.

The war will be finally over and the trumpet blasts will cease and they will give way to the bright strings of harps celebrating our eternal victory.

And verse 3 says, they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. Here's yet another allusion to the Exodus, Song of Moses.

[27 : 43] This is a reference to Exodus 15, when after God delivers his people out of Egypt through the Passover and through the Red Sea by splitting the Red Sea, Moses sings his song.

He writes a song of praise to God in Exodus 15. Similarly, after God delivers his people in this ultimate end time Exodus, all of the redeemed will sing the Song of the Lamb.

This song is being emphasized, highlighted in this passage because it's sandwiched between the two mentions of the seven plagues of God's wrath.

It's a common literary device that scripture writers use to sandwich an important thing with two similar things to highlight it, like the meat of the sandwich. That's the meat. And it goes like this, the psalm, verse 3.

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the Nations. In verse 1, John said that the signs, the signs that he saw of God's seven plague judgments were great and amazing.

[28 : 47] And those exact same words are used here in the Song of the Lamb. Great and amazing are your deeds. So there's, he's connecting the sign that he saw to the great deeds of God.

So the song is praising God for, specifically for his deeds of judgment. And God here is called the Lord God, the Almighty, which highlights God's absolute sovereignty.

The Lord God is not somewhat mighty, but almighty. The Lord God is not partially sovereign. He is totally sovereign.

And this is why he is declared and claimed as the king of the nations. Not a king of one nation. The king of all nations. Verse 3 also praises God in this way, just and true are your ways.

This clause echoing a couple different Old Testament passages. In Daniel 4, Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in his hubris boasts about how he in his own might built his glorious kingdom.

[29 : 53] And God brings him down a couple of notches and humbles him by taking away his reason and reducing him to the state of animal-like existence for a period of time. And after that, God restores his senses and when he returns to his senses, Nebuchadnezzar then starts to praise and extol and honor the king of heaven saying, for all his works are right and his ways are just and those who walk in pride he is able to humble.

So the connection here is that God's ways are just and true in him humbling the wicked who have resisted him. Similarly, Deuteronomy 32.4 says of God the rock his work is perfect for all his ways are justice.

A God of faithfulness and without iniquity just and upright is he. So in the words just and true are primarily again speaking of God's justice and truthfulness in executing his judgments.

God is being fair and just according to his unerring standards and he's being true to his own unchanging character in bringing about these judgments.

This focus on the judgments of God is confirmed by Revelation 16.7 and 19.2 both of which use these exact same words and say true and just are your judgments.

[31 : 17] We in our limited understanding in our fallen sin affected perspective might not always understand the why of God's judgments.

Why God? But we can trust who God is that he's faithful and true. He's always going to be true to whom he's revealed himself to be and he's always going to be faithful.

therefore we can rest assured that God will be an impartial and exacting judge at the time of the last assize. Verse 4 continues the song of the Lamb. Who will not fear the Lord and glorify your name?

This verse is an allusion to Jeremiah 10, 6-7. It says, There is none like you, O Lord. You are great and your name is great in might. Who would not fear you, O king of the nations?

For this is your due. For among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is none like you. Fear and glory are God's due.

[32 : 28] There is none among all the earth, all the nations of earth, that is exempt from this duty to worship God, not one. Even more immediately, verse 4 is echoing Revelation 14, 7, which we saw last week, which said, Fear God and give him glory because the hour of his judgment has come.

At that point it was a command, fear God and give him glory because of his judgment. But now it's a rhetorical question. Who will not fear the Lord and glorify your name?

The assumed answer is no one. There is not one soul in the universe who will not fear the Lord and glorify his name when his final judgments are revealed.

As I mentioned last week, there are only two types of people in the world. Those who now voluntarily repent their sins and worship God or those who will later in the future involuntarily worship God.

One way or the other, God will get the worship that is due to him. But if you wait until that final judgment, you will not escape his judgment. The rest of verse 4 gives us three reasons why all will fear God and glorify his name.

[33 : 54] It says, one, for you are holy. Then two, for all nations will come and worship you. So ESV omits the word for, but it's there in the original Greek. And then finally, third, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

The first reason is for you are holy. A more literal translation would be for alone holy. God is alone holy. He is unique and unparalleled in his holiness.

He alone is holy. Therefore, all will fear him and glorify his name. The most basic meaning of holiness is consecration.

I know we often typically think of holiness as the opposite of wickedness, which is true by implication, but the Bible usually contrasts what is holy from what is common.

For example, it says in Leviticus 10.10, you are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean. So to be holy is to be uncommon, to be specially set apart.

[34 : 58] So the holiness of God then conveys how God is unlike us, how he is set apart from us, that he is the incomparable one, that he is the peerless one, that he is the matchless one, that he is the unrivaled one.

He alone is holy. And God is not merely holy. We saw in Revelation 4.8 that he is thrice holy. Holy, holy, holy.

He is utterly perfect in his holiness. Numbers 23, 19 contrasts man and God. God is not man that he should lie, or son of man that he should change his mind.

Has he said and will he not do it? Or has he spoken and will he not fulfill it? Humans are fickle. They lie, they change their mind, and they break their promises. They need on their word.

But God never lies. God never changes his mind. God always fulfills his promises. God is alone holy for that reason. In the world of men, there are wrongful convictions and unduly harsh sentences.

[36 : 14] In the world of men, there are wrongful acquittals and unduly lenient sentences. because men are fickle. Because men can be bribed and corrupted.

Because men can be biased and prejudiced. But God cannot be bribed. And God's justice cannot be perverted. And no evidence can ever be hidden from the all-seeing eyes of God.

And for that reason, on that final judgment day, all wrongs will be righted, and all those who escape justice in this world of men will be punished by God. That's a comforting Bible.

Also, all will fear God and glorify His name, for all nations will come and worship you. This is an allusion to Psalm 86, 9-10 that we read in our cult worship this morning.

All the inhabitants of earth who had worshipped the dragon and worshipped the beast, thinking that they are all-powerful, thinking that they will rule forever, all those who bowed to economic pressure and religious persecution of the beast, all those who took on the image of the beast and the number of His name, will be dismayed when they see all nations come and worship God and His Lamb.

[37 : 38] And when they behold that mighty throne, worshipping God, they will be forced to bow their knees and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Even those who stubbornly defied God in this life and all those unbelievers who, as Revelation 16, 9 said, did not repent and give God glory, they will come and worship God on that day.

The third reason why all people will fear God and glorify His name is given at the end of verse 4. For your righteous acts have been revealed. Consistent with the theme of this chapter, I think this is also referring to righteous acts that have just been revealed, righteous acts of God's judgment. God deserves praise for pouring out His righteous wrath on the wicked. Do you praise God for His wrath and His justice? I still remember 2016, some of you guys probably remember this in the news, when a Stanford University student was sentenced to six months in jail, not six years, six months for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman on campus.

When the word got out that that was his sentence, there was widespread public fury at the unduly lenient sentence. And soon thereafter, a Stanford law professor launched a campaign to remove the judge who gave that sentence.

[39 : 13] It was the first attempt to recall a trial judge anywhere in the country since 1982. And no California judge had ever been recalled since 1932. But this judge was recalled.

Whenever we see this scared of justice, we long for true justice. It's not a good thing when justice is not served.

God's righteous acts are finally revealed, when he finally judges the wicked of the earth, all will fear him and glorify his name.

After the song of the lamb, John's vision shifts in verse 5 and he sees the sanctuary of the tent of witness that heaven was opened. This is yet another allusion to Exodus, the tent of witness, or the tent of the testimony, as it is often called in the Old Testament, is another name for the tabernacle that Moses and the Israelites built in the wilderness to be the dwelling place of God.

This tent of witness in heaven is the heavenly equivalent of the earthly tabernacle that was with God's people on that Exodus journey. The tabernacle is called the tent of witness or the tent of testimony because according to Exodus 25-21, the tablets of the testimony, the tablets of stone upon which the ten commandments were inscribed by the very finger of God, the tablets of the testimony were in the ark and stored inside the tabernacle and that's why the tabernacle is called the tabernacle of testimony or the tent of witness.

[40 : 58] It served to be as a witness between God and his people that they had pledged to live in light of God's will and to obey his commands. Remember how Revelation 12-17 described God's faithful people.

They are those who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus. So it's fitting then that here in verse 6, the seven plagues come out of the sanctuary, out of this tent of witness against people of the world who have not kept the commandments of God and who have not held on to the testimony of Jesus.

The tent of witness is now bearing witness against, testify against the people of the world who have refused to repent of their sins. In verse 7, these seven plagues are identified explicitly with the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God.

This is significant because we have seen golden bowls before in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 5-8, the 24 elders before the throne of God were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.

Incense symbolically represents the prayers of the saints in Revelation. And those prayers of the saints, that incense is what we saw in Revelation 6-10 when the saints were crying out, O sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?

[42 : 32] In Revelation 8, 3-5, we saw how God finally answers the saints' plea for vindication and vengeance in the seventh seal judgment when the golden censer or the bowl that contained the incense is then taken to take the fire, the coals from the fire to throw upon the earth in judgment against the earth's woes or in rebellion against God.

To all the saints who are weary from being harassed by the red dragon and the beast, to all the saints who are weary and battle-hardened because of the deceptions and the accusations of the dragon, this is your sweet belief.

This is your vindication. This is the answer to your cry for help. Seven golden bowls, the answer to the prayers of the saints, not full of the wrath of God.

And again, I mentioned last week that the cup or the bowl of God's wrath is an Old Testament reference. Isaiah 51, 17, 51, 17 speaks of the cup of God's wrath, the bowl, the cup of staggering. 51, 22, Isaiah says, the cup of staggering, the bowl of God's wrath. And unrepentant sinners will be forced to down this terrible, undiluted liquor of God's wrath to the dregs.

[44 : 09] The fierce, wrathful presence of God can be seen in verse 8. Just as the cloud, or alternatively smoke, covered the tent of meeting in Exodus 40, 34, 35, after completion of the tabernacle, it said that the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle and Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the clouds settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

That same event happens here in verse 8, in greater fullness. The sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

The wrath of God is the unquenchable flame of the glory of God towards sinners. sinners, and when the consuming fire is burning in his righteous anger, not even the heavenly beings, they are of course.

No one can enter until the wrath of God is finished. I want to appeal to those of you and friends here who are not yet Christians, who have not put their faith in Jesus.

This is something we should truly fear. More than an AI apocalypse, more than a nuclear holocaust.

[45 : 40] What we should truly fear is the wrath of God, not the wrath of man or the wrath of the nations. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

But, having we all sinned, having we all fallen short of the glory of God? Isn't that what the Bible teaches? And the righteous wrath of God will not stop unfinished.

It will not let up until it is finished, he says, until justice has been served. He says in verse 1 that with the seven plagues the wrath of God is finished. He says in verse 8, no one can enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

but those who face that judgment do not escape. They are consumed forever. So how can we escape that final judgment of God?

There's only one way for us to be saved. In John chapter 19, Jesus the Son of God as he is dying on the cross for our sins, bearing the penalty for our sins.

[46 : 56] absorbing in our place the wrath of God, satisfying the wrath of God to our sinners. On that cross, Jesus says as his breath is expiring, it is finished.

Because there on that cross, Jesus himself drank down to the dregs that bowl of wrath that was reserved for us. That's the only way for us to be saved.

There is a bowl. Somebody must drink it. If you don't accept Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf, drinking that for you, you'll be the one drinking it in the end.

And Jesus had to die because that was the only way to satisfy the wrath of God. The fact that God was forbearing towards sinners throughout the ages, that he didn't punish sinners right then and there with his fire of judgment, that we are still alive right now instead of being consumed by the wrath and the judgment of God, that brings into question the justice of God.

It impugns the character of God. God, are you always really true and just? If so, what's going on in this world? What's with all this sin?

[48 : 30] What's with all this wickedness? What's with all this evil outside and within my own heart? How can you be just and tolerate this sin?

the cross had to happen. Jesus had to die. He had to satisfy the wrath of God in order to vindicate God's character, that his ways truly are true and just, that he is the just judge worthy of our worship. So please, don't wait until the end of the age when the sudden plates are finished. you can't today hear Jesus proclaim over your sins, no matter what you have done, no matter where you have been, you can hear Jesus say, oh, you, it is finished.

Let's pray. Father, we praise you, your son Jesus Christ.

We praise you that we do not have to bear the penalty for our sins or sins. We cannot imagine bearing bearing your wrath, Father, your discipline, the front and count of your judgment.

[50 : 07] Thank you for sending your son Jesus out of your love for us so that your wrath might be satisfied. Help us to see the gravity of our sin the fury of your wrath so that we might appreciate even more the mercy we have received at the cross of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.