

6 - The Beautiful Wrath of God (Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1-9:21; 16:1-21)

Judgment is not something we normally long for. But if we are suffering unjustly in an evil social system, God's judgment—far from being a dreaded prospect—is our only hope. Like a wood plane that is used against the grain rather than with it, so wrath is how people opposing the rule of God will experience his grace.

In Rev. 6-19 there is a complicated and rather confusing pattern of disaster and suffering. If we seek to unravel these pictures as a timetable for the future, we will be disappointed and perplexed. But if we want to learn how to live in the present and find hope for the future, there is much here to encourage us. These chapters inspire trust in a God who is faithful and just.

1. As you approach the subject of God's wrath, what thoughts and feelings do you have? Explain.

2. *The First Six Seals:* Read Rev. 6:1-17. The scene shifts back to earth as the Lamb opens the book of destiny. Summarize the events during the first four seals (Rev. 6:1-8).

3. Are the events during the seals normal bad times (compare Rev. 6:1-8 with Rev. 6:12-14)? Explain.

4. How does the experience of the saints (Rev. 6:9-11) contrast with that of the unbelievers (Rev. 6:15-17) as they anticipate the impending wrath of God?

5. What evidence, if any, do you see of this contrast among people today?

6. *The Seventh Seal and the Seven Trumpets:* Quickly scan Rev. 8:1-9:21. The seventh seal (Rev. 8:1-5) contains the seven trumpet judgments (Rev. 8:6-11:15). What apparently is God's purpose in allowing these judgments to fall on the whole creation (Rev. 9:20-21)?

7. Does such a response by God seem justified? Explain.

8. It is sometimes maintained that Christians are removed from the world before God's wrath falls. What alternate view is possibly suggested by Rev. 9:4 (see also Rev. 7:3)?

9. *The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath:* Quickly scan Rev. 16:1-21, noting the similarity between these plagues and those brought on Egypt (blood, frogs, gnats, flies, livestock, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, firstborn; (Exodus 7-12). What might be meant by this comparison?

10. How could the same events lead to worship on the part of some (Rev. 16:5-7) and cursing on the part of others (Rev. 16:9, 21)?

11. If we realize that the wrath of God will one day be fully expressed, what difference should it make in our attitude toward sin?

In our attitude toward unjust suffering?

In our attitude toward non-Christians?