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Wrath, Judgment and Salvation

Revelation 16

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PowerPoint Presentation included: None

Sermon Audio Blurb: Revelation 16 unveils the out-pouring of the wrath of God upon the world as it rebels against Him. It is a picture of terror and horror. And if we are honest, it is a hard picture to see and consider. In an effort to bring a proper perspective on this important chapter, Pastor Henry gives a pause and takes us through two key doctrines, sin and salvation with the goal to help us fear God's wrath and delight in His salvation.

I. Introduction.

- A. The challenge of teaching hard things and giving bad news.
 - 1. As chaplain to men in Supermax that there was a death.
 - 2. As an officer giving death notifications or of a family member who committed a bad crime.
 - 3. As a pastor with someone who is in a lot of trouble and trying to speak to him and the family.
 - 4. It is an art that is learned only through consistent practice but two basic truths are certain:
 - a. First, there is no easy or nice way to do it that makes it painless.
 - b. Second, to refuse to do it is an act of cowardice and a lack of love no matter how one tries to package it.
 - c. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, But deceitful are the kisses of an enemy (Proverbs 27:6).
- B. **Read chapter 16.**
- C. Judgment is hard and there is no way around that.
 - 1. But it is also the nature of judgment, it is not redemptive; rather it is the practical outworking of justice.
 - 2. For several weeks we have been walking through this important book and it has been hard. To read this book with any shred of honesty strips away

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the false, sugar-sweet type of Christianity that is so common in the pulpits across our nation.

3. To spend a significant time thinking and learning about God's judgment against all who rebel is good for our souls if we let it.
 - a. When the bible talks about the idea of salvation it is not speaking in general, vague terms. It is quite specific.
 - b. And as I worked on my sermon for this chapter I found a growing desire to speak on judgment and salvation, hence this sermon before us.

D. Its importance is too often understated.

1. The greatest theologian ever produced in America was a man named Jonathon Edwards, who described the doctrine of sin as "that great, important doctrine."
2. Why would he say that?
 - a. Sin is what captures the whole of our existence and it is our great enemy.
 - b. It is what separates us from one another and from our Creator, God.
3. The bible paints a picture from the beginning to the end of the destructive path that sin causes in the lives of people, nations and nature. Its fingerprints are everywhere at all times.
4. If the bible is true about our situation and state. In other words, if we are sinners then ultimately all is in ruin. If the foundation is rotten then the building cannot stand for long.
5. There is a song by Caedmon's Call called *Love Along*, which has a line in it that says this: "No one would love me if they knew all the things I hide."
 - a. This should speak to each of you for each of you know what lurks just beneath the surface of your outward life.
 - b. Sin is likened as a disease, moving through the innermost of our being, working its ill and producing its noxious fruit.
 - c. The book of James says this regarding it, our own desires gives birth to sin; and when sin is brought to its fulness and maturity, it brings forth death.

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- E. Today I want to break from the book of Revelation and lay out a very broad, but important theology of both sin and salvation.
1. There are only a few things that I am convinced of in this life.
 2. One of those is that as Matt Miller has taught us, *hevel* is part and parcel of our existence; therefore, hold on to all things lightly except for God and gospel.
 3. Second, sin is far more toxic and destructive than any of us realize and it is our great enemy.
 4. Third, the salvation given to us through Jesus Christ is greater than all other things and though it is too often unappreciated by us it stands tall above sin and death. It is our ONLY hope.
 5. Fourth, you can only learn to weep and rejoice at the same time when considering God's holy judgment when you understand both sin and salvation.
- F. So before we look in detail at these seven plagues poured out upon humanity (meaning people who we know, love and share life with), I want to lay out this foundation.

II. Sin.

- A. Again, this doctrine is of the greatest importance for it will control everything else.
1. If we are but small sinners committing small sins then we live with little concern.
 2. But if we are truly great sinners who are a veritable factory making sin then there is much to fear. And in that fear we then begin to look away from ourselves to a salvation that is outside of each of us.
- B. The presence of sin is not something God did for He cannot sin.
1. Not only does He not sin but He is not even tempted by sin.
 2. He stands outside of it in every sense.
- C. But it is not something that surprises Him either.
1. Sin is not some power that is eternal or present in all places. It is most certainly not an equal and opposite force to God.
 2. Sin is under the sovereign control of God like all other things. It does not surprise Him, trick Him, or confuse Him. As Paul writes in Ephesians 1, “[God] accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will.”

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- D. The vocabulary of sin.
1. The way the writers of the bible write about this enemy of ours is helpful to see how it works.
 2. It is seen commonly as something that fails to reach its proper goal. It falls short or misses its mark.
 - a. Sin is why you try to say something helpful to another and end up making a bigger mess than before. You failed to actually achieve your goal.
 - b. Sin is why you must remind yourself and others of what is right to do.
 3. It is also described as wander or to go astray.
 - a. In Psalm 58 all who are sinners go astray from birth.
 - b. But before you try to use this to your advantage, understand that the wandering is not by mistake. We don't accidentally go astray, it is done on purpose.
 - c. In other words we don't even enter into this world on the right path. It is easy to see why the bible calls the non-Christian a lost person.
 4. Then the bible will tell us that we sin because we transgress. This simply means that we overstep and find ourselves where we don't belong.
 - a. Often you will find this used in reference to obeying the command of God.
 - b. 1 Samuel 15:24.
 - (1) Give background throughout this chapter. Make note of how sin in Saul works to justify and rationalize what is a simple and clear command.
 - (2) Explain vs 23.
 - (3) Saul's confession and yet not a confession.
 - (4) The cost. It is excessive only if you do not grasp the evil of disobedience to God.

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5. Closely connected are other terms that mean to turn aside and leaving the proper path. To act in a manner in a treacherous manner, to be a traitor and to make friends with the enemy.
 - a. Again it is not by accident but by desire and plan.
 - b. It is what we would call apostasy.
 - c. The prophet Jeremiah used this term when he declared on behalf of God, “Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind And makes flesh his strength, And whose heart turns away from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:5).
 - d. What makes this so powerful and confrontational to each person is that it speaks of spiritual adultery.
 - (1) We are made to love and enjoy God. To worship Him. But because we are sinners we keep turning away for anything or anyone but Him.
 - (2) So when you think of God’s wrath and judgment just think of what it would mean to find your spouse willingly and openly pursuing another.
6. Add to all of this the terms used that describe us as rebels and stubborn of heart.
 - a. Again you can relate whether you wish to admit it.
 - b. How easy it is in the privacy of your thoughts to resent something and fight against it.
 - c. Each of us, without God changing our heart, are rebels in every way. And then we shake our fist at God when He holds us accountable for it.
7. One that is I refer to frequently is a word that speaks to being twisted and crooked.
 - a. As I continue to watch and live I see this work out over and over again in so many different ways.
 - b. Give something good to a person and given time they will twist and pervert it.

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- c. Paul says in Romans 7 that even God's law becomes a victim of this. The Law is good and right, but sin is so powerful a force that instead of the Law controlling sin the opposite happens. Sin twists the Law so that we sin all the more.
- 8. The result is that we are then described as guilty.
 - a. The mass of humanity suffering under the hand of God in Revelation is not innocent. They are guilty in every way.
 - b. And beloved, if you have not confessed at true that you are a rebel and sinner before God. If you have not placed your hope in Jesus Christ alone then this is you, a rebel and unfaithful lover.
- 9. But just because I know how people are let me speak to one final term that the bible uses to describe us. It is ungodliness.
 - a. For any here who might be saying that you reject that you are actively rebelling and rejecting God. Or that you seek to step over and away from the law of God.
 - b. This is the term that captures you in its snare. The term used at its core is that of worship, or the lack of worship.
 - c. Understanding that ungodliness is essentially ignoring God, removing Him from the picture. This can be helpful in witnessing with a person who is an externally good person but who does not consider God in his life. The Bible declares him to be 'ungodly.'
- E. A working definition.
 - 1. Do not think of sin merely as an action you do. We do commit sin but that is not what sin is actually.
 - 2. A simple way to see it is that it is a personal lack of conformity to the moral character or desire of God.
 - 3. It is what every person IS and therefore it is what every person DOES.
 - a. It is what you are at the heart level. It is the current state of every person apart from God's salvation.
 - b. It involves your thoughts and will.
 - c. And it shows itself in your actions and inactions.

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- F. And now to the point about sin.
 - 1. Colossians 3 says that it is because of sin that the wrath of God shall come.
 - 2. This is not some sort of discipline to train. Wrath is the holy expression of God's reaction to rebellion.
 - 3. It is being under the judgment of God in eternity. And it is something from which, once you are experience it, there is no escape.
 - 4. Romans says in chapter 1 that God is currently revealing that wrath due to sin. We see it in the consequences of sinful living.
 - 5. In Romans 2 it is said that we are storing up the wrath of God for that day in which it will be poured out. Why? Because we foolishly think that because we are not experiencing it now, that some how God doesn't see or care.
 - 6. Romans 3 says that it is God who will inflict wrath upon all who are unbelievers.
 - 7. Romans 4 says that the presence of God's Law brings out our sinfulness and results eventually in God's wrath.
 - 8. And then, Romans 5, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him." (Romans 5:9)

III. Salvation.

- A. Such a beautiful truth but also such a complicated one. Keep that in mind and embrace the fact that what I teach now is only broad strokes.
- B. Romans 5:9 makes it simple and clear.
 - 1. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ there is salvation in the fullest sense in Him.
 - 2. In the present, we have justification. It is full and complete to anyone who trust in Jesus' person and work.
 - 3. In the future, we have salvation.
 - a. From what?
 - b. God's wrath. It does not belong to the believer. God has rescued him through Jesus.

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4. How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered!
(Psalm 32:1)
 - a. Remember how sin is described as stepping beyond what and where we are allowed. We transgress God's law and will.
 - b. For the one who is forgiven there is nothing but good. He is to be envied.
 - c. Here we get a sense of the joy David has in this thought...one who has not just gone over the "line" but one who has openly rebelled, yet is forgiven.
- C. Salvation explained—Isaiah 52:1-10.
 1. This passage is referred to, in part, in Romans 10.15 “(And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”).
 - a. As a result there is often the assumption that Isaiah was referring to getting saved from sin.
 - b. This idea, however, is very short-sighted and fails to see the fulness of what salvation involves.
 2. Salvation in its fullest sense is the declaration that God reigns! Note this idea in Isaiah 52.7.
 - a. The peace referred to there is shalom and refers to the day when God brings all things under His rule and reign. Which is what we are witnessing in Revelation.
 - b. Where the righteous are finally vindicated (acquitted), (the meaning behind the term “justification.”).
 3. What is fascinating about this text in Isaiah is how it uses terms with which we are very familiar.
 - a. “. . . who announces (evangelizes) peace And brings good news (evangelizes) of happiness. . . .”
 - b. And, of course, he uses the term “salvation.”
 4. Salvation in this passage, as well as throughout the Bible is far greater and fuller than merely the battle of sin and death.

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- a. We tend to think of salvation in a “motion” sort of way. We see it is something from which we came, usually sin and death. And while this is acceptable to a degree, the bible more forcefully describes it as something that we and all of creation is going toward.
 - b. A simple example of this is seen in the following passages:
 - c. Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.
 - d. 1 Corinthians 1:18 For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
 - e. 1 Corinthians 3:15 If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.
 - f. Ephesians 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
5. We find that the bible says that salvation is found in the truth that God has come and accomplished the necessary work to make all things right again.
- a. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the great enemies have been conquered (there is a kingly concept being described in these events).
 - b. Those enemies are sin, death and Satan. The process of this salvation, however, is still being worked out in various ways and involves the concept of the Kingdom of God.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. Ultimately salvation is eschatological in that it looks to the ‘end’ of the old and the fulness of the ‘new.’
 1. And that is what we will see at the end of this long section in Revelation and the wrath of God.
 2. Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with

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them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:1-5)

B. Beloved it is very simple.

1. You and I are sinners. We have no standing with God, our Creator in ourselves.
2. God is holy and will not ignore sin. He must be faithful to who He is. And eternal wrath is how He will do it.
3. The answer is to flee from that wrath to come.
4. And the way and person to flee is God, through His Son, Jesus.
 - a. Jesus who took sin upon His perfect self and died because of it
 - b. Jesus who drank the fulness of God's wrath in Himself.
 - c. Jesus who died the death that belongs to us.
 - d. Jesus who destroyed death through His resurrection.
5. Jesus says it simply, Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.

V. **Benediction/Doxology.**

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- **CGL, before discussion ask 3-5 people to share their testimony to the group. Encourage everyone to simply hear and think about the different ways the persons came to believe, but also how they are still all the same, sinners coming to Jesus and finding life.**
- **Pray for those who do not know Christ. Pray that each would grow with a burden to those outside of God's grace. Pray for boldness with the gospel. Pray for a sensitive heart both to each person's ability to let sin harden their hearts to each other and that those who are not Christians are slaves in their sin.**