

Grace In Judgment

Long Beach Alliance Church • February 24th, 2013 • Pastor Chris Lankford

Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"

~Revelation 6:1 (NASB)

1) The Breaking Of The First Seal Of The Apocalypse

A) The book of Revelation has moved us from the wonder of our powerful Lord Jesus Christ (Revelation 1), through the adversities facing Christ's Church (Revelation 2-3), into the center of the universe, God's throne (Revelation 4), and finally face-to-face with the Overcomer, Jesus Christ, the Lion and the Lamb (Revelation 5), who will finally reveal the great mystery (cf. 1:1, 3, 7, 19). With creation bursting in anticipating worship, the Lamb breaks the first seal containing the Apocalypse, and the thundering voice of the living creature loudly commands -- "COME!" (6:1).

2) The Problem Of God's Judgment & Gracious Love

A) We live in a culture which aggressively questions how a loving and gracious God could possibly be the same God that is responsible for punishing individuals and pouring out deadly judgments against entire nations in the Bible.

B) But more scandalous than an unbelieving world that doesn't believe (which actually makes sense), is that most of God's own people, followers of Jesus Christ, find it very difficult to reconcile God's destructive anger, His shocking judgments, with His loving, soul-saving compassion.

C) Why pause here to consider this difficult subject?

First, we are beginning a section of Revelation which focuses on God's wrath (a more formal way of saying "God's anger") being poured out upon the earth through series of judgments. When Jesus breaks away the first seal (6:1), a new phase of the future begins, which doesn't conclude until the end of Revelation 17!

Second, if you view God's love and wrath as opposites, it *conclusively crushes* reaching out to those who do not trust in Jesus Christ. If Christians only talk about God's love, but do not engage adversity and God's wrath, we miss being authentic and true. You know it, I know it, God knows it, and it means death for a "culture of invitation."

3) God Is Love, Right? Why Does He Have To Judge People?

- A) God's judgments enforce truth, because He is holy (4:8). Doing otherwise would actually be sin, and God cannot sin. God always acts in a manner which is consistent with His holiness. Yes, He really is that good.
- B) Because God's judgments are always right, they provide justice to the powerless and the victimized (6:9-11). God rightfully defends the oppressed, and punishes sin.
- C) God's judgments reveal that the greatest powers of this earth are genuinely powerless. Trusting in anything other than God will be judged. By this, mankind is GRACIOUSLY warned: Repent and Respond to a loving God (14:7)!
- D) God's judgments reveal His sovereignty over all things. Mankind ignores God, as though He is asleep. God is slow to judge because HE LOVES US! No one will ever say, "I never had the chance..." Why? Because God's judgments are perfect, and we will ALL be completely satisfied with ALL of His judgments. Forever. It will be that good!
- E) God's judgments ALWAYS call people (both righteous and unrighteous) to repentance and faithful living (9:20-21, note though 11:13). Without judgment, people would never repent and be saved by God. Judgment is actually the MOST GRACIOUS ACT GOD DOES FOR MANKIND!