

The Three Types of Wrath in The Book of Revelation

By Robert I. Adams

In this article, we will investigate what the book of Revelation says about wrath.

The first mention of wrath is in 6:16. Here, we read of "the wrath of the Lamb." The Lamb is Jesus Christ (5:6–9). The next verse speaks of "the great day of His wrath" (6:17). This tells us the wrath of Christ will come at a specific time. The question is therefore: When does the great day of Christ's wrath come? The context tells us it will come after the opening of the sixth seal (6:12). At the opening of the sixth seal, we are told: "The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth" (6:12, 13). These cosmic signs match what Jesus says is going to occur in the end time. Referring to a period of "great tribulation" (Matt. 24:21), He said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven" (Matt. 24:29). The next verse says, "They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (v.30). Here, Jesus says that just after the great tribulation, there will be cosmic signs that directly precede His coming. Since Revelation 6 tells us these cosmic signs will directly precede the coming of the day of the wrath of Christ, this indicates that the day Christ returns just after the great tribulation and the cosmic signs is the day of Christ's wrath. This shows that the seals in Revelation 6 are an overview of the end time right up to the second coming of Christ that happens after the great tribulation.

The second mention of wrath in the book of Revelation is found in 11:18, when the last of seven trumpets have sounded. Just before we read of God's wrath, loud voices in heaven utter, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (11:15). This points to what will happen at the return of Christ when He takes over the world and sets up His kingdom. It is at this juncture the elders in heaven say to God, "Your wrath has come" (11:18). Again, we see the coming of God's wrath is placed squarely at the second coming of Christ. Another thing to notice is that because it is said God's wrath comes at the seventh trumpet, this means the previous six trumpets and their manifestations on the earth are God's judgments, but not His wrath.

The next mention of wrath is in 12:12, where it says: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time." The "short time" here is apparently the great tribulation, when the wrath of Satan will be fully felt. This is evident in that we are told he will then "make war" with those "who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (12:17).

In chapter 14, we read, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation" (14:9, 10). This wrath of God will be first manifested in the seven bowls of God's wrath (15:1, 7), which are seen to be poured out at the very end of the great tribulation, immediately prior to the return of Christ that is depicted in 19:11 ff. In 16:2, we are told that the first bowl of the wrath of God will specifically target those "who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his

image.” This informs us who the bowls of wrath are directed against. The first causes a foul and loathsome sore to come upon the people who had the mark of the beast. The second causes every living creature in the sea to die. The third causes the rivers and springs of water to become blood. The fourth causes the sun to scorch men with fire. The fifth causes the kingdom of the Antichrist to become full of darkness. The sixth causes the river Euphrates to dry up preparing the way for armies from the east. The seventh causes a massive worldwide earthquake and causes great hail to fall. Between the sixth and seventh bowls, Jesus says: “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches” (16:15). This is an announcement to the believers to keep watch because the coming of Jesus will then be very near.

In chapter 19, we read of the return of Jesus to the earth. Verse 11 says: “Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.” Then in verse 15, it says, “He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” Here, we see the manifestation of the full wrath of God at the second coming of Christ.

We have seen that the occurrences of the word ‘wrath’ in chapters 6, 11, and 19 refer to wrath that will come at the return of Christ. The Greek word *orge* is employed in these instances. When the wrath of God is referred to in chapters 14, 15, and 16, with respect to the bowls at the very end of the great tribulation, then the Greek word *thumos* is used. According to the definition of *thumos*, this form of wrath carries the meaning of ‘passion,’ while *orge* carries the meaning of ‘violent passion issuing forth in punishment.’ In three verses, both these Greek terms are used together (14:10; 16:19; 19:15). These references show God’s *thumos* at the very end of the great tribulation being intensified and giving way to His *orge* at the return of Christ. A tempered form of wrath will be supplemented by a fierce form of wrath. Thus, a distinction is made between wrath at the very end of the great tribulation, and wrath at the return of Christ. Those who belong to Jesus will be delivered from God’s *orge* at the return of Christ, though during the short time of the bowls of God’s *thumos* just before Christ returns, they will be under God’s protective hand.

From what we see in the book of Revelation, the wrath of God will come in full force upon the ungodly after the great tribulation at the second coming of Christ to the earth, with preliminary wrath in the form of the bowls immediately preceding His return. The great tribulation is portrayed as a time when the wrath of Satan will be felt through the Antichrist making war on the believers. Thus, here we have the three forms of wrath in the Revelation.

In case you have some queries about this article, I have compiled answers to the most frequently asked questions about the Bible’s teaching on the return of Jesus in my book “The Approaching Apocalypse” (also available in e-book format). You are welcome to look at it at [Amazon](#).

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