

Seven last plagues - introduction

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[0:00] A little bit of just to remind us where we are, the book of Revelation, it's a book in the Bible. It's for our edification and our survival and our progress as Christians. It tells us it's an unveiling. It shows us the reality behind the appearance. It's in the form of a letter, so the letter has relevance to the people receiving it, so we mustn't forget that, and that would be the churches in Asia in the first century, and I just put how many churches just to see if you're awake? Seven. Seven, yeah, meaning like the completeness of the churches. The letters are relevant to the hearers. It's also in the form of a prophecy, and the prophecy, it says what's shortly going to happen, and it also says, it also has a bigger horizon, not what's just shortly going to happen, what's going to happen quickly, or what the story is from where they are to the very end, actually, so it's got a sweep in terms of prophecy, and prophecy, generally speaking, gives you behavioral implications once you've seen something of the future. It says, this is how you should live now, and it contains all these different things, which I'll try and go through quickly.

You can spot them, but you don't need me to tell you everything that was in there. All sorts of images and pictures for significant spiritual themes, the beast, the false prophet, the bride, the prostitute, the seven lampstands, the city of Babylon, the city of Zion, the horsemen, the trumpets, and the lamb, and the lamb is upon the throne. And if you were to walk those, the streets of the seven churches, you would see things like the Pax Romana, the effect of the power of the Roman Empire to bring peace, or at least conformity. You'd see the effect of trade and money. You'd see the effect of the Roman soldiers, the Roman military machine with conquest and force. There's some soldiers. You'd see the glorious cities like Rome itself, although is it really glorious, or is it actually rather shameful. You'd see worship of man-made gods, not least emperor worship. You'd see the Roman sexual morality was, I would say, fairly appalling. What we've got there? We've got a priest, and have I got anything about sexual? I haven't got a picture for that. Many gods, polytheism, and that would be the situation, spiritually, morally, of the churches to whom this was first written. In a sense, you think that's actually not a huge lot different to our situation. You can find echoes of that in our situation, and perhaps increasingly as we become a post-Christian society. In chapter 4, so we'll just flick back to that, there was a scene in heaven, and everything was round the throne. And in chapter 4, verse 6, it says, in front of the throne, there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. And I just mention that because the sea of glass crops up in chapter 15 as well. I couldn't colour it in properly, but it looked like a sea of glass. I think that this is an echo of the temple furniture, and I put it up there. The temple furniture would have candlesticks inside the temple. Inside the tabernacle of the temple, there'd be a table with bread, but I don't think that that crops up anywhere in Revelation. But inside the temple precincts, there would be what is sometimes translated as a lava, L-A-V-E-R, but also as a sea. Can we look at 2 Chronicles 4, verse 6?

[4:38] 2 Chronicles 4, verses 4, 5, and 6? Who's got the microphone? We could pass it round. Could we take it in turns? Could Daniel do the next one? 2 Chronicles 4, verses 4, 5, 6?

I'm sorry? We could start at verse 2. Yes, of course, that's got the, is that the one with the pie in it? Anyway, right, carry on. 2 to 6? Yeah, 2 to 6, why not?

He made the sea of cast metal circular in shape, measuring 10 cubits from rim to rim and 5 cubits high. It took a line of 30 cubits to measure round it. Below the rim, figures of balls encircled it, 10 to a cubit. The balls were cast in two rows in one piece with the sea. The sea stood on 12 balls, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The sea rested on top of them, and their headquarters were towards the center, hindquarters even, were towards the center. It was a hand breadth in thickness, and its rim was like the rim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It held 3,000 baths. He then made 10 basins for washing, and placed five on the south side and five on the north. In them, the things to be used for the burnt offerings were rinsed, but the sea was to be used by the priests for washing. Thank you very much. So, the mathematical bit is that it was 30 cubits around the outside, and it was 10 cubits diameter. And that proves that the Bible uses round numbers, because it ought to be 30.14 metres. That's the mathematical number pi. Is that what you were thinking of, Steve?

Not particularly. It's a car to make a safe room shape, as well you draw them. Yeah, okay. Yeah, yeah. Right. So, it just fills us in a little bit on the sea, and of course, we remember that the throne is not empty, because the lamb is upon the throne. And I don't want to get too much. I'm trying to get my head into Revelation again, but I don't want to go over 14 chapters before we get to chapter 15, as it were. Right. Let's look at chapter 15. Now, when I came to it, and as I was thinking, I took the same passage to Hurspear Point this morning, I think, well, this chapter doesn't say what we think it ought to say. It's one of those chapters you think, well, if I'd written that, I wouldn't put that. Well, for one thing, it isn't about me. So, we might come to church thinking, I want to hear something about me. But it isn't about me at all. It's mostly about God, actually.

[8:17] And this chapter contains no practical tips for living. It doesn't tell us anything about how to have a Christian marriage. It doesn't tell you anything about how to bring up your Christian children. It doesn't tell you anything about dealing with anxiety, and all the things that you think, when I come to church, I'd like to hear about those. And it doesn't, it completely doesn't talk about those at all, does it? And it doesn't take as its sort of way of looking at things how to be at ease as a Christian. It doesn't tell me how to have comfort. And it certainly doesn't say the Christian life is a load of fun, and I'll give you a chapter about fun. It just doesn't do that at all, does it? But sometimes, just to be a little bit polemical, you might get the impression that that's what the Christian life is about, and that's what church is there to tell you, how to have ease, comfort, and fun. But the chapter completely goes off in a different direction, doesn't it?

And perhaps a little bit more closer to home, I think, it doesn't look back to the cross as such. It does speak about the lamb in verse 3, the song of the lamb. And I think there's another reference, isn't there, to the lamb? Is there another reference?

Maybe not. So the lamb is part of the theme, but it's certainly not looking back on the cross as such. The passage also disappoints us in that it doesn't seem to contain an obvious offer of the gospel to sinners. So this morning when I was preaching at Good News Church, Hirst-Pier Point, I felt, is there any good news in this chapter, or is this sort of failing the trade descriptions act?

It doesn't make an... I mean, there is an offer, but it's not an obvious offer. So in many ways, this chapter seems unwelcome and foreign to us, but here it is in the Bible.

And just as a sort of imaginary exercise, you could think, suppose we got rid of this chapter, and all the other chapters like it, if there are any other chapters like it, what sort of Christianity would we be left with? And I think when you think about it like that, you begin to think, actually, we can't do without this chapter. If we don't have this chapter, we're left with a Christianity that is not Christianity at all. So I would like to try and persuade you that in fact this chapter is essential and central and vital, and we need to hear it. So that's what I'm going to try and convince us of this evening. So let's go through it in terms of like a storyboard and look at the way it runs.

[11:29] I think verse 1 is an introduction, and then verse 2 to 4 are a little separate section, and then we get back to chapter... verse 5, it carries on from the introduction. So in my Bible, I put a little mark to say verses 2 to 4 sort of are an insertion, if you like, or a little change of scene. But let's look first of all at chapter 15, verse 1. It

is a visionary statement. It says, and I saw, and that becomes a theme. That's repeated in different places. And I saw, you see it's there in verse 2, and I saw, and verse 5. In my NIV, it says, after this I looked. Has anybody got and I saw for their version? David, have you got and I saw for chapter 15, verse 5?

Okay, after that I looked and behold. I'm pretty sure it's and I saw. But anyway, it doesn't matter. Does it? Okay, you're right. It says, and I saw. Thank you very much. Absolutely right. So he sees, and let's get what he says here, a great, a mega, and wonderful, amazing, knockout, if you like. I mean, that word amazing is there, a great and marvellous sign.

So let's give that due weight. What he's going to see is great and marvellous, a sort of breathtaking scene is what he's going to say, what he's going to tell us about. And just to see if you're still awake, the seven of something, what are the seven of somethings? Seven angels, and they've got seven plagues. So the angels, we're told about their attire a little bit later, so I'll just take that and come back to that later. The plagues, I put this sign for biohazard. Plague will do for that, and the seven. And I think this is perhaps their description. I don't think it's saying they've got the plagues with them. I think it's saying these are the plague angels, because we'll see in due course that they get given the bowls full of wrath. And I think that the bowls full of wrath are the bowls full of plagues. These are the plague angels, and as we go through, they'll be given the bowls of plague that they're going to do their job with. And we're not just told the seven plagues, we're told something else about the plagues. There's a word there? Last plagues. And that word is repeated, at least it's in the NIV. It says last. Last because what? What does it say?

It's a complete number. It's a complete number, yeah. And it's got lots of completed. The word for completed is the word from which we get teleology, which is, I'm sure, a word you use every day. [14:58] It means to have a purpose, to have a plan that you're going to complete. Teleology. Telos' goal. Sorry, why would we just say goal? With this, God's wrath reaches its goal.

God has a plan, and it hasn't finished yet until God's wrath reaches its goal. With these last plagues, God's wrath is completed. So let's just stop on this idea of of the last plagues, the completion of God's wrath. It tells us that God's wrath proceeds and comes to a climax. Up to that point, there is patience and grace, but there comes a point where God's wrath is complete. And at that point, there is no more mercy. There is no more patience. Time has run out.

That's it. That's the last plague, because with it, God's wrath is completed. And it reminds us that there is such a thing as a last chance for people, a last chance for societies, a last chance for our whole world. God is patient. He is very, very patient, because we know that, because he's patient with us, doesn't he? He is very, very patient, but he is not infinitely patient. His patience doesn't go on and on and on forever. It goes on and on and stops. He gives the opportunity to sinners to repent, and he says now's the time, because this window of opportunity one day will close. That's right, isn't it? And the day of grace, however long it may be, comes to a close. The gospel age, which is the gospel age that we're living in, comes to a close. It doesn't go on forever. God's patience with sinners is great, but it is not infinite. And the plan of God is not completed until final judgment is done.

So, that's a powerful argument, isn't it? It says to us, particularly if we're on the edge of Christian things, you remember the story of the man with the barn who said, I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and then I'll do this, and then I'll have a holiday there, and I'll buy that. And he just thinks on into the future, and God says, you fool. Time is up. Tonight, your life is required of you. And none of us can just plan ahead in that sense, because at some point, we will have had our last chance to repent and come to Christ, and we mustn't miss it. So, that's a reason to be serious about finding salvation, isn't it? You know, you can't just keep putting it off. I'm sure there are people who just, who come to church, sort of tinkering around the edges of things, and they think, well, I'm never going to actually make a final decision about this. I'll put it off for a bit.

[18:52] It's a bit too heavy, a little bit, costs a bit too much. And that's so foolish, because we don't know how much longer we have got. Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

So, it tells us that, doesn't it? It's a reason to close now with Christ in faith and repentance. And it's a reason for Christian people to live the Christian life now in the light of the future.

So, we'll come and say a little bit more about that in a minute. But I'm just trying to give full weight to this idea of the lastness. It doesn't go on forever. It comes to an end. Okay, I hope that makes sense. So, that's looking at verse 1, which is a sort of introduction. And now, let's look at the, in the storyboard, the next bit, which is in verse 2 to verse 4. Now then, would somebody like to read that to us, get a change of voice? Who would like to go next?

And I saw what looked like a sea of glass, glowing with fire and standing beside the sea. Those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name, they held harps given them by God. And he sang the song of God's servant, Moses, and of the Lamb.

Great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations.

[20:31] Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you. For your righteous acts have been revealed.

Amen. Thank you very much. So, let's just look at this. And I saw in heaven, so it says the sea of glass. So, I think this is the same sea that we looked at before. This time, we're told something else about the sea of glass in terms of colour? Glowing with fire. So, there's something red going on. I wonder whether I've got a picture of that. Let's have a look. Yeah. I'm not quite sure whether it's glowing underneath or whether this is the colour of it or what. And I'm taking the fire reference to be something to do with God's holiness. Some of the commentators say this sea is reminding us of the Red Sea. But seeing as it was mentioned earlier, I think there's a connection with the cleansing the priests. They would have washed their hands in that sea. And now the sea has become solid glass. But I think that's the reference.

Thank you very much. My microphone's falling off. Yeah. I mean, there is an Exodus reference going on. But it just doesn't seem to me to be with the sea.

But I mean, I'm not going to go to the stake for that. Now then, standing. There is something standing either beside or upon the sea. Now, who or what is standing either beside or upon the sea?

People? Yeah. Which people are they? Victorious people. Excellent. And let's just have a look. Standing. Oh, here they are. Standing people. I reckon there's 144,000 of them, but I didn't try and draw all of that. And they had been concerning the beast, its image and the number of the beast. They had been victorious. Yeah. So they have victory. And we'll come back to that in a minute. And they're holding, what are they holding? Harps. The word for harp is kithera. You can see I can't help myself but liking words. Kithera, it sounds a lot like guitar, doesn't it? And so I wonder if actually there are 144,000 of them holding guitars. Please don't tell anybody at the Banner of Truth conference or they'd have a heart attack. But it may be that's what a kithera is, a guitar. So I looked up what a kithera looks like.

[23:37] It looks a bit like that. And what have I got next? They were something. Oh, I know. Yeah. And what activity are they holding the harps? And what activity are they engaged in? Singing. Yeah, they're singing. And what are they singing? The Song of Moses and? The Servants of God. Yeah. And of Lamb. Lamb. It's an interesting song, isn't it? So it's a song of Moses. So I did put a C there.

They're coming out of Egypt. And the Lamb. And so what the picture we have is of a victory celebration. I think none of us here is old enough to remember the victory, like victory in Europe day or victory in the Second World War. But I can imagine it, that when victory is announced, there's a great celebration.

And people come out dancing on the streets and singing and rejoicing. And that's what we have here. It's a victory celebration. And one day, by God's grace, we'll be there and we can sing in that victory celebration. I was trying to think of the song, Begone unbelief, my saviour is near, and for my relief will surely appear. And then the last verse says, Since all that I meet will work for my good, the something is sweet, the medicine is food. Oh dear, I can say it this morning.

Da da da da da da da da. Before long, and then oh how pleasant, the conqueror's song. Do anybody remember that one? He's got it at the end there. I go through life.

All that I meet will work for my good. The bitter is sweet, the medicine is food. Da da da da da da. Before long, and then oh how pleasant, the conqueror's song. That's John Newton, Begone unbelief is how it begins. Here, what's the last verse say? Might as well get it right.

[26:00] The pain felt at present will cease before long, and then oh how pleasant, the conqueror's song. And he's got that right, I think. I think this is the song that is there. Thank you very much, Ray.

It's a victory celebration, and it is the 144,000, I think it is, the Lamb's Army, and it's a strumming, singing army. That's a great thought, isn't it? A strumming, singing army. And I mean, one thing just to pick up on is the importance of singing. I'm told that in Islam, people don't sing.

And I'm told that if a Muslim comes into a Christian meeting, he or she is surprised that we sing, and is surprised that we sing with joy, and surprised that we sing with confidence.

Perhaps even surprised that we have anything to sing about. But we do, don't we? The songs of the Redeemed. And I'm sorry, I'm probably not going to sing a lot of songs this evening, but the principle is there, isn't it? We come together, and it's one of the things that Christians do. We taste the victory already in song, don't we? We envisage it. Our hearts are engaged, and our lungs are engaged, and our souls are engaged, saying, great and marvellous your deeds, Lord God Almighty, just and truly always, King of the nations. So let's just have a little ponder before we go on to the next bit, about the victory. Now, the victory was over what or who? What did it say?

The beast and its image and the number of its name. So I think this is one of those things where in just a few words, it's meant to encompass a whole lot more, or to suggest to us a whole lot more.

[28:09] What am I going to click? There's something essential in the Christian life about victory. And you'll remember, and you might like to just flip back, that each of the churches that are addressed is promised something if they are victorious. And that victory can be expressed in various different ways, but it is nonetheless victory. So tap to 2, verse 7, to the church in Ephesus.

To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God. And chapter 2, verse 11, this is to the church in Smyrna. To the one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death. And then to the church at Pergamum, chapter 2, verse 17. Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna, etc., etc. And it's all promised to the victorious Christian.

Now what does that victory involve? It might be worth just flipping back to 1, oh I haven't even got it there. 1 John chapter 5, verse 3 to 5. So who's got the microphone next?

Do you want to have a go? 1 John chapter 5, verses 3 up to 5, please. This is love for God to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome. For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.

[30:06] Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. Thank you. So here we have the same theme from John in another letter. This time it says overcome. It's probably the same word underneath. There's something in faith in Christ that is an overcoming faith.

And there's a call for us to keep fighting if we get knocked down to get back up again and to keep on fighting.

And what he says is you've got to be victorious. You can't afford to give in. You can't afford to give up. You can't afford to lose the plot. And even if you've gone a long way away, get back on track again.

Because it is the victorious ones. And he says it's in the essence of our Christian faith to overcome the world. To not give in to the world, but to overcome it. And it seems to me that whatever stage of Christian life we're at, we're always engaged in a fight. So those of us who have retired, learn this lesson that being retired doesn't excuse you from the Christian fight, we're still fighting against the world, the flesh and the devil.

And we can't afford to give up on that. We're fighting against the forces in society that would crush faith out of us. We're fighting against the seductions and the deceptions that would just take us off on one side and take us down a by-path. And the people here singing this song are the ones who have not given up, but have pressed on through... Oh, I can't remember songs now anymore.

[32:03] I've journeyed towards heaven... Where a well-spent journey, those seven deaths lay between. I've wrestled on towards heaven. I can't remember. But that's what we've got to be doing, to be pressing on. The Christian life in this world is never going with the flow. Christian life

in this world is never just sitting back and drifting.

We need to be fighting and to be victorious. And there was the reference that I mentioned, 1 John 4. Okay, let's get back into the chapter. So we've identified these people and we've commented on them being victorious. And let's just say a little bit more about this song that they're singing. The song of Moses, the servant, God's servant, and of the Lamb. In Hebrews, Moses and Jesus are compared and contrasted that Moses is the servant in God's house and Christ is the son in God's house. And I don't know whether that is what the writer here is sort of pointing towards. The difference... Oh, dear. I never have names on the tip of my tongue these days.

In Downton Abbey, who was the butler? Carson. And who was the... Lord Grantham?

He was the son, wasn't he? Yeah. So there's a difference between Carson, the butler, and Lord Grantham, the son of the house, who owned the estate. If you've never seen Downton Abbey, just forget the last few minutes. So that we've got the song of Moses, the servant, and the Lamb, which of course is Jesus.

I probably don't need to explain that. Is it the law as well? The law as well? Yes. It is the law, if you like, or the old covenant and the new covenant. So it's all bound up together. There's the song.

[34:23] I'm going to get myself out of order here. What was the song of Moses in the Old Testament? Do you know which song he's referring to? There's two things that he could be referring to. My favourite is Exodus 15. Psalm 15 is crossing the Red Sea. It says in Exodus 15, the song of Moses and Miriam. Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord.

So this is, we might be referring to this. And it's a song of victory. It's a song celebrating the fact that Pharaoh and his threatening army are squished. You'll never see them again.

That threatening army that threatened genocide, done, gone. And so, I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my defence. Well, it could be my song. He has become my salvation.

He is my God and I will praise him. My Father's God and I will exalt him. The Lord is a warrior. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea.

The best of Pharaoh's offices are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them. They sank to the depths like a stone. Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power. Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy. That's a grand song, isn't it? It's a song of victory. But I don't think he's talking about two songs in Revelation. He doesn't say they sang the songs of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb. It's one song. And it's a song that begins, if you like, at the Red Sea. And it's a song that carries on till we celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ at Calvary and in his resurrection.

[36:43] It's one song. It encompasses all God's purposes all the way through history. They sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. And let's just see where we're going with this. Just taking a... Are you impressed by the fact that it's one song? So I think that is really worthy of note. One plan and one song.

And it's a song of victory. It's a victory at the Red Sea and it's a victory at the cross. It's a song of victory. And they say, great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.

King where? King of the nations. And of his lordship, who will not fear you, O Lord? And he is uniquely something beginning with H. Holy. He's uniquely holy. And they sing about God's deeds and his ways and his acts. So it says, great and marvellous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways. And at the end it says, your righteous acts have been revealed. And you can't help but think, the most obvious reference is to his acts in judgment, because that's what is being spoken about. We worship you as the judge who is just and true in your ways.

And as we see that you are this sort of God, who will not fear you, Lord? It's about seriousness, isn't it? It's about reverence. It's about honouring God, the Pantocrator, the Almighty.

[38:42] You alone are holy and all nations will come and worship before you. So he talks about fear and glorifying, who will not bring glory to your name, and who will come and worship before you.

And it's all the nations are to come and worship before him. Now he doesn't say whether the nations are coming voluntarily or under compulsion. And in a sense, it could be either and it will be both.

But at the end of the day, every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. All the nations will worship and rightly honour the God whom either they have voluntarily worshipped long before that, or whom they have constantly ignored, and to whom they have been irreverent all through that. But he will be worshipped by all the nations. And so these are the reasons behind this song. It's not just about me. You know, some Christian songs, at their worst, are just sort of saying how wonderful I feel. It doesn't go like this at all, does it? It says you, the eyes are upon you, and in a deeply reverent and God-exalting sort of way. Yeah? So, this is a little bit of reflection, which we've already done. The theme of the song is victory. [40:18] And as a percentage, how much percent of that song do you think is quotation from the Old Testament? I'll tell you what one of the commentaries said.

Okay. Yeah. I had 80% was in one of the commentaries, but it's strongly Old Testament. And I've put some references there. And I think just before we move on from the song, it is striking, isn't it? It's powerful.

It's impressive. And I mean, this is privileged at old, grumpy people to say things like this, isn't it? Are today's songs necessarily like this? And of course, there's a question, should they be? Because there's other songs than this. This isn't the whole way of singing. It's one way of singing. And it doesn't particularly reference the cross, but it is one of the ways. It was one of the themes of worship. And that's why we sang that one right at the beginning, praise the Father because of your justice. So click. Let's go a little bit further now and follow the storyboard on. So now we're in verse five. And let me read this. And after this, I looked and I saw in heaven the temple, that is the tabernacle of testimony or the tabernacle of covenant law. I'm not quite sure why it translates it that way.

[41:55] Have you got a tabernacle of testimony? Okay. Yeah. And the temple was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. And no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, go and pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath. Where? On the earth. Okay. Let's do this bit.

So the temple. So the temple and the temple is opened. So what's going on inside the temple sort of spills out into the world. And out come the seven angels. I think I did seven of them.

The seven plague angels. What is their attire? It does tell us here now, doesn't it? Linen and a golden sash. Now, is there anyone anywhere else where there's somebody clothed in golden linen with a golden sash around his chest? Jesus. Yes, in the, right at the beginning, in chapter one, verse 13, the son of man dressed in a robe, reaching down to his feet with a golden sash around his chest. So these angels have got the same sort of uniform as Jesus. And I do remember seeing Barack Obama on the television. And he gets out of his big security car. And along with him, there is security men. And Barack Obama is wearing this really sort of sharp suit. And the security men are wearing really sharp suits too. They all have the same sort of uniform. And you think these are the

FBI guys with the, yeah, with the dark glasses and the things in their ear to tell them where they're supposed to be looking for snipers and things like that. But they, here are these angels. They've got the same sort of uniform as Jesus. They're not a separate outfit, if you see what I mean. They, they're doing his will. They belong to him.

And there is a gift of something from somewhere to somewhere else. Who gives what to whom? Verse seven.

[44:42] Yeah, the bowls are given by whom to who? The angels to the... One of the four living creatures to the angels.

Yeah. So the four living creatures, they're the throne creatures. That's what a cherubim looks like in the British Museum. It's a, I think it's an Assyrian cherubim. But I think that, let's speculate that the ones in the Bible are similar. And one of them gives the bowl to, whoops, the, the bowls to the, to the angels. So they haven't got the bowls up until this point. So again, it comes from the, it's not, it's

not, they're not acting on their own. It's, it's part of divine arrangement.

And what happens to the temple at this point? It's filled with smoke. Sorry?

Like Solomon's temple. Like Solomon's temple, yeah. And like Isaiah 6, I think. And it seems to me that it, that it, it is the activity of God at the very highest, you know, a high point. And it's so full of God. And so, you know, God being his goddess, if you can put it that way, at this point. That's why the temple gets filled with his presence. This is really God in action.

If we can put it that sort of way. The temple was filled with smoke, so, and where did the bowls end up? On the earth. Yeah. Now then, hopefully, we will come, we'll think about that last bit in just one moment.

[46:37] So what did we make of the angels attire? We've thought about this. It implies that they are not acting alone. They're part of the the staff, if you like.

And the smoke event is God being extremely God. The high point of God's godness, if you like. And where do these plagues, we're going to see them in action in a moment, but where do they come from?

Roughly speaking. Heaven. Heaven. From the throne. Yes, from the throne. Now, just to stop on this, there was a strand of liberal Christianity which said that there's no real things such as God's wrath or God's judgment.

All there is, is the sort of automatic results of living wrong. It just comes back at you, a bit like karma. And it's an impersonal thing.

It's just the way the universe works. And there's no personal sense of God being involved in that. He doesn't have any actual wrath. It's just a way of speaking about the way events work out.

[47:49] And this chapter denies that, doesn't it? Because the angels are part of God's staff. The living creature is part of God's staff. It comes from the throne.

This is God in action. This isn't just things happening as God says, oh, that's a bit unfortunate. But never mind. This is God being God. Yes? So, let's take this on.

Where does the wrath go? Well, it goes to earth. Where did the bowls end up? The earth, where there are trees and mountains and people and temples to false gods and money being used to corrupt, to have greed, to use power wrongly.

Where there is worship of emperors and imagined gods and where there is sexual immorality and where there are wrong wars caused by greed and cruelty and that was the list of things that we looked at right at the beginning with all those things going on in Rome and I think, let me just wind back to that.

Shouldn't God do something about this? Do you think it would be better if God said, I'm not really concerned about all this evil, I'll just leave it?

[49:34] Would that be more to God's glory than having a chapter about his wrath? Doesn't it show who God is? Let me just wind it on a little bit because I think I've put it over here.

The plagues come from God because God is a God who has wrath. Is God being unfair or unjust? No. This is his justice, isn't it? This is praise, great and marvellously your deeds, Lord God Almighty, just and true are your ways. And do you think that this chapter makes God less glorious or more glorious?

More glorious, isn't that right? If we didn't have this chapter, God would be less than he is having this chapter. If you think about God's dealings with the world and the world contains rapists and child murderers and governments that withhold food from needy people and governments that change truth for their own selfish purposes, you name it.

People say, where is God in all this? And without this chapter, God's reputation as a just God is questionable.

[51:11] Without this chapter, God's reputation as a God of justice is questionable. The question is answered when the wrath of God is completed and then we say, yes, you are a God of justice.

Great and marvellous are your deeds. All nations will worship before you because your righteousness has been revealed. We need this chapter, don't we?

Without this chapter, we don't have a God of justice. We have a God who talks about justice but doesn't do very much about it. And I've got some other thoughts here.

Let's look at a couple of verses in Romans. Romans 1 verse 18 and Romans 2 verse 16.

Could somebody read us Romans 1 18, please? Romans 1 verse 18.

[52:18] The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Thank you very much.

So that's a current statement about God's wrath in the current present world. And then could we have chapter 2 verse 16, please? This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ as my gospel declares.

It's part of the gospel to say that there will be a day of judgment. My gospel declares this, says Paul. So what we're looking at here is not something that we have to feel embarrassed about because it misses the gospel.

It is part of the gospel. And I ask, what would happen to the Christian message if you removed final judgment? Which I think is a sort of asking, what's the challenge and encouragement of this passage?

What would happen to the urgency of mission? Well, we would say, it doesn't matter that much because God's patience will go on forever. He'll never show any anger or wrath.

[53:35] we would lose the urgency of mission without this passage. And what about the rationale and motivation of reasoning with a sinner? Because people say, well, I'm not very religious.

It doesn't appeal to me. But the gospel says, well, whether it appeals to you or not, or whether you're religious or not, you will stand before God on the last day and be subject to his wrath unless there is something that changes here and now, and the only person who can change that is Jesus. We would lose that, wouldn't we, if there was no day of wrath. And what about the cross? What did Jesus do for me on the cross?

What did he experience in those hours on the cross? He experienced the wrath of God. Those bowls were poured out on him on the cross.

That's why the sky went dark. That's why he called out, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Because the wrath of God was on him.

[54:42] And if you take away God's wrath, well, what did Jesus do? Why did he bother? What was going on? Not much. If we don't have this chapter and chapters like it, we've got no atoning doctrine of the cross.

And what about the love of God? How is the love of God shown? Because through in Christ God delivered me from all that.

Let's stop there.