

The Wrath of Jesus

Someone wrote to me recently because she was offended that I mentioned the wrath of God. To her, and many modern Catholics and Christians, the very idea of an angry God is unthinkable. She said, "I believe in God's mercy. I believe Jesus never said that we should receive wrath."

I also believe in the God of mercy, grace and love, but he is also a God of justice, holiness and wrath. Indeed he shows both mercy and wrath; mercy to his elect, wrath to the wicked, both now and for eternity in hell. Even when he shows mercy, God does not ignore his justice. God can only justify sinners by faith because Jesus paid the penalty for their sins on the cross.

The Bible warns unbelievers that they are already under the wrath of God. "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). Elsewhere the Scripture says, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness" (Romans 1:18).

Sadly, many remain hardened in unbelief and impenitence, not realizing that they are stocking up wrath which will be poured on their heads on the day of judgement:

"But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed ... for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger" (Romans 2:5, 8). We would be fools if we ignore God's warning of the coming judgement: "Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient" (Ephesians 5:6).

The Bible gives us a glimpse of the terrible retribution upon sinners on that day. "They called to the mountains and the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!'" (Revelation 6:16).

We don't often hear these days of the wrath of the Lamb; many people prefer the soft and affable caricature of 'Jesus'. Notwithstanding such fantasies, the Lord Jesus will execute God's wrath on the world. "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty" (Revelation 19:15).

The same Lord Jesus is the only cover and protection against God's righteous wrath and indignation for us sinners. We who truly believe in him can rest assured that since "we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!" (Romans 5:9). We are not terrified by God's judgement, for we wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead— "Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath" (1 Thessalonians 1:10); "For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

On that momentous day, what will the Lord Jesus show you? Mercy or wrath? Will he take you in his arms or will he stamp you under his feet?