

Theme: One Story – One God, One Plan, One Story (Yet to Come)

Title: Measured Judgment & a Gathered People – Rev.7: 1-17

Aim: Urge response to God's judgment & His ingathering.

Intro: The idiom “‘Good news/bad news’ & its reverse is generally used to make an announcement of both unfavorable & favorable circumstances. The ‘good news’ generally mitigates the ‘bad news.’ The Bible, & especially the book of Revelation, presents some of that bad news/good news, thankfully always ending w/the good news, that trumps the bad news. The good news is that God has created us for Himself, to know Him. The bad news is that our sin keeps us from knowing God. The good news is that Jesus died to pay for our sin & reconcile us to God. All who believe become children of God. The good news is that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The bad news is that He was crucified. But the good news is that He was crucified! And He rose again to conquer sin & death for us. Last week, as we continued to “set up” that which is “yet to come,” the last section in our overview of God's one story: one God, one plan, one story, we saw in Rev. 4 & 5 the wonderful good news that God is on His throne – His plan will not be thwarted, but carried out. The bad news was that no one was found worthy to break the seals & open the scroll containing the will of God, the plan He has set forth spanning from John's days on the Isle of Patmos to the return of Christ. No one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll nor to carry out the plan of God. The good news is that there was found One who had conquered & was worthy. Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the Lamb of God, stepped forward & took the scroll from the hand of the Father, in essence saying, “Yes, Father. Your kingdom come. Your will be done. I will carry out Your will/plan.” Now we have arrived – chap6-22 - at “those [things] that are to take place after this” (1:19) – after John had received the vision, the revelation of Jesus Christ. These

are the things that were “yet to come” for John & the Church & the world. Some consider that most of the book of Revelation has taken place throughout history. Others consider that they have not yet taken place, but will happen in a 7-year span just before Christ comes again, w/a 1000 yrs thrown in for good measure, the 7 yrs happening either directly before or at the end of those 1000 yrs. We’re not going to try to determine that for you as we go through Revelation, but in an overview, we will endeavor to show you what God is doing in this final part of His plan before His eternal kingdom is established & there is no more death/curse. David Palmer wrote that “in Rev.6-11, Jesus (the Lamb) opens the 7 seals & begins to carry out the will of God.” He notes that there is an “escalating progression” taking place. “As each seal is broken, God’s sovereign purpose in judgment & salvation is made known.” Palmer also notes “a recapitulating pattern” in these chapters, w/the “same point [being] made by a repetition of key ideas, [which is] common in apocalyptic writing. In this section (6-11), the exalted Son of Man releases measured wrath (judgment) in the world even as He gathers a people for Himself.” Measured wrath/judgment & a gathered people – keep that in mind. We won’t read chap6, but let’s briefly walk through it. As the Lamb opened the 1st seal there came forth a rider on a white horse. He had a bow & a crown & “He came out conquering & to conquering.” Some think this rider w/his crown, riding a white horse, is Christ Himself. Others disagree. He goes forth conquering. Palmer says this represents war in the earth, which has gone on throughout history. War is definitely a judgment of God & the consequence of sin in man. As the 2nd seal is opened, a rider on a bright red horse comes forth, w/a great sword in his hand. He is “permitted to take peace from the earth.” In a great sense, war is the lack of peace, w/men slaying one another. W/the 3rd seal opened, a rider on a black horse comes forth, w/a pair of scales in his hand. He goes forth w/famine, to such an

extent that a qt of wheat would sell for a day's wage, which is, according to Palmer, 15X the normal price. But note, it is a measured wrath, as oil & wine are unharmed. The 4th seal was opened & a rider named Death came forth on a pale horse, w/Hades (grave) following him. Had authority to kill ¼ of the earth, "w/sword...famine...pestilence &...wild beasts." Again, a measured/limited wrath/judgment at this time, w/1/4 of the earth affected. When the 5th seal is opened, we see that persecution against the Church had been unleashed. In John's vision, those who had died for their faith in Christ & proclamation of God's word & witness for Christ, cried out to God, "How long? When will you avenge this wrong?" They are "given a white robe & told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants & their brothers should be complete." Sometimes it seems that God is blind to the evil in the world even against His Church, but He will balance the scales in His time. He has a plan. Then the 6th seal is opened & there was seen, in Palmer's words, "a great convulsion of created order" – a great earthquake, the sun blackened, the moon becoming like blood, stars falling to earth, the sky vanishing like a rolled-up scroll, every mountain & island removed from its place. Some say this will literally happened, others say it is figurative. What it does depict, in Palmer's words, is the "terrifying reality of God's wrath. Kings of the earth, the rich & powerful, [but also] slave & free all call for the mountains to fall upon them" that they might escape by death the wrath/judgment of God. This brings us to chap 7, which we will read in its entirety [READ]. Let me introduce 3 points made by Palmer in Casket Empty which display the sovereignty & grace of God. Remember "measured wrath/judgment & a gathered people. 1) "**God's kindness** in delaying the full outpouring of His wrath is designed to lead nations to repentance." Paul wrote in Romans 2:3-5 – "***Do you suppose...that you will escape the judgment of God? ...Do you presume on the riches of***

His kindness & forbearance...not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard & impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself...when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." A day of God's full wrath is indeed coming, but His measured judgment is meant to turn many to Christ. II) "**God's salvation** is made known to the nations through the faithful witness of the Church in the world." Coinciding w/His measured judgment, God has been continually gathering a people for Himself. The Gospel has been going forth – a Gospel we have heard & believed, along w/a multitude of others throughout history. Palmer's 3rd point is that III) **God's measured judgment/wrath** upon ¼ of the earth resolves [at this point in Revelation] w/our eyes upon the great company of the redeemed." Instead of the 7th seal being broken at this point, John saw 4 angels standing at the 4 corners of the earth, holding back the 4 winds (of further judgment, I believe). Another seal is introduced as another angel came to the forefront. The seal he held was "the seal of the living God." He called to the 4 angels holding back the winds of judgment, "**Don't harm the earth or sea or the trees until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads.**" This seal of the Living God signifies ownership. Those who are marked w/the seal of the Living God belong to Him. Palmer wrote: "Just as the high priest bore the name of Yahweh on his forehead (Ex.28:36-38), the redeemed bear the name of God & of the Lamb upon their foreheads." We'll see this again in chap14. The 1st ones recorded as belonging to God are "members of [John's own ethnic group] – the Jews. 12,000 from every tribe of the sons of Israel, which indicates, Palmer notes, "a vast # of those who trust in Christ & are saved from God's wrath. Then (he continued) John saw a great multitude – innumerable – from every nation, tribe, peoples & languages. Ethnic identity is not eliminated, but redeemed. Each are clothed in white robes (representing the

righteousness of Christ), w/palm branches in their hands” (worshipping – vs10). The angels respond – vs11-12. Palmer concludes: “Like the highway through the sea at the Exodus from Egypt, the redeemed are delivered by the Lamb & led to God’s dwelling place. They have washed their robes & made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They are before the throne of God & serve Him day & night in His temple. They abide in the shelter of God’s presence” – vs16-17. We’ll see that again in Rev.21. I urge us all, if we are in Christ by faith, to understand who we are. We belong to God & cannot be taken from Him. We are those called to get the message of the gospel out. As we are touched by the acts of God’s measured judgment/wrath upon the world, let us point others to Jesus. If you are not yet in Christ, respond to the kindness of His grace in not yet destroying, but giving opportunity to believe & receive Christ. His unleashed wrath/judgment is coming, but He is now gathering a people to Himself. Let Him write you into His story: one story – one God, one plan, one story.