

WEEK 19: CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 15¹

- Pastor Stephen Davey has called this chapter *A Pause in the Mercy of God*.²
- There are only 8 verses in chapter 15, but they are a prelude to what is going to come.
- Mankind has been hearing about God's impending wrath for so long that they either view it now like the "boy who cried wolf" or just another scheme by the church to get more people through the door.
- In fact, 69% of Americans across all denominations reject the idea that minor sins warrant God's eternal punishment.
- **This creates a paradox**: the official church standard treats God's wrath with absolute seriousness, but modern preaching often heavily emphasizes God's love to avoid making seekers uncomfortable. As a result, many regular attendees treat wrath as a distant, abstract concept rather than an impending reality.
- In fact, 34% of Protestants in America (those churches which came from the Reformation) believe that people can go to heaven *without believing in God*.
- According to *The State of the Church*³, a study which was done in 2025 among Evangelicals⁴ revealed that 64% believed "Everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God" and 53% believe "Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature."
- 47% believe that "God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam."
- 94% believe that "God loves all people the same way." On a side note, 83% of the U.S. population agreed.
- "The 2025 State of Theology survey makes clear that many evangelical churches and individuals lack a firm grasp of the essential Christian faith revealed in Scripture."⁵
- As we come towards the ending of Revelation, God's final wrath is going to be poured out, the un-holy trinity is going to be revealed, God's Great White Throne of judgment is going to be put front and center.
- Mankind, who thought they were doing what was good and right and following after the beast, is going to be hit hard with a huge dose of reality.
- "And in this chapter – the shortest chapter in the Book of Revelation, and in just 8 brief verses, the stage will be set for the final drama in human history."⁶

¹ All research data taken from <https://www.christiancentury.org/news/new-pew-study-looks-views-theodicy-afterlife>

² <https://www.wisdomonline.org/teachings-detail/revelation-lesson-45>

³ <https://thestateoftheology.com/>

⁴ The Bible is the highest authority, evangelism is important, Jesus's sacrifice forgives sins, faith in Jesus is the only way for the free gift of salvation.

⁵ <https://thestateoftheology.com/>

⁶ Edward Hindson, *Twenty-First Century Biblical Commentary Series: Revelation* (AMG, 2002), p. 161

CHAPTER 15:1-2 ~ A GREAT SIGN IN HEAVEN

Revelation 15:1-2 “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. {2} And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.”

- As John looks into heaven, he sees another sign...this one is great and marvelous.
- He is witnessing the call for God’s final wrath to be poured out before the coming of Jesus to establish the Millennial Kingdom.
- “The first series began to be poured out with the 7 seals in chapter 6; the second series involved the 7 trumpet judgments in chapters 8-11. The earth has now for several years been deluged with horrific disasters, epidemics and death. In fact, already nearly half the world’s population is dead. And now, with this final series, you have the image of 7 bowls of wrath poured out upon the earth as the wrath of God is brought to a conclusion in the Tribulation and Christ returns to reign on earth for a thousand years, as we’ll see later.”⁷
- What John is witnessing is the beginning of the end for the world as we know it.
- As he looks into heaven and seeks the 7 angels and the 7 plagues which have God’s final wrath, he then sees something else also.
- Something like a sea of glass and fire.
 - This is similar to what John saw in **Revelation 4:6** “...and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.”
- The difference is now he sees this glass *mixed with fire*.
 - “The symbolism, however, is rich. The sea is designed to reflect the glory of God. In chapter 4 its description “like unto crystal” speaks of the holiness of God. Here the sea mingled with fire speaks of divine judgment proceeding from God’s holiness. The fact that the saints are able to stand upon it reflects the faithfulness of God in upholding His own in keeping with His divine character.”
- Fire is often associated in the Bible with judgment.
 - **Hebrews 10:27** “...but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.”
 - **Hebrews 12:29** “...for our God is a consuming fire.”

⁷ <https://www.wisdomonline.org/teachings-detail/revelation-lesson-45>

- “This expanse of glass, as it were, like a tranquil sea – not a small pond, by the way, but a sea – reflecting the throne of God, shining with all the reflected glory and light of God Himself.”⁸
- “Here the impending judgment of God is swirling around the platform of clear glass . . . mixing red fiery color to the crystal sea upon which His throne stands. It becomes a terrifying description of His anger and judgment which will pour down in one, final devastating series of events.”⁹
- John saw *those how had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name*.
- In other words, he saw the martyrs who had been faithful to Jesus during the tribulation time. Those who had not given up their witness or testimony when faced with certain death.
- They did not bow to the statue of the beast nor take the mark of the beast.
 - It is interesting that John calls them **victorious**. When we think of victory, we think of the one who conquers someone else. To be victorious means that you won something, you defeated your foe.
 - These murdered saints are victors because of their faithfulness to Christ in their day of persecution.
 - We are going to see that beheading is a favorite tool of the antichrist...
 - **Revelation 20:4** “Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”
 - As one pastor said, every time the Antichrist’s guillotine fell, he thought he had one...but when these saints arrived to be with Jesus, they received the crown of victory.
- The enemies of believers on earth thought they had victory because they were murdering the saints but from God’s perspective the saints had the true victory.
- He also sees these saints standing before God, but not in fear...they are holding harps of God.
- “The harp (lyre) and the trumpet are the only musical instruments mentioned in the book of Revelation... The harpers’ privileged position before the throne contributing to the heavenly harmony of the chorus of the redeemed is their reward for refusing to worship the beast, receive his mark, bow to his image, or be identified with his number. They clearly belong to saints martyred during the time of great tribulation, confirming that the time schedule is near the end of the period and contrasting them to saints of other ages.” (Walvoord)
- “The believers pictured here will have undergone the terrors of the Tribulation and suffered painful, violent deaths as martyrs. Yet despite having endured the most intense persecution the world will ever know, their

⁸ Stewart Custer, *Revelation: From Patmos to Paradise* (BJU Press, 2004), p. 168

⁹ <https://www.wisdomonline.org/teachings-detail/revelation-lesson-45>

faith, which is a gift from God, will endure. Eventually, they will stand triumphantly before the throne of God, watching as God takes vengeance on their persecutors.”¹⁰

CHAPTER 15:3-4 ~ VICTORY SONG FROM TRIBULATION MARTYRS

Revelation 15:3-4 “And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! {4} Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.’”

- Again, from the earthly perspective, evil is in control and is winning the battle.
- But in the presence of the Lord, the victory song has already begun.
- They are singing 2 songs: the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.
- “The former recounts the faithfulness of God to Israel as a nation in recognition that a large number of Israelites are among these martyred dead. The song of the Lamb speaks of redemption from sin made possible by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, and would include all the saints.” (Walvoord)
- The song of Moses is likely the song recorded in **Exodus 15:1-21**.
 - This was sung when Israel was led out of captivity and slavery from Egypt as they were making their way to the Promised Land.
 - “This song from Exodus 15:1-19 was stamped upon the memory of every Jew. It was sung at every Sabbath evening service in the synagogue. To this day, at every orthodox Jewish service one of two prayers they will pray refers to this Song of Moses.”¹¹
- The song of the Lamb is likely a reference to the one given in Revelation 5:8-14.
- The song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea; The song of the Lamb is sung at the crystal sea.
- The song of Moses was triumph over Egypt; The song of the Lamb is triumph over Satan.
- The song of Moses sings of how God brought His people out; The song of the Lamb sings of how God brought His people in.
- The song of Moses is one of the first hymns in Scripture; The song of the Lamb is one of the last.¹²
- This song they are singing is all about the attributes of God and His upcoming victory over Satan and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

¹⁰ John MacArthur, *Revelation 13-22*, 127.

¹¹ William Barclay, *The Revelation of John: Volume 2* (Westminster Press, 1976), p. 119

¹² Adapted from John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation* (Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), p. 187

- God's works are great and marvelous.
 - He is almighty.
 - His ways are righteous and true.
 - He is the King of all nations.
 - God is to be feared and glorified.
 - He is holy.
 - All nations will come to worship Him.
- “The concluding phrase in the song speaks of the divine judgments which are revealed, speaking of the application of divine righteousness to the wicked earthly situation. The righteous judgment from God proceeds from what He is as described in this song: the God who is almighty, righteous, true, holy, just, and worthy of worship.” (Walvoord)
 - “This description of praise to God and prediction of universal worship is in keeping with many other Scriptures and relates, of course, to the second coming of Christ and worship of God by the entire world in the millennial kingdom...The awful hour of wickedness and blasphemy against God, which will characterize the period leading up to the Second Coming, will be followed by a full vindication of God's judgment and holiness in the next period.” (Walvoord)
 - There are many Old Testament predictions of the people on earth worshipping the Lord in response to His kingdom coming to earth.
 - **Isaiah 2:2-3** “Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. {3} And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
 - **Isaiah 66:23** “And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from sabbath to sabbath, All mankind will come to bow down before Me," says the LORD.”
 - **Micah 4:1-2** “And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. {2} Many nations will come and say, "Come and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.”
 - **Zechariah 14:9** “And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one.”

- “This is further textual evidence that during the millennial kingdom, now just a few months away, people from every tongue, tribe and nation will have believed in Christ alone for salvation – survived the Tribulation – and now they enter the Millennial Kingdom to worship and serve King Jesus.”¹³

CHAPTER 15:5-8 ~ GOD’S WRATH IS ACTIVATED

Revelation 15:5-8 “After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, {6} and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. {7} Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. {8} And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.”

- “Another vision now introduced by John as a later development constitutes the immediate introduction of the judgments represented in the vials. Our attention is arrested by the phrase “I looked, and, behold.” This expression always introduces something dramatically new.” (Walvoord)
- John’s attention is taken away from the song of the saints to the 7 angels with the 7 plagues.
- He sees this heavenly vision of the whole temple; likely comparable to the earthly one.
 - “The word temple is *naos* – a reference to the Holy of Holies – the place of the ark of the covenant which housed inside that golden box the 2 tablets of the law written by the finger of God, and kept inside the Holy of Holies.”¹⁴
- “As John looks intently on the scene, the sanctuary is opened, that is, the curtain is parted, and seven angels are seen coming out of the sanctuary. The holy place, into which the high priests alone could go and only after proper sacrifices, does not exclude holy angels who have no sin. Each of the angels is carrying one of the vials containing the seven plagues and is described as being clothed in pure white linen and girded with a golden girdle.” (Walvoord)
 - Their white clothing, clean and bright, points to their purity.
 - Their golden sashes points to God’s glory.
- These 7 angels coming out of the temple:
 - “They are emerging from the Holy of Holies, representing the very place where the law of God has been kept. They are given a mission to bring terror and judgment to earth then, because the law has

¹³ Mark W. Wilson, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Revelation* (Zondervan, 2002), p. 95

¹⁴ <https://www.wisdomonline.org/teachings-detail/revelation-lesson-45>

been broken and mankind has disregarded the law of God and God long ago promised that ***He would never allow the guilty to go unpunished.***¹⁵

- God is going to righteously judge sin and those who have not repented.
- If God does not judge sin then He is unjust and not holy. God cannot just *sweep it under the rug* but must respond in His righteous wrath.
- “The whole scene is most symbolic of what is about to happen. The angels coming out of the sanctuary indicate that the judgments to be poured out stem from the holiness of God and are properly required of God who must do all things right.” (Walvoord)
- “The seven angels described as already having the seven plagues in verse 6 are given seven golden vials or bowls described as full of the wrath of God in verse 7. The reference to plagues in verse 6 may be prophetic, or the bestowal of the vials may be the authorization to use them. The extent of the divine judgment is indicated by the word *full* indicating the devastating character of this divine judgment.” (Walvoord)
- “The angels have been given the authority of Christ to receive their goblets of divine retribution. And with some ceremony that will be amazing to behold – and every one of us who believe by faith in Christ alone will be here watching this scene unfold in [Revelation 15](#) – these seven angels will file out of the Holy of Holies, approach the throne of God where we’re told, **v. 7. *Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.***”¹⁶
- Chapter 16 will begin the final pouring out of God’s full wrath on unrepentant and prideful mankind. It is going to be absolutely horrifying.
- In **verse 8**, John sees that “the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple...until the seven angels were finished.”
 - At this stage, God’s mercy is done, Christ is no longer acting as the intercessor but as the One who is judge.
 - There are no more delays, the time has come for the world to see the full effects of sin.
- **God’s wrath is promised to come throughout all the Scriptures.** The delay in His wrath is not a sign that the Scriptures are not true, but a show of His undeserved mercy.
- **Romans 2:2-6** “And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. {3} But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? {4} Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? {5} But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath

¹⁵ <https://www.wisdomonline.org/teachings-detail/revelation-lesson-45>

¹⁶ Ibid.

and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, {6} who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS...”

- God is holding back His judgment right now. This is part of the riches of His kindness, His tolerance and His patience. This is done so that wicked mankind will repent.
- God is perfectly just to strike mankind dead at their first unholy work or blasphemous word.
- But because of His patience towards sinners, He allows them to live in ignorance and hear the saving message of Jesus Christ.
- When sinful man does not repent, they are *storing up wrath* for themselves which will be shown *in the day of wrath* when God’s righteous judgment comes upon them.
- “This refusal to repent causes the Jews to “store up wrath against” themselves, a commercial metaphor picturing them baling their depravity into God’s silo, where it will accumulate not riches (they have already spurned that in verse 4) but wrath. Sin accumulates throughout their lifetime, ending at the final judgment, called in Scripture “the day of wrath” (Ps 110:5; Zeph 1:15; Rev 6:17).”¹⁷
- There are multiple ways the Bible describes God’s wrath upon mankind:
 - **Sowing and Reaping: Galatians 6:7-8** “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. {8} For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”
 - **Cataclysmic Events:** Worldwide Flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, etc.
 - **Abandoning sinners to their own desires: Romans 1:18, 24** “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ... {24} Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.”
 - **Eternal:** The Great White Throne Judgment **Revelation 20:11-12** “Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. {12} And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.”

¹⁷ Grant R. Osborne, *Romans: Verse by Verse*, (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017), 57.