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All Shall Bow before The Holy One **Revelation 15**

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Sermon Audio Blurb: In anticipation to the outpouring of the seven bowls filled with the wrath of God we are given one more vision into heaven. There we see the heavenly hosts rejoicing and praising God for these coming judgments. We see the lining up of the seven angels to take up their respective bowls. And we how serious and frightening the wrath of God is and how holy he truly is.

I. Introduction.

- A. Chapter 14 was the final part of a key interlude
- B. When I left off in chapter 14 I ended my sermon with these words:
 - 1. The bible has never lied to you. There are two ways, two roads for each of us.
 - a. Jesus called on the broad way and the other the narrow.
 - b. It is easy to be on the broad one, you just have to live and breath.
 - c. But the narrow one is entered only through faith in Jesus Christ. Becoming a follower of Him and Him alone.
 - d. One is life and the other way is death.
 - 2. And each of you is on one or the other. Which is it?
- C. Today, I hope that question will echo through your minds as we look at this short chapter and what it contains. **Read chapter 15.**
- D. We now step back into the chronological flow of this book. It is a glimpse into heaven as the plagues are about to be poured out.
- E. Chapter 15 functions as the prelude to the outpouring of God's final judgments in this tribulation.
 - 1. This is a mirror to the vision of John in chapters 4-5.
 - a. There you have the throne of God and surrounding the throne was a sea of glass or crystal. Imagery of the chaos of our broken, sinful and rebellious world.

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- b. In contrast to the utter lack of holiness on earth, all the angelic hosts can cry out is that God is holy, holy, holy. The fullest, highest expression of holiness.
- c. And then came the vision of the scroll that would begin to unfold God's judgments that He has promised.
 - (1) Jesus' death and resurrection makes Him worthy to open the scroll.
 - (2) And what we have witnessed since then is simply the unfolding of those judgments.
- 2. Then, after reading about judgment after judgment and the hardness of man's heart towards God we found ourselves in chapter 14.
 - a. 14:10 speaks of the cup of Gods wrath.
 - b. 14:14-16 speaks of the coming judgment and the gathering of sinful humanity like a harvest of grapes for the winepress.
 - c. 14:19-20 then graphically speaks to that judgment.
- 3. Anything you thought was bad before becomes downright nice now.
- 4. In light of this, I want to state my goals up front so that you understand what I emphasize and perhaps my tone of voice as well:
 - a. First, that whatever you think you are going to lose out on by trusting only in Jesus Christ is the height of stupidity.
 - b. Second, whatever you think the wrath of God and His judgment will be is light years away from the reality.
 - c. Third, God is not reluctant to bring forth His judgment, it is good and right and displays His glory in a mighty way.
 - d. Fourth, we get a small taste of the level of God's hatred for sin. Which makes the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross all the more breath-taking.

II. Heaven's Reaction to God's Judgment (15-1-4).

- A. Verse one is introductory and sets the tone for chapters 15-16.
 - 1. First, we need to note that what John saw was "great and marvelous."
 - a. This pairing only occurs here in chapter 15 (15:3).

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- b. What is important to understand is that what we call marvelous and what God calls marvelous are often at odds with each other.
- c. John sees in this vision what can only be understood and earth-shattering and completely captivating.
- d. When you create God in your own image you make for yourself a very manageable god but you also make an idol. When you embrace the mystery and majesty of how God reveals Himself then you find yourself filled with a mixture of thoughts and emotions.
 - (1) Fear is one that I think is key.
 - (a) What you have in Revelation is God who is fearsome.
 - (b) As you stop squirming and fighting God's revelation of Himself you begin to understand why the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.
 - (c) Proverbs says this of fearing God: It brings great confidence (14:26). It is a fountain of life (14:27). It is better than riches in this life (15:16).
 - (2) Hope is another.
 - (a) You realize that God is truly great and awesome.
 - (b) You realize that no one can thwart His purposes.
 - (c) And you realize that because of Jesus Christ that He is **for** you and not **against** you. And finally the words of Paul makes so much more sense to you.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through [God] who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:35-39)

- e. This term, "marvelous" (amazing in ESV), is normally reserved for God and His actions.

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- (1) After the overthrowing of Egypt's army in drowning them in the Red Sea, the song Moses wrote speaks of His "awesome"
- (2) In the Psalms you find it used to speak of God's person and His works. There is the idea that the glory of the heavens show forth that He is truly marvelous.
 - (a) It reminds us that the beauty found in creation is not an end in itself. It speaks of the One who made it.
 - (b) Whether it is something gentle and subtle like a Spring breeze that carries the scent of flowering trees or the stunning, shocking power of a tsunami; all of it points out that He is amazing.
 - (c) But there is also the way that it is used in reference to His holiness.
 - i) We too often think of holy as being primarily moral. But the reality is that it is a statement of uniqueness.
 - ii) And it is when you rest there that you can see how truly marvelous or amazing He is. For there is truly none like Him.
2. These seven angels and the plagues they possess represent that marvelous/frightening/awesome image of God and His wrath.
3. And notice in vs one why this is all so amazing? Notice at the end of the verse..... in them the wrath of God is finished.
- B. Heaven filled with those who are victorious (2-4).
 1. In vs 2 we enter the vision itself.
 2. What is the meaning of the sea?
 - a. Remember what I said in the beginning of this sermon about Revelation 4.
 - b. It is the troubled chaos of the fallen world.
 - c. But in chapter 4 it was a sea of glass or crystal. But now notice that it is mixed with fire. Why?

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- (1) It speaks of the state of the world as a result of the outpouring of judgment.
 - (2) It is a rebellious world still. But it is also now fully aware of the judgment of God so instead of a seamless sea of crystal, it is now interspersed with fire and brimstone.
3. We are given a picture of those who had come through this time of the Tribulation and are now in heaven.
- a. That means that they died.
 - (1) They suffered in the Tribulation because they claimed Jesus Christ as Lord. They refused to worship the Anti-Christ. They did not take the mark of the beast.
 - (2) Don't let that pass you by for it is the entranceway for this picture of triumph and peace.
 - (3) The bliss and safety of those who had suffered death under the hand of Satan.
 - b. They are standing before God while the chaos continues below them.
 - (1) But they are safe. Let that sink in.
 - (2) No more battles. No more sin in them. No more sin affecting them. They are now at rest.
 - (3) Again I am reminded of Jesus' statement that through many tribulations we shall inherit the Kingdom of God.
 - c. Remember this vision if you are one who is not following Jesus.
 - (1) Short-term reality will be that enemies of God will look to be the victors and safe.
 - (2) But in the end those same so-called victims shall stand at rest above the chaos that you will still be in.
 - (3) They look forward to the new creation and only eternity under the wrath of God is yours.
 - d. The image of a harp in the bible speaks of joy.
4. Their song(s).

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- a. Not clear if there are two songs here or just one, although the construction lends itself to seeing two songs.
- b. The Song of Moses.
 - (1) There are two in the Old Testament.
 - (a) Deuteronomy 32—Moses wrote to Israel at the end of his career and life. A song of rebellion and God's judgment upon Israel in the future.
 - (b) Exodus 15—after the Egyptian army is destroyed in the Red Sea. A song of triumph as the people of God are saved from their great enemy.
 - (2) Most likely the Exodus one is in view for it is a song of victory.

"Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord and said, 'I will sing to the Lord for He is highly exalted. the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song and He has become my salvation. This is my God and I will praise Him. My father's God and I will extol Him. The Lord is a warrior. The Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea. And the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them. They went down into the depths like a stone. Thy right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power. Thy right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. And in the greatest of Thine excellence Thou dost overflow those who rise up against Thee. Thou dost send forth Thy burning anger and it consumes them as chaff. And at the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up, the flowing waters stood up like a heap. The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be gratified against them. I will draw out my sword, my hand shall destroy them." Thou didst blow with Thy wind. The sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like Thee among the gods, O Lord? Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? Thou didst stretch out Thy right hand, the earth swallowed them. In Thy loving kindness Thou hast led the people whom Thou hast redeemed. In Thy strength Thou hast guided them to Thy holy habitation. The peoples have heard, they tremble. Anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed. The leaders of Moab trembling grips them; All the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them. By the greatness of Thine arm they are motionless as stone, Until Thy people pass over, O Lord, until Thy people pass over **whom Thou hast purchased. Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling.**

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The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever."

c. The song of the Lamb.

(1) This song is found in Revelation 5:9-10.

"Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God; and they will reign upon the earth."

(2) And what happens in this is that we see the summing up of the fulness of the Old Testament and New Testament taking place.

(3) Just as the people of God were saved through the Red Sea (which represented to them a barrier with no hope until God opened the way); so to the people of God in the Tribulation are carried safely through the sea of sin and chaos and into the presence of God.

(4) And in each image and story, the sea becomes the place of judgment and disaster for their enemies.

d. From these two songs then flow this final song of praise in vss 3-4.

(1) It begins with the declaration that God's works are all great and marvelous.

(2) A declaration of God's omnipotence—that He is able to accomplish all that He wills.

(3) A declaration that His ways are righteous and true—in other words, all that he is about to do is totally just and in accordance to truth.

(4) A declaration that He is the king of the nations.

(a) Here we see again the nature of sin. Why do I say that?

i) We are rebels against our Creator and Lord.

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- ii) We keep trying to assert other kings over the One True King.
- (b) It is also a mocking of Satan who has established himself as that king.
- (5) And finally the anticipation of the setting up of the Kingdom of God on earth where the nations shall come and worship Jesus as Lord and King.

III. Preparation for The Seven Bowls (15:5-8).

- A. There is little here that requires much comment for it will all be laid out in the next chapter.
 - 1. The angels come out of the temple.
 - a. Grasp the solemn nature of this description.
 - b. They were angels set apart for this great task.
 - c. Their bowls are filled to the brim with the wrath of God
 - 2. One of the four creatures gives them their bowl.
 - 3. The result is the smoke filling the temple in a awe-inspiring display of the wrath of God poised upon humanity.
 - a. And the doors of the temple of God in heaven are shut.
 - b. It was a terribly frightening thing and no one could enter during this time.
 - c. It was a time for God alone, in His wrath.

IV. Conclusion.

- A. In my introduction I said that I had certain goals in this message:
 - 1. First, that whatever you think you are going to lose out on by trusting only in Jesus Christ is the height of stupidity.
 - 2. Second, whatever you think the wrath of God and His judgment will be is light years away from the reality.
 - 3. Third, God is not reluctant to bring forth His judgment, it is good and right and displays His glory in a mighty way.

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4. Fourth, we get a small taste of the level of God's hatred for sin. Which makes the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross all the more breath-taking.
 - a. "The most violent expression of God's wrath and justice is seen in the Cross. If ever a person had room to complain for injustice, it was Jesus. He was the only innocent man ever to be punished by God. If we stagger at the wrath of God, let us stagger at the Cross. Here is where our astonishment should be focused." (R. C. Sproul)
 - b. We are a people who should be eager to give thanks and praise to our Lord for we are richly loved and we are wonderfully saved.
- B. The hands of God is referenced in various ways in the bible.
 1. In the book of Hebrews it says rightly that it is a terrifying thing to fall in the hands of the Living God.
 2. But the Apostle John writes in John 10, "'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.'" (John 10:27-29)
 3. Beloved, you heard the bible say what is coming. You have heard the word of warning. There are only two options:
 - a. Resist God and face His holy and eternal wrath.
 - b. Or turn to God through Jesus Christ for salvation and be safe forevermore.

V. Benediction/Doxology.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Small Group Questions

- **How does this chapter challenge even in a small way your view of God and how He interacts with humanity?**

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- **We see heaven rejoicing with the anticipation of this final outpouring of God's judgment. What are your thoughts (and you should have thoughts on this) about them rejoicing and praising God? Why are our thoughts so often at odds with this?**