

The Song of the Lamb

Revelation 15:1-8

Rev. Brian Bill

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Recently, Beth and I had the joy of leading a team of 12 servants to Mombasa, Kenya to minister alongside Edgewood's Go Team Partner Bobby Bechtel. Beth and I stayed five extra days in Nairobi to spend time with Jerry Novak and Jim and Sybil Eberhard. I'll share a few highlights today and we'll hear more from the rest of the team on Labor Day weekend.

I had the joy of preaching in two churches, leading four sessions at a pastor's conference, speaking at a chapel service and doing some Q&A with a group of young adults. Beth was able to speak to the pastors' wives. Believe it or not, I preached shorter messages there (our team didn't think this was possible) because I had to use an interpreter. One extra blessing for me was the reminder of the global impact of God's team when we saw this fan in the Nairobi airport [show picture].

You guys had some powerful preaching here as Pastor Daniel, Pastor Ed Hedding, and Pastor Gerard Hall brought timely and convictional messages from God's Word. Today, we're picking up our verse-by-verse study in the Book of Revelation by focusing on the shortest chapter in the book. Turn to Revelation 15 and let's read it together:

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.’ After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And 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, and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and

no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Here's our main idea: *God's wrath is certain, but His people are secure because He is sovereign.*

1. God's judgment is certain. Because God is a just God, He must judge sin. We see this in verse 1: ***"Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished."*** The word ***"then"*** reveals a new section and ***"another sign"*** links this passage with other signs in the book. The word ***"great"*** means, *"incredible and astonishing"* and ***"amazing"*** refers to something that is *"worthy to be admired and marveled at."* These terms express the enormous importance of this sign as it contains the final outpouring of God's wrath. I'm reminded of Daniel 4:3: ***"How great are His signs, how mighty His wonders."*** Psalm 118:23 says, ***"This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."***

In our study of Revelation, we've gone back and forth between Heaven and earth. We've witnessed scenes of joy in the heavens, and we've been confronted with terrifying judgment on earth. We've witnessed worship in Heaven and been shocked by scenes of wrath on earth.

Now we see seven angels come with ***"seven plagues,"*** which literally means, *"to strike with blows and wounds."* This idea is found in Leviticus 26:21: ***"Then if you walk contrary to me and will not listen to me, I will continue striking you, sevenfold for your sins."*** These are the final judgments and when these deadly blows come, the wrath of God will be ***"finished,"*** which means, *"completed and accomplished."*

We have already seen the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments and with each cycle, God's judgment intensifies. From a literary standpoint the bowls are an unfolding of the seventh trumpet, just as the trumpets were an expansion of the seventh seal. David Jeremiah writes: *"Chronologically speaking, the seal judgments may take several years to unfold, while the trumpet judgments come much more quickly. The bowl judgments are the fastest of all, occurring in a rapid-fire form toward the end of the Tribulation."*

A lengthy interlude takes place in Revelation 10-14 which precedes the final series of judgments. Revelation 15 serves as a prelude to the bowl judgments of chapter 16. David Jeremiah writes: *"For all of recorded history God has been stretching*

out His hand of grace and mercy to the human race with offers of compassion and forgiveness. Those who are judged with the severe judgments during the Tribulation are judged because they have failed to respond to the gospel of grace.”

Most people don't like to think about the **“wrath of God”** but it is real. The broader biblical themes of God's wrath, anger, and judgment occur hundreds of times in the Bible. One example is found in Romans 1:18: **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.”**

I was grieved this week to watch a press conference in Massachusetts as their Governor signed legislation expanding abortion access up till birth. The sign in front of her read, “Abortion is healthcare.” At the end of the ceremony, people cheered and applauded. And I thought: *How can something that involves the taking of an innocent human life be celebrated?*

But that is precisely where the gospel confronts our culture. The Bible says there is such a thing as right and wrong, good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. Isaiah 5:20 says, **“Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness...”** Scripture tells us that God does not simply overlook evil; He judges it.

Friends, if we minimize God's wrath, we will inevitably minimize our need for God's grace. The cross makes no sense unless sin is serious, judgment is certain, and God's wrath against sin is righteous. The central paradox and message of the Gospel is that God doesn't set aside His justice to show mercy; rather, His justice is satisfied through Jesus bearing that judgment, offering forgiveness and reconciliation to anyone who seeks it.

At the cross, justice and mercy meet. Jesus took the wrath we deserved so that we could receive the grace we could never earn. And that's why I'm thankful for the gospel: Jesus forgives every sin including abortion, removes our guilt, breaks the power of shame, and brings us into reconciliation with God and with others.

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2. God's people are secure. In verse 2, John sees those who have emerged from their final battle with the beast standing victorious upon the crystal surface before the throne of God: **“And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number**

of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.” In Revelation 4:6 we read, ***“And before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass like crystal,”*** which refers to God’s holiness. In this image, the sea of glass is mingled with ***“fire,”*** which speaks of divine judgment. John MacArthur adds, *“The tranquil beauty of the sea was mixed with the fire of God’s judgment, which was about to be poured out on the earth.”*

One source captures the contrast well: *“In Revelation 13, the beast emerges from the restless, turbulent sea, representing the chaotic nations and powers of this world...the sea below the beast is churning; the sea before God is calm. That’s because heaven is not in chaos. God is in control. What looks chaotic from earth’s perspective is perfectly ordered from heaven’s perspective. The crystal sea is placid and still, reminding us that the God who sits on the throne is never rattled by what is happening on the earth.”*

While the saints are standing, they break out into song and start strumming on harps. In one of the Kenyan churches we visited, an autoharp was used as musical accompaniment. I now know why Psalms 81:2 in the NKJV calls them ***“pleasant harps.”***

In verses 3-4, we see how these servants sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb: ***“And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, ‘Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.’”***

When the Israelites crossed the Red Sea, they had a worship service, which is recorded in Exodus 15. This song of Moses is the first of several songs in the Old Testament and the Song of the Lamb is the last song in Scripture. Almost every phrase of this hymn is taken from the rich vocabulary of the Old Testament. God’s character is extolled as the omnipotent, immutable, sovereign, perfect, and righteous Judge. Because He is God the Almighty, He has the power to carry out whatever He determines to do.

I appreciated how one pastor summarized the song.

- They sang of His works – ***“great and amazing are your deeds.”*** Exodus 15:11: ***“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?”***

- They sang of His ways – *“just and true are your ways.”*
- They sang of His wonder – *“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?”*
- They sang of His wrath – *“for you alone are holy.”* He alone is worthy to judge sin and sinners because He alone is holy.
- They sang of His worship – *“all nations will come and worship you.”*

Here are some additional observations:

- **Note the pairing of Moses and the Lamb.** We don’t see two separate songs but one song that bridges both testaments starting with the exodus from Egypt leading to the greater exodus accomplished by Christ. It shows the unity of God’s redemptive plan: the God who delivered Israel from physical slavery is the same God who delivers His people from spiritual slavery through the Lamb, bringing redeemed people from every nation into the eternal promised land.
- **Note how theocentric this song is.** We see this in the words “you” and “your,” which are used six times – *“your deeds,” “your ways,” “your name,” “you alone are holy,” “come and worship you,” “for your righteousness.”* The martyrs don’t focus on their own costly and glorious victory but instead exalt the greatness and glory of the Lord God Almighty.
- **Note how justice and truth are held together.** God’s judgments are never arbitrary or capricious but righteous and accurate. God always judges rightly and He judges truly.
- **Note how we’re called to fear the Lord and see Him as holy.** Exodus 15:11: *“Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness...?”* Revelation 15:4: *“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy.”*
- **Note how missional this song is.** The lyrics help us see that God is a global God and He is drawing the nations to Himself: *“O King of the Nations...all nations will come and worship you.”* The word “nations” is used 22 times in Revelation.

Speaking of missions, missionary pilot Kevin Rideout, who was kidnapped in Niger nearly 10 months ago, was released on Friday!

One of the most moving parts of our time in Kenya was seeing God’s work among the nations and hearing how God used Bobby Bechtel to start a church under a

mango tree. Watch this brief video and celebrate how God is at work among the nations.

Play video of Bobby Bechtel.

When we gathered to worship in this church of one thousand adults and 500 children, I was undone during the singing time. As I looked at our team members trying to be African while they clapped and swayed to the music, I couldn't move as I reflected on what God has done through Bobby and Lisa. Over 25 years ago, they served as interns here and then were commissioned and sent out by Edgewood. Members provided funds to build their first building, and we just sent \$25,000 for another church building in the Hope Foundation network. I couldn't stop crying as I saw the joy on their faces during the singing time.

Play video of Kenyan worship service.

As tears ran down my cheeks, I thought of Hebrews 11:38 which says of God's sent ones that ***"the world was not worthy of them."*** That description certainly fits countless missionaries who quietly spend decades faithfully loving children, proclaiming Christ, discipling believers, planting churches, and pouring out their lives far from home. The world may never fully recognize their sacrifice, but Heaven does. 3 John 8 says, ***"Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth."***

As I thought about the "long obedience" of Bobby and Lisa and how Edgewood has supported them for over 25 years, I recalled hearing how a witchdoctor who cast curses on the school was saved on his death bed. Another time, while our team was riding in the van with a young Kenyan woman, I asked how the Lord saved her. She shared her story in a way I'll never forget: *"I transformed from Muslim to Christian."* Her words stopped me in my tracks, so I asked her to repeat them. She smiled and happily did so.

While we might naturally say she "converted" from Islam to Christianity, what happened was much deeper than changing religious labels or practices. She wasn't simply exchanging one set of beliefs for another. She had a life-changing encounter with the living Lord Jesus Christ through her time as a student at the Hope Foundation.

Since then, the ripple effect has been incredible. Her mother, aunts, and cousins have all experienced the same transformation. She continues to pray for her

Muslim father and eagerly expects him to come to Christ soon, as he has recently been having dreams about Jesus and even singing in church.

As I was weeping and worshiping that Sunday morning, this phrase came to mind: *When givers give and goers go, God gets the glory among the nations!*

BTW, due to your joyful generosity, our five mission trips this year have been fully funded! Also, we just received word that \$13,694.79 was given by EBC for Pregnancy Resources' Baby Bottle Project! To celebrate our partnership with PR, Edgewood has been invited to their Moline Center for a Legacy Leaf ceremony this coming Saturday at 2:30 p.m. Don't forget the Walk for Life on Saturday, September 12. Cory McAnally has already raised over \$3,500!

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3. The Lord is sovereign. God's sovereign justice is put on display in verses 5-7: *"After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And 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."*

When John looked around, he saw the *"sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened."* Are you aware that Scripture repeatedly speaks of a heavenly tabernacle and temple? The earthly tabernacle was a copy and shadow of heavenly realities, but Revelation gives us repeated glimpses of the actual heavenly temple as we read in Hebrews 8:5: *"They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things."* In fact, the temple is mentioned 15 times in Revelation, and several of those references explicitly place it in Heaven. Revelation 11:19 says, *"God's temple in heaven was opened."*

The word *"opened"* is significant. It was sometimes used of opening something that had been closed or sealed, like a treasure or storehouse. But here, something is being opened for a very specific purpose: seven angels come out of the heavenly sanctuary carrying the seven final plagues. The same temple that displays God's glory now becomes the place from which His righteous judgment proceeds. God is not acting arbitrarily or impulsively. Judgment is coming from His holy presence and according to His perfect justice.

This song in Revelation 15 may also reference the song of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy 32:4, 34-35, 41: ***“For all His ways are justice...just and upright is He...is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly...if I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and will repay those who hate me.”***

Brian LaBerge points out how the golden bowls were used in the Temple to toss the blood of sacrifice on the four corners of the altar as a means of atonement: *“The altar was outside of the sanctuary, so this Revelation 15 moment is a reverse of the normal flow of the sacrificial system...if you accept His blood He accepts you. If you trample His blood, he tramples you...this is so deep and meaningful. It is terrifying to fall into the hands of the living God, but it is overwhelmingly joyful and peaceful to be lifted in the hands of a gracious Savior.”*

I found this insight helpful: In Revelation 15, the opening of the heavenly sanctuary is purposeful: judgment proceeds from God’s holy presence, not from arbitrary wrath. God’s judgments flow from His holiness, are consistent with His justice, and are rooted in His glory. The same sanctuary that radiates His beauty becomes the place from which His righteous judgments are dispatched.

The seven angels are wearing unsoiled and shiny garments, ***“with golden sashes around their chests.”*** Their attire signifies a holy, priestly, and royal commission. Erupting from the heavenly sanctuary, they act as divine ministers carrying out God’s pure, righteous, and unassailable judgment. Interestingly, Luke 24:4 describes the angels in the empty tomb wearing ***“dazzling apparel.”***

These seven angels with golden sashes are holding seven golden bowls ***“full of the wrath of God.”*** These are not deep bowls like the ones we might have in our kitchen cupboards. The Greek word describes a broad, shallow saucer which was designed to be poured out quickly, easily, and completely. We’ll see this in greater detail in chapter 16, when God’s wrath, which has been restrained up until now, will be poured out in full. The word ***“full”*** means, *“to swell,”* like a ship overloaded with cargo or a dam ready to burst.

The combined force of the tense and the verb used here stress the concept of culmination and completion. Revelation 14:10 refers to the ***“wine of God’s wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger.”*** In Revelation 5:8, the golden

bowls were full of incense representing the prayers of the saints. John may be calling our attention to the relationship between prayer and divine retribution.

This shift communicates something profound: The God who patiently provided atonement is now pouring out judgment on those who rejected His provision. The same holy vessels that once symbolized mercy now are the source of justice. Worship and wrath flow from the same throne. One commentator captured it well: *“Those who fail to drink the cup of God’s salvation will drink from the cup of His wrath. There is no middle ground with God.”*

Verse 8 describes how the smoke from the glory of God filled the temple: ***“And the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.”*** In Exodus 40:34, we read how God’s glory filled the tabernacle. In 1 Kings 8:10-11, the priests could not enter the temple because the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. In Isaiah 6:4, the temple was filled with smoke. No one could enter God’s holy house until the irreversible judgment of the seven plagues of the seven angels was finished.

God’s redemptive deeds are great, and His retribution will be disastrous for those who are not saved. God does not lose control as judgment unfolds but is enthroned over it. His sovereignty is not diminished by wrath; it’s displayed in it.

The temple that was standing open with the veiled curtain torn in two, will be closed when the day of mercy has passed. God is going to judge sinners and there is nothing they can do to stop Him. One day, the door of deliverance will be shut to those wanting to come in because God’s righteous justice will be poured out.

In Luke 13:24-25, Jesus tells a powerful parable demonstrating the urgency of responding to Christ before it’s too late: ***“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then he will answer you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’”***

Up until now the wrath of God has been like water flowing over a dam that has held back the worst part. But, with the bowl judgments, the dam of God’s wrath will break, and waters of judgment will drown both sin and sinner.

On May 31, 1889, after a night of heavy rains, the South Fork Dam in Johnstown, Pennsylvania burst. When it did, 20 million tons of water came crashing down the narrow valley. Boiling with huge chunks of debris, the wall of flood water grew to 60 feet high, tearing downhill at 40 miles per hour, leveling everything in its path. Thousands tried to escape but were soon overtaken by the waters. When the next day dawned, over 2,200 people were dead. Johnstown was destroyed without mercy in a matter of minutes.

That is but a glimpse of the horror that is coming on this world when God's wrath is poured out. The dam will break and judgment will fall leading to damnation for many. You need to be sure that you have repented and received Christ to avoid the wave of wrath that will soon come upon this lost world.

What makes the tragedy even more haunting is this: there had been warnings. The dam's condition had been a concern for years. People had seen the danger and yet, when the dam finally broke, it was too late to do anything about it. This is but a glimpse of the horror that is coming on this world when God's wrath will be poured out.

Loved ones, consider this your warning! Revelation 15 reminds us that God's wrath is not a figure of speech or an exaggeration. The dam of God's patience will one day break, and His righteous judgment will be poured out upon a rebellious world.

Today is still an age of grace as we read in 2 Peter 3:9: ***"The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance."*** But judgment may come tomorrow as we read in verse 10: ***"The day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."***

Warren Wiersbe writes: *"God's wrath has been building against sin ever since Adam and Eve sinned in Eden. One day the wrath of God will boil over, and absolute judgment will be the result. The only refuge a sinner has is the blood of Jesus Christ."*

Right now, there is an open door of salvation but one day it will be too late! Repent and receive Christ before judgment's door opens.

Last Sunday afternoon, I was very moved by the testimonies of ten individuals who were baptized. One family of four all got saved during the same service on Sunday, March 15, when the sermon title was, “Go Through Open Doors.” I wonder if some of you are ready to get saved today. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, ***“Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”***

The reason Jesus can be the door of salvation is because of what He did for us. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of God’s holiness. Our sin separates us from God and the penalty for that sin is death. But Jesus came to rescue us. He lived the perfect life we could never live, and then He went to the cross and died in our place. Three days later He rose from the dead, proving His power over our depravity, the devil, and death itself.

The door of salvation is open, but it must be entered before it closes. You enter that door by repenting of your sin and trusting Jesus Christ alone to save you. When you do, the same Jesus who opened the door to Heaven will open the door to you for forgiveness, new life, and eternal hope.

Are you ready to go through the door?

Invitation Prayer

Closing Song: “Holy Forever”

Commissioning Prayer for Japan Team

Twelve Edgewood members are leaving this Thursday to minister to four of our Go Team partners in Japan: Dave and Kate Otto, Ben and Amanda Hodge, Andrew and Kat Kalanauskas, Will Kabala, Anna Kabala, Ari Kuriscak, Bella Kuriscak, Nick Maclin, and Travis Watson.

Church, let’s continue giving and going so God’s glory will spread among the nations!

Qualls Family Membership Saturday Night