



Revelation 15

Revelation 15
Tape #8254
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn now to the Book of Revelation chapter fifteen. In the latter part of the fourteenth chapter, John saw in the visions the Battle of Armageddon preparation. As we get into the sixteenth chapter, he'll be talking about this great Battle of Armageddon. You've probably heard the phrase, Battle of Armageddon, and next Sunday night as we get into the sixteenth chapter we'll be giving you a full view of what the Battle of Armageddon is all about, who the contestants in the battle will be, and how the battle will turn out. But chapter fifteen is sort of a little interlude between the fourteenth chapter, where he begins to talk about the Battle of Armageddon and the sixteenth chapter where he gets into the subject more fully.

The Book of Revelation is not written in a chronological order. And thus it is difficult for our western minds to follow many times the events of the Book of Revelation because when we read a book, it usually is following a chronological order. That is not so in Hebrew literature. For instance in Genesis chapter one, you have God's account of the seven days of creation. And in chapter two, then it goes back and it fills you in on the creation of man and it gives you a broader perspective. It gives you more details. Often the Bible does that. It lays out the full scene and then it will come back and it will fill in some of the more minute types of details.

The Book of Revelation does that also. It lays out the whole scene and then it comes back and fills in some of the gaps. Probably the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and as we get in next week to the seven bowls of God's wrath, they probably are running concurrently. If you will compare the seven trumpet judgments with the seven bowls of God's wrath, you will see that there is a similar order as far as what will be affected when the first trumpet sounds. It is similar to what will be affected when the first bowl of God's wrath is poured out and it follows together. So they just sort of lay out the whole picture and then come back and fill in the blanks.

Chapter fifteen is just sort of a filling in of some of the blanks. We have moved from the earthly scene. We enter into the heavenly scene once again. Now it is not the church that we see in heaven. But what we see in chapter fifteen are those people who have been saved out of the Great Tribulation.

Back in the opening of the fifth seal, John saw the souls that were under the altar. And they were crying to the Lord. "How long, O Lord, holy and true before You avenge our blood on our adversaries" (Revelation 6:10)? And they were given white robes and were told that they should wait for a short season until their full number was complete.

In chapter seven, their number has been completed and thus we see them now in the heavenly scene. The elder asked John, Who are these? Where did they come from? And John basically said, I don't know. You tell me. And the elder said, These are they that came out of the Great Tribulation who have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb. "And they do stand in the holy temple and do worship the Lord day and night continually" (Revelation 7:15).

So the number completed, they enter into the heavenly scene. Now again in the heavenly scene, we see again this multitude that have come up out of the Great Tribulation who have faced the wrath of the antiChrist and many of them saved through martyrdom. By their refusal to take the mark of the beast, their refusal to worship his image, they are put to death. The Bible says in chapter thirteen of Revelation that "they will cause all both small and great to take a mark in their right hand or in their forehead and all of your commerce will be done through the mark. No one will be able to buy or sell except they have the mark. And they have power [it says] to force this upon man. To put to death those that refuse to take the mark.

And so when it speaks of how they have been delivered or how they have victory over the beast, the victory is in the fact that they didn't submit to the mark. They didn't submit to the worship of his image and thus were put to death because of their refusal. But that's how they were delivered and that is where their victory was in their refusal to enter into that system.

We also in chapter seven saw the hundred and forty-four thousand who were sealed of God. They were Jews, twelve thousand from each tribe, and they were sealed in order that they might be protected from some of the judgments that are coming upon the earth. They become God's witnesses to the Jewish people during this period of time. And we see them again in chapter fourteen. We saw them last week and here they are again in chapter fifteen.

So as I say, you're just getting further details of these groups that you have been introduced to earlier within the book.

I saw another sign in heaven (15:1),

We're back in the heavenly scene. We've been on the earth, we've watched the judgments on the earth but now we are returning back to the heavenly scene.

great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up [or the completion of] God's wrath (15:1).

This will end the tribulation period at the end of the pouring out of these golden bowls that are filled with the wrath of God. Chapter seventeen and chapter eighteen we'll again be going backwards and filling in the details of God's destruction of the false religious system called Mystery Babylon.

In chapter eighteen, God's destruction of the commercialism that grew out of Babylon. In the eighteenth chapter. But chapter sixteen carries you out to the end of God's wrath in the seven bowls that will be poured out upon the earth. And so he "saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous sign, there were seven angels who had the seven last plagues and in them the completion of God's wrath that is to be poured out."

And I saw as it were a sea of glass (15:2)

Back in chapter four when John was taken into the heavenly scene, he saw the throne of God, the cherubim about the throne of God. "The twenty-four lesser thrones upon which sat the twenty-four elders. Before the throne of God, there was the sea of glass and proceeding from the throne of God, the lightnings, the thunders, the voices" (Revelation 4:5). Awesome sight!

And so here we are again at the throne of God, the "sea of glass,"

mingled [here] with fire: and he saw those that had gotten the victory over the beast (15:2),

And as I said, the victory isn't that the beast was defeated by them but their victory was that they were not defeated by the beast. They did not give in to the commands and to the orders of the beast to worship him and to worship his image and to take his mark. That was their victory, their victory was in their "loving not their lives even unto death" (Revelation 12:11), but dying rather than submitting to his orders, to his kingdom. They "had victory over the beast,"

and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name (15:2),

We got that back in chapter thirteen, the number of his name is the number of a man, six hundred and sixty-six. They refused to take the mark or the number of his name.

and they are standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God (15:2).

So they're standing before the throne of God. That's where we find them back in chapter seven. They are in His temple and they do worship Him day and night continually, this great multitude which no man can number who came up out of the great tribulation.

And they are singing the song of Moses the servant of God (15:3),

Back in Exodus chapter fifteen, you have the song of Moses. That spontaneous singing of praises unto God for delivering them from the Egyptians. They had just watched the sea as it had drowned the Egyptian army and they realized that they were now truly free from the bondage that they had experienced there in Egypt. And there is that rejoicing in song for God's power, for God's deliverance, for God's destruction upon their enemies. They are singing the song of Moses.

This, no doubt, is the hundred and forty-four thousand who are there in heaven as of the fourteenth chapter. As they are singing the song of Moses. Actually in Deuteronomy 32, again you will find the song that Moses taught the children of Israel. And the children were to learn this song in Deuteronomy 32. It was one of those songs that was taught to the children from an early age. In the song in Deuteronomy 32, it is interesting because in the song, there are warnings. It's a song of victory again and deliverance but also it's a song of warnings. Should they turn their back on God, the things that would transpire, the judgments that would come.

And you know it's an interesting thing how that folk songs have a way of sort of sticking in your mind and years later, you can still be singing that folk song that you learned as a child. Many times it's just the melody and you're not really thinking about what you're singing. You're not really thinking about the words. Auld Lang Syne or whatever. It's the melody that, who is Auld Lang Syne or whoever? You really don't know but you're singing. So it's something that sort of sticks with you. But the whole purpose of the song of Moses that was taught to the children was that in the days to come when they forsook the Lord and forsook the Law and they would go into captivity. They would gather together in the town hall to sing their traditional songs but as they would sing it, there would be the conviction. They would listen to the lyrics. They realize, Wow, we're in captivity! Yeah, that's what the song says. If we forsake the Lord and all, and it was to be one of those things that would in the time would really grip their hearts and they'd realize, Wow, we are experiencing God's judgment because we forsook the Lord! And so that was the purpose of Moses teaching the song to the children of Israel. The song of Moses.

But then there was also,
the song of the Lamb (15:3),

Now the song of the Lamb we find in the fifth chapter of the Book of Revelation. And it is sung there by the church. It is at the time when there is the scroll in the right hand of Him who is sitting upon the throne and the angel proclaims with a strong voice, Who is worthy to take the scroll and to loose the seals? It had seven seals. Who is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals thereof? The scroll is the title deed to the earth. That was forfeited by Adam over to Satan and he has held it, lo, these six thousand years. But now the time has come for the redemption. "Who is worthy to take the scroll and loose the seals? And John said, I began to sob because no one was found worthy in heaven or earth or under the sea to take the scroll or look thereon. One of the elders sidled up to him and said, John, don't weep. Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed. He's going to take the scroll and loose the seals. And John said, I turned and I saw Him as a Lamb that had been slaughtered. The song of the Lamb.

He came forth and He took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. And when He did, the twenty-four elders came with their little golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints, the incense. They offered it before God and they began to sing, the church. Worthy is the Lamb to take the scroll and to loose the seals. For He was slain and He has redeemed us by His blood out of every kindred, tribe, tongue and people and He has made us unto our God kings and priests and we will reign with Him upon the earth. That's the song of the Lamb. It's the song of rejoicing in that Jesus paid the price to redeem the world from the power of darkness, from Satan. And the purpose of redeeming the world was to obtain the bride, His church. And thus we sing and we rejoice that He loved us so much that He redeemed this world that He could take us out of it.

Jesus said, The kingdom of God is likened to a man going through a field and discovering a treasure. And who for the joy immediately goes and sells everything he has so that he can buy the field that he might obtain the treasure. Now in parables, the field is the earth, the world. Jesus talked about the sower who went forth to sow the seed and it fell on the various types of soil and as He was explaining that parable, He said, Now the field is the world. So the question is, Who gave everything to purchase the world? And of course, the answer is Jesus. For what purpose? That He might take the treasure. What is the treasure? Fasten your seatbelt. It's you!

Peter says that we're God's peculiar people. And it is peculiar to me that God would treasure you. And even more peculiar that He would treasure me! But oh, how grateful I am that God sees me as His treasure.

Paul when he was praying for the church of Ephesus said that he prayed that God would give to them the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of God. That they may know the hope of their calling and what is the riches of His inheritance in the saints. Not really the riches that you have as a child of God. But the value that God puts upon you. If you only knew the value that God puts upon you! He so loved you that He sent His only begotten Son to redeem the world that you might be His. That He might take you out of the world. His treasure. And God treasures you. You're a special treasure unto God.

The song of the Lamb. The song of redemption. The song of deliverance from the powers of darkness through the redemption that we have in Jesus Christ. John sees Him there in heaven and they're singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, the song of the Lamb,

saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty (15:3);

How great and how marvellous is God's work of redemption? That God would send His only begotten Son. Great and marvellous, the work of redemption. Redeeming man from sin. Great and marvellous is the work of God in judgment. These people have been on the earth during the great tribulation. They have seen the judgment of God coming upon the earth. They have seen the cataclysmic catastrophes of nature, convulsions of nature and the destruction it has brought to the earth. And they sing, Great and marvellous are Thy works, the works of God in judgment against a Christ-rejecting, God-rebelling earth.

And surely the earth is getting ripe for God's judgment. It's all around us. It's very obvious. The world is ripening up for the judgment of God. The cup is filling and will soon overflow! And God will pour out His judgment upon the earth. They will be there to see it. And thus as they sing, Great and marvellous are Thy works, it is the work of God in judgment as well as the work of God in redemption and in deliverance.

But, greater and marvellous are His works in creation! The marvels of creation. It boggles the mind. We cannot grasp it. It's beyond us. The vast universe in which we live. A part in this little, tiny corner of the Milky Way galaxy. This little bit of dust that rotates on its axis as it revolves around the sun. Way down here in the corner of the Milky Way galaxy. And when we peer out into space and we realize the vastness of space and we realize the size of many of the stars in our own galaxy, great and marvellous are Thy works! It boggles our minds! We cannot really comprehend it! When we start talking in distances, in light-years, it's just beyond our ability to really grasp. We can talk about it and we can conceptualize to a point but not really grasp the vastness of space, the vastness of the universe. And yet the Bible says that He "stretched out the heavens like a curtain" (Psalm 104:2).

"When I consider the heavens," the psalmist said, "the work of Your fingers, the moon, the stars which You have ordained, what is man that You are mindful of Him" (Psalm 8:3-4) Great and marvellous, Lord, are Your works. You're mindful of this little speck of dust on this little speck called earth. Way down here in the Milky Way galaxy and yet God thinks about you.

David said, "If I should number the thoughts concerning me, they are more than the sands of the sea" (Psalm 139:18). It's estimated that there's probably 10²⁵ power grains of sand. I don't know who figured that out. But that's an awful lot of thoughts that God thinks, concerning you. Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty. The fact that God thinks of me astounds me! But as we sing, "He knows my name. He knows my every thought. He sees my falling tear. And He hears me when I call." Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty!

When you look at the life forms and you consider the designs, the intricacies of the many different forms of life, I find myself fascinated with life and the various life forms. I think if I weren't a minister, I'd like to be a biologist. I'm so interested in the different life forms.

I watch these little white flies that are on my hibiscus right now. And I don't love them, I spray them. I'd like to get rid of them. But as I'm spraying them, they start flying off. And I think, What are they thinking? Where are they going? Probably to my other hibiscus. But you wonder just the world that they're in. These little miniature white flies and their ability to fly. It's just amazing. Great and marvellous are Thy works. The works of God in creation.

Because they have seen the hand of God in judgment they sing,
just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints (15:3).

To me it is interesting that several times as we are coming through the Book of Revelation here, several times, we'll get it again next week, but several times in the midst of the most awesome judgments, there will be that declaration of the righteousness of God's judgments. Next week as we are in the sixteenth chapter and the bowl of God's judgment is poured out on the fresh water supplies of the earth so that the fresh water supplies will be turned to blood, you'll not be able to drink. They'll have no fresh water to drink. And the angel responds, Right on, Lord. They shed the blood of Your people. Now you've given them blood to drink. Boy, that's a fit thing. But all the way through when God's judgments are coming, there is that acknowledgment that they are righteous judgments. It's the right thing.

No one can really accuse God of not being fair. You may imagine that God is not fair but that's because you don't know the whole story. And when the whole story is known, we will realize the absolute fairness

and justice of God. There are a lot of things that the Bible doesn't tell us. A lot of things we don't know. And usually it is the things that we don't know that trouble us and confuse us. But whenever you come up against something you don't know, fall back on what you do know. And I know that God is love. I know that God is fair. I know that God is righteous in His judgments.

Now I'm not convinced that the justice system that we have on the world is fair. I am prone to agree with that guy who cried, There ain't no justice. And so many times when you see the edicts of the court, you wonder if the judge got his appointment from a grab bag or something. Now there are good judges and it's not to paint the whole judicial system with a black brush. There are excellent judges. I have friends who are outstanding judges, whose real heart and they really take their job to heart and they are really concerned that justice is done. But there are always those who are open to pressure and other things, their own self interest at times. That's not just so of the judicial system, that's so of the ministry. I mean, goodness sakes, no one's going to try and say that every minister is really serving God. There are a lot of self serving people in the ministry. Every field has those who sort of spoil the whole scene because of their corruption. And that's tragic.

But God is fair. God is just. You can be sure of that. So that person who has lived in the jungles of South America or of Borneo, New Guinea, the Congo, that person who has lived and died without ever hearing of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who died for their sins. When God disposes of their case, you can be sure that it will be absolutely fair. God will be just in judgment. True and righteous are His ways.

Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name (15:4)?

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The question, "Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?" It to me is very sad and tragic that there is no fear of the Lord in their hearts. There are people who are openly opposed to God. People who are openly opposed to the law of God, to the ways of God.

Presently in the California State Legislature they are considering pro-homosexual bills that are absolutely contrary to God. They're blasphemous to God. And yet it looks like the majority of the Senate has already passed some of these bills and they are now again in Committee before they go to the next level and you think, God, is there no fear of the Lord in their hearts? How could they ever justify these kinds of legislation? In their own minds, in their own hearts, how can they justify these things that are so totally anti-God, anti-Scripture, and you think, My, I can't conceive an elected body of officials. I can't conceive of people who would elect officials that would consider and promote such legislation as is being considered right now in Sacramento. Surely we as Christians need to pray.

"Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?"

for You only are holy (15:4):

That's the whole issue! The holiness of God is what man rebels against. It goes against our nature. Man by nature is a sinner. You're not a sinner because you sin, you sin because you're a sinner. There's the difference. As they used to say, stealing a horse doesn't make you a horse thief. Stealing a horse only proves that you are a horse thief. No one steals horses except horse thieves. And so the fact that you stole the horse only proves that you're a horse thief. It didn't make you one. It only proved you were one. That's why you stole it.

Sinners doesn't make you a sinner. Because you are a sinner, we sin. The Bible says we were born in sin. We were "by nature," Paul said to the Ephesians, "the children of wrath, even as others" (Ephesians 2:3). By nature. And thus the holiness of God goes against my nature. And God is calling on me to deny myself, to take up the cross, to reckon my old nature dead, crucified with Christ that I might live unto God after the things of the Spirit. But that is contrary to the natural man and the natural desires and there are many who rebel against God because they don't want to surrender their evil nature. They delight in the things that they are doing and because the Lord condemns them, they turn against God.

They crucified Jesus. Why? Because He went against the grain. They didn't like it. They didn't like the things He was teaching. They felt convicted in their hearts for what they were and what they were doing. They didn't like that feeling.

People don't want to feel guilty. They want to make laws that would allow them to live the kind of lives they want to live without feeling guilty. And thus, they rebel against God in their hearts and there is no fear

of God before their eyes. That is why we have the Book of Revelation telling us of the consequences of this kind of living. The judgments of God that will be brought upon the earth as the result of man's rebellion against all that is righteous, all that is holy, and all that is pure. "Who will not fear Thee and glorify Thy name? for You only are holy:"

and all nations shall come and worship You (15:4);

Back in the twenty-second Psalm which is a psalm concerning Jesus Christ and it's actually a psalm that prophesies of His death upon the cross. It's a psalm that talks about them parting His garments among them, casting lots on His vesture. And in this psalm, verse twenty-nine, beginning with verse twenty-seven, "All of the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord. All of the families of the nations will worship before Thee, for the kingdom is the Lord's and He is the Governor among the nations." This is when Jesus returns and establishes God's kingdom upon the earth. And "they that are fat upon the earth shall eat and worship and they that go down to the dust," that is, our loved ones who have already died they shall bow before Him. None can keep alive his own soul" (Psalm 22:29). So the resurrection of the righteous to be with Christ, to worship Him in the glorious Kingdom Age.

Paul tells us in Philippians chapter two that we ought to have the "mind of Christ. Not exalting ourselves, not promoting ourselves" (Philippians 2:5). As I was sharing with the College and Career down at Murietta on Friday night, the Scripture seems to teach things that are sort of reverse. The Scripture teaches that the way up is down. And the way down is up. He that exalteth himself shall be abased. He that humbleth himself shall be exalted. So the way up is down and the way down is up. And you have many of those things. He who will seek to save his life will lose it. He who will lose his life, Jesus said, for My sake will find it. So the way to find your life is to lose it. The way to lose your life is to try to find it. And so you have these things that are sort of a reversal.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). What was the mind? Who, being in the form of God, and thought it not something to be grasped to be equal with God. Yet He humbled Himself, came in the likeness of man, came in the form of a servant, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). The mind of Christ, humbling Himself, emptying Himself. But because of it, "Wherefore God has also highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11)! All of the kindreds, all of the families will come, all of the nations and they will worship before Thee.

for Your judgments are made manifest. After this [the scene in heaven, John said] I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened (15:4,5):

There is a temple in heaven or a tabernacle, the temple of the tabernacle. When Moses built the tabernacle, God gave to him the specifications, the measurements, the whole thing. He told him exactly how to make it. And having told him exactly how to make it, then He told him, Now be careful to make it according to what I have said. He was to make it exactly like God told him. And then God gifted some skilled men, gave them skills, to make it, just like God had ordered it to be. And the reason for making it very carefully, we are told in Hebrews, that it is a model of the heavenlies. It's an earthly model of what heaven is like. If you want to know what heaven is like, then you can look at the tabernacle and it was a model of heaven. And of course, the heart of it, the central feature is the mercy seat and the cherubim that are surrounding the mercy seat.

In the fourth chapter of the Book of Revelation, we see the throne of God, the mercy seat before the throne of God and the cherubim surrounding it. And thus, in the holy of holies there was the mercy seat and the cherubim there in the holy of holies surrounding the mercy seat.

The angels, the tabernacle is open in heaven of which the earthly tabernacle was a model.

And the seven angels come out of the temple (15:6),

The symbolism or the idea is that there will be no mercy at this point. They come out of the temple to bring the judgments of God upon the earth. And so these "seven angels come out of the temple,"

having the seven plagues, they are clothed in pure and white linen (15:6),

This was the garment that the priest wore. It was a pure linen, a white linen, that they wore in their daily ministry and in the tabernacle in the temple here on the earth.

and they had on their breasts they had these golden sashes around their chest. And one of the four cherubim (15:6,7).

that are around the throne of God that we were introduced to back in chapter four, one of these four living creatures,

gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls (15:7)

Now the word is bowls, it's translated vials in King James. You think of a vial, you think of a little dosage thing in a drugstore or something. But these are bowls. They're full! And in these seven bowls are the plagues.

they are full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever (15:7).

The eternal God.

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power (15:8);

You remember when the temple that Solomon had built was dedicated to the Lord, that the glory of the Lord came down and filled the temple and there was smoke and the priests were not able to stand because of the presence, the glory of God there in the temple. Here in heaven the temple, filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power.

and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled (15:8).

You had seven angels blowing seven trumpets. We went through those judgments. This is it! This is the end. This is the culmination of the whole thing, of the judgments and the wrath of God against the sinning earth.

So next week in chapter sixteen we see the consequences that will take place upon the earth when these angels pour out these bowls of God's wrath upon the earth.

Father, we again are thankful that Your Word is so rich, so full in that in Your Word, You have given us, Lord, a view into the future. To see the things that are going to happen. And Lord, we feel like those who were under the altar saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You bring Your judgment upon this earth that has turned its back against You? How long, Lord, until Your judgments come upon our nation which seems to be determined to rid itself of Your influence and of Your people? Lord, we look at things that are going on and we ask You, Lord, work Your work. Father, we pray that Your Holy Spirit will cause us to be very diligent in spiritual things. That You will work in our lives, Lord, and You'll help us to be a salt in a world that is quickly rotting. A light in a world that is filled with darkness. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

The pastors are down here in the front again to pray for you. You might have needs. Maybe God has been speaking to your heart. Maybe there are things in your life that have given sort of a beachhead for Satan and he has a stronghold upon you. You'd like to be set free. Jesus is able to deliver you. The song of the Lamb is the song of deliverance. The power of Jesus to set one free. So we encourage you to come down. The pastors are here to pray for your needs tonight. Feel free to come and they'll be glad to bear your burdens with you and to pray for you and thus fulfill the law of Christ that tells us to love one another and to pray for one another. May the Lord just watch over and keep you in His love. May you be filled with the Spirit. And may God help us to be a light in this dark world in which we live. May God work through us in revealing Himself to a world that so desperately needs to see the truth of God. May you experience His love this week in a special way.