

# Pursuing Resilience in Revelation

The Song of Victory

## ***Revelation 15***

### Intro

On August 14th, 1945, President Harry Truman gave an address to the United States of America bringing the wonderful news of Japan's unconditional surrender and thus our final victory which brought a close to world war II. The response of people in cities all across the nation was nothing short of exuberance. There were newspaper articles from that time describing thousands of people spontaneously gathering in New York City's Times Square. The atmosphere was electric with people singing, dancing, and cheering. It was said that spontaneous parties broke out all over the country. Of course all over the world people celebrated. World war II had wrecked many families, many nations, and many economies across the world. People were overjoyed to see this conflict end and justice brought to the wicked men who attempted to impose their evil will upon the whole world.

As great and wonderful as the victory we had in WW2 was, it has nothing on the victory that we have in Christ. As righteous as the dispensation of justice was then, it has nothing on the dispensation of justice which Christ will bring on His enemies. As exuberant as the celebrations were when we won world war II, they will have nothing on the great celebration which will happen when the saints of God stand before Christ as he unleashes his final judgment upon the world.

Today we have the opportunity to get a glimpse into what heaven will be like for those of us who are redeemed and restored in Christ. Our future is really incredible, and my prayer is that as we think about these things today our hearts will be drawn to worship and to center our lives on Christ now as we prepare for this great future that we have with Him.

### Discover

In this chapter we are given a clear picture of a new Exodus for God's people.

“The Lamb of God has secured for his people an even greater exodus, one that delivers not simply from physical slavery out of Egypt but from spiritual slavery out of sin.” -Sam Storms

Similarly to how God previously brought His people out of Egypt to bring them into the promised land, He is bringing His people redeemed in Christ out of the metaphorical Egypt and Babylon of this world in order to bring us into a truer and better promised land which Christ is preparing for us.

## I. The third sign, seven angels carrying seven final plagues (1)

- A. Previously in Rev 12 we saw the signs of the pregnant woman (God's people) and the great red dragon (Satan) who antagonizes God's people and His Christ. Now we see the sign of seven angels which signify the sure destruction of Satan's kingdom.
  - 1. Each of the previous signs which John saw had world altering ramifications. The woman who was crying out in labor pains altered the world because she, and especially the child she bore, were God bringing Isaiah 59 to reality. Adam and Eve failed by bowing the need to Satan and bringing sin into the world. As a result of their sin it was not possible for anyone in the world to make right what had been broken. As Isaiah 59 says, the woman preparing to give birth is a sign that God has broken through into this world to win salvation for himself and to redeem His people for Himself. This, more than any event in history, has altered the course of this world.
  - 2. The second sign, the red dragon, signifies the presence of the devil in this world. His presence has ruined countless lives, tainted God's beautiful creation, and sent terrible shockwaves throughout history.
  - 3. This third sign, like the other two, brings a world shattering event forward after which the earth and its remaining inhabitants will never be the same again.
    - a) These angels bring plagues which destroy everyone opposed to Christ and thus wipe out the population of Satan's kingdom. If Satan has no people to rule, he has no kingdom. His judgement is final. His dethroning is inevitable.
- B. Great and marvelous
  - 1. While these coming plagues are terrible and will affect the entire world, they are great and marvelous because by them the Lord will finally purge the entire world of all evil and sin.
    - a) By these plagues God is clearing the unclean land that is this world and preparing it for His people to take it for good.

## II. The songs of God's saints (2-4)

- A. A sea of glass mixed with fire
  - 1. This is a fascinating image. Theologian G.K. Beale points out that in certain Jewish midrash traditions, it was thought that the Red Sea would become like glass to commemorate the work that God did by delivering

his people through it. It was also thought in the ancient world that the Red Sea was a place where a great sea monster dwelt.

2. Daniel 7 gives us a picture of a river of fire flowing out of God's throne room to judge wickedness. I have no doubt that John drew on this imagery from Daniel here.
3. Earlier in Revelation we got a picture of a sea of glass, but this one is different. Whether it is the same sea or not we don't know, but what we do know is that this time there is fire present. The fire is a clear sign that the Lamb of God has judged the beast in this place.

B. Those who were victorious over the beast

1. "And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."
  - a) Scripture is clear that the beast can only be overcome if we repent of our sins and believe in Christ. It is by Christ's blood and our true testimony about Him that we overcome the beast and reject His image.

(1) It is also by being marked with Christ's sign that we overcome the mark of the beast.

2. Theologian Dennis Johnson points out that the description of the overcomers as victors "shows that appearances on earth are a negative image of reality as it is rightly perceived from heaven. From an earthly perspective, the beast overcame God's witnesses, the saints. But the reality is that they overcame their enemies by the blood of the Lamb, holding fast to their testimony."
  - a) According to worldly wisdom, almost everything about God's kingdom is upside down. People think that participating in sin makes their lives better, increases their happiness, and makes them free. In reality participation with sin makes us miserable, enslaves us, and is always lethal in the end. They think participation with Satan is the so-called right side of history, but in the end the truth will be revealed. Only by laying our lives down and following after Christ can we find true freedom, joy, happiness, and the real right side of history.

C. Worship in heaven

1. As a musician myself, I really enjoy the thought of myriads of saints standing together with harps and playing heavenly worship songs while we sing our hearts out to God.
  - a) I love when we worship together, and our worship together is important because in some way we are participating in the concert of worship throughout history. But the worship which we will participate in together on the day when we stand over the crystal lake will be unlike anything we have ever experienced in our lives. The greatest worship service we could have on this side of heaven won't even hold a candle to that moment.

(1) This future is all the more reason for us to orient our lives around worship now. We have such a great and wonderful future ahead of us, and that future will orbit around the worship of God who is our Savior and our greatest joy. Satan wants to steal this from us now by filling our lives with distractions and reasons why we shouldn't spend time focusing on the Lord, I would call us to reject Satan's ploys and make a intentional effort to pursue Christ now. We don't have to wait until we stand in Christ presence to work on centering our lives around worshipping him now.

### III. Preparation for the end (5-8)

- A. God brought His people out of Egypt with plagues and likewise He is judging metaphorical Egypt with plagues.
- B. After this great worship service takes place, the final stages of this current age will unfold.
  - 1. The Angels who will carry out this judgment are clearly good angels. They are pure and clothed similarly to the saints of Christ.
  - 2. We won't go into detail on the seven bowls of wrath today, but it is enough for us to be aware that these seven angels are tasked with bringing about God's final judgment of plagues on this world and preparing this world once again to be a pure temple unto God inhabited by His holy people.
- C. This scene clearly demonstrates to us that God is holy, just, and glorious.
  - 1. Because God is just, Satan and the world must be judged. This is a certain fact based on an immutable characteristic of God.
  - 2. As God finally dispenses out His justice, His glory is revealed. Similarly to what Isaiah experience in Isaiah chapter 6, the glory of God is so strong in this scene that even angels and purified saints can't enter the temple for a time. God is infinitely more glorious and wonderful than we can possibly imagine. If this passage teaches us anything, it teaches us that God is indeed glorious.

## Nurture

Who is God? He is the Lord who is purifying this world.

What has God done? He has saved us from the coming wrath.

Who are we? We are those who have overcome the beast through Christ.

What are we called to do? We are called to live now like people who are going to worship the Lord, free in him for all time.