

December 3, 2023 by Steve Brandon



The Song of Victory

Revelation 15

1. A Sign (verse 1)
2. A Song (verses 2-4)
3. A Sanctuary (verses 5-8)

We have entered the Advent season, that is, the four weeks before Christmas, designed to prepare our hearts and minds for the celebration of the birth of our Lord. Today is the first Sunday in Advent. For this Sunday, I want for us to continue on in the book of Revelation.

One of your first questions might be this: Is Revelation really an Advent text? I say, "Yes." In many church calendars, and the one that we are following, the first week of Advent focuses upon the word, "Hope." The other themes are Peace, Joy, and Love. The hope this week is the hope of the coming of Christ. The coming of the one who will save his people from their sins. But this Advent hope, of the coming of Jesus isn't merely focused upon his first coming, it's also focused upon his second coming as well. In which case, the book of Revelation is a perfect book for us to consider this morning.

So, I invite you to open in your Bibles to Revelation 15.

This is a chapter of victory. It's a chapter of calm before the storm. My message this morning is entitled, "A Song of Victory," because that's at the heart of Revelation 15. Now, before we dig into the text, I want to point out to you how the last few chapters of Revelation have been structured.

In the second half of chapter 11, we have the see the triumph of the end. The loud voices in heaven were saying "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15). It's about victory! It's about how God wins in the end!

Following this in chapter 12, we see the cosmic battle, we see Michael and his angels waging war against the dragon and his angels (Revelation 12:7).

In chapter 13, we see the earthly battle, with the two beasts waging war against the saints (Revelation 13:7).

And then, in chapter 14, you had another picture of glory, with the Lamb standing in victory on Mount Zion. and with him the 144,000 standing fully redeemed and following the Lamb wherever he goes (Revelation 14:4). But then, chapter 14 continues with judgment: "The wrath of God being poured out on those who worshiped the beast" (Revelation 14:9). The wrath of God came in full strength against them.

So, we see this back and forth, between victory and conflict. It's almost as if God knows how much of the judgment we can take. And before explaining more judgment, there is hope in the victory.

Chapter 11 – Victory, with God on his throne!

Chapters 12-13 – Wars in heaven and on earth, with Satan and his beasts taking the upper hand.

Chapter 14 – The Lamb in victory.

Chapter 14 – The full measure of God's wrath upon the unbelieving world.

Now, in chapter 15, we again bounce back to the victory side of things. This is before chapter 16, when we again return to God's wrath. See, the book of Revelation isn't merely a book of judgment coming upon an evil world. It is that. But that's not all that it is. The book of Revelation also gives us these interludes of hope and victory along the way.

Revelation 15

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.

My first point comes in verse 1.

1. A Sign (verse 1)

That's what John sees. Look again at verse 1,

Revelation 15:1

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.

He sees seven angels with seven plagues. Now, I'm not quite sure how John saw these plagues. Plagues are not things that can carry or wear or set beside you. Plagues are events. Plagues are diseases and afflictions. they are difficult to picture. I searched the internet for some pictures of what John may have seen as he saw these seven angels with seven plagues. I searched in vain, because, plagues are not really something that you can picture. But remember, this is apocalyptic literature, where almost anything goes to make a point.

John comments about these plagues. He says, these plagues

Revelation 15:1

... are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

If you read forward, toward the end of the chapter, you can see that these plagues correspond with the bowls of wrath that the angels will be given. Look at verse 7.

Revelation 15:7

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,

In chapter 16, we will see these angels pour out their bowls upon the earth. And plagues come upon the earth.

Look at the first bowl in Revelation 16:2. "So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image." These sores are like a plague.

When the second bowl is poured out, we see something similar: "The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea" (Revelation 16:3). Again, this is like a plague, where everything in the sea dies.

Now, does all of this sound familiar? Where else in the Bible were there a series of plagues upon a people? Do you remember the account of the Exodus, where Moses pronounced the plagues that would come upon Egypt? I think that we are to remember this imagery. Look again at chapter 15.

Revelation 15:2-3

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.

Here we see a group of people, standing beside a sea of glass mingled with fire, and singing the song of Moses. Moses had a song? Yes! Actually, Moses had two songs. The first is in Exodus, chapter 15. The second is in Deuteronomy, chapter 32.

At this point, it would be helpful for us to turn and look at these songs, as we are going to be spending some time in Exodus. It's important, because it is the background to Revelation 15. So, turn in your Bibles back to Exodus, chapter 15. The context of Exodus 15 finds us after the ten plagues had been poured out upon Egypt. Plagues like the water in the Nile being turned to blood, and all of the creatures in the water perished (Exodus 7:14-25). Plagues like sores and boils that came upon man and beast in the land of Egypt, such that the people needed to stay at home, they couldn't venture out because of the pain they were experiencing (Exodus 9:8-12). These plagues are just like the plagues of the first two bowls that will be poured out in Revelation 16.

Finally, with the tenth and last plague, the death of the firstborn throughout the land, Pharaoh let the people of Israel go, saying "Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. Exodus 12:32 Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also" (Exodus 12:31-32)!

Yet, when Pharaoh came to his senses, he said, "What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us" (Exodus 14:5)? So he summoned his horses and chariots and sent them out after Israel, who were in the wilderness with the aim of bringing them back to Egypt. When the people of Israel saw the Egyptians coming after them, they were afraid. But Moses said to them,

Exodus 14:13-18

...Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent. Then the LORD said to Moses "Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.

Jim Hamilton has written a book on Biblical Theology entitled, "God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment." In the book he traces this theme throughout all of the Scripture, arguing that this theme is central in all of the Bible. In his book, he writes,

Salvation always comes through judgment. Salvation for the nation of Israel at the Exodus came through the judgment of Egypt, and this pattern is repeated throughout the Old Testament, becoming paradigmatic even into the New. When God saves his people, he delivers them by bringing judgment on their enemies. This is not limited to Old Testament enemies such as the Philistines. At the cross, the ruler of this world was cast out. At the consummation, Jesus will come to afflict those who afflict his people. Salvation for all believers of all ages is made possible by the judgment that falls on Jesus at the cross. The cross allows God to be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. The cross of Christ, the climactic expression of the glory of God in salvation through judgment, is the turning point of the ages.^[1]

This is exactly what we see here in Exodus. Moses said to Israel, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today (Exodus 14:13). God told Moses, "I will get glory over Pharaoh...the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen (Exodus 14:17-18).

The story in Exodus continues. Moses stretches out his hand over the sea (Exodus 14:21). The LORD drives the sea back with the wind (Exodus 14:21). The waters of the sea are divided (Exodus 14:21). Israel went through the sea on dry ground (Exodus 14:22). Pharaoh's horses and chariots and horsemen pursued Israel in the sea (Exodus 14:23). When they were in the middle of the sea, Moses stretched out his hand, and the water came back upon the Egyptians in the middle of the sea (Exodus 14:26-28).

Then we read, "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Israel saw the great power that the LORD used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in his servant Moses" (Exodus 14:30-31). This is "God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment." And then, we come to the song of Moses.

Exodus 15:1-3

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD, saying,

"I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously;
the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.
The LORD is my strength and my song,
and he has become my salvation;
this is my God, and I will praise him,
my father's God, and I will exalt him.
The LORD is a man of war;
the LORD is his name.

The song continues by explaining what took place:

Exodus 15:4-18

Pharaoh's chariots and his host he cast into the sea,
and his chosen officers were sunk in the Red Sea.
The floods covered them;
they went down into the depths like a stone.
Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power,
your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy.
In the greatness of your majesty you overthrow your adversaries;
you send out your fury; it consumes them like stubble.
At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up;
the floods stood up in a heap;
the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea.
The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake,
I will divide the spoil, my desire shall have its fill of them.
I will draw my sword; my hand shall destroy them.'
You blew with your wind; the sea covered them;
they sank like lead in the mighty waters.
"Who is like you, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like you, majestic in holiness,
awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?
You stretched out your right hand;
the earth swallowed them.
"You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed;
you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.

The peoples have heard; they tremble;
pangs have seized the inhabitants of Philistia.
Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed;
trembling seizes the leaders of Moab;
all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.
Terror and dread fall upon them;
because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone,
till your people, O LORD, pass by,
till the people pass by whom you have purchased.
You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain,
the place, O LORD, which you have made for your abode,
the sanctuary, O LORD, which your hands have established.
The LORD will reign forever and ever.”

Here is the people of Israel, glorifying God in their salvation, which came through the judgment of the Egyptians. This, by the way, is exactly what we see in Revelation 15.

We come to our second point.

2. A Song (verses 2-4)

Revelation 15:2-4

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.”

Notice here that the scene is the same. You have victorious people standing by the sea, in this case, the “sea of glass.” And these people are singing. They are singing “the song of Moses.” Now, the context is a bit different, because at this point, the salvation is soon to be accomplished. Back in Exodus, they were singing after their salvation had taken place. This, of course, is because this passage is proleptic, anticipating the end.

There is one major difference. It’s not just the song of Moses that they sing. They sing “song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb,” because at this point in redemptive history, the hero of the story is not Moses, it is the Lamb. It is the one who has obtained the victory through the shedding of his own blood on the cross (Revelation 5:9-10). The one who is standing on Mount Zion in victory (Revelation 14:1), with his 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth (Revelation 14:3).

And the song they sing is a “song of victory” to the Lord!

Revelation 15:3

Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty!

These are the deeds of judgment that we have seen throughout the book of Revelation. From opening the seals of judgment in Revelation chapter 6, to sending forth the angels to blow their trumpets of judgment in chapters 8 and 9. From claiming the kingdom of the world in chapter 11, to defeating the dragon in chapter 12 and casting him down to earth.

The deeds of the Lord God, the Almighty are “great and amazing. The song continues in verse 3.

Revelation 15:3

...Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!

Lest you think that the judgments poured out in Revelation are in some way unfair, as if those afflicted didn’t deserve it, think again. God’s ways are just! God’s ways are true! As the King of the nations, the Lord can do as he pleases. But he always acts in faithfulness and without iniquity.

Now, in verse 3 are some hints of the other song of Moses, that appears in Deuteronomy 32. The song there is much longer than the song of Moses in Exodus 15. So, we won’t turn there, but I want to read for you one of the verses of the song:

Deuteronomy 32:4

The Rock, his work is perfect,

for all his ways are justice.
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,
just and upright is he.

This is almost exactly what we see here in verse 3. God's ways are perfect, even in the ways that he judges. and there is no iniquity in his judgment. In fact, that's what Deuteronomy 32 is about. It's about the justice of God.

Deuteronomy 32:35 says, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay." Deuteronomy 32:36 says, "The LORD will vindicate his people." It ends with these words,

Deuteronomy 32:43
Rejoice with him, O heavens;
Bow down to him, all gods,
for he avenges the blood of his children
and takes vengeance on his adversaries.
He repays those who hate him
and cleanses his people's land.

It's an invitation to worship the Lord. Which is exactly what verse 4 is.

Revelation 15:4
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."

This is our great application this morning. Will you fear the Lord this morning? Will you glorify his name? We have seen in the book of Revelation, how holy the Lord is! We have his righteous acts revealed! All the nations will come to him! Are you coming? Are you worshipping with them? Will you sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? fearing the Lord, glorifying his name!

There's the song. Let's move on to our third point.

3. A Sanctuary (verses 5-8)

Revelation 15:5
After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,

Here is the heavenly sanctuary. It corresponds with the tabernacle in the wilderness in Moses' day. It corresponds with the temple in Solomon's day. John probably sees the inner sanctuary, where the ark of the covenant was, where God dwelt. This sanctuary "was opened."

Verse 6 tells us what was inside.

Revelation 15:6
and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues,

These were the angels that John saw in verse 1. Only here, he describes their appearance.

Revelation 15:6
...clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.

These angels are clothed like Jesus. Do you remember in chapter 1, how John saw Jesus "clothed with a long robe with a golden sash around his chest" (Revelation 1:13). These angels have picked up the clothing trend and are adorned like Jesus. I think the best way to take this clothing is as George Eldon Ladd writes, "The clothing of these angels is designed to enhance the splendor of these celestial beings." [\[2\]](#)

Then we see some action in verse 7.

Revelation 15:7
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,

This prepares us for chapter 16, when the bowls of God's wrath are poured out on the earth (Revelation 16:1). which will finish the wrath of God (Revelation 15:1).

And until all of these bowls are poured out, nothing more will enter this sanctuary.

Revelation 15:8
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.

The sanctuary was a smokey place. The glory of God was the source of the smoke. It's a bit like when God's glory first filled the tabernacle in Moses' day. "Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Exodus 40:34-35).

It's like when God's glory filled the temple in Solomon's day. "As soon as Solomon finished his prayer [of dedication], fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. And the priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the Lord's house" (2 Chronicles 7:1-2).

Similarly here, in Revelation 15, God sends forth his angels to pour out his wrath, and seemingly shuts himself in the sanctuary until all is finished. No one could enter, not even the holiest of angels. I picture a president who presses the button to launch a nuclear weapon, and then returns to the situation room, until he hears back how the bombing went. Such is the wrath of God that we will look at next time we are in Revelation, after the Advent season.

So, what do we do with all of this? We come before God in the only way that we know; through the blood of Christ. Because, you will either be on Mount Zion with Jesus, or you will face the wrath of the bowls.

I think that it's appropriate for us at this moment to think back to the days of the plagues. There was a way out of the plagues, through repentance. There was a way out of the last plague.

Exodus 12:1-13

The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt."

This is the same with the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God. We don't apply his blood to our doors. But through faith, God sees his on the door of our hearts. So that he will "pass over" our sin.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on December 3, 2023 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Jim Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 57.

[2] George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 207.