**“Just and True”**

Revelation 15, Pastor Emeritus Joe Fuiten, May 27, 2020

 The book of Revelation was written by the Apostle John, the only one of the original Apostles not already killed. He wrote to the Christians of Asia Minor who were suffering persecution. It was a comfort to them as it has been to many generations since then. We last learned about the Mark of the Beast and his efforts to wage war on God’s people. That war on the saints results in great suffering. Now it is time to bring that suffering to an end.

**Revelation 15** “ *I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues — last, because with them God's wrath is completed. 2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God 3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:*

We have here the seven last plagues upon the earth. In heaven, beside the sea of glass, all the victorious people of God were gathered. They were the ones who had been victorious over the beast and had refused the Mark of the Beast. They were given harps and were singing out strong. The song they sang was that of Moses and the Lamb.

 In what sense was it a song of Moses? Moses led God’s people out of the oppression of Pharaoh. They were freed from the government of their captivity and brought under God’s personal jurisdiction. This chapter is the repeat of the Exodus. Once again the people are standing before a Red Sea. They are about to enter into their freedom. Even some of the plagues are repeats of the Exodus account.

 This is an Exodus moment followed by the kind of victory praise after Israel crossed the Red Sea. Exodus 15:1-5 has the original celebration: “15 *Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. 2 The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. 3 The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. 4 Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. 5 The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.”*

The song sung by the victorious people of Revelation 15 is similar to that of Moses. Both songs celebrate who God is and what he has done especially against the opponents of God.

Remember the original context of Revelation. Christians were suffering great persecution from the Roman Emperor, Domitian. Revelation would have been a great encouragement to them. What was encouraging about it? Ultimate outcomes matter more than current circumstances. This is one reason why God uses prophecy. Prophecy sees the future.

 The knowledge of heaven is important because no matter how our life on earth goes, we know we have a secure eternity. It is important to your peace of mind to know that if you died today, you would go to heaven. You can have absolute certainty about that. You don’t have to wonder. We may have trouble today but we will be victorious eventually.

Let’s consider the actual song that is sung: *"Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. 4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." 5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 6 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.”*

 The song is not just about the ultimate outcome. It is also a formula for thought. Victorious people are going to think in certain ways. You have that thinking in Revelation 15:3. "*Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.”*

Your success depends on knowing what God has done and upon having a right view of it. You should know that God’s creation is fantastic. You should know that God planned for people to be forgiven of their sins and made provision for it, from the very beginning of time.

You should know God and what he has to say. Otherwise you will fall victim to a lot of intellectual scams; things which appear to be true but end up being false. This why we teach the Bible. It is why we go verse by verse so we get the whole of Scripture not just little snippets. I am not just giving you a bunch of my own thoughts and ideas. I am trying to correctly relate what God has said in his word. I think there are a lot of people who want to know what God has said. They have followed the latest conflicting information and contradictory University studies. They want to know the just and true ways of the King of the ages. His ways are not going to be found false even if some smart people have decided that God is old fashioned and needs to be brought up to date. Christianity lost a great champion in Ravi Zacharias last week. I appreciated his defense of the right ways of God in a secular world. It is also why I appreciate Chris Ashcraft and this apologetics study that he leads.

There is a big divide between the liberal church and the Bible-believing church. The liberal does not believe that God’s ways are true and just. The Bible needs to be reinterpreted to fit new ideas and thoughts. They need to change the definition of the words, redefine marriage, redefine sexuality, and adjust what sin is. I hope you will sign the sex education referendum. We need to overturn the devil’s perverted ideas and we certainly don’t need them being taught to our children.

This preference for man’s ways was obviously the problem of the first century and it remains the source of conflict even today. It will be the great divide at the end of time as well. The one who doesn’t get the Mark of the Beast is the one who sings out strong "*Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages*.” It means that God’s opinion is correct. In the next chapter it is said slightly differently but with the same meaning. In chapter 16:7 his “judgments” are said to be just and true.

I love that expression “King of the ages.” Its meaning is obvious. Jesus never changes and he doesn’t need to change. No matter how many generations are watching tonight, the Gospel is the same for us all.

This Gospel is a faith for all of life. It fits all generations. It fits all aspects of the lives of all generations. There is no area of life from which God wants to be excluded. The King of the Ages cares about families and children, his creation, life and death, education, and the daily bread. He made it all and has preferred outcomes for it all. As a church we want to be interested in what interests God.

The judgment of Revelation 15 is for those who want the Beast rather than God. They want their own ideas rather than God’s. In a way they are “hoisted on their own petard,’ blown up with their own bomb. They earned these judgements with their rejection of God’s rule. These seven judgments of Revelation are designed to bring the world to repentance. You see that expressed directly in Rev 16:9-11” *They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. 10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done*.”

The rebel won’t bend. The one who is saved honors and glorifies God. Nations will worship because of his righteous acts once they see them properly and accurately. At the present moment (2 Corinthians 4:4-5) “*The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God*.” The problem is people prefer to do what they want to do. They prefer their way to God’s way. At least for a time, the Beast’s way is more attractive to some.

The moment of salvation occurs when a person asks God to forgive them for choosing the inferior rather than God’s way and commits to following God’s ways and judgments. There is a question each person must answer. Is there some idea or behavior that is keeping you from God’s way? Are you willing to lay that idea here on this altar and voluntarily choose God’s way? Are you willing to give up your priorities and accept God’s? It really comes down to a decision between you or God. There cannot be two kings. One has to win. Will it be you or God?

Proverbs 8:10-11 “*Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her*. “

The question of verse 4 also reveals a rationale. “*Who will not fear (or honor) you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name?* ***For you alone are holy****.”* God is a holy God. That is why we need his “holy” Spirit within us. When you make your decision to seek God’s way, ask him to fill you with his Holy Spirit. Every day, desire to know God more and to follow him more closely. Humbly bend. Let God melt you and then mold you after his pattern. As the old song had it, “Melt me, mold me, fill me, use me…”