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The Revelation of Jesus Christ

"Bowl Me Over"

15:1-4

Sometime or another you'll be asked a question that begins, "How could a God of love...?" You can fill-in the blank with any number of things: - *being changed to bring change* -

- "How can a God of love send people to Hell?"
- "How can a God of love allow suffering?"

I understand the question but that doesn't mean it's not shallow. First of all, suffering and death is a reality. If there is no God, suffering and death don't go away. They are made worse because now there isn't even a question to ask!

Second, every parent knows that love encompasses discipline. Giving your kids everything they might desire with no accountability is not loving. Not at all.

So just by logic and experience it's a shallow question. God is love and His love encompasses accountability.

God's accountability calls ultimately for judgment upon those who refuse His love and salvation.

Let me read a portion of two verses, 15:4 and 16:7,

Revelation 15:4 "... Your judgments have been manifested."

Revelation 16:7 "... Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

The one word that best summarizes these two chapters is *judgment*. The entire context of these chapters is the judgment of God upon the earth, represented by the pouring out of the seven bowls of wrath.

The judgment of God troubles many people. They do not believe that a God of love *would* do such things, and they do not believe that a God of love *could* do such things.

He *would*, and He *could*, and He **will**! God *is* love; but He is also holy and therefore must judge sin. The God of love sent His Son, Jesus, to die for the sins of the world to satisfy His holiness. For those who will receive Jesus as their Savior, judgment is passed; they have only joy to look forward to.

What if you reject Jesus as your Savior? Then the God of love Who is also holy respects your decision. But remember: Your sin still needs to be judged - or else God would be neither loving or holy.

God's judgment *will* be "manifested," as it says in 15:4, and it *will* be "true and righteous," as it says in 16:7.

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

John described what he saw as "another sign." Earlier in the book, seven seals were opened. When the seventh seal was opened, seven trumpets were blown. The seventh trumpet was blown at the end of chapter eleven and "the temple of God was opened in heaven." Chapters twelve, thirteen, and fourteen paused to give us some details. Now in chapter fifteen we pick up the sequence as in

verse five you read, “the temple... was opened.” With the blowing of the seventh trumpet, seven bowls are poured out.

A “sign” is something that summarizes for the purpose of quick communication. The seals, the trumpets, and the bowls are “signs” in that they summarize the outpouring of God’s judgment in simple symbols.

John calls this “great and marvelous.” I’ll say! The last judgments are the “last,” and in them the “wrath of God” - His judgment - is “complete.”

They are here called “plagues.” It’s a tie-in with Exodus imagery. There’s a lot of Exodus imagery in this chapter. We see plagues, Moses, the tabernacle, and the cloud of God’s glory. This chapter shows the ultimate Exodus, the freedom of God’s people from a sinful and persecuting world.

They are poured out in rapid succession over the last few months of the seven year Great Tribulation. The reaction of believers is to “bless” God:

- You see believers who have been martyred bless God in verses one through four.
- In 16:15 you see believers on the earth told to “bless” God.

Revelation 15:2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

These believers are in Heaven, having been martyred. They were martyred because they received Jesus and refused to follow the Beast - the man we call the Antichrist.

This “sea” is probably the same one described in chapter four. Because the tabernacle was a shadow of the reality of heaven (Hebrews 8-9), the “sea of glass” is actually a glassy sea of literal water of which the laver in the temple was a picture (Exodus 30:18).

The laver was a wash basin for the priests. A priest would be given a thorough ceremonial washing at his ordination but still needed to wash daily. So Jesus told His disciples on the night before He was crucified that, once saved, we are totally cleansed but still need a daily washing because we pick-up defilements in the world.

Our daily washing is by “the water of the Word” of God. Many believe that in the architecture of heaven, the sea of glass is a physical representation of the Word of God, connecting to the idea of the Tabernacle’s laver and the *washing of water by the word* (Ephesians 5:26). We might say that these saints are “standing on the Word.”

In chapter four its description “like unto crystal” speaks of the holiness of God. Here the sea mingled with fire speaks of divine judgment proceeding from God’s holiness.

Because images from the Exodus abound in this chapter some see an indication of the color red and with it an allusion to the Red Sea and the deliverance from bondage.

They will be strumming “harps of God.” People make fun of Heaven as a place where we’ll sit around playing harps for all eternity. Well, if I had been martyred during the Great Tribulation, I’d be happy to sit comfortably in Heaven jammin’ on my stringed instrument!

“Death” was their “victory over the beast.” They refused to bow to the antichrist. They refused to worship him. They therefore could not buy or sell anything. Their families and friends turned against them. They were hunted down and brutalized. Death proved the strength of their commitment to Jesus.

Satan can never directly defeat you. The worst thing He can do is have you killed and only then with God’s permission. But that’s great because you wake up in Heaven.

Satan indirectly defeats you when you are drawn away by your own lusts and willingly sin against God.

Revelation 15:3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb...

The original "song of Moses" is recorded in Exodus fifteen. The "song of the Lamb" is recorded in Revelation chapter five. As we'll see in a moment, these martyred saints don't sing those same words; the words they sing are in verses three and four. So how is this "the song of Moses?" And why is it also called "the song of the Lamb?"

Either they sing those two songs *and* this new one as a kind of heavenly trilogy. Or this song is in the same genre as those songs in that they all speak of God's ultimate rule and reign.

Here's their song:

Revelation 15:3 ... "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!

Revelation 15:4 Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, For Your judgments have been manifested."

All the songs speak of God's rule and reign on the earth - and thus all the songs imply that His judgment is coming prior to His rule and reign on the earth. Believers of every age bless God for His judgments.

I bless God for His judgment of my sins. I will never be judged for my sins; they were all judged at the Cross as Jesus took my place and my punishment.

I bless God for His coming judgment of sin. Those who refuse to repent are rejecting Jesus and cannot be allowed to go on in their rebellion forever. God is longsuffering toward them, not willing that any should perish but, rather, that they would repent. But when they refuse He must judge their sin. Having rejected His Substitute and Savior, they must and will be punished for their sin - otherwise God would be neither loving nor holy.

It's been pointed out that the words of this song give praise to God's works, God's ways, God's worthiness, and God's worship:

- God's works are "great and marvelous."
- God's ways are "just and true."
- God's worthiness is expressed as they "glorify" His name.
- God is worshipped by "all nations."

They say "Your, Your, You, Your, You, Your, You, You," and "Your." I'd say the emphasis is on God. It's a good lesson in how to worship. Sing directly to the Lord about His works, ways, and worthiness.

Not exclusively. It's still worship to sing about God. But singing to Him is something we should never get away from.

There is incredible interest in all-things 'Armageddon' as of late. Educational TV is running shows like crazy on the Mayan calendar prediction that the world ends in 2012; with Nostradamus' newly found drawings; with various Armageddon scenarios.

Nonbelievers are more interested in the end times than many believers! It's silly since we have the actual script.

Don't get sensational; do stay Scriptural and share the hope of the coming of Jesus.