

22. Glory and Wrath

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In 1994, California's \$3-billion-a-year pornographic movie industry viewed the earthquake as God's personal destruction of America's most wicked city, some porn producers said.

The quake was centered in the cities of Northridge, Chatsworth, and Canoga Park, which are home to nearly all of the U. S. soft and hard-porn video industry. Every one of the primary porn studios and distributors, a total of around 70, suffered damage. The headquarters of the largest, VCA Pictures, collapsed, destroying equipment and most copies of several films. At least for quite some time, high-level porn studio executives and models were edgy.

An executive at World Modeling, a San Fernando Valley agency supplying actors to the porn industry, said that their clients backed away from X-rated acting as a result of this earthquake.

"Our clients have a definite lack of motivation," said the agent for porn actors, who requested anonymity. "It's put the fear of God in them. I'm telling you, it's enough to give you an attack of religion."

"Can you imagine how the fundamentalists are going to leap on this when the smoke clears?" said a porn film director who works for many Northridge studios and asked not to be identified. "They'll say it's God's retribution."

They have not seen the wrath of God yet. If they stay in their course, they will see much more later for sure.

By the way, that \$3 billion-a-year industry grew to \$14 billion-a-year now.

A. THE THIRD WOE

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.

At this point, John saw the seven angels holding the seven bowls of God's wrath, make themselves ready for action. The wicked world is about to "drink of the wine of the wrath of God" that we learned from last chapter. But before the angels pour out the wrath of God, there is an "interlude" of blessing. Before sending the "third woe", God once again reassures His faithful people.

Revelation 14 seemed to describe the consummation of all things and a preview of the Battle of Armageddon. But now apostle John will go back and describe God's judgment in more detail. This idea of stating and re-stating in more detail is common with prophecy, and with Hebrew literature in general.

In Revelation 15, God says, "I have been patient with human rebellion and depravity – and now the bowls are full."

Genesis 15:13-16 Then He said to Abram: "Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and

they will afflict them four hundred years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge; afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete."

While Israel was held captive in Egypt for four hundred years, God was giving the Amorites an opportunity after opportunity to repent and turn to Him for four hundred years. Tragically, they didn't.

"Destroy the Hittites, the Amorite, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivite and the Jebusite," God commanded Joshua upon the Israelites' entry into Canaan in Deut 20:17. This seems extremely unfair and brutal when we fails to take into account the fact that God patiently waited for them to repent for four hundred long years.

So finally, when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God said, "Enough is enough. Destroy them." Did He do so because He is cruel? No. The Amorites were already doomed, damned, lost, gone, toast, curtains, dust. They were so sinful and corrupted, God was simply putting them out of their misery.

I camp on this point because people who read the Bible casually or hear a story in a Sunday sermon occasionally can think God is cruel. We must explain to them how patient God is. Especially with this country America. But that we must not mistake His patience for apathy or approval of sin. For while the millstone of God's judgment turn slowly, they do, indeed, grind exceedingly fine.

B. STANDING ON THE SEA OF GLASS

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.

The images from the Exodus are all over in this chapter. This chapter shows the ultimate Exodus, the freedom of God's people from a sinful and persecuting world.

I asked you to underline "Those who have victory over the beast." These are those who are victorious over the beast through their faithfulness unto death. They are the tribulation martyrs, described in Revelation 7:9-17. You might say, "They lost, because they are dead." No, they are the victors over satan because they stood on the Word of God with faith in Christ.

Even if we go through terrible times on this earth, we are winners in God's eyes as we stay in the course that God designated for us according to His Word, the Bible.

Many bible students 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. Perhaps we could say that these Tribulation saints are "standing on the Word."

C. THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB

Revelation 15:3-4 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 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."

Only one song is sung, but this song goes by two titles "the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb". The two titles refer to a single song. Here is a perfect union between law and love, between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

As we have noticed, the Bible mentioned 'Your' for four times and 'You' for three times in these two verses. These martyrs are only focused on God. They don't even focus on their own costly death and glorious victory. They have the heart of true worship. It's all about God, not about us.

When we read the Book of Exodus, we realize that we can find a typology from this great Exodus:

- Egypt represents the world we left.
- The two million Israelis represent the people, including us, who have lived, are living and will live on earth.
- Pharaoh represents satan who wants to keep us back in his slavery and bondage.
- Moses represents Jesus Christ who gives us freedom and will lead us to eternal life.
- The wilderness they go through represents the time period that we are going to spend our lives to learn about Jesus and to serve others, or to reject Him.
- Joshua and Caleb who believed the promise of God represent those who accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and receive His promises.
- The Promised Land represents the Spirit filled life of obedience. Although there were battles and struggles in the land, even failures -- they were in the land of promise.

Everyone is invited, but not everyone will come. Only a few accept the invitation of God by faith just like Joshua and Caleb did.

This scene would give great assurance and endurance to suffering saints in any age of the church. It is entirely possible to be victorious over the world carnal system! One does not have to yield to the "mark of the beast", nor temptations of the world. Through the blood of the Lamb, we have deliverance. Our Lord Jesus' work on the cross is a "spiritual exodus" accomplished by His blood.

D. THE PRELUDE OF THE SEVEN BOWL JUDGEMENTS

Revelation 15:5-6 After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

Exodus 25:8-9 and Hebrews 8:9 remind us that the tabernacle of meeting God told Moses to build was based on the pattern of heaven. This refers to the heavenly reality of the tabernacle, not the earthly copy.

Exodus 25:8-9 And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.

Hebrews 8:9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.

These seven angels bring God's judgment. It is significant that they come directly from heavenly temple, from the very presence and throne of God. They do not act on their own authority, but God's.

Their clothing in pure bright linen and having their chests girded with golden bands are reminders that God's judgment is always completely pure and righteous.

The girdles of gold across their breasts symbolize the heart of God within. That is, the judgment they are about to administer to the earth stems not from cruelty but from love of God.

E. THE CLOUD OF THE GLORY OF GOD

Revelation 15:7-8 Then 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. 8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

The King James Version says that the angels had seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. The word 'vials' is really a poor translation.

These bowls are broad, flat bowls or saucers used ritually for drinking or for pouring libations in sacrifice. The contents of such a shallow bowl were quickly, easily and completely poured out.

When the cloud of glory fills the temple in heaven, no one can enter. It was the same way when Moses could not enter the Tabernacle when the smoke of the cloud of God's glory, sometimes called the Shekinah filled the tent in Exodus 40:34-35.

Exodus 40:34-35 Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Both the bowls and the cloud come from the glory of God and from His power. This is a reminder of God's special presence and glory, even in the midst of devastating judgment.

I asked you to underline "No one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed." This declares that judgment cannot be reversed. Nothing can hinder it any more. The access to this temple in heaven will no longer be allowed until the wrath of God accomplish its job.

When a lamb repeatedly jeopardized his own safety by continually wandering away from the flock, the shepherd would break its leg. Then, throughout the healing process, the shepherd would carry the straying lamb on his shoulder, during which time something amazing transpired in the lamb. You see, when after five or six weeks, his bone could again support his weight, the lamb remained close to the shepherd, never to wander again – not because he feared another broken bone, but because he had become attached to the shepherd.

If we wander away and continue in sin, our Good Shepherd break the bone of our self-sufficiency in order to force us to draw close to Him in ways we never would have otherwise.

But if you think the bowls of judgment about to be poured out in the Tribulation are still unfair, take another look at our Shepherd, and you'll realize that the Good Shepherd is also the Lamb of God who suffered not a broken bone, but a broken body and a broken heart as He died for our sin.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) We must not mistake God's patience for apathy or approval of sin.

As God wait for the Amorites' repentance patiently for four hundred years, He waits for our repentance. We can be as dumb as the Amorites and get destroyed or turn from our wicked ways and seek His face, so that He may heal our land.

2) Even if we go through terrible times on this earth, we are winners in God's eyes as we stay in the course that God designated for us according to His Word, the Bible.

The only people who reject the loving hands of God are true losers.