

Revelation 15 — “Song of Praise in Heaven”

启示录 15 — “天上的赞美之歌”

INTRO -

Introductory Illustration

- Scripture reading: Psalm 98:1-9; Ephesians 5:18-21; Revelation 15:1-8.
- **Bob Kauflin**, a worship leader for Sovereign Grace Ministries, has a book called: **WORSHIP MATTERS**. He writes: “**Good theology helps us keep music in its proper place. We learn that music isn’t an end in itself but rather a means of expressing the worship already present in our hearts through the new life we’ve received in Jesus Christ.**”
- *If you were asked: What is the greatest hindrance in worshipping God?*
 - *what would you say?*
- *Often, we hear things like...*
 - “Our worship leader isn’t very experienced.”
 - “The services are too planned/spontaneous.”
 - “The songs are too complex/simple.”
 - “The band/orchestra/organist/guitarist sounds bad.”
 - “There are too many new/old songs.”
 - “Our church is too big/small.”
 - Ignoring for a moment that all these statements refer to a meeting context, they reveal a profound misconception about the hindrances to true worship. Contrary to what we might think, our greatest problem doesn’t lie outside us, but within our own hearts. It’s the problem of distraction; misplaced priorities; lack of *awe-in-God*; self-centeredness; or even **idolatry — we have moments where we want, desire, crave, need, cherish, love something or someone other than God alone!**
- Think about this perspective from an individual who leads a congregation in singing in a church context:
 - “*An effective corporate worship leader aided and led by the Holy Spirit, skillfully combines biblical truth with music to magnify the worth of God and the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, thereby motivating the gathered church to join him in proclaiming and cherishing the truth about God and seeking to live all of life for the glory of God*”
- **Therefore, it is true that:** Worship is the highest and noblest activity of which man, by the grace of God, is capable.

****READ THE TEXT****

THESIS — From Revelation 15, we’ll see a “Song of worship in Heaven” and learn about *singing there* so we can be equipped to sing better *here*.

See the theme of “The wrath of God” (v.1 and v.7) = bookends (opening and closing the chapter). This is a heavenly interlude before John receives revelation of the 6 bowls of divine wrath.

I. The victorious martyrs of the Tribulation sing a song of Deliverance (15:1-4)

- a. *Singing has a way of IMPRINTING the truths* on our hearts.
 - i. What you sing you remember. (just ask someone what songs they learned when they were a child; they probably remember the songs!)
 - ii. If you sing *error* you will believe error.
 - iii. If you sing *truth* you will believe *truth*.
 - iv. That’s why so much care must be given to *what* is sung. Emphasis must lie on *content* , not on style. Theology, not on popularity!

It is a heavenly song.

This song is composed almost entirely of quotations/allusions from the Old Testament. It is a heavenly song of worship of the Redeemed who are “victorious over the Beast (15.2)” and who are in heaven singing Moses’ Song and the Song of the Lamb (back to Ex 15 language and themes).

The Song (vv.3-4)

Notice the Character of God That Pervades this Song:

And: here we find the martyred saints who have overcome the Lamb who are praising God because of His righteous character which must punish sin – and sinners.

The Point: This scene here is of the worshippers in heaven who have been slain by the Beast but yet they have Conquered because of their belief in Jesus Christ. They are in heaven worshipping God! *No Christians are losers. All are winners! All triumph IN the Lamb!* Again: None lose who have Christ!

The character of God in this Song —

1) Power of God (3b)

Definition: The doctrine that God is able to do all his holy will (Wayne Grudem).

1. From **Psalm 111:2** ² Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them.

2) Righteousness of God (3c)

Definition: The doctrine that God always acts in accordance with what is right and that he is himself the final standard of what is right

Quote from **Psalm 145:17** ¹⁷ The LORD is righteous in all His ways,
And kind in all His deeds.

2. Righteous - All God’s ways are upright, honest, right, and accurate.

3. True - God’s ways are never false; they’ll never fail; they never lie.
4. **Deuteronomy 32:4** ⁴ "The Rock! His work is perfect, For all His ways are just; A God of faithfulness and without injustice, Righteous and upright is He.

3) Sovereignty of God (3d)

Definition: God’s exercise of power over His creation.

1. Quote from **Jeremiah 10:7** ⁷ Who should not revere you, O King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is no one like you.
2. Our God is the **King** of *all* the Nations!
3. **Ps 96:1-10!**

4) Holiness of God (4a)

Definition: The doctrine that God is separated from sin and devoted to seeking His own honor

Partly quoted from **Psalm 86:9-10** ⁹ All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. ¹⁰ For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.

2. Holy- “To be morally *separated* from sin; to be morally spotless; blameless; free from wickedness; to be religiously observing every obligation and command of God; to be a pious and a sincere worshipper.
- v. **Bob Kauflin rightly summarizes:** *So, God’s glory is the end of our worship, and not simply a means to something else. In the midst of a culture that glorifies our pitiful accomplishments in countless ways, we gather each week to proclaim God’s wondrous deeds and glory in his supreme value. He is “holy, holy, holy.” There is no one, and nothing, like the Lord*

5) Revelation of God (4b)

Definition: The ways in which God reveals Himself to His creation through creation and through His Word

- b. **John 4:24** – those who worship God must worship in **Spirit and truth**
 - i. John 17:17 – God’s Word is truth.
 - ii. ***When you worship God, the songs should remind you of the Gospel and of verses from God’s Word!***
 - iii. The more you can meditate on God’s Word the better and more focused your heart will be during singing.
- c. This is what the Bible means when it speaks of singing a “new song” — fresh acts of God’s mercy call for ‘new songs’. New deliverances call for new songs! (Ps 33.3; Ps 149:1; Rev 5.9).

SO THEN:

“The righteous judgment from God proceeds from what He is as described in this song: the God who is almighty, righteous, true, holy, just, and worthy of worship” (John Walvoord).

xii.In Sum: Charles Feinberg *says:* *“In their singing they extol God’s great and marvelous works, His righteousness and truth, His sovereignty over the nations, His holiness, and ultimate reception of universal worship through the disclosure of His righteous dealings”*

Worship in heaven will be marked by:

- ✓MULTITUDES
- ✓GOD-CENTERED
- ✓BIBLE-BASED
- ✓PROSTRATE
- ✓JOYFUL
- ✓LOUD
- ✓PURPOSEFUL
- ✓INTELLIGENT
- ✓UNDISTRACTED
- ✓EVERLASTING

- d. Connecting this truth of “Heavenly Worship” to our Current times of Congregational Worship, here are a few elements of application for music/singing:
- e. **6 elements in music in the worship assembly....**
- f. **When we gather, the music is *NOT* the ultimate focus; it is a God-given vehicle to express our worship & praise to God for His person, worth & gospel. Therefore, when the leader selects the music to be sung in the worship service, here are some important guides:**
 - i. must INSTRUCT (truth) — i know that music engages the heart & makes words memorable & i want solid theology to guide and carry the people
 - ii. must REFLECT (the cross/hope)
 - iii. must ENGAGE (with Scripture)
 - iv. must EDIFY (believers, build up, strengthen, fortify)
 - v. must be SINGABLE (for corporate worship)
 - vi. must be THEO-CENTRIC (God-centered // not man-centered)
- g. **SO THEN, Some clarifications**
 - i. Worship is driven by Truth, not feelings/emotions
 - ii. Worship is Christ-centered, not self-centered
 - iii. Worship is tethered to the atonement of Christ and the holiness of God
 - iv. Worship is grounded on, alluding to and using the language of Scripture
 - v. Worship is self-controlled & thoughtful, not losing one’s mind.

- vi. Worship is a humble heart before God’s majesty, not a lofty view of self
- h. **For example: consider the hymn: *Crown Him with Many Crowns*:**
 - i. Crown him with many crowns (sovereignty!)
 - ii. Crown him the virgin’s son (humanity!)
 - iii. Crown him the Lord of love (love!)
 - iv. Crown him the Son of God (deity!)
 - v. Crown him the Lord of life (power/resurrection!)
 - vi. Crown him the Lord of lords (supremacy!)
 - vii. Crown him the Lord of years (eternality!)
 - 1. And you are lost in the wonder and amazement and glory of who God is!
 - 2. ***Thomas Carlyle said it well***: Worship is transcendent wonder.
- i. We need to remember the entire Gospel:
 - i. **We deserve NOTHING but hell.**
 - ii. **God in His sovereign grace saw man’s helplessness and inability to save himself and he sent Christ to die on a cross for those whom he chose to be His children.**
 - iii. **Christ died on the cross *in place of* sinners and He bore the *wrath* that sinners deserve and the punishment that *they* should eternally bear in hell.**
 - iv. **Sinners who believe in Jesus Christ for salvation are immediately, supernaturally and eternally justified.**
 - v. **The sinner who truly repents of sin will *evidence* that conversion in a CHANGE of life as he strives to turn from sin and turn toward holiness for the glory of Christ!**

Postures of worship in the Bible (in Rev 15:2 - they are standing & singing!)

- j. **Lifting your hands** - obedience, full surrender
 - i. **1 Timothy 2:8** ⁸ Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.
 - ii. **Psalm 28:2** ² Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry to You for help, When I lift up my hands toward Your holy sanctuary.
 - iii. **Psalm 134:2** ² Lift up your hands to the sanctuary And bless the LORD.
- k. **Closing your eyes**
 - i. To focus on God, to concentrate, to be undistracted.
- l. **Falling on your knees** - honor.
 - i. **Ezra 9:5** ⁵ But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;

- ii. **Luke 22:41-42** ⁴¹ And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and *began* to pray, ⁴² saying, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me;
- m. **Prostrate before the LORD** - great humility.
 - i. Ps 138.2 - I will *bow down* before your Holy Temple
 - ii. Neh 8.6 - the people bowed low and worshiped with their faces to the ground.
- n. ***Beware: Don't let your PRIDE get in the way so that you worship in one of these postures in order to be seen by people. Guard the heart-motive.***

Worship in Heaven will be all-encompassing: “No legitimate activity of life—whether in marriage, family, business, play, friendship, education, politics, etc.—escapes the claims of Christ’s kingship. . . . Certainly those who live and reign with Christ forever will find the diversity and complexity of their worship of God not less, but richer, in the life to come. Every legitimate activity of new creaturely life will be included within the life of worship of God’s people.”

— Cornelius Venema

II. The seven angels are prepared for the seven last plagues (15:5-8)

These verses prepare us for the sobering -- and last -- judgments of God’s wrath (ch.16, the ‘bowls’)

A. Instituted by Eternal God (5-6)

The tabernacle of testimony refers to the immediate presence of God -- the inner sanctuary -- God is the source of these plagues!

B. Instituted Without Mercy (7)

This word for “bowl” refers to a broad bowl which was used for offerings. It was a broad, shallow bowl. The picture is not that of a large water pitcher slowly pouring out a liquid. Rather, the picture is of a shallow coffee-cup saucer where you turn it over and all the liquid quickly comes flowing out!

C. Instituted until Divine Wrath is Complete (8)

Smoke is a picture of God’s majesty (Exodus 19.16-18) & it symbolizes God’s presence in the OT (Ez 40.34-35; Isa 6.1-4).

That no one was able to enter speaks of the coming of the plagues of the 7 bowls -- and it shows that God’s mercy is exhausted (dried up) & that only his wrath remains for all those who dwell on the earth.

CONCL -

Concluding Illustration

- This song in heaven reminds us of the Victory we have in the lamb! It is thoroughly biblical and dripping with Scriptural language. It gives a glimpse into what worshipful-life in heaven is like.
- So then: John MacArthur has rightly said:
 - *“Music in the church ought to be much more than an emotional stimulant. In fact, this means music and preaching should have the same aim. Both properly pertain to the proclamation of God's Word. Preaching is properly seen as an aspect of or worship. And conversely, music is properly seen as an aspect of the ministry of the Word, just like preaching. Therefore the songwriter ought to be skilled in Scripture and as concerned for theological precision as the preacher.*
- So then: give thanks that these songs are carefully selected here. Pray for your musicians. And pray that your hearts and minds will engage with Truth, with the Words, with theology when they are sung!