

Revelation 15 – The Prelude

Father, as we have read those words of Scripture we pray that now your Word would read us. Holy Spirit, we invite you to teach us, lead us into all truth. We invite you to shine into our hearts the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. For the weightiness of this opening to chapter 15 I pray that you would overlook my inadequacies as a man and as a teacher so that your Word would go forth in the demonstration of the Holy Spirit and of power, so that men and women would be saved, so that men and women would be built up in their faith, so that men and women would be equipped to live for you and to serve you in these last days, so that as we scatter Jesus would be more exalted in the way that we live than ever before. And it's in his wonderful name we pray, amen.

The **15th** chapter of the book of **Revelation** is actually the introduction to the **16th** chapter. And so as we're trying to see where this chapter fits in the scope and the flow of the book of **Revelation** – We want to understand that chapters **15 & 16** are a part of the same vision. Both of these chapters deal with the series of events that will advance the chronology of the great tribulation. They're going to advance the timeline of events right up to the second coming of Jesus Christ to this earth. These final events are introduced to us in chapter **15** as the seven last plagues. So it's worth you underlining that phrase in verse **1** right now as we get started.

“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.”

Just to get our bearings and to get people up to speed –
Here's how the book of **Revelation** unfolds;
Here's how the chronology, the timeline of the great tribulation advances.

We're remembering that this is a 7-year period of time. During this 7-year period of time God is dealing with the nation of Israel, even as he said & foretold in **Daniel 9**. And within this 7-year period of time, as God is dealing with the nation of Israel, he's doing it in the context of judging & bringing to an end the horrific failed attempt of man to govern himself prior to the coming of Jesus Christ.

And here's how all of this has advanced –

It began with the 7 seals – those judgments that begin in chapter **6**.
The title deed to the earth was given to Jesus because he had the right, the authority to open it as he has purchased planet earth with his blood. And we see those judgments begin there.
And then there's a pause – a little parenthetical section in chapter **7**.
And then those 7 seals – those judgments that come forth from those 7 seals –
They conclude in chapter **8:1** with the 7th seal that contains the next series of judgments – 7 trumpet judgments. Those judgments begin in **8:1**. They continue through the end of **9**. And then they conclude in **11:15-19**.
Beginning in chapter **12** we saw that the chronology of events is on hold (if you would).
The Holy Spirit isn't moving the narrative forward chronologically;
But instead he is backfilling for us important details in the timeline up to that point.
Now in chapter **15** the chronology of events begins to advance again, taking us to the end of chapter **16**.

And what we see in all of this is one giant crescendo. Would you think of a musical piece?
And think of the conductor there. He has his baton. And he's raising his baton.
He's inviting every instrument with their intensity, their volume, to bring this piece to an explosion (if you would).
I like listening to tunes by this band 'Explosions in the Sky'. And that's how they write their music.
Everything builds incrementally always to these massive moments in their songs.
So think of this as a musical piece moving towards a giant crescendo.
And that is what has been happening since chapter **6**.
The 7th seal of the title deed of the earth that was loosed by Jesus contain the 7 trumpet judgments.
The 7th trumpet judgment contains all of the judgments described in the 7 bowls of judgment that we are going to see as we move into chapter **16**.

Now as we look at all of that in terms of the chronological movement of events –

Chapter 19 actually follows immediately from chapter 16.

Chapter 17 & 18 don't advance the chronological events of the great tribulation.

So if you want to get a sense of the final movement, the final crescendo of the book leading up to the second coming of Jesus, read chapters 15 & 16, and then jump to chapter 19, and pick up reading there; because that's where everything moves.

The intervening chapters that we're not going to jump over – we will study them – chapters 17 & 18 – They're not moving the chronological series of events at all.

So here we go –

“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.”

So we are coming to –

the final series of judgments upon fallen man,

the final series of judgments upon the world that has been organizing itself without God and against God.

Where it says, **“I saw another sign”** – the word **“another”** refers to 2 other signs that John saw back in chapter 12. And we looked at those. And together these 3 signs are important to the prophetic nature of the book of **Revelation**.

The first sign was the woman representative of the nation of Israel.

The second sign was the great red dragon. This is a reference to Satan.

And it also includes the final world-governing empire under his control.

The third and the last sign are these seven angels having the seven last plagues.

So this is the completion of God's judgment –

upon the world system that is established and driven by Satan,

and upon those men and women who are complicit with him in it.

Now circle, highlight, underline, asterisk, draw arrows to the words **“great and amazing”**.

The Holy Spirit inspires John to describe this sign with the words **“great and amazing”**.

I love the old **King James Version** – it says – **“great and marvellous”**.

God want us to know that these events that are about to bring to a culmination his judgment upon this fallen world & that will usher in the return of Jesus – He wants us to know that they are utterly amazing, absolutely extraordinary.

How amazing?

How extraordinary?

Well, there is only one other place in the whole of the New Testament where these same three words **“great and marvellous”** are used together. There in verse 1 would you draw an arrow down to verse 3 –

Revelation 15: “³ 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!””

So how great?

And how marvellous? –

Well, they issue from, they come from God who is great and marvellous.

They are that great!

They are that amazing!

Now I want you to note this with me –

This new group of angels is seven in number; and they have the seven last plagues. Just as in the seven seals and the seven trumpets the number of completion is used. In the Bible the number seven is the number of completion. But what's even more significant is that these seven plagues are described as “**the last seven**”. The Greek here is very emphatic – “*having seven plagues, the last ones*”. So now we are to the very end of the very end.

And by telling us that these are the last plagues John implies that all of the judgments that were poured out with the breaking of the seven seals and the blowing of the seven trumpets, that they were also plagues. And the word “**plague**” is a radical word. You might want to write this in the margin of your Bible there. It means – to strike or to wound.

Now what a thought to consider!

God is striking a Christ-rejecting world. God is inflicting fatal wounds upon the world that has rejected him - so totally & utterly rejected him that they are willing to be placed under the direct rule of Satan by way of the antichrist. And these are the final wounds before the second coming of Jesus to the earth.

Now this gets really sticky.

And I've been praying all afternoon that God would give me real grace in this moment in the study. The minute we venture into a portion of the book of **Revelation** that deals with the subject of God's wrath; The minute man comes across anything in the Bible that begins to even sniff of the subject of God's wrath – There are people that check out. They just check out. They want nothing to do with the God of the Bible because the Bible talks about his wrath.

Before you might be inclined to check out – And I'm not saying it's just unbelieving men and women who check out on the subject of wrath – A lot of modern Christianity in America absolutely checks out when it comes to the subject of God's wrath.

So if you're inclined to do that, if you get a little skittish, if you get a little squeamish – Maybe some Christians get a little embarrassed –

That's the other side of God;
That's the Old Testament God.

We're not talking about him.
We're now talking about Jesus.
We're all in the New Testament.
We don't want to go Old Testament on anybody.

Before you check out when it comes to God's wrath please remember what we saw back in chapter **14**. Back in chapter **14** we saw God doing something that he has never done in the 2,000 years up to this time since Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave. He sends an angel to proclaim the everlasting good news to every single soul on planet earth because God is not willing that any should perish.

And he knows that the time is coming to a close.
He knows that the fullness of his wrath is about to be completed.

And he says, “*I'm going to get the gospel out to everybody before that moment.*”
These final wounds, these final blows of God on the world are not because God is mean or that God is merciless. They're because man has rejected the ultimate offer of God.
Even at this point in the book of **Revelation** in the proclamation of the Gospel man has rejected God's mercy.

“¹ ... for with them the wrath of God is finished.”

Now in my notes I put the word “**FINISHED**” in all uppercase bold.

So you might want to circle that word “**finished**”, underline it a few times, highlight it.

That word “**finished**” is from the exact same Greek word that Jesus used just before he died on the cross.

Write **John 19:30** in the margin of your Bible there.

John 19: “³⁰ When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, “It is finished”, and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

The word used by John there in his gospel in **John 19:30**, and the word that he uses here in **Revelation 15** – It’s is from the Greek word ‘*teleos*’.

We get our English words ‘telescope’ or ‘telemetry’ from it.

It’s looking out a great distance

It’s looking out to the very end.

This is mind-blowing – Even as in the cross of Jesus the work of salvation was finished –

Jesus said, “**It is finished.**”

There is nothing left to be done for man to be saved.

You and I cannot save ourselves.

You and I cannot make ourselves righteous.

The death and resurrection of Jesus alone saves us.

When we believe with our heart on the Lord Jesus, what Jesus did on the cross to fully save us is applied to our lives.

We cannot add to it.

We will never be any more righteous in heaven than the moment we believe with our heart on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because the work of salvation was fully completed, paid in full, when Jesus was nailed to the cross.

Even as the work of salvation was finished there on the cross – this is staggering –

John now tells us that the patience of God is finished.

There is coming a time when the patience of God will be finished.

Now, Christians, we need to be so careful.

I never want to fall short in talking about the incomprehensible love, the boundless mercy & endless grace of God.

And, for the most part, there is so much misinformation and disinformation concerning the God of the Bible –

that he’s only and always angry with man.

We want to actively proclaim the incomprehensible love of God, the boundless mercy and the endless grace of God.

But we only understand the nature of God’s love in sending Jesus in light of the nature of sin & how God views sin.

Psalm 7:11 in the **ESV** says this – “¹¹ **God is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day.**”

That same verse **Psalm 7:11** in the **King James** says – “**God is angry with the wicked daily.**”

When we read that God is angry please don’t think that God is being angry like you and I can be angry.

Here in the book of **Revelation** we’re about to see the absolute, the ultimate conclusion of the wrath of God.

But it’s not because God lost his temper over something that man did.

Have you ever lost your temper? That’s not what’s happening here.

When that happens with our kids we usually say something like, “*I’ve had enough*” or something similar.

And when you say, “*I’ve had enough*” your kids usually know it’s time to stop whatever it is they’re doing that you have had enough of.

God is not losing his temper here.

God has been suffering long with the world.

I want you to write these passages in the margin of your Bible there next to the phrase “**wrath of God**”.

Psalm 103:8 & 10

“⁸ The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

¹⁰ He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities.”

I’m so glad that is our God.

When people come unglued, and they say,

“There’s that wrath of God thing again. Why is God always got a mad on for humanity? Why is that?” –

When they say that would you read that verse to them; or paraphrase that verse to them? Tell them that – God is slow to anger, and he is abounding, the **King James Version** says plenteous, in mercy.

God has not dealt with this world, he has not dealt with you, he has not dealt with me, according to our sins.

But mankind – and that includes you and me before meeting Jesus –

Mankind has wanted nothing to do with this God that is so merciful.

And here’s what’s mind-blowing – All the while they’re labelling God as angry –

There is only one thing that keeps this world from being utterly consumed today – It’s the mercy of God.

Isn’t that striking?

They’re labelling God as angry and as this vengeful, wrathful God that they just feel is so intolerable;

And they can have nothing to do with, and they won’t waste their time on him.

The whole time they’re taking that position, the only thing that’s keeping them from being utterly consumed is the very mercy of that God.

You can also write **Lamentations 3:22** there in the margin of your Bible. Jeremiah is writing this from – it is believed there was a quarry outside of the walls of Jerusalem – It’s believed by many that place that is called Jeremiah’s grotto is actually in the face of that place that is called ‘the face of the skull’ – It’s from there that Jeremiah was looking at the city of Jerusalem as it had been laid waste by the Babylonians. And he’s lamenting. And here’s what it says in –

Lamentations 3: ²² It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

He’s looking at the waste of Jerusalem.

And he’s saying it’s of the Lord’s mercy that we are not utterly consumed, because his compassions fail not.

You need to understand this – the only thing – and I want to emphasize that – the only thing – keeping your unbelieving spouse, your unbelieving friend, your unbelieving child, your unbelieving co-worker, your unbelieving classmate, your unbelieving teammate out of hell is the mercy of God. Outside of Jesus, without Jesus, every human being is walking on a thin sheet of ice over the pit of hell. And the only thing keeping it frozen is the mercy of God.

Grace – and that’s a word that has sadly become cliché in the church –

Grace is getting what you don’t deserve.

Mercy is not getting what you do deserve.

This world – and that includes you and me – deserves God’s judgment.

Now why is it that a lot of Christians and a lot of non-Christians get really unnerved when it comes to the subject of God’s wrath and God’s judgment? It’s because they have a very wrong idea of the gospel.

The message of the gospel does not begin with man. The gospel begins with God.

It begins with who he is. And it’s the record of what he has done to save us.

So let’s begin with who he is. The Bible says that God is holy.

Man wants to measure himself against man. God says, “*No, the gospel begins with me.*”

Man is measured against God – God – absolutely morally perfect – that’s a tough one for us.

We don’t know anything about absolutes. The closest thing we can get to an absolute is $1+1 = 2.00$ *ad infinitum*.

When it comes to sin there is no sliding scale.

We can’t measure ourselves against other people, and say that relative to these other people I’m relatively holy.

Therefore, on that relative scale, God should accept me.

No, because we're being measured against an absolutely morally perfect God.

Any deviation from God's absolute moral perfection is absolutely wrong.

Keeping with the 1+1 picture – to say that $1+1 = 1.9999999999$ *ad infinitum* is absolutely wrong.

I mean, you can run those 9s out to the right of the decimal really far.

And as we think of it, if it was being graphed, we couldn't even see any space between that and the number 2;

How can it be absolutely wrong? No, it's absolutely wrong because $1+1 = 2.0$ – absolutely.

So it doesn't matter how close to correct you are. You are absolutely wrong.

Romans 3:23 says “**All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**”

By nature and by choice we – that includes me – we are all absolutely wrong before God.

Now the pride of man doesn't like that at all.

But that's where the gospel begins.

Now, true – when it says all have sinned –

Some might sin less;

Some people's sin might have less adverse outcomes on the human level;

Some might be nicer sinners than others;

Some might be kinder sinners than others.

But all sin.

All fall short.

And the consequence is still the same no matter –

how big or how small your sin is,

how many or how few.

The consequence is still the same.

I've only driven over it a few times, but the Forest Hill Bridge is pretty impressive. That gorge is pretty massive. So to get this idea of all falling short of the glory of God, and yet some people, how big their fall is compared to others, I want you to think of this – Take the bridge away. And you line up on one side of the gorge. And everybody on planet Earth is lined up there. And everybody gets a shot at running as hard as they can to see if they can jump and clear the gorge and get to the other side. Now some might barely clear the edge and fall down to the bottom of the gorge. Others might go many times further out. Everybody falls short, right? The person who only got a foot out over the ledge, the person who maybe got twenty feet out past the ledge – but the outcome is still the same, right? They all hit the bottom.

We are all in trouble before God – everyone.

And because God is holy he must be just – he must be just.

From the very beginning God defined his judgment for sin – from the very beginning –

“The wages of sin is death...”

There in the Garden of Eden he told Adam and Eve,

“I'm just going to ask you, this one fruit, don't touch it. And the day that you touch that one fruit you will surely die.”

Well, they disobeyed God. They ate of it.

They didn't die instantly biologically. But they were instantly separated from God.

Biological death followed because by one man sin entered the world, and by sin, death.

God said the outcome of sin, the wages of sin is death.

And because he is holy God will judge sin.

God's wrath is God's response to sin.

Now let's get a grip on what this means – God's wrath.

A. T. Robertson says –

*“God’s anger is never out of the control of his wisdom and righteousness;
And his wrath is never cool or indifferent, but is always a wisely directed fury.
The wrath of God is never less than a perfect, judicial decree.”*

That is so far removed from God being just this whimsical, infinitely large being, who can just lose it in a moment. His anger toward sin is never out of the control of his wisdom, never out of the control of his righteousness. But his wrath, how he is in his being towards sin, is heated. He’s never cool. He’s never indifferent towards it. And his wrath is always a wisely directed expression of his fury. It’s never less than perfect in its justice.

We are living in a time when the world is dictating to us –
what it will let us say about sin and
what it will not let us say about sin.

I might – I hope I’m not going to – but I might – end up with some people being really unhappy with me.
But I really feel there is something that I need to say –
Because the church, and not just the local church, but the Church, the body of Christ, desperately needs clarity.

We’re looking at God. Remember this book is titled ‘**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**’.
Jesus is the centerpiece of the book. Early on in the book when the seven seals were being broken open, there was a point when the world was hiding in caves, and people were saying, *“Let these rocks fall over us and cover us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb - Jesus.”*

There are a lot of professing Christians who are desperately in need of clarity.
I constantly need to get clarity from the Word of God.
I need the entrance of his Word to bring light to my life.
I need his Word to constantly reconcile my thinking to his thoughts.
I need to understand the world around me on the basis of his wisdom and what he says.

And in the New Testament – you remember when Peter was essentially saying that Paul was writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that what Paul wrote bore the same weight as the Old Testament Scriptures and should be received as such, and he said, *“Paul is writing things that are sometimes really hard to understand.”*

But just because they’re hard to understand doesn’t mean they’re not true;
And it doesn’t mean they’re not inspired by the Holy Spirit.
Would you write **Ephesians 5:5 & 6** in the margin of your Bible? Paul says –

“⁵ For you may be sure of this,”

And please remember – All of Scripture is God-breathed – all of it.
So this statement – **“you may be sure of this”** – is God-breathed.

“that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.”

Today, if a Christians says that heterosexual sex outside of marriage is sin they’re labelled as self-righteous and judgmental. That happens even in the local church. One time we were going through this church discipline thing. And there was a young lady in the church that was committing sexual sin. And her response to us was,

*“Who are you to judge me?”
“Who are you to talk to me about this?”
“You have no business talking to me.”*

And the people who take that same position –
They actually sue churches for dis-fellowshipping them on the grounds of unrepentant sexual sin.
So we're not just talking about the world outside of the church. We're talking even within the church.

But if a Christian labels homosexual sex as sinful they're branded as homophobes.
Now a phobia is an irrational fear.
So when people say that Christians are homophobic, they're saying Christians are crazy.

I heard one guy say – and I thought it was funny – you may not find it funny – he said –
"I'm not homophobic. I'm homo-nauseous."
And he didn't mean that homosexuals made him sick. He didn't mean that. He said,
"I'm just sick of hearing this constantly."
I'm sick of hearing how Christians don't love gays simply because they talk about homosexuality in Biblical terms."
This guy knows that God loves the homosexual as much as God loves any sinner.

Nobody's sin puts them off the radar of God's grace.
The church surely needs clarity concerning how much God loves every sinner.
Shame on Christians who don't love homosexuals the way God loves homosexuals – shame on them.

Before our holy God –
everybody is wrong;
but everybody is loved.

And the problem for some Christians is –
there is only some wrong stuff they want to look at as though that person can't be loved by God,
unlike somebody else doing a different wrong thing can be loved by God.
And those Christians need clarity.

But the church now I think is on a precipice – it is on a ledge – in an area that's equally in need of clarity. In an effort to get men & women to embrace Christianity there are men & ministries, that have redacted or redefined certain behaviour that God, in Scripture, calls sinful. It's just off the table, never to be mentioned, never to be talked about. And remember there's that other group of Christianity – and it's a big group – I am not diminishing it – it's a big group that needs equal clarity because they somehow think that homosexuality is different than their self-righteousness and their religiosity.

I'll talk about this publicly because the statement that I'm going to read to you was made publicly on national TV. So there is not much private about that. I read this last week. And it was so disheartening. My heart sunk. This guy pastors Hillsong Church in New York City. And he says –

*"We have a stance on love, and on everything else we have conversations.
Some churches want us to give blanket answers on huge issues.
Well, my Bible says be attentive to individual needs.
So I'm not going to make polarizing political statements about certain things in our Christian community right now.
No matter who says what we won't be pressured into giving blanket statements to individual needs – never.
Very rarely did Jesus ever talk about morality or social issues."*

I was stunned. This guy is massively influential – massive.
Like whatever you see going around in the church world that is big and influential. It's nothing. This guy is huge. It's so disheartening on so many levels because he's either incredibly disingenuous or biblically illiterate; Because Jesus was constantly talking about morality – constantly. The Sermon on the Mount is replete with Christian morality. What moral statement wasn't Jesus making when he told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more? That was a moral statement if ever there was one.

And rather than the church seizing the moment when they are interviewed to a national television audience, and think, *'We can get right to the truth of the gospel without making one sinner different than another. We can just talk about sin and man's need for a Savior, and list any number of sins, and put them all in the same light, all in the same side of the scale before God.'*

It's disheartening because this guy – and there are many like him – he stands out because it was so widely publicized– They view the Epistles as less inspired than the Gospels, discounting **Romans 1**, where Paul essentially says that homosexuality is the apex of human idolatry.

If we're to believe the Bible at all,
We have to believe that all of it is inspired.

All of it is essentially Jesus-breathed, because there is no gospel unless Jesus is God.

Because Jesus can't save you if he is not God. So Jesus is God.

And the Bible says that all Scripture is inspired by God.

So that means **Romans 1** is Jesus-breathed.

And so when Jesus makes statements in the entirety of Scripture about any kind of a sin, there is no argument.

Timothy Keller said –

"Jesus' claims are particularly unnerving because if they're true there is no alternative but to bow the knee to him."

You see, if Jesus is the Son of God who died on the cross for your sin and mine, and three days later conquered the grave, and he's ascended into heaven, and one day he's coming back in glory, well, I don't care what you and I think about same-sex sex, Jesus has said something about it. And everything gets rebooted to that.

Timothy Keller also said this –

"Note that there is not widespread division over what the Bible says about homosexuality.

All three branches of Christianity – Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant – agree on at least four things –

One – that every mention of homosexual practice in the Bible says that it's wrong;

Two – that it's specifically prohibited in both the Old and New Testaments;

Three – that it – the Bible – did not just reflect the prejudices of the day; it cut against the view of ancient cultures;

And Four – the whole arc of the Bible –

begins with a heterosexual marriage – Adam and Eve,

and ends with the vision of one – the wedding feast in the book of Revelation."

As we're looking at this statement, this phenomenal statement, that the wrath of God is finished in these 7 judgments, it is disheartening to see that the world is influencing the Church to not talk about certain sins because it's polarizing. Sin – all sin – is polarizing. But, you see, if in your mind the gospel in its beginning is about man and not about God, well, then, of course, you're going to be concerned about the things that you say relative to men.

But the gospel is not about man, primarily –

It's about God, and what God has done to reconcile man to himself.

And all sin is polarizing in a vertical sense.

It polarizes man from God – all sin.

It pits man against God.

It separates man from God.

It places man under the wrath of God.

And the most unloving thing you can ever do is –

not call sin, sin,

and not point man to God's remedy for that sin.

Day by day the world is picking up speed as it races headlong towards the moment when God will say, *“Enough!”* And I don’t know about you, but the world isn’t looking any better on my TV than it was five years ago. It’s not looking any better in the news that I’m reading.

And **Revelation 15** tells us that God, who on the basis of his mercy has let the world come that far, as far as it is in chapter **15**, is one day going to say, *“Enough is enough!”*. And the tragedy is that the world has been fooled into believing that will never happen, that God will never say, *“Enough”*.

But in all reality it has already happened once. You might remember a little thing called Noah’s ark when God judged the then world. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to tell them what the world would look like at the time of his return, he said that it will look just like the days of Noah. And Jesus told them that all the way up to the flood man was just carrying on as if God was clueless or as if God could care less. And then he also referred to Sodom and Gomorrah, and how in Sodom and Gomorrah it was business as usual all the way up to the very day of judgment.

God’s mercy and patience have been misunderstood by man as being the proof that God will never judge. You see, man looks at the absence of judgment as a license to do as he pleases.

Ecclesiastes 8: *“¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil.”*

In the margin of your Bible there in **Revelation 15** would you write **2 Peter 3:3-10**?

As an aside – a lot of people today are worried about endangered species – field mice, the red-cheeked squirrel. But do you know what is a real endangered species today in modern church culture – is people turning the pages of their Bible – some who just don’t read the Bible, or people who don’t bother to turn a page because it’s being projected for them. I don’t know about you, I love lobster, not like I love my wife, but I love lobster. And whenever I get a chance to eat steak and lobster, the last bite of my meal is lobster. I put it on a fork, and while I’m finishing up my steak it just sits in that little thing of butter. That last bite of lobster just sits there sucking in that butter. I want this book to be like that last bite of lobster in your hearts. Imagine if when you took that last bite of lobster there suddenly was another one. And then you take that bite, and there suddenly was another one – the endless lobster tail. Wouldn’t that be awesome! This book is infinitely better. It never runs out. We can never plum it out.

So here’s what Peter says – *“³ knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. ⁴ They will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.””*

That’s known as uniformitarianism –

From the very beginning forward nothing has changed; and it’s never going to change.

“⁵ For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, ⁶ and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly. ⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.”

Notice the certainty of that – It will come.

God said it – It’s going to happen.

But man wants to carry on as if the world is never going to end.

“² 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. ³ 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!”**”

So these are the men and women who, at the cost of their lives, refused to –
take the mark of the beast,
or worship his image.

By choosing Jesus they look like the losers to the world around them during the great tribulation. Everyone else was taking the mark of the beast, and bowing before its image so they could eat and live. Because they took the mark of the beast, and they worshipped the image, they got to buy and they got to sell. Remember we learned that without the mark of the beast you couldn't buy, and you couldn't sell. And if you refused the mark of the beast you'd be put to death. So they got to buy; they got to sell; they got to live. It looked like they were the winners. And those who refused the mark of the beast & chose to follow Jesus looked like the losers. They lost their lives. God's Word tells us they were the victors. God's Word tells us they were the overcomers. They came out of their conflict with the antichrist victorious. Had they kept their lives by surrendering to the beast and worshipping him they would have lost.

In **Luke 9:24** Jesus said –

“²⁴ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.

²⁵ For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself?”

That's directly applied to these men and women in **Revelation 15**.

But the same is true for every one of us today.

Are you willing to lose your life for Jesus? – Because –

That's exactly what has to happen to be a Christian.

That's exactly what has to happen to follow Jesus.

You have to lose being in charge of your life.

It means that I'm not going to live for myself anymore.

It means that I'm not going to be the self-appointed sovereign of my little kingdom of one.

King Richard is going to die so that King Jesus can rule in my heart.

And because they could say, **“For to me to live is Christ”**,

They could also say, **“To die is gain”**.

Paul wrote those words in **Philippians 1:21**.

And that was reality for them.

And I have to confess that –

when I look at these great tribulation saints,

when I read these words of Paul in **Philippians 1**,

I'm at a loss in regards to the hard realities of it.

What does it cost us to follow Jesus here in Roseville or Rockland or Granite Bay or Georgetown or wherever?

What does it cost us to follow Jesus? – a few odd looks maybe, some friends.

In our world it's just too easy to be a Christian.

It's not so easy to be a Christian in India.

It's not so easy to serve Jesus in India.

I remember **K. P. Yohannan** talking about a guy who finished their school of ministry, this guy who had become a Christian. And he wanted to serve Jesus. And so he went through their school of ministry. He got trained. And he was ready to be commissioned. And he was being sent to a little place called Bundi. And Bundi had been killing Christians. And K. P. told this brother, *“Remember, Heaven is better than Bundi.”*

I don't know that ministry. When I got my certificate of ordination nobody was threatening to kill me for serving Jesus. I know theoretically that as a Christian to die is gain. I know theoretically that as a Christian death is victory. And death really is victory for those who believe with their hearts on the Lord Jesus.

1 Corinthians 15:55 in the **New Living Translation** –

“⁵⁵ O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

⁵⁶ For sin is the sting that results in death...

⁵⁷ But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Last week I mentioned seeing that movie **‘The End of the Spear’**, and how I was really moved, like really moved, like sobbing, crying moved – and that's not the kind of guy I am. And I found myself at the end of that movie weeping almost uncontrollably because I felt so sad that my life was nowhere close to looking like those men who died at the end of a spear.

Jim Elliot, one of the men who died, in his desire to bring the gospel to the Waodani, he said this – *“No man is a fool who gives up that which he cannot keep in order to gain that which he cannot lose.”*

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

There is no other way to describe the works of God.

They're **“great”** because he's great.

God does out of who he is.

So he can do nothing less than that which is **“great and amazing”**.

And his great and marvellous works – this is amazing – causes these saints to stand in wonder and astonishment.

Write this one down – **Psalm 8:3**.

“When I look at” – the King James Version – **“When I consider”** –

“the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place...”

I want to encourage you to take time to say to yourself, **“When I consider”** – and then fill in the blank.

When I consider creation;

When I consider salvation;

When I consider you, me, living for God –

Those are great works.

Those are marvellous works.

Take the time during the week to consider how great and marvellous the work of God is.

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

That's the foundation of our security.

We cannot begin to imagine what life would be like if God were not **“just”** and God were not **“true”**.

And from the very beginning Satan has tried to deceive man into thinking that God isn't **“just”** & God isn't **“true”**.

And he still tries to pass off this lie on the world by accusing God for man's injustice, for man's lies.

He is blaming God for the tragedies in a fallen world.

The ambivalence of atheists is so amazing.
They insist there is no God.
But they blame God for every bad thing in the world.

And man has been foolish enough to even think that God's not fair for making only one way to heaven.
I actually had somebody say that to me once, "*I just think it's so unfair that God made only one way to be saved.*"
And I'm thinking – Okay, let's run this out. So you're on the Titanic. The ship is going down. You jump overboard.
You're in the freezing waters of the North Atlantic. And a lifeboat comes alongside of you. And they say, "*Look, this is the last lifeboat. We can barely squeeze one more person in it. Come, let us save you.*" And you look at them, and say, "*I am so offended. This boat is white. I don't want a white lifeboat. Is this the only boat that you're telling me can save me?*" Of course you're going to jump into the boat regardless of color. You're not going to pick and choose.

God makes a way for fallen man to be saved, and man will say, "*That is so unfair – that God won't save the Hindu, that God won't save the Muslim, that God won't save...*"

No, God made the way.
Jesus said, "**I am the way, the truth and the life. And no one comes to the Father but by me.**"

Thank God for Jesus.
God is so just that he would not forgive our sins unless the just penalty for our sins was paid;
He is so just that he gave his only begotten Son to pay the price so that he would with perfect justice could forgive.

1 John 1: "9 If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

The cross tells us that God is just in all of his ways.
God is just and true.

Numbers 23:19 (New Living Translation) –
"God is not a man that he should lie.
He is not a human that he should change his mind.
Has he ever spoken and failed to act?
Has he ever promised and not carried it through?"

God has not said one thing that's not true.
I take it back to those things the Church has to get clarity on concerning what they think is polarizing & what isn't.
And if God said something about a sin, it is true.
We might not understand it.
We might not get it.
We might not agree with it.
But if Jesus is who he says that he is, I bow to it.

In the everyday affairs of life are we really going to trust God?
In a real practical way, if you are a Christian –
God is always true.
God is always fair.
God is always just.

My pastor told a story once. And it made such an impact on me as a young Christian. It was about him and his wife early in their ministry – how they were totally flat broke; they were desperate. And there was a sum of money they needed for rent and groceries. And they didn't have a penny. And they had been praying about it. As the man of the home it was weighing on Chuck. And you could just tell in the way he was speaking of it, looking back all of those years that it was a really critical moment for him and his wife. And then he said they got a letter one day from a friend. And this man had become very successful. And in that letter he said, *"We don't know what's up. But as we've been praying every day the Lord just put you on our heart. And we're sensing that you're in need for something. And we're just believing that's God telling us. So you will be receiving very shortly from us a check in this amount."* And in that economy of the day it was a lot of money. Chuck put down the letter. And he grabs his wife and starts dancing around the kitchen. And he's just so thrilled. He said, *"The need is going to be met."* And he said while he was dancing with his wife the Lord stopped him in his heart, and said, *"How do you know he's going to send it?"* And in Chuck's heart he's working this through with God. He says, *"Well, because he's an old friend; and I trust him. And he has the means. He has the resources."* And he said, *"God says, 'Why haven't you been dancing before this because I'm your friend, and I promised I'd always take care of your needs?'"*

So, you see, **"just and true"** – that's who our God is.

**"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."**

And at this moment in the great tribulation the nations aren't fearing God; they're not glorifying his name. But the day is coming when –

**"Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess,
that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father."**

That is the ultimate theme of the Scriptures.
That's the end of the story – the world exalting God –
 some gladly, willingly,
 others reluctantly before being forever judged.
That's the ultimate theme of the Scriptures.

And this is our God.
He's almighty.
He's righteous.
He's just.
He's true.
He's holy.
He's worthy of worship.