

Sermon – 04/11/2007 am

Victory Song in Heaven

Study Text: Revelation 15:1–5

With the opening of the seventh seal there was silence in heaven for about half an hour (8:1). John saw seven angels in heaven ready to sound the seven trumpets of God's judgments. As he looked into the temple in heaven he saw the smoke of incense coming up before God. With the sounding of the seventh trumpet John again saw into heaven and heard a song of victory (11:15f).

We have come to the end of the next sevenfold vision, a series of judgments that are not so clearly enumerated. Final judgment has come upon the earth – described as the winepress of the wrath of God (14:19, 20). In this seventh section John saw another great and marvellous sign in heaven. He saw seven angels with the seven last plagues of the wrath of God (15:1). These plagues are pictured as seven bowls full of the wrath of God (15:7). Before these are poured out John is again given a glimpse into the throne room, and into the temple which are in heaven.

Sea of Glass

John saw *something like a sea of glass mingled with fire* (15:2). He saw this same sea of glass when he was first lifted up to see into heaven and the things that must soon take place (4:1, 6). A sea of glass like crystal surrounded the throne.

Glass is a very interesting and useful material. We have it in all our houses. It is very hard, yet we can see through it. Or else we use it for its quality of reflection in making mirrors. Glass can be moulded into beautiful ornaments like plates and vases.

Imagine a floor made of glass. This is what appeared to be around the throne of God in heaven. It is not called a floor but a sea. Ezekiel (1:22) called it a 'firmament'. The glory of God must have been reflected and refracted most brilliantly in this sea of glass, especially with the rainbow that was around the throne (4:3).

This sea has its background in the Old Testament, most probably in the Red Sea, the place where God finally and fully judged the Egyptians while delivering his own chosen people. Moses and the people sang a song of victory as they stood on the shore of the Red Sea, realizing what a great deliverance the Lord had worked for them. In the Old Testament temple there was a large flat bowl of water for ceremonial washing which was called the Sea. It was probably a reminder of the Red Sea also.

The sea of glass was *mingled with fire* (15:2). Fire is symbolic of judgment. Fire destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. The lake of fire is ready for Satan and his followers. Moreover, the sea is symbolic of evil. The beasts of Daniel's vision and the beast of Revelation 13 came up out of the sea. That sea was stirred up and in turmoil. With his lying and murderous ways Satan loves to stir up trouble. The sea of glass is calm for evil has been defeated by God and the Lamb.

Standing on the sea of glass with harps in their hands are the victorious saints of God. They are those who did not succumb to the intense pressure to receive the mark of the beast and his number 666, and to actually worship the beast. The beast, remember, represents antichristian governments of this world. Some think these victorious ones are only martyrs – but all true followers of Jesus must worship only God, and must never deny the Lord Jesus Christ who saved them.

The victory is in keeping the faith of Jesus without compromise with the world. *If anyone loves the world or the things of the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – is not from the Father but is of the world* (I John 1:15, 16).

Song of Victory

The victorious saints, those who stood firm in the Lord Jesus Christ to the very end, were now standing on the sea of glass in heaven singing praises to God. It is natural to bust forth into song when we are happy and blessed, and especially when we have won the battle.

What is interesting here is that they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God (15:3). We find the song of Moses in Exodus 15. It is the song Moses and the people sang when they *saw the great work which the Lord had done for them in Egypt . They feared the Lord and believed the Lord* (Exodus 14:31). They sang this song in praise to the Lord who saved them.

There are many parallels between the Exodus and the final judgment of the God through Jesus Christ. In fact the song of Moses is also called the song of the Lamb (15:3). The song of Moses not only looked to the deliverance from Egypt, it anticipated an even greater deliverance from evil. It pointed forward to an even greater judgment than that seen at the Red sea.

Moses anticipated such a judgment and the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He looked forward to his heavenly reward in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 11:26). This victory song could be sung by the people of God from both the old and new covenants, those who followed Moses the servant, and those who followed Jesus the son. They sang to the one and same God enthroned in heaven.

The victory song praises God Almighty for his marvellous works. When we call God ‘Almighty’ we understand that he can do all things. Nothing is impossible for God. Is this what you believe? God made this planet and this universe. He is the Almighty Creator of all things. And he continues to intervene in his creation for his glory. He divided the sea to save his people and closed it again to destroy his enemies.

God sent his son Jesus to the Cross to save his people, and raised him from the dead in victory over death. The Cross is bad news to the enemies of God. Jesus’ death and resurrection sound the judgment of God upon his enemies (John 9:39). Those who do not believe in Jesus are condemned. Those who *do not believe in Jesus shall not see life for the wrath of God remains on them* (John 3:36).

God is truth. God cannot lie. Jesus said ‘I am the truth’. Those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth – they must worship in the truth that is Jesus Christ. God does not

accept worship that is not true. He does not accept any old thing that man wants to bring to him. God has declared how we are to worship him.

God is just. The message of the Cross is justice, just as much as it is a message of grace. The Cross is a symbol of God's justice for at the Cross God justified sinners who believe in Jesus. *God demonstrated at the present time His righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus* (Romans 3:26).

Just and true are your ways, O King of the ages (15:3). The God who is almighty, who is sovereign over all creation, the God who is just and true in all his ways is rightly to be feared. He alone is to be revered and glorified by all people. *For all nations shall come and worship before you* (15:4). God will be universally recognized as the Most High God, the Lord of heaven and earth. One day the blasphemy which we see and hear so often in our society will cease. Gods name will no more be dragged into the dirt. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow – willingly or unwillingly.

This does not mean that everyone without exception will be saved. There is no universalism here as some try to tell us. This is 'all' without distinction; it is people from all nations, tribes and languages. In heaven will be men and women and children from the four corners of the globe. It is great when the church on earth reflects this multinational dimension. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave or free, male or female, for you are all one in Christ. You are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ* (Galatians 3:28, 26).

God is praised for his works, for his justice and for his judgments/righteous deeds. His judgments are transparent. God hates partiality and corruption. Because God is just he has to condemn the guilty. He has to condemn them for his own names sake and for the sake of those who cry out to him for justice (6:10). Whilst no one is innocent before him, God declares 'not guilty' those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the most marvellous of all God's works. It is the Cross of Jesus that stands between life and death in the court of heaven.

You alone are holy. Whilst we think of holiness as moral purity it actually means being separate. God is set apart from his creation. It is a fundamental and fatal error to believe that God is part of the creation – as many people do. Pantheism is the belief that the existence of the world is not separate from God's existence. Some see god in the sun, the trees or the mountains. They say that god is in me and in you.

Let us remember that God is holy and that he alone is holy. In awe and wonder, in fear and reverence, let us worship the sovereign God who made us and redeemed us from sin and death through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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