

REVELATION—UNVEILING THE END, ACT 3 THE FINAL CURTAIN

STUDY THREE

The Original Temple of Doom

Revelation 15:1–8

How grateful I am that God has promised He will deliver me from His wrath and into the kingdom of His Son's love in order to give me a face-to-face relationship that I don't deserve.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

OUR God is a *good* God. When introducing Himself to the Israelites—His chosen, covenant people—He described Himself like this:

*“Yahweh! The LORD!
The God of compassion and mercy!
I am slow to anger
and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.
I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations.
I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin.” (Exodus 34:6–7a)*

Compassion. Mercy. Unfailing Love. Faithfulness. Forgiveness. These beautiful ideas capture the goodness of our God. Yet God didn't stop here with His self-description . . .

“But I do not excuse the guilty” (34:7).

Yes, God is merciful and offers forgiveness to those who place their trust in Jesus Christ because Jesus bore the full force of God's anger toward sin when He died on the cross. At the same time, those who don't follow Jesus remain guilty in the eyes of God. God will not excuse those who do not receive the gift of His Son.

Those who do not have the Son live under the “wrath of God.” And in this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study, we will see His hatred for sin on full display as seven angels prepare to pour out His wrath upon the earth. Such a display, though severe, will move us to show gratitude for God's mercy as well as concern for those who have yet to enter the faith.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

God’s wrath against sinners might upset, confuse, or frighten you. It’s helpful to remember that “God is love” (*1 John 4:16*). His natural response to humanity’s sin is based on His love. Write a prayer confessing your sin, thanking God for His love, and asking Him for guidance in this study.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As the music of Revelation rises from the pages of our Bibles, the melody of God’s judgment against sin hits our ears loudly. In fact, for a large portion of John’s vision, he witnessed God executing His judgment in three distinct movements: seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls.

All the while, we hear a countermelody—a song of hope for the faithful followers of Jesus. Yet the tunes of God’s wrath and mercy are not discordant. Rather, they harmonize to sing of God’s holiness and glory.

Revelation 15:1–8 offers a prelude to the bowl judgments—the *final* demonstration of God’s wrath against sin and the *final* act of judgment before Christ’s victorious return.



Observation: Seven Bowls of Judgment

In the vision recorded in *Revelation 15:1–8*, John saw seven angels, each holding a bowl of wrath—“the seven last plagues, which would bring God’s wrath to *completion*” (*Revelation 15:1*, emphasis added). Each angel would pour out his bowl of wrath upon the earth to consume sin and evil like cleansing fire.

As you read of the events that preceded this final release, pay careful attention to the details John included. Remember, sound interpretation and practical application always grow out of the seed of thorough observation.¹

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A Glorious Scene of Triumph and Joy—Revelation 15:2–4

In the first portion of John’s vision, he saw something like “a glass sea mixed with fire.” (*Revelation 15:2*). Whom did John see standing on this sea?

Those standing on the sea held “harps that God had given them” (*15:3*) and proceeded in a song of praise. In your own words, summarize the message of this “song of Moses” and “song of the Lamb” in *Revelation 15:3b–4*.

A Dreadful Scene of Wrath and Doom—Revelation 15:5–8

After this picture of victory for the followers of the slaughtered Lamb, John saw an image of the defeat of sin and its slaves. This scene took place in the heavenly temple—a vibrant image of God’s holy presence. Whom did John see proceeding from this temple in *Revelation 15:6*? What did they receive from the four beasts in *15:7*?

What did John see filling the temple in *15:8*? What caused this?

Our world is too shallow, too noisy, too fast-moving for anyone to pause and ponder our mysterious, awesome God. He is our high and holy and almighty and only awesome God whom we worship and in obedience we fear. I think John was never more devoted than the moment when he saw the evidence of God’s presence in that smoke. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Interpretation: The Wrath of God

John's vision of the bowls of wrath commences with a picture of victorious saints who resisted the satanic beast (*Revelation 15:2*). By making this observation, John recalled the opening movement of the book when Jesus sent letters to seven churches throughout Asia Minor. In each letter, Jesus made specific promises to those who claim victory through their faithfulness.

Read *Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26–27; 3:5, 12, 21* and summarize what rewards belong to believers in Christ who overcome Satan's temptations and deception. How is this connection instructive for followers of Jesus today?

Read the following verses and summarize what they teach about the wrath of God: *John 3:36; Romans 1:18–21; 2:5–8*. If you read these verses in a more word-for-word translation (like the New American Standard Bible), you'll be able to see more clearly the use of the term *wrath*. Then, provide your own definition of *wrath*. If you need help, feel free to look up the term in a Bible dictionary (like *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*).

How does Jesus' death appease God's wrath? For the apostle Paul's insights on this question, see *Romans 3:21–26*. For additional help, take a look at Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Revelation*, or *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.²

One of the many, many benefits that come with knowing the Lord Jesus as personal Savior is that we have been delivered from judgment. Is that good news or what? Our judgment is behind us. Christ was judged in our place when He was nailed to the cross. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Correlation: The Song of Moses

John observed in [Revelation 15:3](#) that the victorious followers of the slaughtered Lamb sang “the song of Moses.” Though these singers did not rehearse the exact words Moses had previously sung, their songs shared similar sentiments.

After God delivered the Israelite slaves from Egypt, split the waters of the Red Sea, and flooded the pursuing Egyptian army, Moses stopped to worship God. Read the words Moses sang in [Exodus 15:1–8](#) as he watched the horses, chariots, and soldiers of their former oppressors wash away. List the reasons Moses gave for praising God.

Now go back and read the song of the Lamb in [Revelation 15:3b–4](#). What parallels do you notice between this song and the song of Moses in [Exodus 15:1–8](#)? Pay special attention to the themes of victory and wrath we examined in the interpretation phase.

God may demonstrate His wrath against sin, but He has offered a way to avoid this judgment. And more than that, He has promised *victory* to His children who trust in Jesus Christ. For that reason, we praise Him.



Application: Words of Gratitude and Concern

God’s anger toward human sin and its damages functions as a key element in the complex workings of His holy character. If God didn’t demonstrate wrath against sin, then He would not be just. If He were not just, then he could not set right everything wrong with the world.

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In light of these truths, Pastor Chuck offers a word of gratitude and a word of concern:

- How grateful we are for Christ's sacrifice and the victory He offers.
- How concerned we are for those who don't know Him and will endure His wrath.

When Jesus died on the cross, He took the full force of God's anger against sin. He was the perfect *atonement* that satisfied God's wrath, restoring peace between God and humanity. Those who place their faith in Him will not endure God's stern judgment and fiery condemnation. Take a moment to reflect on this wondrous reality.

How can you express your gratitude to God for His loving sacrifice? Write down some practical ways you can remind yourself of God's grace and thank Him for His mercy in the coming days.

In the space below, recall one person in your life who has yet to come to faith. Reflect on what you can do for this person to point him or her to Christ. Record your thoughts below. Just as God has transformed you, He can transform this person through your prayers, words, and actions.

God is good, and because He is good, He will not always allow sin to desecrate His beloved creation. *That* is why He expresses wrath toward sin. Thankfully, Christ paved the way for us to receive and enter into God's love and participate in His victory. Victory over sin. Victory over Satan. And even victory over death itself.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Close your time in God’s Word today by praying the words of the song of the Lamb from *Revelation 15:3b–4*:

*“Great and marvelous are your works,
O Lord God, the Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations.
Who will not fear you, Lord,
and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship before you,
for your righteous deeds have been revealed.”*

ENDNOTES

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “*How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?*”
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Revelation*, Swindoll’s Living Insights New Testament Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2014).

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Brad Smith, writer and content strategist, *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2004, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

