

Christ Glorified in Final Plagues as a Final Passover Lamb (Rev 15-16)

Please turn in the Word of Christ to Rev 15. As we teach through this book some might weary of its repetition of wrath. Some may wonder if it's wise to study Revelation or to spend time dwelling on judgment. Some may wish we didn't study doctrine generally, or end times doctrines specifically, and prefer we just focus on loving Jesus and each other. But if you're going to love Jesus you need to ask 'what Jesus?' And whatever you answer about Jesus is doctrine. The doctrine of Christ is essential to knowing and loving Christ, including the doctrine of His coming. In fact Christ connects the two saying at the end *love of many will grow cold* (Mt 24:12). Heb. 10 says we need to stir one another to love, to not forsake assembling as a church, and to encourage one another, and all the more as we see the day approaching...

In Rev 15 the approaching day comes: 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.* 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!”* 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.”* ⁵ *After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,* ⁶ *and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests.* ⁷ *And 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 *and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.* **16:1** *Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”* ² *So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.* ³ *The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.* ⁴ *The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.* ⁵ *And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.*

⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” ⁷ And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” ⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹ They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. ¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. ¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. ¹³ And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. ¹⁴ For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!” ¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. ¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. ¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. ²¹ And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

Let’s pray. Our God, what we know not, teach us; what we have not, give us; and what we are not, make us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

3 years ago this month a young Christian man named Jeremy trying to find steady work was sleeping on his brother’s couch. I think his pastor at that time in the Bay Area was someone I went to seminary with. Jeremy’s career bounced around basketball leagues. A then injury-ridden NY Knicks were in the midst of a losing streak, 11 of their last 13 games lost. Short-handed and desperate, the team had called up a B-league no-name guy to warm the bench as a 4th-string point guard until Shumpert healed on the disabled list.

No Asian-American had made it in the NBA before. Jeremy didn't look like much or look the part, in fact team security initially didn't let him enter the arena, telling him that was a player's entrance. He had to convince them he was on the team. He was fairly small, didn't look too strong or athletic, was overlooked by all. But on 2/4/2012 Jeremy Lin came off the bench, out of obscurity, and out of nowhere to score 25 points, leading NY to victory. It began a winning streak: Lin had 28 next game, a double-double next game, a few games later he led NY back from behind and he hit a game-winning 3

Last week is the anniversary of when he led the Knicks to victory over the world champion Mavericks with 28 points and 14 assists on national TV. It was also on the national TV stage in NY against the Lakers that Jeremy Lin outscored Kobe who hadn't heard of Lin. He scored 38 points in the victory but my favorite Linsanity moment in the game was a spin move past Fisher to a layup. Repeated replays show surprised opponents and symbolized it all

At times in the game they replayed other plays leading up to that, but it was that play I remember seeing multiple times, from multiple angles, in slower motion to see details missed before. That moment epitomized his victory, and what followed. Some replays showed the faces of the stunned Lakers or others captured a celebration of his teammates after, others the perspective of adoring astonished NT fans. There were commercial breaks in the action then returning to replays with color commentary on what had just happened.

What does all that have to do with Rev 16? Voddie Baucham says *replay* is a key concept in this book.¹ Christ's victory at His 2nd coming is seen from multiple angles and aspects, showing different details in each replay, slower or zoomed in frames. Sometimes we see the opposition astonished or angry, sometimes we see the rejoicing of those He led to victory, other replays are heaven's crowds adoring. There's brief breaks in the action, then after each break they resume with commentary on what just happened, replay events leading up to the crucial point that symbolized and epitomized what occurred

[Rev 7 & 10 give breaks, Rev 12 rewinds a back story feature, Rev 16 replays]

Rev 16:20: *And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.*

This replays 6:14: *...every mountain and island was removed from its place*

[that can't happen 2x in a few years, it's a replay of a 2nd coming event]

That same verse in chapter 6 says the '*sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up...*' That's what the Bible says will happen at the 2nd coming at the end after the tribulation. Peter and Isaiah connect that with the 2nd coming, when heaven passes away with earth's mountains and islands, that's the end.

Rev 16 is replaying the end, giving more details of events right before that. Rev 16:18 says '*there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder ...earthquake*' and then v. 19 describes the heavy hail. 11:19 records at the 7th trumpet '*there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.*' The 7th bowl in Rev 16 replays the 7th trumpet in Rev 11. The 7th seal in Rev 8 also matches: '*peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.*' When we get to the 7th judgment in each series, it's at the end, then the next series replays from other angles.

At the last trumpet in chapter 11 it's kingdom come, it says His wrath *came*, it's now resurrection day, judgment day. Rev 20 replays the end of Rev 11. Rev 14 ends with Christ gathering and crushing His enemies as a winepress as Christ comes again on the clouds, and that's what Rev 19 replays with the same language but with more details; same event but slower motion, a zoom lens focusing on other parts of the 2nd coming. Rev 19 expands on 14:19. It may be 16:19 is a graphic visual of how God crushes His enemies in 14:19 like grapes: 100-lb stones fall from the sky as crushing bloody judgment? It says here in 16:16 it's Armageddon (only mention in Bible). Rev 19 replays that last battle in expanded view. In Rev 16:17 wrath is done, an angel says *it is done*, and in v. 19 God judges cities symbolized by Babylon. Rev 17-18 then gives a slow motion instant replay of its fall that happened (also 14:8).

[the Bible starts this way, too, 7 days of creation, Gen 2 replays 6th day]

On the basic concept of *replay* many a-mil writers can agree with many of a historic pre-mil view, which is more my leaning with progressive elements. To John's view I think this is clearly the future 'great day' (v. 14), the day Christ is coming like a thief (v. 15), battle of Armageddon day (v. 16), the day His wrath is finished (v. 17), when earth is radically changed (v. 20)

[it's the end of the world as we know it...but nobody feels fine]

This may be the '*hour of trial*' God promised to keep the church from that's the hour He comes against sinners as a thief (3:10, 3:3), keeping us through it or *from it by gathering* us in that final hour (14:14-16). It may be the same '*hour of judgment*' in 14:7 as the '*hour to reap...the harvest*' in 14:15. Is it what Rev 18 describes 3x as the desolation of man's city?: '*in a single hour ...judgment has come...in a single hour all this...laid waste*' (18:10, 17, 19)

[are you ready for your hour to come? If not, trust Christ this hour]

I don't know if all of Rev 18 or 16 happens in a 60-minute hour, it may, but Rev 16:14 is clear it's *the great day*. 6:17 calls it *the great day of His wrath*. The lamb of 15:3 is small and doesn't look very strong or powerful, doesn't look like much, it doesn't look the part of a victor. But the overlooked lamb is Overcomer of overcomers, Victor of victors, King of kings, Lord of lords.

In Rev 15:3 the background music is the song of Moses and the Lamb and it summarizes Rev 15-16 in 2 parts: the final plagues and the final Passover.

So let's look briefly today at the final plagues, then the final Passover. Rev 15:1 begins calling these the last plagues that finish God's wrath. The cross was where Jesus said '*it is finished*' in His work of salvation, but here His work of judgment before He comes again is finished, 16:17 says '*it is done*'

- in 16:2 those who took the mark of the beast now are marked with sores that torment them. The idols of comfort and health are stripped stripped away; those who idolize medicine will find it can't cure this
- in v. 3 the sea is turned to blood and every creature in the sea is dead which to the NT world meant an end to all economy not just ecology
- in v. 4 the 3rd judgment turns all rivers and water sources to blood. If you say 'how can life go on without water?' that's exactly the point! This isn't just last days, this is at the door of the last *Day* (singular)
- in v. 8 the 4th in rapid fire sequence scorches with fire from the sun. The global warming folks ain't seen nothing yet! Environmentalists need to worry more about what *God* will do to this planet! The very atmosphere will dissolve, heavenly bodies burn, and man can't save the world, man needs to be saved and remade for a new earth. Rev 6 says the sky will rip apart, all will fall, stars will fall, and this replay in Rev 16 shows there will also be a fall of man's gods of capability, comfort, health, economy, environmentalism, etc., and anything else man idolizes. All this will burn someday. Where's your trust, focus?
- in v. 10 the capital of the beast's kingdom is plunged into darkness by the 5th bowl of wrath and it says their tongues gnawed in anguish
- the 6th judgment seems to be allowing nations to gather for judgment
- the 7th one, v. 17-21 is the final great earthquake, judgment, hail, fire

The book *Revelation: Four Views*, says v. 12-21 'is one of the few portions of Revelation where most approaches reach a measure of agreement...[it's] occurring at or near the end...' ² And it seems to me even the unbelievers at that end will be in agreement it's God's final wrath, but won't repent. Don't explain Rev 16 away generally or all symbolically. Those in it won't: ²*They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory ... ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent ...*

1st application: Remember unbelief is a moral problem, not intellectual one

There's no question in the sinner's minds that these plagues are God-given.

No one blames these events on climate change, Republicans, or Democrats. There's no doubt to sinners this is all God reigning down judgment on man, but instead of calling on His name in repentance, they curse it in rebellion! I don't need any other chapter in the Bible to prove total depravity. As Doug Wilson says, atheists insist on 2 things: #1 there's no God, #2. I hate Him. It says in Rom. 1 the wrath of God is already revealed before the day of wrath, but men suppress the truth they know deep down, God's power in nature is clearly seen, but they exchange His truth for a lie, creation for their Creator.

In v. 14 men will believe the lie of Satan and gather in rebellion waging war instead of surrendering. In Rev 6:16 sinners would rather die than come for life to the Lord on His terms. Rev 6 says they cry for stones to fall to them so they don't have to see the Lamb and it seems they get their wish in 16:21 but even then it says in v. 21 as stones fall *'they cursed God for the plague'*
[they keep slandering instead of surrendering and repenting]

A man who survived a plane crash was surprised at many around him using God's name in vain and curse words to the end.³ We might think if only the world had a chance and saw God's hand, they'd believe ... but Jesus said if people won't listen to Scripture they won't be convinced even if someone is raised from the dead (Lk 16). And when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, it says the Jewish leaders not only didn't believe in Jesus, they wanted Jesus dead so no one else would believe in Him (Jn 11). When Jesus rose again, it says they found out, but didn't bow or believe, they bought off the guards to make sure they didn't tell anyone the truth about Jesus and His resurrection. That's total depravity, not intellectual inability but moral refusal in rebellion

2nd application: Remember God is holy and His judgment is right and true

⁵ *And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"* [i.e., just retribution] ⁷ *And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"*

God is holy. Truth and justice doesn't always happen in our justice system, but it will at the end with God's judgment and heaven's verdict is perfect. If we think things aren't fair, we need to remember what is: God's judgment is what we deserve. Sinners who die rejecting God's undeserved grace will get the perfect justice of a holy God and Judge who can throw the book at them

Lest you think these plagues could only apply to sinners on the very last day Rev 22 ends with a warning to any reader of the book this God can add the plagues of this book to them, too, for how they treat this prophecy. It seems the plagues symbolize real judgment on earth and also eternal judgment, too
[symbols don't mean not real, symbols make real with graphic language]

Rev 15-16 is about the final plagues and lastly it's about a last Passover

Some use the word recapitulation, I think a better concept is *intensification of earlier warnings*. In Rev 8 a 3rd of the sea turns to blood, a 3rd of the sea creatures die, a 3rd of fresh water is made undrinkable, a 3rd of the sun goes dark, but now it's intensified. The partial is complete, 100% is now judged: all the water on earth is blood, all creatures die, and all of the sun goes dark. These 7 plagues are also replays of the Exodus, that local judgment is now repeated as global judgments. In Egypt there were also boils like 16:2 and frogs like v. 13 and hail and fire from above, and an army gathered to attack
[if that was literal in the past don't be quick to explain Rev 16 away]

Like in Exodus, the Lamb of Rev 15:3 is a Passover protecting His people:

- Rev 16:2 makes clear only worshippers of the beast receive God's wrath
- the beast (antichrist) is like Pharaoh, in fact, Pharaoh is called a beast in the OT.⁴ v. 10 is much like Pharaoh's kingdom hit by darkness, but that was Egypt's *localized* judgment that Israelites in Goshen didn't suffer
- in Exodus God preserved His people through judgment, bringing across a red sea that Egypt's horses and riders fell in (Rev 17 is beast and rider)
- God doesn't have to take His people off the planet so they don't face the wrath of God. God saves and keeps His people through judgment like in the flood while all else died around the ark of protection, in Egypt, etc.
- Rev 7 says His final saved people will be a massive multitude, all tribes and tongues and nations, Gentile Christians will be saved in and through great tribulation (7:9, 14), and it says the Lamb *will shelter them* (just like the Lamb covered Israel in Egypt by Passover blood covering their doors. Unlike Rev 16's unsaved, in 7:16 *'the sun will not scorch them [the saved] nor scorching heat.'* The wicked have only blood to drink but God's people don't thirst in 7:15-16, their Shepherd leads to water. And unlike the world's torment, 16:2, Jesus wipes tears from eyes, 7:16.
- Christians are persecuted, some die, tribulation is for all, but 1 Thess 5:9 says *wrath* isn't our destiny (that word⁵ in Rev is always at 2nd coming)

[I think Rev 14:16 gathers them right before 2nd coming wrath in v. 19]

Christians reading Rev 16 aren't to become Chicken Littles, running around thinking the sky is falling on us. Jesus is our Passover Lamb. His blood over us shields us from wrath. Rom 5:9: *'Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!'*

Rev 12:11 says they'll conquer the beast *by the blood of the Lamb*. Look at **15:2** *'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.'*

The fiery sea of glass seems to picture their unapproachable or untouchable safety in God's presence, as He brings through to glory to a place the beast can't reach. Holy, holy, holy, all the saints adore God around the glassy sea. The water with fire mix reminds of a *lake of fire* the beast and his followers go to in later chapters, and may hint of Pharaoh's followers dying in the sea. That's also imagery out of Exodus: God's people overcome as they cross a red sea and stand safely on the other side, with musical instruments in hand, as Miriam with tambourine in hand led a lively worship team in Exodus 15. It seems *harps* here are closer to guitars or even banjos, up-beat ripping joy

Rev 15:3 *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb* [think the Passover Lamb in the time of Moses in the Exodus], saying, *“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! ⁴ Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you* [read that again!], *for your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

Glorifying the name of the Lord is the key phrase in v. 4 and in Revelation. Like the 1st Exodus it's about the glory and fame of the name in all the earth

- He told Pharaoh in Ex 9 *'I will send all my plagues...[what's the point of sending plagues?] so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth... for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth.'* (9:14, 16)
- Ex 14 says 3x of the red sea *'I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host...[v. 18:] And the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen...'* It ends with them standing on the other side, fearing God like Rev 15:4
- Ex 15:1 *'Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the LORD* [this is the song of Moses], *“I will sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The LORD...is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him...[I sang that as a kid, splish-splash hand motions! Ex 15 has many themes that glorify God's name like Rev 15:4 says] Who is like you, majestic...awesome in glorious deeds...The LORD will reign forever and ever...[they worship/sing] for he has triumphed gloriously'*

His glorious deeds or triumphs are to spread His name and fame to all earth. Rev 15:4 promises believers from *all nations will come*. I think 11:13 shows people glorifying in fear and faith at the end in the place *symbolically called Egypt* (11:8). Isaiah 19 seems to picture literal Egypt itself turning to Christ in massive numbers in the last days, a reversal of the Exodus, Egypt saved?! In Ex 12:38 some of nations in Africa joined Israel in the first Exodus, but it seems at the time of the final plagues and Passover *many of all nations will!*

This is exciting to think about, a last Passover redemption picture completes

- Rev 15:2 starts with God's final redeemed now across the sea (Ex 14)
- in v. 3 they then sing the song of Moses (Ex 15) and song of the Lamb
- in v. 4 they call on all peoples to the Lord (as Israel was to in Ex 19:6)
- in v. 5 after deliverance Israel had a tabernacle tent of witness (Ex 25f)
- in v. 6 angels are dressed in linen as priests in the book of Exodus (28)
- in v. 7 the bowls echo tabernacle bowls for drink offerings in Ex 37:16
- in v. 8 the glory of God filling the tabernacle in a cloud so no one can enter is exactly what we see at the end of the book of Exodus (40:35)

[not only verse-by-verse, but the same order as Exodus!]

This section also completes a final Exodus picture that began back in Rev 1:

- 1:6 calls the church '*a kingdom of priests*'--Israel's calling in Ex 19:6
- John's first vision in Rev 1 is also imagery like the book of Exodus, a 7-fold candlestick of pure gold, as Jesus says *I am the first and the last*
- Rev 2:17 has Exodus imagery promising the church *manna* (provision)
- Rev 3 promises the church pure white garments, like OT priests (3:4-5)
- Rev 4 has 7 lamps like Ex 37:23 and stones only in Ex (39:10-13) and describes the same phenomena as when the Law came at Sinai (Ex 19)
- Rev 5 is where John sees the Lamb slain redeeming His people (Ex 12)
- Rev 6:9 shows martyrs praying under an altar (Exodus sacrifice image)

[chapter-by-chapter this is the final Exodus]

Rev 7-14 in particular show events in the same order as the book of Exodus:

SLIDE: Israel's tribes listed and become a multitude – Rev 7, Ex 1:1-7

God hears and responds to prayers of His saints – Rev 8:3-4, Ex 2:23-25

God speaks to earth through fire - Rev 8:5, Ex 3

Hail, fire, locusts, angels of death, judgments thru 2 witnesses – Rev 8-9, 11:6; Ex 7-11

Jews sealed and protected from judgment, saved with a multitude of other nations

– Rev 9:4, 7:4-9; Ex 12:37-38

Hard-hearted response by the unrepentant - Rev 9:20-21, Ex 13:15-16, 14:4

God glorified as He judges His enemies – Rev 11:13, Ex 14:31, 15:1-11

God guides, provides for His own in a wilderness – Rev 12:6, Ex 15:22-27

God brings through difficulty to promised land - Rev 13-14, 21-22, Ex 16 to Joshua

[same order, same orchestrator, same Savior!]

This will be the greatest replay ever, a final Passover, a final promised land!

Application: Worship and glorify the Lamb, longing for more in the future
Sing to the Lord as great and amazing like v. 3 says. Praise Him as the Lord God Almighty as it says. Honor Him as just and true, as King of the nations, Lion and Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb, how great is our God, sing with me

Don't be the people who won't fear and glorify His name, as v. 4 says. Be a part of those who come to worship, and be a part of what v. 4 says, calling people of all nations to come and worship, to come be a part of this picture.

If you're not yet a part of this picture, come join it today before it's too late. Will you fear God and give Him glory by repenting of sin, surrendering self and trusting in the blood of the Lamb Jesus as your only hope for the wrath of God to pass over you? Turn from whatever else you're worshipping to worship Jesus as the way, the truth, the life, as the only way to the Father.

¹ Voddie Baucham, introduction to Revelation, www.sermonaudio.com

² Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views, Revised and Updated*, p. 439.

³ Craig Keener, *Revelation*, p. 400.

⁴ Psalm 74:13-14, Isaiah 51:9-10.

⁵ The Greek word *orge* that Paul says we're not destined to in 1 Thess 5:9 and 5:10 is used in Revelation 6:16-17, 11:18, 14:10, 16:19, 19:15, at each of the 2nd coming passages. We are destined for tribulation (Greek *thlipsis*, same word as in Rev 7:14), but not *orge* wrath.