

I saw another sign in Heaven

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[0 : 0 0] Chapter 15. The book of Revelation chapter 15. At the beginning we read these words And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the hearts of God. And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints, who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name. For thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.

These are the verses that we will try to consider together this evening. And here is the Apostle John, and he is still there, and it's the Lord's day, and this vision, this tremendous vision has been given to him. And we just recall what he has already seen. We were thinking about that a fortnight ago, where in his vision he saw the two harvests that take place at the end of the world.

He sees how on the one hand, God's elect people are harvested into the garner of heaven, where they are going to enjoy everlasting felicity and bliss. But he also sees the other harvest. He sees the enemies of God, and these enemies of God are spoken in terms of grapes, so that when the vintage comes, that is the end of the world, and the judgment takes place, these grapes are crushed until there is produced a lake of blood.

And that bespeaks, doesn't it, suffering, pain, death. But before telling us about the judgment that will be outpoured upon the wicked, we are given in these words that are before us just now, a description of the Church of Christ Christ, and the wonder of the wonder of its triumph. You see, this whole book is working up to a crescendo.

It has started off in a gentle sort of way, but it is now working up, it's reaching the grand finale. And the grand finale is when the great judgment takes place, when the resurrection takes place, when God suddenly sends his Son to be the judge, when God introduces a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. But before all that, you see, these events have got to take place.

[3 : 4 4] God must exercise his judgment upon this world of wickedness, and he is going to do so by the outpouring of the balls of his wrath, by judging the adulterous woman called Babylon, that is, the seductive powers of the world, by judging the beasts, by judging the dragon, the devil himself, and then everything will be ready for the new world. And so this evening, just let us look for a little while at what John saw.

In these first two verses. He says, I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

He saw the preparations that were now underway for God's final judgment prior to the inauguration of the new heavens and the new earth. You see, he penetrates into heaven itself.

And he sees this sign, whatever the sign was, which indicated now that the last judgment was about to take place.

You see, all these previous judgments have been infinitesimal compared to this, the final state of judgment. And when it says that there were seven angels having the seven last plagues, and they were about to be sent forth by God on their terrible mission of vengeance, the number seven, as we have always said, is the perfect number.

[5 : 40] And that indicates, does it not, that this is now going to be perfect judgment that's going to be exercised.

No one will find fault with it. No one will find fault with it. You see, you and I, in this world that we are living in, we hear of someone who comes before the court, he is sentenced, and we say, how unfair!

Why did he get off? Why wasn't he punished properly for what he did? The whole system of the law seems to be out of joint.

That's how we feel sometimes. But you can be sure of this, my dear friend. That when it comes to God's judgment, there will be no escaping.

And the judgment that God will pass will be perfect judgment. It will not be something that you and I will find fault with. It will be something that we will realize is true and just.

[6 : 43] And so John sees the wrath of God now outpoured upon a world of wickedness. A world that has despised God and rejected his son.

A world that has shown contempt for the salvation that has been wrought by God's son. You know, sometimes as we look at subjects like this, you might say to me, are we reaching such a stage in the history of our world?

I went into a shop the other day. I know the man who works there in that shop, it's not his own place, he's only their sort of manager.

And he started to chat and he started to tell me about how they have to watch so carefully those who come in.

And he said to me, you wouldn't believe the people that come in here and take stuff from us. And you would be astounded, he said to me, if you knew who they were.

[7 : 56] And he started to name certain items of considerable cost that had been removed from that place.

And he looked at me and he said this. I wonder, he said, what's going wrong? What's wrong with our society?

Yes, what is wrong with our society? And as you look at the situation of today, people you see are so careless. And there's no thought of God in all their minds.

There's no thought of a judgment to come. And no thought of a hell to shun. But it's not always going to be like that.

Because God is waiting for the day to come, when he will outpour the balls of his wrath. It's a terrible thing to think about.

[9 : 02] Now we read together in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. And why did we read that chapter in Thessalonians? Well these two letters of Paul to the Thessalonians are extremely interesting.

Do you know why? Because he is dealing with the second coming of Christ. And in his first letter he explains to these Thessalonian believers that Christ's coming is imminent.

And that when he comes, there will take place the resurrection to life. And as often as not, sometimes we read that passage at a funeral sermon, by a service.

We saw in it as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then also will Jesus bring with him. You see, that is a passage of scripture whereby we are pointing people forward to the ultimate day when they will rise, when the dead will rise from their graves.

And in order to counteract the complacency that's set in the church of the Thessalonians, Paul writes again. He says, now don't be misled, don't misunderstand that the day of the Lord is just about to be upon us.

[10 : 27] No, he says there will be certain events that will have to take place. And then, after all these things take place, Jesus, he says, will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

Now this is true. This is not make-believe. This is not some fairy story that I'm speaking just now.

I'm actually quoting what is said here in God's word, which is God's infallible word, God's true word. Every word of this scripture stands or falls.

And here is what it says about the return of Christ. He will be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints and to be admired in all them that believe.

Oh, I wish the people of Inverness would read their Bibles. I wish these Sabbath breakers who have been going about the town of Inverness with their plastic bags, visiting shop here and shop there, filling up these bags and going home to eat, to drink and to be merry.

[12 : 04] And to have a grand festive time over this Christmas season. I wish they would read their Bibles. I wish these shopkeepers would read them.

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints.

Oh, they may have dismissed this now, but be sure of this, that the day of reckoning is coming. And no wonder the psalmist, as he looked to the day of God, said this, and this was preached upon last Sabbath evening by Professor Mackay, where he used these words from Psalm 2, where the psalmist says, Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and he perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little, blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

And so, John, as he sees into heaven, he sees this sign which indicates that all the preparations are now made.

That the seven last plagues are about to be outpoured. These bowls have been filled up, he says, with the wrath of God.

[13 : 47] But he also saw here the ultimate victory of Christ's redeemed people. I saw, I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast and over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name stand on the sea of glass having the hearts of God.

What is this sea of glass? This sea of glass that is mingled with fire. Well, this sea of glass mingled with fire is emblematic of God's transparent righteousness.

And God's transparent righteousness revealed in his judgments upon the wicked because here is glass which is transparent, here is fire which is emblematic of judgment, and here is what John sees.

The righteousness of God revealed in his judgments upon the wicked. There on the one side of that sea are the godless, the wicked.

They're being dealt with. Here on this other side of the sea are the redeemed. Those of whom it is said they have gotten the victory over the beast, over his image, over his mark, over the number of his name.

[15 : 31] Well, of course, we were looking at that before, the beast. Isn't that the anti-God system that is in the world?

That's the beast. The image of the beast is the symbol that people had to worship this beast, this anti-God system.

And those who wouldn't worship the beast were dealt with and punished, but in order to worship that beast you had to have the mark and you had to have the number of its name, 666, which we have described as failure, failure, failure.

In other words, here is this anti-God system. It's against God. It's against everything that has to do with God.

And isn't this what is happening today, that the multitudes of our fellow citizens are worshipping this godless system, worshipping at the altars of materialism, worshipping at the altars of hedonism, worshipping at the altars of vanity, and the mark of the beast is on them, and the number of his name is on them, which means to say that there these people are, and what is it that they have achieved in the end, nothing but failure, failure, failure.

[17 : 23] Well, thank God Christians overcome that. And they've overcome this world system, because their trust is in God and in Christ. And they don't have the mark of that beast on them, they have the mark of Jesus on them.

And they don't have the 666 placed on them, because they are the victorious ones. And here they are, says John, standing on the sea of glass, standing on the right side, and they've got the hearts of God to swell the great praise that is being made about our God.

They had overcome, you see, these people, overcome by God's grace, this anti-God government, or system, and anti-Christ religion, and all that can be identified with hedonistic, materialistic concepts.

That's what John saw. I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mingled with fire, and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the hearts of God.

Now, here is the other thing that I want to speak about. We've noticed what he saw. What did he hear, John? This is what he heard, verse 3.

[19 : 04] This triumphant church in heaven, the redeemed people of God in heaven, they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.

Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints, who shall not fear thee. O Lord, and glorify thy name, for thou only art holy, for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest.

What a song. The song of Moses and of the Lamb. The song of Moses, you find it there as we read it together in Exodus chapter 15.

And it's elaborated on in more detail in Deuteronomy chapter 32. And what is that song that Moses composed, recorded in Exodus 15?

Well, it's a song of victory. A song that is celebrating the magnificent victory and the conquest of the Israelites over the Egyptians at the Red Sea.

[20 : 27] here were these Egyptians coming after the Israelites after the Egyptians had allowed them to leave the land of Egypt.

And as the people of God come to the Red Sea, the sea is in front, the enemy is behind, there's no way out of this impasse.

God comes to Moses' sermon and says, strike the sea. And he strikes it and it divides. And through that, through these walls made by the sea, the children of Israel make their way across dry shod to the other side.

and the Egyptians coming after them try to do the same, but as they are there venturing across, suddenly after the last of the Israelites is assured, the mighty walls of water close in, and the Pharaoh and his army are washed up dead on the shore.

now what is the point of the song of Moses? The point of the song of Moses is that it was all of God this victory.

[21 : 54] It was something that man couldn't accomplish, never could. It was a victory that was achieved by the mighty power of God.

and all that Moses and his people could say was just this, it is the Lord's doing. It's marvelous in our eyes.

That's the song of Moses. A song that recalls Egypt smitten and Israel saved.

That's what the song is. Egypt, the enemies of God's people, smitten and the people of God saved.

That's the song that they sing in heaven. And you know the song of the Lamb is similar. What is it? It's a song of victory, like the song of Moses.

[22 : 58] It's the victory of Christ and his people, the victory of Christ and his people over the powers of darkness and hell.

Just as the song of Moses recalls Egypt being smitten and Israel being saved, so the song of the Lamb celebrates the overthrow of Satan and the salvation of the redeemed.

The two songs correspond. The one song is the song that was sung by the Old Testament saints, and the other song is the song sung by the New Testament saints, but it's all of one.

Now let's look at the elements in the song, as you and I analyse it and consider it in detail.

What is this song about? Well, the first element in the song is this, God's great and marvellous works. They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty.

[24 : 25] Let me recall to you what we've already gone over in the past. Do you remember the awful red dragon that we spoke about in chapter 12?

The red dragon, symbolic of the devil who persecuted the woman and who tried to destroy her child. That is the devil trying to destroy the church that had produced Christ.

And how this terrible dragon used the two allies to help him in doing so, the seven headed monster and the two horned lamb. Anti-God society, anti-Christian religion as we have said.

But the point that I'm bringing to your attention is this, that when the red dragon produced these monsters, men were deceived.

They stood in awe of the power that was given. And so it led men to worship this seven-headed monster with the ten horns.

[25 : 41] And men stood in awe of that creature. They were afraid of this power. In other words, men today and women today are bowing down before anti-God systems and worshipping them.

But now let's look into heaven. And as they sing this song, are they afraid, these people, of the power of the seven headed, ten horned monster?

Not at all. They're not afraid. The only one that they are afraid of is the Lord God himself.

And in their song they say, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty. And isn't he great and marvellous, the Lord God?

What a great God God is. The God who has created this vast universe. The God who is supporting this vast universe.

[27 : 06] The God who is sovereign over the universe and who says to its mighty seas, hitherto shalt thou come and no further. The great and mighty God who says to the powers of wickedness, hitherto shalt thou come and no further.

And this great and mighty God who will one day raise the dead. This great and mighty God who will introduce a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

And no wonder the song of the Lamb has to do with the Lord God Almighty. And then another element in the song is this, he is just and true.

Just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. The theme here is surely the righteousness of God and the sovereignty of God.

And God's ways are always righteous and just and true. And because of that his ways are ways of pleasantness and all his paths are paths of peace.

[28 : 24] Look at the world my dear friend that you and I are living in which is dominated by the devil. It's a beautiful world yes, but is it a safe world?

It's far from being safe. I cannot guarantee that any one of you or even myself will get home in safety tonight. Who knows?

there may be an evil man out there. He may destroy your life.

Look at the systems of wickedness that are so abhorrent. Look at the child abuse that is going on.

it's almost unbelievable that an adult man can take a tiny child and manipulate that child in evil ways.

[29 : 35] It's beyond belief. But it is happening. And it's not just poor men that are doing it to young children.

But well healed men. Well dressed men. Who in the darkness of their own homes will do this to their own flesh and blood. Oh it's frightening.

The two great leaders of the nations. The Russian leader and the American leader have been coming together to stop the awful terror that faces the world in terms of nuclear power.

And I'm telling you all these things in order to show that a world that is dominated by the devil can you expect any better. monster. This monster who is against God and all that God is and who is against man because man was made in the image of God.

Well thank God he's going to be destroyed in the place that was made for him. and thank God when God creates his new heaven and new earth it will then be indeed that the Lord's people will sing just and true are thy ways thou king of saints.

[31 : 16] Oh how just God is and how true he is and how his ways are ways of pleasantness and his paths are paths of peace. And then the third element in the song of Moses and of the Lamb is this that God is the one who is to be feared who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify thy name for thou only art holy for all nations shall come and worship before thee for thy judgments are made manifest.

God is holy you see thou only art holy there is nothing by way of imperfection in God in this world dominated by the devil it's imperfect but there is no imperfection with God God and all his ways are ways of peace and purity and God too is supreme all nations shall come and worship before thee isn't it in this way that the psalmist puts it he says this among the gods there is none like unto thee O Lord neither are there any works like unto thy works all nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee O Lord and shall glorify thy name and God is righteous for thy judgments are made manifest it's a reference to the judicial attributes of God and you will notice in this song of Moses and of the Lamb and this is a point that's well worth bearing in mind that in the song of Moses and of the Lamb there is not a word of self in the song the song is all about

God the true the holy and the just God how tired we are of self how tired we become of self importance self self esteem self gratification and that is why we get tired of this world of materialism because it's all centered on self and on the individual whom we try to make into a God but here in this song self is forgotten and God is given his rightful place you and I may not agree with all that the late professor Barclay of the church of Scotland had to write there are many things that we would find fault with with regard to his theology but you know in his own peculiar way

Barclay could say many many good things listen to what he says these are the words of the late professor Barclay heaven is heaven because in it at last all self and self importance are lost in the presence of the greatness and glory of God that's the wonder of heaven that you're not looking at Mr.

So and So and So and Mrs. So and So you're not concerned with how they're getting on or what their faults are or what their estimation your estimation of them may be in heaven you're captivated by God and by his son Jesus Christ Oh dear Scotland how we've had in this land of ours these great heroes of the past who made our nation what it is and they're forgotten today John Knox William Guthrie Alexander Melville Thomas Chalmers the men who directed the theological thinking the religious thinking of this land of ours forgotten but let's not forget that eminent covenanter who was tried and who was about to be put to death but God took him before that happened and I'm referring to that quaint but peculiarly spiritual man

[36 : 33] Samuel Rutherford and you know the words that were written in connection with his sayings the sands of time are sinking the dawn of heaven breaks the summer morn I've sighed for the fair sweet morn awakes dark dark hath been the midnight but day spring is at hand and glory glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land O Christ he is the fountain the deep sweet well of love the streams on earth I've tasted more deep I'll drink above there to an ocean fullness his mercy his mercy doth expand and glory glory dwelleth in Emmanuel's land that's what John saw the glory that dwells in Emmanuel's land will you see it will we join together this great number on the sea of glass with the hearts that

God will give us will we sing the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb Lord God Almighty marvelous are thy works just and true thou king of saints will we sing this in heaven who shall not fear thee O Lord and glorify thy name for thou only art holy for all nations shall come and worship before thee for thy judgments are made manifest I would just say to you dear friend who are Christians thank God that you are you're not a Christian I've been pleading with you and I plead with you again give your heart to Christ take him as your saviour just pray now

Lord Jesus open this heart heart of mine receive me and I'll sing your song in heaven the song of the Lamb let us pray gracious God we pray that the truth of thy word may indeed penetrate the hardness of our hearts may we come to see the greatness of that salvation that has been wrought for us in Christ thy son may we gladly avail ourselves of it and be numbered among those who will stand on this sea of glass and who will rejoice in thee and sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb the song of ultimate victory the victory that has been achieved over sin and death and hell be with each one of us and pardon our sins in Jesus name we ask it

Amen