

# Tales of the End: A Study of the Book of Revelation

## Session 14: The Last Word On Judgement

**Scripture:** Revelation 15-18

### How Long?

- The pages of scripture are filled with the question – how long before judgement and **justice** arrive.
- The call for judgement arrives at a climax in **Revelation**.
- Rather than a concern, it is a CRY!
- **Hurt** people want relief.
- Bullied people want fairness.
- Those pushed around want dignity.
- Desire for judgement develops as people **wait** for it.
- John's Pastoral Method: Not balm, not understanding.
- He adds **salt** – intensifies the waiting.
- The cry of how long leads to **Worship**.
- Worship provides the context for believing in **justice** while experiencing injustice.
- The Long-delayed judgement arrives in the shape of worship (15:1-8)

### Overview

- John has created an ever-progression set of panels to display God's **plan**.
- Each panel offers a different vantage **point**, stressing different features.
- Central truth of them all: God **rules** and overrules in the affairs of humanity.
- C.15-18 – the struggle of people of faith with the hostile world **powers** reaches a new level of intensity.
- C 6 – 7 Seals
- C.8-9: 7 Trumpets
- C15-16: 7 bowls of God's **wrath**.
- 7 Bowls described as 7 plagues.
- With these plagues – the "**wrath** of God is ended (15:1)."

### Revelation 15

- John portrays the safety of those who have conquered the beast (15:2).
- Safety leads to **worship**.
- Song of Moses – After Crossing the Red Sea (Ex15)
- Confidence in God leads to **worship**.
- In Rev. 15:3-4 – echoes of this confidence reside in the **people** of faith.
- No Mention of the people of faith's victory.
- Trust in God's greatest and **justice**.

- After this worship, angels arrive with bowls of God's **wrath**

### **Revelation 16**

- Wrath/destruction directed against those who had the mark of the **beast** and worshipped its image.
- Throughout chapter, the **bowls** of God's wrath are emptied.
- Repeatedly speaks to a lack of **repentance** – showing one's true allegiance.
- Rather than literal bowls of **wrath** – key idea is intense calamity and terror.
- The **justice** of God brings judgement on individuals and nations that violate God's structure.
- John repeats through these images his central conviction: God **rules** and overrules in the affairs of the church and world.
- John's motive for repetition of woes: To prepare the **church** for a period of suffering.
- This is grim honesty from a pastor who loves them.
- Conscious of the calamities that await, the **church** must prepare to meet them undaunted.
- **Worship** once again remains key to survival.
- John makes room for worship – for songs of praise – throughout each section of hardships.
- John uses these foul-mouthed frogs to assemble the kings of the world for a **battle**.
- Besides number **666**, Armageddon is probably the most well-known word/image from Revelation.
- No one knows what the word Armageddon means, or the way to spell it.
- Most scholars suppose it alludes to the **city** of Megiddo.
- This ancient city sat at a mountain pass that opened onto a large **valley**.
- Many ancient battles between the Philistines and **Israel** were fought here.
- John is using familiar language a final conflict between good and evil – where evil is defeated by God's Word – Jesus Christ.
- In Revelation, Babylon = **Rome**.
- Treason to speak negatively of Rome.
- Babylon represented for the Hebrews all that was wicked.

### **Revelation 17-18**

- "Literary triumph of imaginative **power**."
- Alludes to the many ways Christians have been martyred by the leaders of **Rome**.
- C. 18 describes the **Fall** of Rome with a poem for the fallen.
- Chapter 18 ends with a climax of haunting end to the **city**.
- Rome is destroyed because of the blood of the saints.
- Written hundreds of years before it's defeat in 410

## **Conclusion**

- John wrote to stimulate **faithfulness** in persecuted Christians in 1<sup>st</sup> Century.
- John assures them and us of the ultimate **victory** in Christ.
- Warning for all who elevate material abundance, imperial grandeur, racial pride or anything else over Jesus.
- Revelation speaks to God's **character** and the timeliness of God's judgement over us all.
- God's **justice** will arrive even as we continue to cry – "How long?"