

Coffee/Question:

"The wrath of God is what happens when the holy love of God encounters sin. The two simply cannot co-exist." J.D. Walt  
Do you agree with this statement? Explain.



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Revelation 15 and 16 is the next section of the book of Revelation that we will be working our way through.

The passage begins by speaking of the wrath of God...

Revelation 15:1

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them **God's wrath** is completed.

Revelation 16:19

God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the wine of **the fury of his wrath**.

... and it finishes the same way.

This section of Scripture also begins and ends with the word “teleioo” which is translated “completed” in 15:1 and in 16:17 by the phrase, “It is done.”

Revelation 15:1

I saw **“teleioo”** in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues – last, because with them God's wrath is **completed**.

Revelation 16:17

The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, **“It is done!”**

What is it... that is completed, that is done?

The wrath of God.

God's wrath is not an intense, emotional flare-up of anger, or an irrational passion that consumes him, so that he acts in an out-of-control way.

Leon Morris, in his book 'The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross,' writes...

The wrath of God is his "...strong and settled opposition and hatred of all that is evil... [it is] a burning zeal for what is right."

Leon Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross

DJ, p.284

Revelation 15-16 impresses upon the reader "how serious God is about right and wrong, good and evil." DJ, p.284

There are three things I need to put before you, things we need to state, to clarify or to remember as we launch into these two chapters.

1. It was Abraham who stated that God is the Judge of the earth, Genesis 18:25.

In discussion with the religious leaders who were offended by him because he had healed a man on the Sabbath and called God his Father, Jesus said...

John 5:21 – "For just as the Father raises the dead and give them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."

Then Jesus continued and said ....

John 5:22

The Father...has entrusted all judgment to the Son...

Acts 17:31 confirms what Jesus said...

John 5:22

The Father...has entrusted all judgment to the Son...

Acts 17:31

...God has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this by raising him from the dead.

J.I. Packer wrote, "Jesus Christ stands at the end of life's road for everyone without exception." Knowing God, p.161.

The prophet Amos wrote...

Amos 4:2

Prepare to meet your God.

The message of the Revelation is...

Amos 4:2

Prepare to meet your God.

The book of Revelation

"Prepare to meet the risen Jesus."

Every person will meet Jesus either as their Savior or the Judge who sends them into exile.

2. The vision which John saw while on the island of Patmos was a revelation (an apocalypse) of Jesus Christ,

Revelation 1:1a

The revelation (apocalypse) from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants what must soon take place.

Today our understanding of the word “apocalypse” is different that it was for John’s original audience.

When people today hear the word “apocalypse”... they think... devastations.



But John's original audience understood the word to mean...



... a revealing, a disclosing, a bringing to light of something that had not been known.

This is how the word apocalypse is used in the Bible.

Matthew 10:26

"...there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known."

Philippians 3:15

"...God will make [it] clear to you."

1 Corinthians 2:10

"...these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit."

We've seen this repeatedly...the revelation from Jesus Christ to John consisted of vivid images.

... a lamb with seven horns and seven eyes  
... an enormous, red, seven headed dragon with ten horns and seven crowns  
... a seven headed beast that resembled a leopard, had feet like a bear and a mouth like a lion  
... a beast that had horns like a lamb, but spoke like a dragon  
... a city named Babylon that is a prostitute dressed in purple and scarlet

Why did God choose to communicate in this manner?

**a. I remind you that none of the images used in the Revelation are new – they've been seen before in the OT.**

What God is doing in the Revelation is connecting his salvation and rescue through Jesus Christ, to his work of grace before the cross.

The Bible tells one story.

**b. I remind you that John was a prisoner of the Roman Empire who held him in confinement on the island of Patmos.**

God's message to him for the churches had to be "cryptic" or the manuscript would never have been permitted by the Romans to leave the island.

You could say the OT was the code-breaker.

**c. The book of Revelation reminds the reader heaven is in control... God is moving history towards a new beginning.**

The apocalyptic images  
are meant to grip  
the reader's imagination  
as they make known  
the seen and unseen realities  
that shape the world  
in this present time.

The Revelation reminds us that things are not as they seem.



It may seem redundant, but I'm still going to ask:

- Does Jesus exist in the form of a lamb? with seven horns and seven eyes?
- Is Satan an enormous, red, seven headed dragon... with ten horns and who wears seven crowns?
- Is the dragon accompanied by two fantastical beasts which are described in chapter 13?
- Is there currently in existence a city named Babylon which is actually a prostitute?

The answer to all those questions is...no.

As the reader draws upon the OT and the gospels, they are helped to see past the image to the reality behind it.

### 3. The Revelation speaks four times of something being opened.

Revelation 4:1

...a door standing open in heaven.

Revelation 11:19

Then God's temple in heaven was opened...

Revelation 15:5

...the tabernacle of the covenant law was opened.

Revelation 19:11

I saw heaven standing open...

Regarding the opening of the temple in chapter 15... Darryl Johnson asks a good question.



“Why was John led by the Spirit to be so specific in what he wrote... not just that he saw the temple in heaven opened, but that he described it as ...



**...the tabernacle of the covenant law?"** p.286

The use of the word “tabernacle” points the reader back to the OT...

...when the nation of Israel, after being rescued from Egypt, journeyed to and then camped in front of Mt. Sinai

...when God entered into covenant with them there

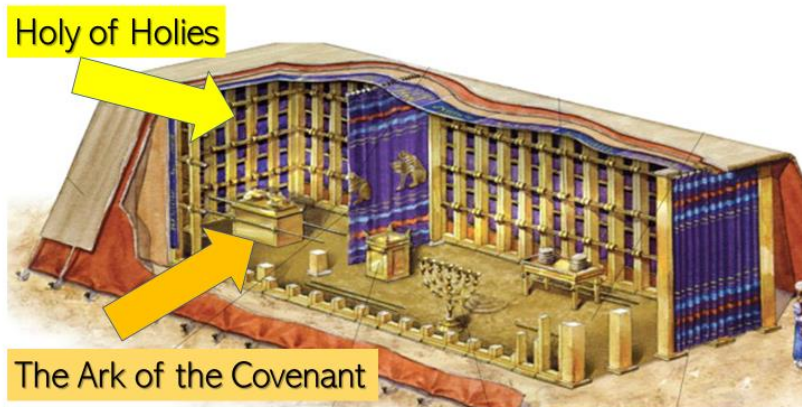
...when God gave to them the Ten Commandments, which were written by God’s own hand on two tablets of stone

...when God told them how they were to worship and live in relationship with him

...when God gave them detailed instructions (1) for the building of a tabernacle with two parts...the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, and (2) for the making of all the furnishings of this tabernacle – the ark, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the table, the altar for sacrifice

...when God provided for them the means by which their sins could be atoned for...through the blood sacrifice of animals

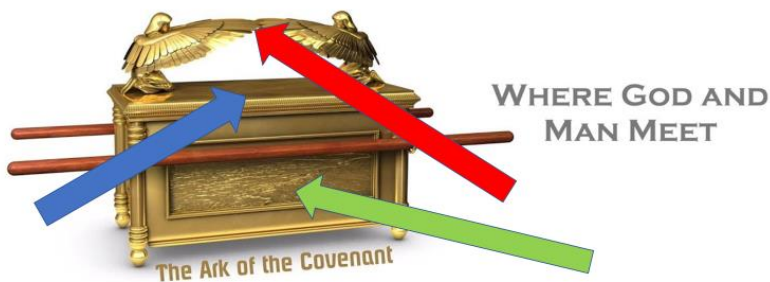
The ark of the covenant... was placed in the tabernacle...



...in the **Holy of Holies**.

The top of the ark was called the mercy seat.

## The Mercy Seat



### The Green Arrow.

The 10 Commandments were placed... inside... the ark.

### The Blue Arrow.

Each year, the high priest brought the blood from the sacrifice of an animal and sprinkled it on the mercy seat.

God permitted this sacrifice to temporarily cover the sins of the people.

But it was a sacrifice that had to be repeated every year.

It was not a permanent solution.

## The Red Arrow

This is where the presence of God was manifested... between the cherubim and above the sprinkled blood and the Law.

When Jesus lived on the earth, he revealed during the years of his public ministry that the entire OT had pointed towards him... that he was the fulfillment of...

...the tabernacle and the temple

...the priesthood

...the Sabbath and the festivals

...the sacrifices

John the Baptist rightly identified Jesus as the Lamb of God who would take away the sin of the world.

When Jesus gave his life in sacrifice upon the cross, it was there that the justice and the mercy of God came together... bringing about all that was needed for humanity to be saved... from the wrath of God... from the curse and power of sin and death... from enslavement of the devil.

Look again at Revelation 15:1, 5-7.

The bowls are the third and last vision of God's judgment.

But where do these bowls filled with wrath come from?

They come out of the temple.

Stay with me here...this is important.

Remember what Jesus said in John 2:19-22?

### John 2:19-22

<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days."<sup>20</sup> They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

<sup>21</sup> **But the temple he had spoken of was his body.**

<sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

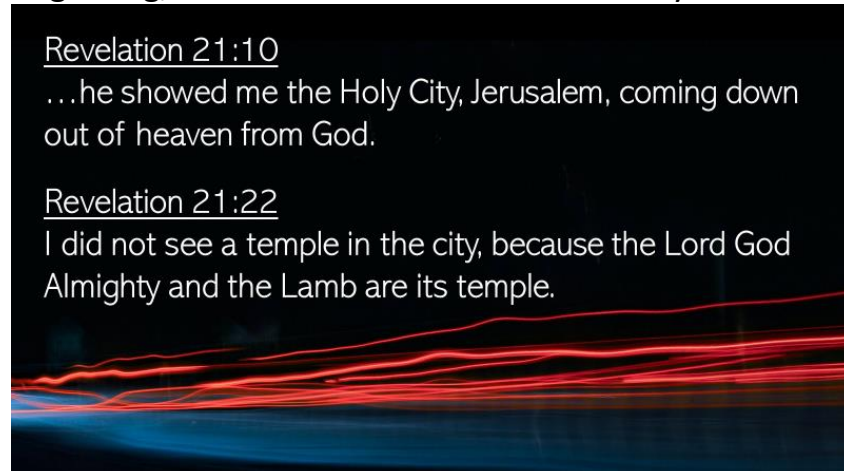
Jesus' body is the temple of God, he is the tabernacle of the covenant law.

He is the place where the person and presence of God is manifested.

Look at Revelation 21:10.



When the two realms, heaven and earth are again reunited in God's new beginning, look at what Revelation 21:22 says isn't there.



I believe the temple, the tabernacle of the covenant law which John saw in 15:5...



...is God Almighty and the Lamb, our Lord Jesus Christ.

What is being communicated to the reader by this vision, what is the reality behind the image used?

The followers of Jesus...are being reminded that from the person of God comes love and wrath, salvation and judgment, rescue and exile.

The song which John heard sung in verse 2-4 confirms this. John calls this song... the song of Moses...



... and the song of the Lamb...



Who God is... is who he has always been.

There are not two different gods in the Bible... an OT god and a NT god... a cruel god and a loving god.



From the day Adam and Eve fell, until the return of Jesus the King, it is the triune God who is the same yesterday, today and forever... who has been active in this world to save... and to eradicate evil.

There will be a new beginning...



... and it is God's loving wrath that will bring this about.

**Read verse 2-4.**

This song celebrates and praises God for his loving justice and his loving wrath. All of God's deeds... are great and marvelous.

Look at the praise expressed in Psalm 96... and the stated reason for this praise.

Psalm 96:10-13

Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns..." ...he will judge the peoples with equity.

<sup>11</sup> Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it. <sup>12</sup> Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.

<sup>13</sup> Let all creation rejoice before the LORD, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Long ago God said to the nation of Israel, Deuteronomy 30:19-20...

Deuteronomy 30:19-20

...I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life...

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death... but the gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord."

The hope of humanity has always been found in the Glorious Three-in-One.

As the bowls of wrath are poured out it will become increasingly clear to the reader that the choice before humanity is one of ...

Life or death

Life Connection Question



## Life Connection/Question(s)

How has this passage encouraged you? given you hope?

What question(s) has it raised in your mind?

Has the passage made you uncomfortable? Why? Why not?

Has your understanding of God been stretched? Explain.

In what way has the passage challenged your lifestyle?

your priorities? your faith?



## The Blessing

The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In these last days, the mercy, love and grace of God extends to the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, a way to be saved – through faith in Christ alone. God puts before each person the choice of life or death.

These are the realities which are vea

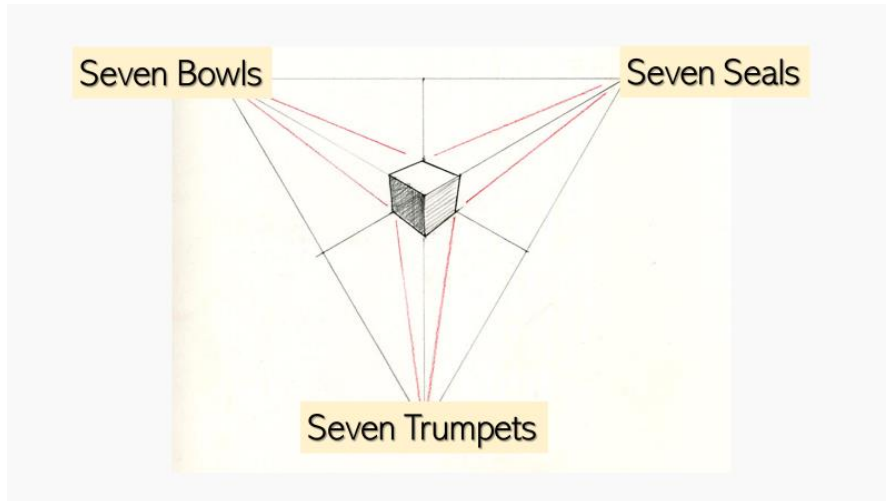
Jesus came to the earth to make God known.  
Following his ascension, through the Holy Spirit he continues to make God known.  
Jesus reveals the Father,

The Bible tells the truth.  
It says...the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23.  
Fallen human beings and the cultures they build always minimize sin.  
But God in mercy brings judgment to expose the true face of sin.

Romans 6:23 also speaks good news.  
It says that... the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.  
The triune God sets before humanity a choice – death or life.

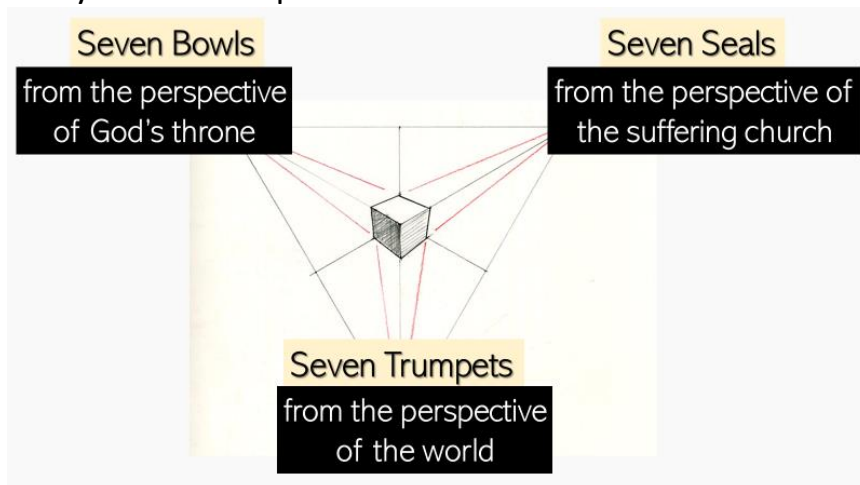
A person will either bear the consequence of their sin, or trust in the Savior God provided.

4. While the seals, trumpets and bowls look upon a singular glorious reality from three different perspectives...



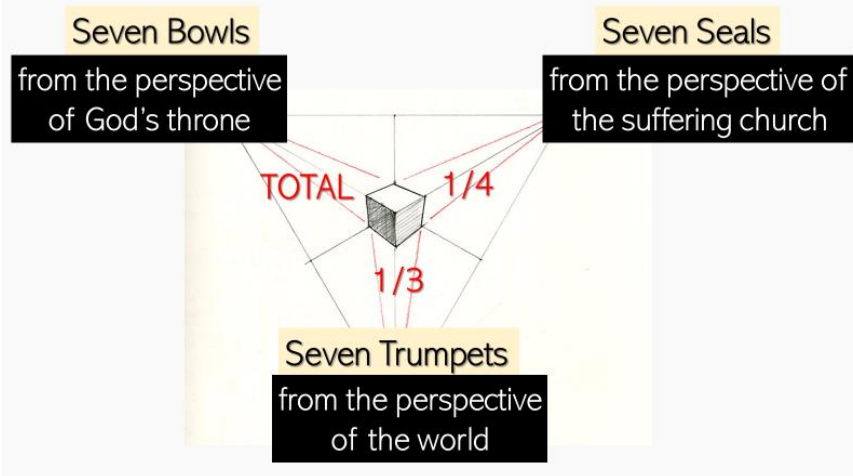
...it is important for us to note there are some differences between these three series of judgments.

Darryl Johnson explains...



- The seven seals look at God's judgment from the perspective of the suffering church.
- The seven trumpets look at God's judgment from the perspective of the world, as it is called to repentance.
- The seven bowls look at God's judgment from the perspective of heaven's throne. p.287

There is something else that is important for us to note...



In the seals, 6:7, it is **1/4** of the earth that is impacted.  
 In the trumpets, 8:7,8,9,10,11,12,13, it is **1/3** of the earth that is impacted.  
 But with the bowls, 16:2-14, it is the entire earth that is impacted.

God's judgments are an appropriate response to humanity's stubborn and hardened heart and will increase in severity as needed.

But know this...

1. God's judgment is always just, and...
2. Until the moment when the Father gives the command to reap the earth, the judgment of God in the last days is a severe mercy, intended to persuade one of the folly of living without God.

Peter spoke in his second letter, 3:9-10, of the glorious opportunity extended by God to humanity, but also warned of the necessity to take immediate action.

2 Peter 3:9-10

God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.

**God is actively working in this present time to save and to undo what sin, death and the devil have ruined.**

Heaven is in control.

In our remaining time lets interact with the first four verses of chapter 15.

For those who may have not been with us last week, chapter 14 ended with God the Father giving the command, using an agricultural image, for the earth to be harvested.

In Revelation 14 there are two scenes of harvest because on the last day, the people of God will be gathered and brought home to forever live with God in a new heaven and a new earth.

Last week I said to you that God is guiding history to his determined end. I read this week a statement by Tim Keller that I think better describes where history is head – God is at work on the earth... guiding history to...



The other harvest on the last day will be of those who refuse to repent, who reject God and his Savior, Jesus Christ.

We now take one final look at how the judgement of God is enacted in the last days.

But before we do that, the first four verses of chapter 15, show to the reader a scene from heaven.

Those who follow Jesus, those who were harvested from the earth on the last day, are safe at home in the presence of God.

**Read v.2-3a.**

With great intentionality, the reader sees that those who currently live in the presence of God, worship him as they did when they lived on the earth.

Worship is a key priority... in the here and now, and it will continue to be a key priority in God's new beginning.

God created us to know him and to enjoy him forever.

We are saved to be in relationship with him...to enjoy his fellowship.

We see in Revelation 15:3 that the worship of God includes singing to him... praising him in song... for who he is and what he does.

Look at the words of the song in verses 3b-4.

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



In this song the redeemed proclaim that God is...

- the Lord.
- the Almighty.
- the King of the nations.
- holy.
- righteous.

In this song the redeemed proclaim that God's...

- deeds are great and marvelous and righteous.
- ways are just and true.

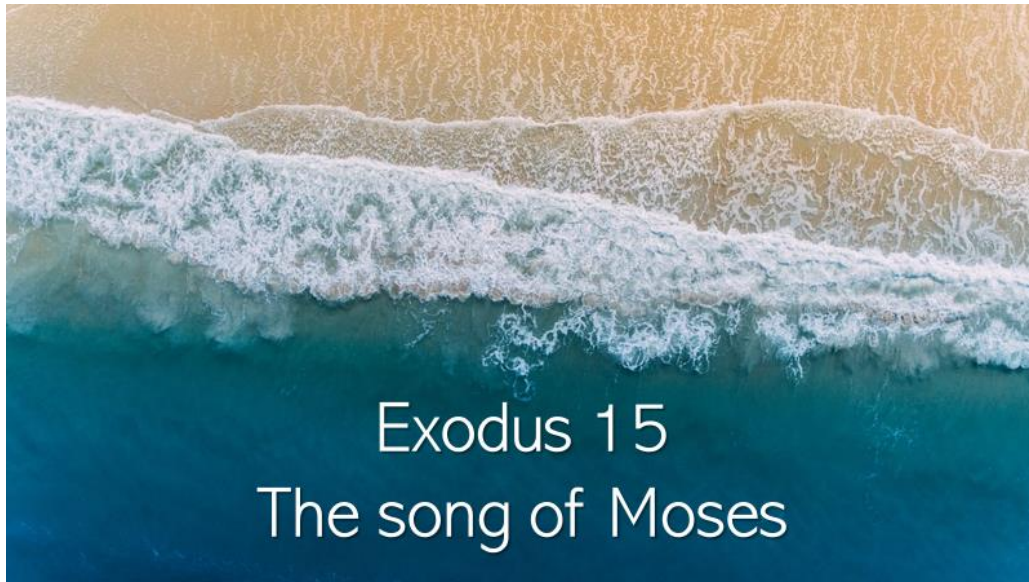
What God does... produces in the redeemed a right and proper fear of him.

What God does... compels his people to bring him glory... through their lives and voices that speak of his beauty and the weightiness of his person.

The song is identified as being the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb?

What is the song of Moses?





The Hebrews left Egypt the night of the Passover.  
With the tenth plague, Pharaoh finally agreed to let them go.  
But then Pharaoh... as he had done repeatedly...changed his mind and mobilized the army to go in pursuit of the Hebrews in order to bring them back.

Pharaoh caught up to the Hebrew nation at the Red Sea.  
But God's pillar of cloud came and stood between the Egyptians and the Israelites, and neither could come near the other.

That night...in what to all appearances was an impossible and utterly hopeless situation... God provided a way of escape and it was through the Sea.

God caused a strong east wind to blow so that the waters stood up and there was a dry path for the Hebrews to walk on.  
But when the Egyptian army pursued the Hebrews... and went down into the sea, God caused the wheels of Pharaoh's chariots to come off, and then told Moses to stretch out his staff so that the waters returned to normal.

The song of Moses was sung by the Hebrew nation as a response to the God of justice who had defended his people from the fury of Pharaoh and who had brought his wrath upon the Egyptians.

The song of the Lamb...



...also celebrates the justice and the wrath of God that overcomes sin, death and the devil.

When the earth is harvested, the wrath of God will decisively and for the last time rescue his people from the beast who along with the dragon and the other beast has waged war against them.

This song is rooted in God's great Reversal...which began with Jesus and will ultimately impact the lives of all his followers.

"God raised Jesus from the dead, after the Jewish leaders had manipulated Pilate to have Jesus condemned as a false Messiah. In doing so, God reversed the verdict of the human court...

What's more the resurrection proved that the cross itself had been the great, spectacular act of judgment..."... not of Jesus, but of ... "sin, death and the devil [which were] condemned and triumphed over." TW, Revelation, p.139

These two songs which are merged into one, celebrate and praise God for his justice and his wrath.

As we attempt to understand; to integrate, to hold in right tension.... the love and wrath of God; his justice and mercy, his holiness and his longsuffering, we do so with this confidence.

It has been the intent of God from the very beginning... that his people would rightly know him.

This is why God revealed himself in the time of the OT through his prophets. This is why he directed those prophets to carefully write down what he said to them.

This is why God preserved those manuscripts.

This is why Jesus came into the earth “as the image of the invisible God,” Colossian 1:15, and as the “exact representation of God’s being,” Hebrews 1:3.

In the person of Jesus, God became flesh.

Listen again to the prayer of Jesus, spoken to the Father, John 17:26...

**I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself might be in them.**

Jesus came to the earth to make God known... and following his ascension, from heaven... through the Holy Spirit he continues to make God known to us.

But we must not miss why he does so.

It is not simply to satisfy our curiosity.

Jesus reveals the Father to us so that we might experience the Father’s love.

To ensure that we do not sentimentalize or trivialize this.... Jesus clearly states that the love which God has for his people is the same love which the Father has for the Son.

Followers of Jesus...this is why 1 John 3:1 says, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us...”

Look again at the last phrase of the song sung in Revelation 15 – v.4b.

**“All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”**

The righteous acts of God are his acts of judgment.

The NIV has a footnote that say, “phrases in this song are drawn from Psalm 111:2-4; Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Jeremiah 10:7; Psalm 96:10-13, 98:7-10.”

#### Psalm 111:2-4

**Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures forever. He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate.**

The works of the LORD... are his deeds, his wonders.

God’s works are great, they are glorious, they are majestic.

God’s works are consistent with who he is – he is gracious, he is compassionate and he is righteous.

God’s righteous acts express his justice and wrath, as well as his grace and compassion.

#### Deuteronomy 32:3-4

**I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he.**

The name of our God is Yahweh, the LORD – he is “I AM” – the eternally existent One... who has always been and always will be.

The greatness of Yahweh’s person is beyond our capacity to fathom.

But he reveals himself to us.

He identifies himself as the Rock – what does that mean?

Psalm 62:2 says, **“He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”**

Psalm 94:22 says, **“But the LORD has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge.”**

Yahweh is the Constant One... he never changes.

Jesus told a parable of a person who built a house upon a rock.  
This house stood solid because of its foundation.  
Jesus' point in the story was that... the life built upon God is the life that is not shaken and ruined.

Jeremiah 10:6-7

**No one is like you, O LORD; you are great, and your name is mighty in power. Who should not revere you, O King of the nation? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you.**

This is an incredible statement.  
Look at who God has revealed himself to be...

Three-in-One  
Uncreated  
Self-sufficient  
Eternal  
Infinite, without limits  
Unchanging  
All-knowing  
Wise  
All-Powerful  
Everywhere present  
Faithful  
Good  
Longsuffering  
Just  
Jealous  
Wrathful  
Gracious  
Loving  
Holy  
Sovereign

...there is no one like Yahweh, both in greatness and in power.

The Romans had a goddess of love... Aphrodite, and a god of war...Mars.  
The Greeks had a goddess of peace...Irene.

The Hindus have a goddess of wrath... Kali.  
I could go on and on.

But there is no god like Yahweh – these qualities exist in perfect harmony within his person.

God is no schizophrenic.

He is not unbalance and out of control, bouncing from one quality to another.

He is not fickle or unpredictable.