



# Prelude to Armageddon

## Revelation 15:1-8

**Anyone who has parented small children understands what it means to “play the judge”! At least five—or fifty—times each day, one of the kids comes into the room, crying for all the world as if Genghis Khan has invaded. Typically, a sibling is hard on their heels, arguing the other side of the story.**

On a good day, we try to listen, discern truth,  
and dispense justice. On a bad day, we say,  
“You guys figure it out. No more crying.”

**The cry for true justice rings out in this world, yet in so many instances, we see justice postponed. As God's people, not only can this be personally troubling; it can lead to awkward questions. Unbelievers ask us, "If God is so good, then why is this world so messed up?" We do our best to answer. In the end, we are left with, "One day, everything will be set to order."**

**The reality of God's judgment is good news because on that day, the clamoring of humanity will be silenced. The "he said/she said" confusion of conflict will be settled. Our righteous God will declare justice, and every human soul will know he is right. That is good news.**



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## Revelation 15:1-8

**CONTEXT OF REVELATION 15**

**Revelation 6-19 records the events of the 7 year Tribulation which brings history, as we know it, to a close. In these chapters is revealed the future salvation of Israel as well as the salvation of an untold multitude of Gentiles (Ch. 7).**

**We receive a detailed description of the activity of the Antichrist (13:1-10) and the False Prophet (13:11-18). We are shown the deception and ultimate destruction of an evil, spiritual, political and economic system known as Babylon (Chapters 17-18). We are provided a birdseye view of the glorious return of Jesus (19:11-21).**



**Tying all of this together are 3 series of judgements that God brings against the earth. The 1st is the seal judgements of chapter 6; the 2nd is the trumpet judgements of chapters 8-9; the 3rd is the bowl judgements introduced in chapter 15 and poured out in chapter 16.**

**Chapter 15, the shortest chapter in Revelation, serves as a prelude then to the final series of judgements. It serves as a prelude to Armageddon. This is where we have come.**



# Prelude to Armageddon

## Revelation 15:1-8

**TEXT**

**Revelation 15:1 (CSB) Then I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven: seven angels with the seven last plagues; for with them God's wrath will be completed.**

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**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) I also saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had won the victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name, were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.**

**Revelation 15:3 (CSB) They sang the song of  
God's servant Moses and the song of the  
Lamb: Great and awe-inspiring are your works,  
Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your  
ways, King of the nations.**



**Revelation 15:4 (CSB) Lord, who will not fear  
and glorify your name? For you alone are holy.  
All the nations will come and worship before  
you because your righteous acts have been  
revealed.**

**Revelation 15:5–6 (CSB) After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes wrapped around their chests.**

**Revelation 15:7–8 (CSB) One of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. Then the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.**

**Throughout Scripture we are warned about this terrible time of judgement, the Day of the Lord:**

**Joel 1:15 – “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.”**

**Zephaniah 1:14-18 – “The great day of the Lord is near; It is near and hastens quickly. The noise of the day of the Lord is bitter; There the mighty men shall cry out. That day is a day of wrath, A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and alarm against the fortified cities and against the high towers.**

**I will bring distress upon men, and they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath; But the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of His jealousy, for He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land.”**

**Malachi 4:1 – “For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” says the Lord of hosts, “that will leave them neither root nor branch.”**

**Now that Day has arrived, it is upon us.**

**Chapter 15 serves as its prelude. The 7 bowls of judgement constitute the 3rd great woe of 11:14. They are the blowing of the 7th trumpet. We are at the end of the end.**



**We have come to the conclusion of a lengthy interlude in chapters 10-14. Divine judgement is on the horizon; it is just around the corner. What do we discover? What is it that God wants us to learn?**

Revelation 15:1 (CSB) Then **I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven**: seven angels with the seven last plagues; for with them **God's wrath will be completed.**

Now for the third time, John **sees another** sign in heaven (previously, the “great sign” of the woman in 12:1 and “another sign” of the dragon in 12:3).

Revelation 15:1 (CSB) Then I saw another **great and awe-inspiring sign** in heaven: seven angels with the seven last plagues; for with them God's wrath will be completed.

This "great and awe-inspiring" sign consists of the seven bowl judgments, which complete the wrath of God. These are the "last" plagues in the sense that they complete God's warnings to an unrepentant world.

**Revelation 15:1 (CSB) Then I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven**

**There is wonder in what God does. Great (mega) and wonderful (marvelous, amazing). John is astonished at what he sees. Its magnitude and significance is difficult to comprehend.**

Revelation 15:1 (CSB) Then I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven

What is about to happen will change all of history. Indeed the world will never be the same. John looks on in amazement. He is stunned by the vision.

Revelation 15:1 (CSB) ...**seven angels with the seven last plagues**; for with them God's wrath will be completed.

**7 angels and 7 plagues** communicate completeness.

**7 last** (eschatas) plagues (plegas) denotes finality.

That they are called the “**last plagues**” sets them apart from the seals and trumpets in spite of some similarities. They are different chronologically and in intensity. Why? “For in them the wrath (thumos) of God is complete,” brought to its appropriate and climactic conclusion. These are the last and these are the worst.

**These 7 last plagues are referred to quite a bit in the preceding chapters:**

**They are the 3rd woe (11:14), the time of destruction (11:18), the wrath of God poured out in full strength (14:10), the final reaping of the earth (14:14-20).**



**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) I also saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had won the victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name, were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.**

**God's servants rejoice as Armageddon approaches.**

**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) I also saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had won the victory ... were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.**

**In Revelation 15:2-4 John receives his 2nd vision in this chapter. These verses constitute an interlude of victory. Significant similarities with the Exodus will accompany us from this point all the way through chapter 16.**

Revelation 15:2 (CSB) I also saw something like a **sea of glass** mixed with fire...

**Sea of glass** (cf. 4:6). The “sea of glass” was first revealed in 4:6 and functioned as a mirror, reflecting God’s glory and majesty. This is symbolic of God’s purity, holiness, and separation from creation.

Revelation 15:2 (CSB) I also saw something like a sea of glass **mixed with fire**...

Here it is “**mixed with fire**,” symbolizing the divine judgement that is about to be manifested from a holy God.

**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) ...and those who had won the victory over the beast...**

**John sees martyred saints (cf. 13:7) redeemed during the Tribulation. They are described as victorious (nikontas), lit. “overcomers” or “conquerors.”**

**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) and those who had won the victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name, were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.**

**Because of their faith in Christ, even unto death (cf. 14:13), they defeated Antichrist (the beast), his image, his mark, and the number of his name.**

**Revelation 15:2 (CSB) and those who had won the victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name, were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.**

**They had no standing on earth, but they do in heaven! They stand on the majestic sea of glass, harps (joy, celebration) of God in hand.**

Revelation 15:2 (CSB) and those who had won the victory over the beast, its image, and the number of its name, were standing on the sea of glass with harps from God.

**God is just in honoring his faithful servants.  
What they lost on earth they more than gain  
back in heaven.**



**Revelation 15:3 (CSB) They sang the song of God's servant Moses and the song of the Lamb: Great and awe-inspiring are your works, Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of the nations.**

**Song of Moses is a song of deliverance found in Exodus 15:1-8.**

Revelation 15:3 (CSB) They sang the song of **God's servant** Moses and the song of the Lamb

Notice His title, **the servant (doulos) of God**.  
What a great tribute. When you read the song you will see, like the song of the Lamb (5:8-14), it resounds with the themes of God's salvation, victory and deliverance. It celebrates the righteousness of His redemptive acts.

**Exodus 15:1–2 (CSB) Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord. They said: I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted; he has thrown the horse and its rider into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him.**

**Exodus 15:3–5 (CSB) The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. He threw Pharaoh's chariots and his army into the sea; the elite of his officers were drowned in the Red Sea. The floods covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.**

**Exodus 15:6–8 (CSB) Lord, your right hand is glorious in power. Lord, your right hand shattered the enemy. You overthrew your adversaries by your great majesty. You unleashed your burning wrath; it consumed them like stubble. The water heaped up at the blast from your nostrils; the currents stood firm like a dam. The watery depths congealed in the heart of the sea.**

**Revelation 15:3–4 (CSB) They sang the song of God's servant Moses and the song of the Lamb: Great and awe-inspiring are your works, Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of the nations. Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship before you because your righteous acts have been revealed.**

**What we find in Revelation 15:3-4 is not an exact reproduction of Exodus 15 or Revelation 5. Here the common themes of Exodus 15 and Revelation 5:8-14 are summarized and highlighted. Verse 3 with its 4 lines forms a synonymous parallelism. Great and marvelous are Your works (repeated from v. 1, cf. Psalm 139:14) parallels just and true are Your ways.**

**Revelation 15:3–4 (CSB) ...Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of the nations...**

**Lord God Almighty (cf. Amos 4:13) parallels O King of the Saints (“ages”, NIV), or better “nations.” It recalls Jeremiah 10:7 which reads, “Who would not fear you, O King of the nations?”**



**Revelation 15:3–4 (CSB) ...Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of the nations...**

**God's works are great, marvelous, just and true. Our Savior is the Lord God Almighty, the King of the nations.**

**Revelation 15:4 (CSB) Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name?**

**Verse 4 begins with a rhetorical question. Fear (phobos) and glorify (doxa) are proper responses in light of who God is and what He has done (vs. 3 & 4). This is the only logical and spiritual response to the God who alone is holy.**

Revelation 15:4 (CSB) Lord, who will not fear  
and glorify your **name**?

**Name** connotes all that God is in His person,  
character and activity. God is to be feared and  
glorified because He is great, marvelous, just,  
true, holy, the Lord, the Almighty, the King! His  
name and His nature are truly worthy to be  
praised. There truly is none like Him.

Revelation 15:4 (CSB) ...**All the nations** will come and worship before you because your righteous acts have been revealed.

**All** (not some) **of the nations** (ethne) shall come and worship (ascribe worth, value, honor) before you. No other is worthy of such reverence and homage, worship and adoration. He alone is Lord, Almighty, King and holy.

**Revelation 15:4 (CSB) ...All the nations will come and worship before you because your righteous acts have been revealed.**

**His judgements (righteous acts) have been revealed (manifested, made known). The day will come when all people will acknowledge that God's wrath, which is about to be poured out, is deserved, righteous, and perfectly designed to achieve His holy purposes.**

**It should be noted that the saints in heaven do not sing about their own victory over the beast but about God's glory, sovereignty, and justice. Note that some form of the pronoun "you" or "your" occurs 7 times! It truly is all about Him!**

**Revelation 15:5 (CSB) After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened.**

**God's sanctuary is ready as Armageddon approaches. These verses (15:5-8) reveal the 3rd and final scene of this chapter; the final act before the bowl judgements are poured out.**

**Revelation 15:5 (CSB) After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened.**

**The temple (naos), the Holy of Holies, of the tabernacle of the testimony – this takes us back to the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exodus 40:34-35) where in was the 2 tables of testimony, the 10 commandments brought down by Moses from Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:15) and the ark of the covenant.**



**Revelation 15:5 (CSB) After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened.**

**This is the place where God dwells, where His holy presence was made known.**

**Revelation 15:6 (CSB) Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes wrapped around their chests.**

**John saw the veil of the Holy of Holies part, and out of the inner sanctuary of the Temple appeared “seven angels” (v. 6) who had been selected to administer God’s bowl judgements.**

**Revelation 15:6 (CSB) Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes wrapped around their chests.**

**They are holding “the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles” (v. 6).**

Revelation 15:6 (CSB) Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, **bright linen**, with golden sashes wrapped around their chests.

**Bright linen** is symbolic of the purity of the angels, their righteous character, and the righteous act of God in pouring out His wrath on the earth.

Revelation 15:6 (CSB) Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, bright linen, with **golden sashes** wrapped around their chests.

**The golden sashes** held the linen garment in place when the priest ministered in the Temple. Gold is symbolic of God's riches, beauty, greatness, and majesty. Christ wore the same apparel when He appeared to John (cp. 1:13).

**Revelation 15:7 (CSB) One of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.**

**4 living creatures (ch. 4), angelic beings of worship. One gave to the 7 angels 7 golden bowls full of the wrath (thumou) of God.**

**Revelation 15:7 (CSB) One of the four living creatures...**

**4 living creatures - These guardians of the heavenly throne appear 7 times in Revelation (4:6; 5:6; 6:1; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4). Their assignment on this occasion is ominous and foreboding.**

God's anger, His wrath, His last judgements on the earth are carefully and reverently passed to the 7 messengers of destruction. There is no doubt that what they are assigned will come to pass. It comes from the God who lives forever and ever. The Lord is everlasting. He will send His divine judgement on His time, and that time has come.



Revelation 15:8 (CSB) Then the temple was filled with **smoke** from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

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Revelation 15:1-8

Following the angels out of the temple comes **smoke**, symbolizing God's majesty and glory, His awesomeness and His wrath.

**Revelation 15:8 (CSB) Then the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God...**

**When God made a covenant with Abraham, He passed through the divided pieces of the sacrifice in the smoking furnace and burning lamp (Genesis 15:17). When Moses received God's law on Mount Sinai, God revealed His holiness with fire and smoke (Exodus 19:18).**

**Revelation 15:8 (CSB) Then the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God...**

**After Israel placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, God's presence was symbolized with smoke and fire (Exodus 40:34-35). In Solomon's Temple the glory of the Lord filled the holy place in the form of a cloud (1 Kings 8:10-11).**

Revelation 15:8 (CSB) Then the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God...

**This is an ongoing reminder of God's holiness. God's glory is always manifested during the time of His judgement. Smoke from God's glory made entering the Temple impossible until His seething indignation was poured out.**

**Revelation 15:8 (CSB) ...and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.**

**No one may enter his presence until the task of judgment has been completed. Life cannot go on as normal until evil is driven from God's creation.**

# Prelude to Armageddon

Revelation 15:1-8

**MODERN APPLICATIONS**

**One of the major themes of Revelation is that of the new exodus. The exodus was the greatest saving act of God in the Old Testament as he rescued his people from slavery in Egypt, judged their enemies, consecrated them as his own people, and led them to the promised land.**

**So powerful was Israel's experience of redemption through the exodus that it became the primary pattern for how God would offer final and ultimate salvation. Jesus becomes the Passover Lamb of God (5:9–10) as his cross/resurrection parallels the exodus event itself.**



**Just as God poured out plagues of judgment on Pharaoh and his army, so he is faithful to judge the enemies of his people and vindicate their suffering. His liberated followers, now united by the Holy Spirit, are being formed into a kingdom of priests dedicated to serving God (1:6; 5:10; Exod. 19:5–6).**

**While they are protected spiritually in the wilderness, their journey is not without trials and tribulations (12:6–17). They anticipate their arrival in the new heaven and new earth, where God will dwell among them (21:1–7). Having been safely delivered to this new promised land, they will sing a new song celebrating God’s faithfulness, covenant love, and sovereign majesty.**

1. We can praise God for his righteous character that brings forth justice and vindication. Worship may be defined as our most intimate and sacred response to God's character and actions. This passage is packed full of descriptions of both.

**He is the Lord God Almighty, King of the nations, holy, eternal, glorious, and powerful.**

**His deeds are great, marvelous, just, true, righteous, and full of wrath against his**

**enemies. This text offers a clean and bright canvas on which to portray God's nature as both great and good.**

**How often our worship turns inward and loses its power or turns outward and loses its focus. Worship that is God-centered allows us to celebrate aspects of his character that are too often ignored, such as his faithfulness to judge evil and bring justice for his people.**

**Just as believers cry “How long, O Lord?”  
when they suffer at the hands of ungodly  
people and evil systems (6:9–11), so they  
celebrate and worship when God makes things  
right.**

**The forces of darkness don't deserve to win. And they won't win. They won't get away with harming us and the people we love who belong to the Lord. They deceive and manipulate and abuse and bring death all around. God is to be praised for judging evil (16:5–6; 19:1–6).**

2. God will be worshiped and glorified by believers from many nations. Revelation does not advocate universalism, but it does strongly suggest that God's new exodus community will come from many nations, over which God will be king (15:3).



People from every tribe, language, people, and nation will “come and worship” the Lord (15:4; Ps. 86:9), thus fulfilling the initial promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:3), the hope of the prophets (Dan. 7:14; Zech. 2:11), and the great commission of Jesus himself (Matt. 28:18–20).

**The call to the nations to fear God and give him glory (Rev. 14:6–7) is not answered positively by all, but many do respond and experience God’s saving mercy (Rev. 21:24–26; 22:2). Shouldn’t the church strive now to reflect God’s goal of a multicultural people?**



# Prelude to Armageddon

Revelation 15:1-8

**OLD TESTAMENT CONNECTIONS**

**Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another great and awe-inspiring sign in heaven: seven angels with the seven last plagues; for with them God's wrath will be completed.**

**Leviticus 26:21 "If you act with hostility toward me and are unwilling to obey me, I will multiply your plagues seven times for your sins.**

**Revelation 15:3 They sang the song of God's servant Moses and the song of the Lamb: Great and awe-inspiring are your works, Lord God, the Almighty; just and true are your ways, King of the nations.**

**Amos 4:13 He is here: the one who forms the mountains, creates the wind, and reveals his thoughts to man, the one who makes the dawn out of darkness and strides on the heights of the earth. The Lord, the God of Armies, is his name.**

**Psalm 111:2 The Lord's works are great, studied by all who delight in them.**

**Psalm 139:14 I will praise you because I have been remarkably and wondrously made. Your works are wondrous, and I know this very well.**

**Psalm 145:17 The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all his acts.**

**Psalm 92:5 How magnificent are your works, Lord, how profound your thoughts!**

**Revelation 15:4 Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All the nations will come and worship before you because your righteous acts have been revealed.**

*Revelation 15:1-8*

**Psalm 86:9 All the nations you have made will come and bow down before you, Lord, and will honor your name.**

**Jeremiah 10:6–7 Lord, there is no one like you. You are great; your name is great in power. 7Who should not fear you, King of the nations? It is what you deserve. For among all the wise people of the nations and among all their kingdoms, there is no one like you.**

**Malachi 1:11 “My name will be great among the nations, from the rising of the sun to its setting. Incense and pure offerings will be presented in my name in every place because my name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord of Armies.**



**Revelation 15:5 After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened.**

**Exodus 38:21 1This is the inventory for the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, that was recorded at Moses's command. It was the work of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar son of Aaron the priest.**

**Revelation 15:5** After this I looked, and the heavenly temple—the tabernacle of testimony—was opened.

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**Exodus 40:34** The cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

**Revelation 15:6** Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, dressed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes wrapped around their chests.

**Leviticus 26:21** “If you act with hostility toward me and are unwilling to obey me, I will multiply your plagues seven times for your sins.

**Revelation 15:7 One of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.**

**Psalm 75:8 For there is a cup in the Lord's hand, full of wine blended with spices, and he pours from it. All the wicked of the earth will drink, draining it to the dregs.**

**Isaiah 51:17** Wake yourself, wake yourself up! Stand up, Jerusalem, you who have drunk the cup of his fury from the Lord's hand; you who have drunk the goblet to the dregs—the cup that causes people to stagger.

**Isaiah 51:22** This is what your Lord says—the Lord, even your God, who defends his people—“Look, I have removed from your hand the cup that causes staggering; that goblet, the cup of my fury. You will never drink it again.

**Jeremiah 25:15 This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, said to me: “Take this cup of the wine of wrath from my hand and make all the nations to whom I am sending you drink from it.**

**Revelation 15:8** Then the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

**1 Kings 8:10–11** When the priests came out of the holy place, the cloud filled the Lord's temple, and because of the cloud, the priests were not able to continue ministering, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

**2 Chronicles 5:13–14** The trumpeters and singers joined together to praise and thank the Lord with one voice. They raised their voices, accompanied by trumpets, cymbals, and musical instruments, in praise to the Lord: For he is good; his faithful love endures forever. The temple, the Lord's temple, was filled with a cloud. 14 And because of the cloud, the priests were not able to continue ministering, for the glory of the Lord filled God's temple.





# Prelude to Armageddon

## Revelation 15:1-8

**SUMMARY**

## Key Themes of Revelation 15:1–8

- God's condemnation of evil flows out of his holy and righteous character.
- Believers can celebrate that God's righteous character brings justice and vindication in answer to their prayers.
- The victorious people of God will include believers from all nations.



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## Revelation 15:1-8

**CONCLUSION**

**What a sign to the ungodly people on the earth, who chose to shun the worship of a holy God to follow the beast. The seven angels stand ready, awaiting the final signal to pour out God's wrath. That signal will soon be given. Indeed, it is only 1 verse away.**

**One day God's wrath was poured out on Jesus because of what He did for sinners. One day God's wrath will be poured out on sinners because of what they did with Jesus. When that day comes no one or no thing will be able to stay the hand of God's judgement.**

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**Revelation 15:1-8**

**The door of salvation will completely close between God and man. He will rather knock down the door separating heaven from earth as he floods the world with His final judgements. It will truly be “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).**



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## Revelation 15:1-8