

Text: Revelation 15
Title: God's Holy Justice
Time: 3/25/2018 am
Place: NBBC

Intro – In his book, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life*, the atheist Richard Dawkins wrote this about ultimate justice from an evolutionary perspective: “In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, some people are going to get hurt, other people are going to get lucky, and you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice. The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference. As the unhappy poet A. E. Houseman put it: ‘For Nature, heartless, witless Nature/Will never know nor care.’ DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music” [(New York: Basic Books, 1995), p. 133].

For the atheist, there is no such thing as ultimate moral justice, because there is no such thing as righteousness, or as sin, or as judgment to come. For them, the Holocaust happened as a dance to the DNA of the German high command.

In contrast, the Book of Revelation reveals the true picture of our universe. It tells us that it is a creation, existing by the will of and in dependence upon its Creator. It tells us that the Holocaust happened in rebellion against His righteous nature and law, and it promises a day of ultimate justice for the perpetrators of sin and evil.

Few passages of Scripture affirm God's ultimate holy justice more forcibly than Revelation 15. On the timeline of this prophecy of future events, we have come to a predic-

tion about the beginning of the end of evil in the world. We learn here that God will bring evil in the world to an end in ultimate justice. Our passage prepares us for the concluding days of the Great Tribulation period, a time of God's final judgments described as the outpouring of seven golden bowls of wrath.

This morning, I want us to understand three things about our God's holy justice from the chapter.

I. God's holy justice satisfies His great and awesome wrath against evil and sin (vv. 1, 5-8).

Ill: Dawkins claimed in his book that the universe does not care about right and wrong because there is really no such thing as right or wrong. In a more recent work called *The God Delusion*, however, Dawkins advocates his own "Ten Commandments" filled with moral advice about how to do right and avoid doing wrong.

The fact of the matter is, we all know that right and wrong exist, Dawkins included. We as God's creatures are not indifferent to morality because our Creator is not indifferent to morality. We have been created in His image, and so we can function with no other understanding when it comes to the need for justice in our moral universe.

Appl: God's holy justice is demanded by His wrath against evil and sin. Wrath is the opposite of indifference. God is not indifferent when we serve something else as god before serving Him. He is not indifferent when we claim to worship Him our way and not His way. He is not indifferent when we take His name in vain. He is not indifferent when we refuse to set aside the Lord's Day as holy for assembly. He is not indifferent when we dishonor our mother and fa-

ther. He is not indifferent when we commit murder or hatred. He is not indifferent when we commit adultery or extra-marital sexual lust. He is not indifferent when we steal. He is not indifferent when we lie. He is not indifferent when we covet what others have.

No, He is wrathful in response to all evil and sin. When He executes His wrath against these things smoke fills the sanctuary (v. 8). None can enter before His presence until that wrath is satisfied. His wrath pours out plagues on the sin and evil He sees. This is not indifference.

The justice that satisfies our God's wrath against sin and evil is a holy justice. The holiness of this work of God is indicated in a number of ways in our passage: the judgment comes from the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle of testimony (v. 5); it is executed by seven angels who are clothed in pure white linen and priestly golden belts around their chests (v. 6); the bowls containing the wrath to be poured out are golden and distributed to the angels by one of the cherubim (v. 7), a creature who rests not day and night proclaiming the holiness of God (Rev. 4:8). This is holy justice.

I am reminded as we read of this great and awesome holiness of our God and His wrath against evil and sin, that this same God calls us to holiness, "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 20:7); "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, 'Be ye holy; for I am holy'" (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

Ill: We often sing a song written by a 19th century layman, the treasurer of the Bethesda Free Chapel in Sutherland, England, who helped finance D. L. Moody's revivals in London and Scotland, William Dunn Longstaff:

“Take time to be holy, Speak oft with thy Lord;
Abide in Him always, And feed on His Word:
Make friends of God’s children, Help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

“Take time to be holy, The world rushes in;
Spend much time in secret With Jesus alone:
By looking to Jesus Like Him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

“Take time to be holy, Let Him be thy guide,
And run not before Him Whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow Still follow thy Lord,
And looking to Jesus, Still trust in His Word.

“Take time to be holy, Be calm in thy soul;
Each thought and each motive Beneath His control;
Thus led by His Spirit To fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted For service above.”

If we are children of the Holy Father, we will want to strive to be holy as He is holy. That last line has it correct. We shall be fitted for service above by being made perfectly holy, like our Father in heaven is holy. We have some examples of this in our passage, which brings us to our second point about God’s holy justice.

II. God’s holy justice rights every wrong suffered by His people (vv. 2-3).

Appl: You may remember from Chapter 13 that the false prophet will execute those on the earth who refuse to worship the image of the antichrist he sets up that last 3.5 years of the Great Tribulation period (Rev. 13:11-18). Some will resist, likely many of the 144,000 mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 14.

Their suffering will have been brutal, but our chapter tells us that those who are slaughtered by the antichrist in this way are those who have conquered or have overcome the antichrist (v. 2; KJV: "gotten victory"). As God executes His holy justice, it is their justice. God's victory is their victory.

They rejoice in that victory with a song accompanied by lyres of God, one called "the song of Moses the slave of God," and "the song of the Lamb," the Son of God. The song praises God's greatness as the Almighty ("great and awesome are your works"), and His goodness as King of the nations ("righteous and true are your ways"). We endeavor to do that each Sunday with a hymn of adoration focused on God's greatness and a hymn of assurance focused on His goodness.

Can we sing those hymns the way these victorious saints will sing some day? Is God's victory our victory? Do we sing as those who have overcome the spirit of antichrist in our day?

Or is the victory of God's holy justice something that will one day expose the fact that we were unwilling to suffer the wrongs His people are called to suffer in this world dominated by the spirit of the antichrist? Will that day show that we loved the world and its songs, instead of Christ?

Every hardship for Christ will be worth it all someday. If we shrink from our duty in spite of hardship now, what victory shall we have to sing about then? Well, there will always be one victory that will always cause true saints to sing, the theme of our last point this morning.

III. God's holy justice has revealed His righteous acts that save (vv. 3-4).

Ill: One of my favorite songs to sing is one in the *Praises* songbook our choir uses titled, "The Blood of Christ Jesus." The song has a nice simple tune and a great text, but it is not the tune and the text alone that make it one of my favorites. What makes it a favorite for me is that it is the one song I ever say as a duet with my mom. I think I was in high school at the time. Mom had a beautiful voice and carried the melody. I sang the alto an octave lower than written. I am thankful that I had a mom with whom I could sing a song about "The Blood of Christ Jesus" as a duet.

Appl: I struggled this past week for a time with understanding the sense in which this song of the faithful martyrs of the Great Tribulation period is both a song of Moses and a song of the Lamb (v. 3). At first I thought that perhaps the significance was that Moses wrote the song, and that the Lamb is the One whom the song is about. But the more I thought about it, the more I have come to understand that we have to take these genitives in the same sense. In other words, this song is a song of Moses in the same sense that it is a song of the Lamb.

So what I believe the Lord wants us to understand here is that this song is something like a heavenly duet. Moses and the Lamb are able to sing together the song of God's holy justice.

Moses is the lawgiver. This song is a song of Moses because its truth rests on the fact that God's holiness demands justice before God's law. God could not just be indifferent about sin and evil. His law's demands are met by the exercise of God's holy justice, and so we have here a song of Moses.

But this song is also a song of the Lamb because its truth rests on the fact that the justice demanded by God's holiness has been met by the One who can now justify sinners because He is the Lamb. He is the one who accomplished the righteous acts that have been revealed or made manifest, which are mentioned in the song (v. 4; "judgments" = "righteousness of saints" in 19:8).

When the song speaks of God's righteous acts having been revealed, I believe it speaks of two acts of the Lamb that justify sinners. First, He died on the cross to atone for our sins; second, He arose again victorious over death and sin and evil for our justification unto life. Those are the two righteous acts that save. They are the gospel.

Paul put it the same truth this way: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; 22 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; 24 Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: 25 Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; 26 To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: **that he might be just, and the justifier** of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3:19-26).

Conclusion: Let's conclude with the question of verse 4: "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" (v. 4). Do we fear the Lord and glorify His name? God's holy justice satisfies His wrath against evil and sin, and we should be holy people who hate our evil and our sin. God's holy justice will right the wrongs suffered by His people. Are we willing to suffer those wrongs? God's holy justice has revealed righteous acts in the death and resurrection of Christ. Are we justified by that work today?

"A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, 'Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.' That is the distinction – the sermon, and the 'lightning and the thunder.' To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters."

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

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