

Rev 26-04-05b

We are looking at the concept of forever so that we can better understand the duration of God's judgments. There are no instances of God extending punishment beyond a set period. You have captivities that are of a limited duration.

You have the ending of an empire or of other powers on the earth. But in terms of unending torment, there are no examples anywhere in scripture unless you decide to understand Revelation 14 and Revelation 20 in that way. Let me conclude by going to the book of Jude and it's just a few pages back from where we are in Revelation.

And the seventh verse in Jude talks about Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them in a similar manner to these having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The vengeance of eternal fire. So it can't mean a fire that is actively and continually burning in the observable world.

So biblical eternal fire language seems to describe fire whose source, character, or effect is divine and irrevocable. Sourced in God and there's no coming back from it. The effect, the end result is what is eternal, not the actual perpetration of the fire.

So we don't require the combustion to continue indefinitely or endlessly in a straightforward physical sense. But a wooden reading of the passage might give that impression. So when you see terms like forever, forever and ever, smoke rising forever, day and night, we wanna be cautious and condition the literal understanding of those with the recognition of the character of God, the purpose of God, and understanding that in most of these cases, especially when you look at, say, the Aaronic priesthood, the destruction of Edom that we saw in Isaiah 34, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah depicted in Jude, it is the result that is everlasting and eternal.

God's judgment in the revelation, the seals, the trumpets, the thunders, and the bowls are given with a sense of finality. The flood in the day of Noah had a finality and God is never going to do it again. It has results that have extended to the present day and beyond.

And the passages to keep in mind here, just by way of review of this particular little digression, Exodus 21, verse 6, Exodus 40, verse 15, Jonah 2, verse 6, Matthew 24, 3, Isaiah 34, 9, and 10, Jude, verse 7, and with all of those as background, you can then look at Revelation 14, 11, Revelation 19, 3, and Revelation 20, verse 10. So context, context, context. Sometimes the context is as wide as biblical revelation itself.

That said, I want to turn to a happier subject and that is in our passage, Revelation chapter 15, we see a great sign in heaven, great and marvelous. You have the seven angels with the seven last plagues, but John says, I saw a sea of glass mingled with fire and those who have victory over the beast, over his image and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass,

having harps of God. Harps of God, why do they need harps? What is it with the harps? I'm intrigued that there are musical instruments right there in the presence of God before the throne.

So I did a little quick study on harps and what you discover is that there are very few instruments that are used to accompany singing in scripture. You have percussion instruments, you can marry them with tambourines and cymbals and the cymbals they used, as I said last time, were sort of like finger cymbals. They're like castanets, except made of brass.

And you see these even in some Middle Eastern contexts of dancing and such. But in Hebrew, there are two words used. One represents the lyre, L-Y-R-E, and the other is the harp.

And in the Psalms, you repeatedly have references to praise with the harp. This is the Hebrew kinor, K-I-N-N-O-R. And in Greek, it is the kithara, K-I-T-H-A-R-A.

These are associated with the formal praise of God. And these were larger instruments. So in Greek, there is only the one instrument referred to, and it is the lyre, which is the smaller instrument.

I won't go into great detail. I could expand and extend on this, but I'll give you the essence of it very briefly, because we have other things to cover here in this session. But the lyre was an instrument of seven strings.

The harp was an instrument of 10 strings. There are exceptions, but remember, sometimes you will hear David say, "'Praise the Lord' on an instrument of 10 strings." That's the bigger, fuller, orchestral-type harp. The lyre was a personal instrument that was held by an individual and played as an instrument of seven strings.

Do you notice that in these stringed instruments, you have seven and 10? This is the beautiful music side of those numbers. This isn't the beast with seven heads and 10 horns. This is not the nations in Canaan that start out as 10, but three are deposed, and Joshua has to go in and conquer the other seven.

But this combination of seven and 10 is significant throughout scripture because of the symbolic value of seven as the number of perfection in heaven, and 10 as the number of completion or wholeness. You count things with your 10 fingers, so to speak. But the tonality of the lyre, and that is what is in our passage here.

The Greek kithara was an instrument of seven strings, and you can basically think of this in terms of the sound of music, Julie Andrews, the little kids, and you remember the song that she teaches them that helps them understand the vocal notes of do, re, mi, fa, so, la, and ti. If you count those up, how many are there? Seven. Those are the white notes in an octave on the piano, and that is a major scale.

But you can use those same seven notes, and if you flat the E or you flat the A, you can have a

minor scale. And by different modalities or tonalities, these seven strings could be tuned to produce beautiful music. You kind of wish that a guitar had seven strings instead of six so that it could mimic a biblical lyre.

But that is the instrument that is in use here, and it is an individual instrument. It's not like an organ where you play one organ at the front of the church and everybody sings to it, or a piano where one person plays and the entire group sings to it. The lyre was designed to be operated by multiple individuals.

So in the choirs that were organized by David and in the heavenly choir, there are numerous individuals who have these lyres, and it is the chorus of lyres just as the chorus of voices that praises God. And gives Him glory. And it is a reminder that it is our individual hearts that join together in praise, both with voice and with, in this case, this instrument.

And so there is instrumental music in heaven. Those of you that have learned an instrument can expect to play some form of instrument in the eternal future. All of those hours of practice evidently are not wasted.

And I think our skills will transfer. And those who have a gift in the area of music will continue to use that gift to praise the Lord. And this has implications for other gifts that we develop and under the ministry of God's Holy Spirit express in this age.

There is nothing to say that those will not continue to operate in a much enhanced and expanded fashion in the ages to come. So whatever your area of enthusiasm, whatever area the Holy Spirit blesses in a special way in your life, pay attention and value it and cultivate it. Because certainly in the area of music, the music that people express now is moving into the eternal future.

I fully expect David is gonna be singing his Psalms and we will get to hear the original tunes. I can't wait for that. I've told you before, there was a rumor that went around back when I was in seminary, that the vowel points in Hebrew were a way to express musical notes and somebody had the theory that you could take these marks and recover the tunes.

It's all nonsense, but we will hear all 150 Psalms and more importantly, what we're gonna look at for the remainder of this session, the Song of Moses. Because what is the song that they express here? They sing the Song of Moses in verse three, the servant of God and the Song of the Lamb saying, this is Revelation 15, three and four. And here are some of the lyrics, great and marvelous your works, Lord God almighty, just and true your ways, O King of the saints or nations.

I personally think that this should be nations, King of the nations. Who shall not fear you, O Lord and glorify your name for you alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before you for your judgments have been manifested.

And this is why I think from verse four, King of nations is appropriate in verse three. The Song

of Moses, the servant of God and the Song of the Lamb. What do we know about the Song of Moses? There are actually two songs of Moses.

Do you remember? Moses has two songs. He's got one at the beginning and one at the end. So what is the first Song of Moses? You have to go back to Exodus.

I haven't lost my place here. The Song of Moses in Exodus chapter 15. What are these individuals gonna be singing and can we reflect on that content? So the Song of Moses, Exodus chapter 15.

Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord and spoke saying, I will sing to the Lord for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and its rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song and he has become my salvation.

He is my God and I will praise him. My father's God and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war.

The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea. His chosen captains also are drowned in the Yom Suf.

The depths have covered them. They sank to the bottom like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power.

Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. And in the greatness of your excellence, you have overthrown those who rose against you. You sent forth your wrath.

It consumed them like stubble. And with the blast of your nostrils, the waters were gathered together. The floods stood upright like a heap.

The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake.

I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword.

My hand shall destroy them. You blew with your wind. The sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you? Glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders. You stretched out your right hand.

The earth swallowed them. You in your mercy have led forth the people whom you have redeemed. You have guided them in your strength to your holy habitation.

How apropos, don't you think? These words to be sung in the presence of God right at this point in Revelation chapter 15. The people will hear and be afraid. Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia.

Then the chiefs of Edom will be dismayed. Remember, Edom is the subject of Isaiah 34. The mighty men of Moab, also mentioned in Isaiah 34.

Trembling will take hold of them. All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them.

By the greatness of your arm, they will be as still as stone. Till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over whom you have purchased. The redeemed.

Remember the description of 144,000 as the virgins who have not been defiled. They are faultless before the throne. Remember the three elements that we saw there.

They are redeemed. They are sanctified and they are purified. Those whom you have purchased, you will bring them, verse 17, in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance.

Remember, these are standing at Mount Zion. No accident. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which you have made for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.

Remember, this is Exodus 15. They haven't even gotten to Sinai. The 10 commandments have not been given.

They're out of Egypt, but they've not been to Sinai. They haven't wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. They haven't entered the land.

They haven't built the tabernacle yet. And yet, anticipating prophetically that there will be a temple and it will be in Zion, here is the song of Moses. Think about the context of this.

Think about where they are and how much still lies ahead. You will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which you have made for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. That which Moses is gonna make according to the pattern shown to him in the mountain, him and the spirit-inspired and enabled workmen are going to create a copy, a shadow of the reality in glory, which we are looking at in Revelation 15.

So that is the song of Moses in Exodus chapter 15. Now, there is a second song of Moses and it is lengthy. And for the sake of time, I'm going to omit the center because the center is also a little bit depressing.

But we're gonna look at the beginning and we're gonna look at the end. The second song of Moses is given to us in Deuteronomy chapter 32. It is introduced at the end of chapter 31.

And again, I quibble with the chapter division here. I think they should have started a fresh chapter one verse earlier. But remember, Moses is told in Deuteronomy 31, 14, behold, the day's approach when you must die.

Call Yeshua and present yourselves in the tabernacle of meeting so that I may inaugurate him. Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of meeting. The Lord

appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud.

Pillar of cloud stood above the door of the tabernacle and so on. You can read all of this. And God says in verse 20, skipping quite a bit, when I have brought them to the land flowing with milk and honey, of which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them and they will provoke me and break my covenant.

Then it shall be when many evils and troubles have come upon them, what is the time of Jacob's trouble? 70th week of Daniel, the tribulation that we are now covering. Then it shall be when many evils and troubles have come upon them that this song will testify against them as a witness, for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants. For I know the inclination of their behavior today, even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them.

Therefore, Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the children of Israel. Skip down to verse 30. Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel, the words of this song until they were ended.

Chapter 32 of Deuteronomy. Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak. Hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

Let my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as rain drops on the tender herb and as showers on the grass, for I proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the rock.

His work is perfect. For all His ways are justice, a God of truth and without injustice. Righteous and upright is He.

They have corrupted themselves. They are not His children because of their blemish, a perverse and crooked generation. Do you thus deal with the Lord, O foolish and unwise people? Is He not your father who bought you? Has He not made you and established you? Remember the days of old.

Consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you. When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel.

For the Lord's portion is His people. Jacob is the place of His inheritance. Found Him in a desert land and in the wasteland, a howling wilderness, encircled Him, instructed Him, kept Him as the apple of His eye.

As an eagle stirs up its nest, hovering over its young, spreading out its wings, taking them up, carrying them on its wings. So the Lord alone led Him and there was no foreign God with Him.

Made Him ride the heights of the earth that He might eat the produce of the fields.

Made Him draw honey from the rock and from the flinty rock, curds from the cattle and milk of the flock with the fat of lambs, rams of the breed of Bashan and goats. With the choicest wheat, you drank wine, the blood of the grapes. But Yeshurun grew fat and kicked.

You grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese. Then He forsook God who made Him and scornfully esteemed the rock of His salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods and this goes on for another 20 verses or so detailing the failure, the distraction, the lack of appreciation, the lack of dedication, the lack of sanctification and purification that characterizes Israel in those days.

I'm gonna skip down past all of that to verse 34. You can look up above just in 32 and 33. Their vine is the vine of Sodom and the fields of Gomorrah.

Their grapes are grapes of gall. Their clusters are bitter. Their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of cobras.

God says in verse 34, is this not laid up in store with me, sealed up among my treasures? Vengeance is mine and recompense. Their foot shall slip in due time for the day of their calamity is at hand and the things to come hasten upon them. For the Lord will judge His people.

By the way, we are His people. The Lord will judge His people and have compassion on His servants. When He sees that their power is gone and there is no one remaining, bond or free, He will say, where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge? Who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise and help you and be your refuge.

Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the Lord. He'll be like a shrub in the desert and will not see good when it comes. I insert here for reference.

Verse 39, now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides me. I kill and I make alive, I wound and I heal, nor is there any who can deliver from my hand. For I raise my hand to heaven and say, as I live forever, if I whet my glittering sword and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies and repay those who hate me.

I will make my arrows drunk with blood and my sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives from the heads of the leaders of the enemy. Then such a powerful turn in verse 43. Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants.

Remember the souls under the altar? How long, O Lord? Here's your white robe, rest a little while longer. Be patient. The world may seem unjust, life may seem unfair, circumstance may be just unaccountably harsh.

Be patient. Wait. He will avenge the blood of his servants and render vengeance to his adversaries.

He will provide atonement for his land and his people. So Moses came with Joshua, the son of Nun, and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. And Moses finished speaking all these words to all Israel.

And he said to them, set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe all the words of this law, for it is not a futile thing for you because it is your life. And by this word, you shall prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess. And the next episode there is the death of Moses.

This is the song which is going to be sung in heaven by these individuals in Revelation chapter 15. So important to understand these individuals. And before the bowls are poured out, there is a reminder.

Why are these severe Holocaust judgments poured out on the earth? Listen to the song of Moses. Go back and read all of the verses in Deuteronomy. Vengeance is mine.

I will recompense, says the Lord. But the summary here in verse three and four, great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.

Who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? What is the matter with someone who doesn't recognize Almighty God in His grace, offering to adopt us as His children and to be our heavenly Father, to bless us, to sustain us, to give us life and peace and purpose and a future, purchasing us with the blood of His Son, offering us resurrection life, pictured and given as an archetype in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Himself. After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels, having the seven plagues clothed in pure, bright linen and having their chest girded with golden bands.

Remember the depiction of the Lord Jesus in chapter one? Gird about with a golden band on His chest, clothed in white linen. There is no distance between the salvation of God in righteousness and the judgment of God in righteousness. The Lord Jesus is the Lamb as it had been slain, redeeming us, cleansing us from sin.

It is that same righteousness and justice pictured here with the white linen and the golden band that characterizes these angels. Verse seven, one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels, seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. Notice, these angels come out of the temple and they don't have the bowls of judgment.

They have been in the temple, in the presence of God in heaven. They emerge and these bowls of judgment are handed to them. The content of these bowls is the fruit of the wine press that

we saw in chapter 14.

The wrath of God will be poured out in righteousness and justice mediated by angels. We've seen an increasing angelic role throughout Revelation. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.

And no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. That by the way, Revelation chapter 15 is the shortest chapter in the book. And it prepares us for chapter 16, where a loud voice from the temple says to the seven angels, go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.

That is where we are going to pick up next time. We will look at these bowls for your homework. Take a look at the bowls.

If you have a chance, you have a few moments, read chapter 16, look at the bowls as they are enumerated one through seven. Go back and check the seven angels sounding their trumpets. See if you notice anything.

There is a symmetry. There is a correspondence that is instructive as with all of the plan and purpose of God, whether you look at it on the macro scale or the micro scale, our God is a God of design and purpose. He is a God of grace and glory.

He is also a God of judgment and glory. His glory is reflected in salvation, but you look at the temple filled with smoke from the glory of God as final retributive justice is poured out on the earth. God is just as glorious in his judgment and elimination of sin and evil as he is in expressing his love and grace in delivering us from the wrath to come.

It's a powerful reminder of what an opportunity we have to be on the positive side of God's character and to exploit what the Lord Jesus purchased for us on the cross. Most importantly, the eternal life pictured in his resurrection, something we can live out day by day as we look forward to its full expression in the ages to come. Hope you have a blessed resurrection Sunday.

We'll close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for the revelation of your intentions, your plans and purposes revealed in anticipatory form in Israel in the Old Testament, the content given to us so beautifully in the songs of Moses and Exodus and Deuteronomy and reflected and expressed again in your presence as we see it in Revelation chapter 15. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will remind us of the wonderful place we occupy as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, members of his body, participating in the opportunity to reflect his glory, to bear his witness and testimony and to prepare ourselves for service and function now and in the ages to come.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name, amen.