

Revelation 15:5—The Testimony of the Tabernacle and Repentance

Last week we learned about the Temple of the Tabernacle of Testimony. In the Holy of Holies there was the ark of the covenant, with the mercy seat on top, and above the mercy seat was the shekinah glory of God, the manifestation of the presence of God, and God Himself would be the only light in that place or room of the tabernacle. We started talking about what the Tabernacle testified. This week I would like to add a little to this before we move on. We'll start by reading:

Hebrews 9:1-5 NLT paraphrase

That first covenant between God and Israel had regulations for worship and a place of worship here on earth. ² There were two rooms in that Tabernacle. In the first room were a lampstand, a table, and sacred loaves of bread on the table. This room was called the Holy Place. ³ Then there was a curtain, and behind the curtain was the second room called the Most Holy Place.

⁴ In that room were a gold incense altar and a wooden chest called the Ark of the Covenant, which was covered with gold on all sides. Inside the Ark were a gold jar containing manna, Aaron's staff that sprouted leaves, and the stone tablets of the covenant. ⁵ Above the Ark were the cherubim of divine glory, whose wings stretched out over the Ark's cover, the place of atonement. But we cannot explain these things in detail now.

Inside the box were three emblems that God had told them to put there. They are a symbol of all the sin of mankind.

1. The **manna** reminded Israel of God's provision and their ungratefulness
2. **Aaron's rod** reminded Israel of their rebellion against God's authority
3. The **tablets of the covenant** reminded Israel of their failure to keep the Ten Commandments and the rest of the law

Let's go through them one by one. First, there was the 10 commandments that were written by the finger of God on the two stone tablets. When Moses came down from the Mt Sinai and found the people worshipping the golden calf, he broke the two stone tablets, which was a picture of man's rejection of God's moral law.

Second, there was the pot of manna, the special food that God provided for the Israelites during the 40 years in the wilderness. God rained it down on them every morning, 6 days a week, in the wilderness. They ate the same food every day for 40 years. At the start they complained that they didn't have enough variety, they wanted all the leeks and garlic and the other vegetables and meat that they used to have in Egypt. So in their hearts they would go back to Egypt, back into carnality or worldliness. So you could say that the pot of manna in the Ark was a picture of man's rejection of God's provision.

Third, there was Aaron's rod that budded, that was when the camp rebelled against Moses and Aaron and their leadership—they were about to have a big rebellion. So God told Moses to get all the leaders to come forward and stand before himself and Aaron. This is what happened.

Numbers 17:1-5, 8, 10-11 NLT paraphrase

Then the Lord said to Moses, ² “Tell the people of Israel to bring you twelve wooden staffs, one from each leader of Israel’s ancestral tribes, and inscribe each leader’s name on his staff. ³ Inscribe Aaron’s name on the staff of the tribe of Levi, for there must be one staff for the leader of each ancestral tribe. ⁴ Place these staffs in the Tabernacle in front of the Ark containing the tablets of the Covenant, where I meet with you. ⁵ Buds will sprout on the staff belonging to the man I choose. Then I will finally put an end to the people’s murmuring and complaining against you.”

8 When he went into the Tabernacle of the Covenant the next day, he found that Aaron’s staff, representing the tribe of Levi, had sprouted, budded, blossomed, and produced ripe almonds!

10 And the Lord said to Moses: “Place Aaron’s staff permanently before the Ark of the Covenant to serve as a warning to rebels. This should put an end to their complaints against me and prevent any further deaths.” 11 So Moses did as the Lord commanded him.

So basically, the rod that sprouted living leaves, blossoms and even ripe almonds was God’s conformation that the tribe of Levi was the priestly tribe and Aaron was the proper high priest. *So Aaron’s rod is a picture of man’s rejection of God’s leadership.*

The three together represented the sins of all of mankind. So when the high priest put the blood on the golden mercy seat, which had beneath it, inside, these symbols of man’s sin, it meant that the payment or propitiation for the sins of the nation of Israel had been paid, for one year. The wrath of God had been averted or turned away for one year for the nation of Israel.

Now going from the type or shadow to the real thing, the reality, the substance: when Jesus put His own precious blood on the permanent golden mercy seat in the heavenly Tabernacle of Testimony, it meant that the payment or propitiation for the sins of all mankind had been paid. So Jesus death on the cross averted or turned away the wrath of God, but not just for a year, and not just for the nation of Israel, but for the whole world, believers and unbelievers alike.

1 Jn 2:1-2 NKJV

My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² **And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins**, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

1 John 2:1-2 NLT

My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. ² **He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins**—and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

So what was the primary testimony of the Temple of the Tabernacle of Testimony? Jesus. He Himself, is the propitiation, the payment for my sins, your sins, and the sins of the whole world. God knew that there was no other way for man to be saved than for He Himself to pay our fine, so He did. He knew this even before He created mankind. Its purpose is to demonstrate that He loves us.

And this brings us back to the question that we asked last week, why was the Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony opened at this time? Because for those who reject God's provision of salvation, His gift of forgiveness, there is no other way to be saved, only a fearful expectation of judgement, and boy is it a fearful judgement. After we go through Revelation 16 you will be praising God that you were spared from the horrors of the 7 year tribulation.

Those Who Dwell on the Earth

There is one more thing that I would like to cover before we start chapter 16, and that is, *what is the real purpose and rationale of the judgements in Revelation, and why the unbelievers on earth really do deserve everything that is coming to them.* It's brought up in seven statements in the book of Revelation that have this clause in it—"those who dwell on the earth." The clause or phrase is repeated 7 times, and the purpose of the judgements is to judge those who refuse to believe, who are called, "those who dwell on the earth."

What does it mean? *Someone who so identifies with the things of this earth that they possess him.*

The phrase is used seven times in the book of Revelation:

1. Revelation 3:10 NKJV

Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from (out of) the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, **to test those who dwell on the earth.**

The word **test** means to put them through a test that will reveal their true character.

Notice here that God not only promises to keep us out of the **trial**, but also out of the time (**hour**) of the **trial**. This is a clear promise that He will keep the church out of the tribulation. God is clearly saying that this judgement is not for the church, it's for those who dwell on the earth.

2. Revelation 6:10 NKJV

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on **those who dwell on the earth?**"

Here we learn that **those who dwell on the earth** are the ones who torture and slaughter God's people during the 7 year tribulation.

3. Revelation 8:13 NKJV

And I looked, and I heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, "Woe, woe, woe to **the inhabitants of the earth [those who dwell on the earth—same Greek word]**, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!"

This shows that the last three trumpet judgements, which are called the three woes, are specifically against those who dwell on the earth. In other words, this is the purpose of such horrible judgement.

4. Revelation 11:10 NKJV

And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented **those who dwell on the earth**.

So you see here what their true character is; they rejoice in the death of God's servants or prophets. The antichrist is given authority to kill the two prophets, most likely Moses and Elijah, who minister during the first half or 3 1/2 years of the seven year tribulation on the streets of Jerusalem. The response of **those who dwell on the earth**, or as they are called in the NLT, "**the people who belong to this world**", is jubilation. There is no pity or remorse at all.

Remember again what the phrase means: Someone who so identifies with the things of this earth that they possess him.

5. Revelation 13:8 NKJV

All who **dwell on the earth** will worship him (the antichrist), whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Notice first that it's not the names that have been written in the book from the foundation of the world, but rather, it's the Lamb who has been slain from the foundation of the world—according to the Greek.

The point here though is that *none* of those who are called, "**those who dwell on the earth**" will have their names written in the book of life of the Lamb. The Lamb's book of Life is one of two books in God's bookkeeping system. It determines who is lost and who is saved. When someone believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour, and receives the gift of pardon that He bought for you by His death in your place, your name is written into the Lamb's book of life.

So what do we learn from this? Those who dwell on the earth will worship the antichrist, they will fall for him, they will be deceived.

6. Revelation 13:14 NKJV

And he [the false prophet] deceives **those who dwell on the earth**—by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling **those who dwell on the earth** to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

The false prophet performs signs in the presence of the antichrist which deceive **those who dwell on the earth**. Remember:

2 Thessalonians 2:9-11 NLT paraphrase

This man will come to do the work of Satan with counterfeit power and signs and miracles. ¹⁰ He will use every kind of evil deception to fool those on their way to destruction, because they refuse to love and accept the truth that would save them.

¹¹ So God will cause them to be greatly deceived, and they will believe these lies.

¹² Then they will be condemned for enjoying evil rather than believing the truth.

7. Revelation 17:8 NKJV

The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And **those who dwell on the earth** will marvel, **whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world**, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

As we covered a few weeks ago, there are two different books. The *Book of Life* and the *Lamb's Book of Life*. Concerning the *Book of Life*, the names of every person who would ever be born was written in this book, the *Book of Life*—they are only removed when they die, or in this case, receive the mark of the beast. This is different from the *Lamb's book of Life*, where your name is not written in it until you are born again—your name is entered when you believe.

The point here is that these people, **those who dwell on the earth**, by the end of the tribulation, no longer have their names written the *Book of Life*—they have taken the mark and have been doomed to eternal damnation. They have lost any chance of being saved. While your name is still in the *Book of Life* you still have a chance to be saved—usually this is until the day a person dies—many are born again on their death bed. But for **those who dwell on the earth**, once they have taken the mark, it is too late. Their names have been removed from the *Book of Life* before they are even dead, and they can never, ever, be written into the *Lamb's Book of Life*.

At the end of the ages, both books will have only believers names written in them. They will both end up with the same names written in each book. Of course, **those who dwell on the earth** will not be in them. Why? Because they have been ensnared by the things of this earth. It's such a danger for us all. Let's look at:

1 John 2:15-17 NKJV

Do not love the **world [world system]** or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

World (world system) is the Greek word *kosmos*. It refers, not just to the world, but also the world system. It looks at the world, not so much as a place, but the very elaborate system that controls it, and all of the things that are a part of this system. So God says to His children, “do not love the world system.” We are to be in the world, but not of the world.

v 15 If anyone **loves** the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

The word “**loves**” here is in the present tense, meaning those who habitually or continuously love the world. They have never loved the Father. They don't have the love of the Father in them. This is another way of referring to **those who dwell on the earth**. They are so ensnared by the things of the world that they have no time for God.

1 John 2:16 NKJV

For all that is in the **world [world system]**

— the lust of the flesh (craving for physical pleasure),

— the lust of the eyes (craving for everything we see),

— and the pride of life (pride in our achievements and possessions)

is not of the Father but is of the **world (world system)**.

We need to be aware of these things and overcome them.

Firstly, our love for physical pleasure (food, drugs, alcohol, sexual pleasures, touch...) whatever pleases our physical senses. This is where fasting is really powerful. We are actively putting down our flesh, wresting control back from our sinful nature and keeping those desires in check. We can fast from anything; food, facebook, TV, games, sport, ... you name it. If anything seems to be becoming an idol, just get rid of it for a while and put it back in its place. If it is wrong, then get rid of it completely.

Secondly, there is the lust of the eyes, the craving for the things we can see. This describes the “I want” mentality that advertisers play on so well. Whether it be beer, girls or the latest sports car or phone, our eyes see something and want it, we covet it. The easiest way to avoid these temptations is to avoid looking at those things. Get rid of the TV, disconnect the internet, and stay away from places where people don’t dress modestly.

Thirdly there is the pride of life, the pride we have in what we have achieved and possess. You could call it the, “hey, look at me” mentality. Whether it be our position or accomplishments at work, our reputation in the community or in the church, our financial status, our education or how we look, it doesn’t matter. These things can easily consume us and control us. The best way to overcome these temptations is to realise just how temporary those things are, and to remember the following verse:

Proverbs 29:25 AMP

The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever leans on, trusts in, and puts his confidence in the Lord is safe and set on high.

Why is the world system so dangerous? Because of who controls it.

1 John 5:19 NKJV

We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

This is Satan. We have to be careful that we don’t allow our lives to be so taken by the things of this world that it crowds God out. It’s so important for us to realise that the world system changes with every generation—it’s like the clothing fashions—always changing and we are never able to keep up with it.

“In my younger days I kept trying to get where it was at, but when I got there it was where it was.” (Hal Lindsay)

Jesus said that where your treasure is, there your heart is also. We need to be so careful that we don’t allow the things of the world to crowd out Jesus.

Repentance—Why is it important, what is it, and why should I

A major theme in Revelation chapter 16 is repentance, or the lack of, despite all of God’s efforts to get people’s attention. So I’ve decided that before we get into the horrific judgements described in Revelation 16, I will spend some time talking about repentance. Another reason I’m doing this is because easter is next week, and this is a topic that is very relevant.

These are the three questions that I will try to answer today.

Q 1 Is believing that Jesus died for my sins enough for me to go to heaven?

Mark 1:14b-15 NKJV

...Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, ¹⁵ and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. **Repent, and believe in the gospel.**”

Jesus makes it clear that we need to both repent **and** believe the gospel if we are going to be saved and go to heaven when we die. Jesus is saying that there are two things that are needed for a person to be saved—repent and believe. What is the difference?

Well, it's like two people about to jump out of an aeroplane. They both know about parachutes, but only one of them actually puts on the parachute. As a result one lives and one dies. They both believed that the parachute would save them, but only one put it on before they jumped.

Application:

A person may know and understand that Jesus is the payment for their sin, but unless they “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”, or repent, they have not received God’s gift of forgiveness.

Again, it's like God gives both people a parachute, but only one person picks up the parachute and puts it on—two people jump out of the plane, but only one person survives the jump. It sounds strange, but this is what it's like for a person who dies knowing about Christ, but who never repented. They knew that Jesus died for their sins, they even believed that it was true, but they never bothered to receive the gift. As a result, one person goes to heaven, one person goes to hell.

Jesus makes it very clear that we must repent in:

Luke 13:5 NKJV
but unless you **repent** you will all likewise **perish**.”

We first need to understand that “perish” and “be destroyed” means to remain separated from God forever in Hell, the Lake of Fire, being in torment forever, and not just physical death.

Q Why is repentance important? *If I don't repent, I will perish.*

So now we know why Repentance is important. The only way to avoid being separated from God in the Lake of Fire for eternity is to both repent and believe.

Q 2 What is Repentance?

Now, I know that I have to believe that Jesus death on the cross was the payment for my sins, but what does it mean to repent? This is our second question.

There is so much confusion over what this actually means in the life of a believer. So much so that the bible says that many will think that they are Christians and yet are not true believers. They are false converts, they knew about the parachute but never put it on:

Matthew 7:21-23 NLT paraphrase

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. **Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter.** ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, **‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’**”

Here we have two groups of people, both who call themselves Christians:
The first group... **you who break God's laws**—those who live to please themselves.
The second group... **those who actually do the will of My Father in heaven**—those who live to please God.

Do you see the contrast? I either live for myself, doing what I want, pleasing myself, no matter what the cost, or, I live for Jesus, doing what Jesus wants, wanting to please Him, no matter what the cost.

It's important to understand that going to church and calling yourself a Christian doesn't make you a Christian, just like living in a bird cage doesn't make you a bird. Only those who repent and believe are truly saved and are going to heaven.

Q 3 So what does it mean to repent?

Acts 26:17b-18 NLT paraphrase

Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles ¹⁸ to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.

Notice that repentance here is described as **turning from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God**. This simply means turning from a life of darkness, a life ruled by Satan and sinful desires, to a life of light that is ruled by God—a life that pleases God.

Then... repentance comes *before* forgiveness of sins.

Pictures of what repentance looks like

Repentance means putting Jesus first:

Luke 14:25-26 NLT paraphrase

A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ²⁶ **"If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else**—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. **Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.**

Simply put, Jesus must be first or most important in my life. Otherwise I cannot be His disciple.

Examples:

—Rich young ruler (read Matthew 19:16-26):

Q Did he put Jesus first? *No*. Could he be a disciple of Jesus? *No*. Was he saved? *No*. Is he going to heaven or hell when he dies? *Hell*.

—Zacchaeus (read Luke 19:1-10): He went from stealing money from people to being willing to give up his money and live a life that pleases God.

Q Did he put Jesus first? *Yes*. Could he be a disciple of Jesus? *Yes*. Was he saved? *Yes*. Is he going to heaven or hell when he dies? *Heaven*.

Repentance means being willing to suffer for Jesus (willing to give up a life of comfort and ease):

Luke 14:27 NLT paraphrase

And if you **do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.**

The bible makes it clear that a believer can expect to have some hard times because they choose to follow Jesus. The bible calls it persecution.

Example: A Muslim who comes to Christ—they are kicked out of their family, treated as if dead, mocked, lose their job, go hungry (e.g. do not receive UN food in Indonesia), are beaten and killed.

For us, it could mean losing friends, being laughed at, not being able to go to the parties, having to say no to our families etc.

Repentance means being willing to count the cost—am I willing to forsake all:

Luke 14:28, 33 NKJV

For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and **count the cost**, whether he has enough to finish it...

³³ So likewise, **whoever of you does not forsake all** [be willing to give up everything] **that he has cannot be My disciple.**

The idea is that to receive the new life that God has for us, we must leave the old life behind.

examples:

- changing sports
- moving house

Repentance means making Jesus the Lord or Master of my life:

Romans 10:9 NLT paraphrase

If you openly declare that **Jesus is Lord** [Owner, Master] **and** believe in your heart that **God raised Him** from the dead, **you will be saved.**

The word **Lord** here means master, owner, the boss. So in addition to understanding that Jesus' death takes care of my sin problem, I have to make the decision, to **openly declare**, that Jesus is not just the boss of the world, but that He is the boss of **me**, that He owns **me**. I choose to make Jesus my Master, and I will be His slave. I live to please God. God doesn't exist to please or serve me, as the prosperity gospel incorrectly implies.

So we can see that all these pictures of repentance are really the same thing.

Why should I repent? What is my motive? What would make me want to give up everything for Jesus?

We need to remember that repentance is far more than a simple change of behaviour. It must be a changed heart that leads to a change in behaviour. But what changes my heart?

Romans 2:4 NLT paraphrase

Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?

Romans 2:4 AMP

Or are you [so blind as to] trifle with and presume upon and despise and underestimate the wealth of His kindness and forbearance and long-suffering patience? Are you unmindful or actually ignorant [of the fact] that **God's kindness is intended to lead you to repent** (to change your mind and inner man to accept God's will)?

Look at how Peter and Paul introduce themselves:

Romans 1:1 NKJV

Paul, a **bondservant** [slave] of Jesus Christ

2 Peter 1:1 NKJV

Simon Peter, a **bondservant** (slave) and apostle of Jesus Christ,

Notice how the apostles Paul and Peter introduce themselves? As bondservants of Jesus Christ. This word bondservant is the answer to our question. Let's have a look at see what it means.

What is a bondservant? It is explained in the Old Testament. Poor people would sell themselves to another family as a slave so they would have food, clothing and somewhere to live in exchange for work. Every seven years the Israelite slaves would be set free. But sometimes, the slave would grow to love the family he served so much, that he wouldn't want to leave the family. He could make the decision to remain as a slave or servant of that family for the rest of his life. That family would then become responsible for looking after him. This is how it worked:

Exodus 21:5-6 NLT paraphrase

But the slave may declare, '**I love my master, my wife, and my children. I don't want to go free.**'⁶ If he does this, his master must present him before God. Then his master must take him to the door or doorpost and publicly **pierce his ear with an awl**. After that, **the slave will serve his master for life**.

This is what it means to be a bondservant. A slave who loves his master so much that he **doesn't want to leave**.

- **A bondservant is a willing slave. He will serve that family, not because he is forced to, but because he wants to.**
- **For the child of God who is walking with God, it's not "I got to", but "I get to" serve God.**

Jesus was the ultimate example. Jesus was a bondservant to the Father (Ps 40:6-8). Jesus did and said only what the Father showed and told Him to do. Jesus is our example:

John 6:38 NKJV

For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.

John 8:29b NLT paraphrase

For I [Jesus] always do what pleases Him [the Father]."

Q What do these verses tell us about Jesus? *He put the Father first.*

Application: What does this mean for us today?

Q Why did Jesus willingly choose to only do the things that pleased the Father?

John 15:9-11 NLT paraphrase

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. ¹⁰ **When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love.** ¹¹ I have told you these things so that you will be **filled with my joy**. Yes, **your joy will overflow!**

And the answer is... *Because He loved His Father so much. Jesus was a willing servant!*

Q Why should I love God?

Romans 5:8 NKJV

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Q Would you do that for anyone, especially your enemy? *No, but God sacrificed Himself for us while we still hated Him.*

This is my favourite verse that shows why it makes sense to love God, why my God is a God worth loving, why my God is worth sacrificing what I want for, why my God is worth giving up everything for.

Titus 3:3-8 NLT paraphrase

Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.

⁴ But—When God our Saviour revealed his kindness and love, ⁵ he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶ He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior. ⁷ Because of his grace he made us right in his sight and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.

Conclusion

If Jesus is not your Lord or Master, He is not your Saviour. Jesus only becomes our master when we understand the gospel and realise that He loves us and we choose to return His love. True repentance or change is motivated by my love for Jesus—it must start in my heart. I obey Jesus because I want to, because I love Him—I am a bond servant of Jesus.