

THE SERMONS, LECTURES, AND SONGS OF SIDNEY EDWARD COX

Revelation - Chapter 15
 Review of Revelation up to Chapter 15
 Chapter 15 – Seven Things Seen

Editorial Note: This is a lecture by Sidney Cox that was part of a series of lectures on the Book of the Revelation that he taught while on the theological teaching faculty at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute during the early part of 1962. He was 75 years of age at the time.

During the latter part of his life, Sidney Cox had developed a close relationship with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (“CMA”). CMA operates as a vast network of churches, similar to a “denomination.” Toccoa Falls Bible Institute was closely affiliated with the CMA, provided support to the Institute and the Institute sent many of its graduates into ministry within CMA churches. CMA and The Salvation Army, in which Sidney Cox served as an officer for 30 years previously in his life, share a similar theology and emphasis in Christian outreach.

From 1956 – 1960, Sidney and Violet Cox lived in Miami, Florida where Sidney was on the theological teaching faculty of the Miami Bible Institute, another CMA supported institution. They moved to Toccoa Falls, Georgia in 1960, where he served on the staff at the Toccoa Falls Bible Institute from 1960 – 1962.

As a lecture, he was obviously assuming that his students had prepared for class by reading and studying the pertinent scripture and other class material. Thus, his comments were not like a sermon, but lectures to enhance the students' theological understanding. He emphasized a detailed study of the scripture and incorporated analysis that he gained from his study of Bible commentaries and books on the related subject matter. These lectures are remarkably free of any personal opinions, personal illustrations or “sermonizing” of any kind. While at other times in his career he was very much the preacher and evangelist, in these late-in-life roles of Bible Professor, he was very much the educator.

Lastly, it might be helpful to at least comment on the historical context in which these lectures were delivered. Many biblical scholars of that day associated some of what is found in the Book of Revelation with the Catholic Church – symbols of paganism, the movement of Satan/antichrist to establish one world church, etc. Many people viewed the Catholic Church with much skepticism and fear. Further, John F. Kennedy had just been elected the first Catholic president of the United States in 1960. His election was quite controversial and many non-Catholics were concerned about Kennedy's catholic background. Elements of these concerns and mindset are found in these lectures. In 2008, many of these fears have been discredited and some would find them to be offensive and intolerant, but they were quite prevalent and not at all unusual in 1962.

John Douglas Cox, grandson of Sidney Cox. December 29, 2008.

...the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Revelation. You will remember that in our previous chapter, in

fact, the thing that we have been noticing was the storm in Chapter 13; the lull between the storm in Chapter 14; the echo of a coming storm in Chapter 15; the breaking of the storm in Chapter 16. I want you to notice, if you please, that these are preliminary things to the opening, the beginning, the pouring out of the final series of judgments upon the earth and upon the people of the earth. We have noticed the Seal Judgments, and we have heard and seen the Trumpet Judgments. Now we are to see and hear and, perhaps to a certain extent, feel the impact of the Bowl or Vial Judgments. This is the last series.

I want you to notice something, if you please, and first of all to remind you. One, we have seen that from the seventh judgment of whatever series it may be, the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet, there comes out of it the succeeding judgments. The Trumpet Judgments came out of the seventh Seal Judgments. Now, we come to the last one and we find exactly the same thing - the Vial Judgments coming out of the seventh Trumpet Judgment. Now, that reminds us of something.

The last we heard of the seventh Trumpet Judgment was in Chapter 11. And we heard the sound of the seventh Trumpet Judgment. Now, following the same pattern, out of that judgment comes these Bowl or Vial Judgments, which means that between Chapter 11 and this that we're now looking at, Chapter 15 and then into 16; because 16 is a continuation of Chapter 15; we are looking at the same pattern but in between the one chapter and the other, Chapter 11 and Chapter 16, these are all things of explanation so that we might see things that are happening. Sometimes we see things that are going to happen in the future, like the result of the Battle of Armageddon that we saw there in Chapter 14. And we have noticed quite a number of things of that sort.

But chronologically when we get to this point, we go back to Chapter 11. Now we have said a good many times that the Book of Revelation is not a chronological order of things that happened. It is a record of things that happened, but interspersed and in parentheses you find explanations - perhaps a little vision of something that's coming in the future. Something, some answer to a question. For example, what happened to the 144,000, and so on? These are the things that you see. But chronologically, we've got to go back to Chapter 11.

Then, out of the seventh trumpet there comes the Vial Judgments that are mentioned at the end of Chapter 15 and completely seen in Chapter 16. Let's keep that in mind, if you please. In Chapter 14, we saw great judgments coming under the heading of 'the harvest and the vintage.' We saw our Lord with a sickle in his hand, thrusting in the sickle to gather a harvest to Himself, and the vintage of God's wrath coming upon the things and the people of the earth. This is what we saw. We noticed that it was a matter there where angels were involved.

And in that chapter we saw the last effort of God, apparently, and I'm only expressing this just as best we may, but it seems as if it's the last effort of God to impress upon the people of the earth that there is still time to turn to God's truth and receive it. Now we saw a strange thing in connection with that. That message, that final message, is called 'the message of the everlasting gospel.' And we noticed it there and we noticed as well that it was committed to an angel. Now, no other gospel was ever committed to an angel, but this one was. And flying through the heavens is this angel with this last message of perhaps mercy, or at least or warning to the peoples of the earth.

From that point on, you do not see anything like that. The cup of wrath is now filled. It is now to be

poured out. And what we are watching in Chapter 5 is a few preliminary things before we actually see the calling of the angels to pour out the judgments of the vials. Once more we see the picture of the four living creatures, just like we did in the first place, when the seals were to be opened and at the beginning of Chapter 6 when we saw the one with the book in his hand begin to open the seals. We saw the four living creatures giving a command or thrusting open a door and saying, "Come, come, come."¹ And we find exactly the same thing when we are looking at the last of these judgments.

Now, I want you to notice, if you please, some of the things that we see in Chapter 15 that are all preliminary, important, but more in the nature of stage setting. It's almost as if a stage is being set. In a very little while we shall as the curtain moves, we shall see the picture of the temple. And it will be quite different from any temple that we've seen up til now. At least different in its aspect. Out of it there will be coming smoke and flame instead of the Shekinah glory. There's no sign of that anymore. Here, out of the midst of the temple, is coming God's judgment. And presently, we shall see there lining up before us seven angels with the seven Vial Judgments to pour out the last things, the cup of God's wrath filled with the judgments described as 'the wrath of God and of the Lamb.'

Now, there are one or two other things that we need to see. Perhaps they're almost like a buffer to help us to bear the shock of this last terrific judgment that is coming. Now, let's look and see and each of these things in itself is a most interesting thing. I think you've got these in your notes. These are the things you see in Chapter 15. One, a sign in heaven. Two, the singers and their victory. Three, the sea of glass. Four, the song they sing. Five, the seven angels. Six, the seven golden vials. And seven, the seven last plagues.

Now, you've got seven things there that you see in Chapter 15. A remarkable chapter; it's all the more remarkable because it is the shortest chapter in the Book of Revelation. It's a very short chapter and yet it is packed full of these tremendous scenes. Let's take them each one at a time.

And first of all, the sign in heaven. Now, the sign in heaven here is the sign of the angels that are ready to pour out the wrath of God upon the earth. This is the third time in the Book of Revelation that you have seen this: 12:1, 12:3, 15:1. And you find signs that are there. Now, I want you to notice something. And here, I'm only going to suggest this, and you can add your own detail to it. You will find that when signs are given in the scripture, there will always, if not always, appear in series of threes. Now, let me give you some, and I'm not going to give you references here because I don't have them for the moment, but I can give you the point to which you may add your reference. Some of them will come to your mind automatically.

One, God gave Moses three signs. When God sent Moses down into Egypt, He gave him three signs. When God called Gideon to be the leader and the redeemer of His people from Midianite bondage, He gave to Gideon three signs. He gave to King Saul three signs. He gave to Elijah three signs. And three in the Book of Revelation. Now, that's just a suggestion. I'm not quite sure that that's the complete picture or not. But at any rate, it gives us the thought that when signs appear in the scripture, you will always find them appearing in series of threes. Let me mention those names again, just in case you'd like to make a note of them: Moses, Gideon, Saul, Elijah and Revelation.

¹ Revelation 6:1

Now, here is the beginning of it. The curtain has gone up. And the first thing we see is that which is spoken of as a sign, the seven angels with the seven bowls or vials of God's wrath.

Now, another thing that you find is, here are the singers and their victory.² Now, in Chapter 14 we heard them. In Chapter 15, we see them. It has gone one step further. Now, we heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps, and they sang as if there were a new song before the throne. Now, this is the thing we heard in Chapter 14. Now we see them. They become visible in Chapter 15.

Notice what it is that we see about them. Three things again. You will find all the way through this chapter, two numbers appearing: three and seven. Now, I'm not putting any particular interpretation on that, just calling your attention to it. As a matter of fact, in this chapter, you find the number seven appearing eight times, in one short chapter. Now, let's look and see. Here's the number three again. They gain the victory or were given victory over, first of all - victory over the beast, two - over his image, three - over his mark, and four - his number. The general thought is: victory over the beast and you see that in three ways, his image, his mark, and his number. Now, this is the picture then of the singers and their victory.

And remember, if you please, that to their faithfulness, God added His faithfulness. They were not merely there because of their faithfulness, they were there because of God's faithfulness too. And to their faithfulness was added His faithfulness, and what rejoicing and what music as we hear them playing the harps of God. Now, that's another picture that comes before us. I don't know whether that's the orchestra or not in this particular thing that we are looking at.

Alright, now the next thing you see is, again, a familiar sight. We have seen this before. We noticed this in Chapter 4. Now I want you to notice, here it appears again. I believe when we saw the Sea of Glass in Chapter 4, we mentioned that we should see it again. And now, here we do see it again. We notice there in so far as the Sea of Glass³ is concerned, what was the Old Testament typology that we were seeing? Here is the laver of the tabernacle and the sea, the brazen sea, of the temple. And we see it there and we notice this: that the water was always there for the cleansing. It was always a cleansing agent. Now, we reminded ourselves that the Word of God is God's cleansing agent, always. And when we saw it there in Chapter 4, we said, "Here is the fulfillment of the Word, Thy Word is settled in heaven." Now, it was faith in that Word that brought them into that circumstance in the first place. It is faith in that Word on which they now stand. Because they stood, now they stand.

And I want you to notice a change in it this time. Here is this thing that we call the Sea of Glass, not a liquid anymore, a solid on which people stand. It is now settled in heaven. And I want you to notice the change that is here, the addition. It now catches the reflection of the fires of the wrath of God. You can see the reflection in it. Two things you notice about the Sea of Glass: the saints are standing on it, and it catches the reflection of the wrath of God. The fire of the wrath of God can be seen in it.

Now, let me remind you, in the Word of God you see two things, the goodness and the severity of God. That is the thing that you see always - the goodness and the severity of God. Now, I want to remind you of something else, a strange thing that came at the end of Chapter 10. A strange command was

² Revelation 15:2,3

³ Revelation 15:2

given to John about a little book that contained God's will and way and purpose. What was he told to do with that little book? Eat it, that right. He was told to eat it. And he was told it would have a double effect – it would be both sweet and bitter. Now, here you've got the picture of it again - the sweetness of it on which the saints stand. But at the same time, it's catching the reflection of the wrath of God.

Remember, you cannot have love without its opposite. It's always there, always. And the more love you have, the deeper the wrath when that love is insulted. If you have any question about that, visualize for a moment a baby in the arms of its mother - the object of her utmost adoration, humanly speaking. But you let somebody come in there seeking to do damage and harm and steal away that precious little thing, and you watch the love in that mother's eyes turn into flames of fire. And the more love there is, the deeper the fire would be. Now, that's always the case. It's exactly the same with God. You cannot have love on the one side, without the opposite on the other. It's always the case. A love that is not severe on the other side is not love at all. It's simply sentiment, that's all.

Now, you've got God's Word, where God's will and way is revealed, beautiful. And they stand upon it. They have been faithful to it all the way through. Some have given their lives for it. There they were faithful to this Word of God in the midst of difficulty. And yet, because they stood upon it, now they stand upon it. And it's a beautiful picture of God's Word, this victorious throng.

Now, let's come back to the singers and notice the song that they sing. I want you to follow it and here I want you to add a few things if you feel they're worthwhile to copy, and I think perhaps they are. You will notice the song that they sing is spoken of as, what? [Students answer] The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb. It's the Song of Moses and the Lamb. Now, let's remember if you please, that it's the Song of Moses because he sang about the Lamb. Now, that isn't the only meaning, but I want you to see that one. Now, that's strange, isn't it? That's strange.

I want you to go back in your Bibles please, and here's the addition to this little spot. I want you to go back in your Bibles to Deuteronomy 32, because here is the Song of Moses. Now you will find another Song of Moses in Chapter 15 of Exodus, which by the way, is the first song recorded in the scripture. 15th of Exodus – that's the song when they came out of Egypt and God delivered them and so on. But that is not really the Song of Moses. It is a song in which Moses participated, but this is the Song of Moses. I want you to mark, first of all, in your Bible if you haven't already done so, how very important this chapter is.

Let me give you a quotation which will show that. One of our great commentators said this. "It is the synopsis of all prophecy that follows." There isn't a prophecy that follows that you can find the seed of it in the 32nd chapter of Deuteronomy, in this thing that we call the Song of Moses. Every prophecy that echoes down the corridors of the scriptures, you can find the beginning of it in Chapter 32 of the Book of Deuteronomy in what we call the Song of Moses.

Now, I want you to notice, if you please, how Moses sings about the Lamb. Now, we're going a long way back here, but I want you to notice it if you will please. First of all, Verse 4, he sings of Christ's perfections. Now you notice here, "He is the rock. His work is perfect. For all His ways are judgment. A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Verse 4, Christ's perfections.

Alright, look at Verse 15, and there salvation through Christ. Now look at it and see. "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness, then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the (now notice the same word that we found in Verse 4) the Rock of his salvation." He is the Rock. Verse 15, the Rock of his salvation. And so Christ, in Verse 15, is salvation.

Look at Verse 18. He is the life giving one. Notice it again, "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." The life giving one, same word again, Verse 4, Verse 15, Verse 18. Here it is.

Now notice it again in Verse 31 and you'll see it once more. "For their rock is not as our Rock, (here is Rock again with a capital R) even our enemies themselves being judges." Israel's Rock, even acknowledged by their enemies. Even the enemies of Israel knew that in the midst of Israel there was something, or should we say someone, whom they did not know and they did not have. And so Israel's Rock acknowledged by enemies in Verse 31.

Now, you go back to Verse 8 and notice God's purpose for Israel. Notice what it says, "When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Here is God's purpose for Israel in Verse 8.

Notice again Verse 26 and 27. Israel dispersed, but remember, let's have a look at those verses there. "And I said I would scatter them into the corners." Isn't it strange that Moses knew all about this thousands of years before it ever happened. "I said I would scatter them into the corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men. Were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, 'Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this.'" Here is Israel despised and remembered.

Now, finally, and here is number seven again, in Verse 43, Israel's restoration and blessing to the nations. Israel's restoration and blessing to the nations. "Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His adversaries, and will be merciful unto His land, and to His people." Now, you've got Verse 43, Israel's restoration and blessing to the people.

Now, let me repeat that and you can just check it there and you'll find these things, these seven things: One, Christ's perfections – Verse 4. Two, Salvation through Christ – Verse 15. Three, the life giving one – Verse 18. Four, Israel's Rock acknowledged by enemies – Verse 31. Five, God's purpose for Israel – Verse 8. Six, Israel dispersed but remembered – Verse 26 & 27. Seven, Israel's restoration and blessing to the nations – Verse 43. Now, is there any point there that you didn't get? Number six, Israel dispersed but remembered, Verses 26 & 27. Number four, Israel's Rock acknowledged by enemies, Verse 31.

Now, here is Moses singing not merely the Song of Moses, but the Song of the Lamb as well. Of course, when the Song of the Lamb is heard, the words 'great and marvelous are Thy works' are the

accompanying chorus that comes along with it. Now, you will notice this, that when you get to that point, you come across a little two word phrase that we sort of checked on right at the beginning of this study. The two words: 'after this' or 'after these'. Now, whenever you find it, you will see, and I believe you have this in your notes, that it is simply a technical term indicating we are turning a corner, that's all. We're going around the corner. Something else is now going to break upon our vision and it surely does.

For we see now the temple as we have not seen it before. But before we see the temple and take a good look at it, the thing that we notice immediately is, coming out of the temple, seven angels. Now here you've got your number seven again. Notice this time they are dressed in priestly garments.

Remember, this is a judgment upon religions of the world. It's not merely a judgment upon world governments. That would come from the throne of God. But now, the final judgment of God upon the world is, it has rejected the truth of God all of which was centered in and spoken by the temple. It was all in there. That's the center of God's judgment upon them and out of it you can find it coming. Now, the detail of this, of course, as we have seen so many times, are mentioned, and then, Chapter 16, the details of it.

What about these seven angels? What will they do? What will they have in their hand? What will be the result of it when, given permission of God, they pour out the wrath of God upon this earth? What will be the result of that? Now, you'll have to wait until you get into Chapter 16 before we see that. We may catch a glimpse of it, I don't think we will, but we may catch a glimpse of it even before we get through with this class this morning, although I'm not sure about that. Now, the thing that you notice is the angels and that which they hold in their hands – the seven golden vials. Now, here are these bowls, which is a much better word than vials, because that's what they were. They were shallow vessels that would symbolize this that they were holding, the wrath of God. And it is now to be poured out upon the people of the earth and upon the earth itself.

Notice if you will please, that when God's mercy is refused, then God's judgment is all that remains. And it's always the same. It has been the same right from the very beginning. When God's mercy is refused then God's judgment must be poured out. And here we find seven golden vials, the four living creatures crying their permission for this thing to happen.

What's the difference between the voice of the four living creatures when we notice them in connection with the Seal Judgments and the sound of their voices now in connection with this last judgment? What did they say in the first one? What was the word that they used there, when they're pushing open the door and giving their permission for the first rider to come and do his work, because he couldn't have done it at all without permission of God? What was the word they used? (Students answer) No, it was a word that indicates, you would say it the same way if you found somebody at the door there. What would you say? "Come in," that's right. And they didn't say, "Come in," they simply said, "Come," that's all. Now, what do they say to these angels here? "Go," that's right. First, it was Come, then it was Go. We simply notice it there, nothing in particular about it as far as I know.

Now, look again and see the way in which these seven final judgments are now described. What are they spoken of as, what? The seven last plagues, the seven last – underscore the word 'last' if you will, because this is the beginning of the end as far as the judgment of God upon the earth is concerned.

Now notice they come out of the temple. And here they are, bringing God's final judgment. If there is a place where man finally insults God, it is not in his commerce. It is not in his mortally might. It isn't in his governments. But where man finally, where the world concentrates its insult against God is when it refuses God's truth, symbolized by the temple. Now here's the final thing that's coming - God's ultimate wrath because of the final insult that has been given to Him.

In what way was this final insult given to God. By anti-Christ, if you want? The peoples of the earth, for remember they bowed down to worship? In what way was this done? What was it? The final insult to God, what was it? (Students answer) It was the image in the temple, that's right. The image in the temple is the final insult to God. Now, here out of a heavenly temple, and out of a temple that appears here in the image of the scripture, comes the answer to that. "You put your image in this temple," out of the mystery of a temple that we cannot understand and cannot explain. But here it is in the imagery of it. Out of this, with a temple background, comes God's final answer to this.

Now, we find that there is no sign from this time on of anything that happens in the temple or connected with it but wrath. All worship has gone. All prayers, gone. All sacrifices, gone. Now, here is this thing, and you find as if the picture of the temple, as if a sentence is now finally proclaimed.

I read yesterday, or heard this morning there, of a criminal who was executed last night. You may have caught the sound of that. He had received twelve reprieves. He had been at the door of the execution chamber, or almost, twelve times. But the thirteenth time, and this morning, he paid the price. Now, I'm not discussing the case because I don't know anything about it. All I know is this, but before that happened there was somebody who put the final word to that. Somebody had to put the final okay on it, or refuse to lift an okay they'd already put. That didn't happen until somebody said the final word, or failed to say a word that would lift it. Now, you've got exactly the same thing here. You find judgment has been delayed and judgment has been coming in a partial form. Now, it's the final thing.

I don't know whether the custom still obtains, but whenever a judge in days gone by would sentence a criminal to death, he would always appear with a black cap upon his head. Now, that's an old-fashioned custom. I don't think it's been followed in our law courts. But in most parts of the world, years ago, that's what happened. Whenever a sentence was to be passed like this, a black cap was worn. I don't think we're stretching matters too much when we say, this is the moment when, so far as this old rebellious earth is concerned, God puts on the black cap. And you can see the awfulness of it. There is no ray of light anymore. It's total darkness from now on.

And out of the mystery of this final judgment there comes those who are going to execute the judgment - the angels that are now told, not to come, but to go. Now, the angels did not break the seals or execute the Seal Judgments in the first place. They're going to do it now. It was others that were given permission. But now you find it's the angels, and God has covered Himself once more with total darkness as the final judgments are to be poured out upon the earth.

When you get into Chapter 16, I just wanted you to look at one or two things here, and then we'll bring this to a close. I want you to notice, just in advance, and we'll go over it again when we meet on Monday, that Chapter 16 is a chapter of great things. Now, you've got them in your notes. I would suggest that in your Bible, because you're not going to have these notes along with you all the time, but

in your Bible underscore the great things that you find in Chapter 16. You put them down and underscore the word in that Chapter 16, in Verse 1 and 9 and 12 and 14, and so on. The great voice, the great heat, the great river, the great day, the great voice again, the great earthquake, the great city, the great Babylon, the great hail, the great plague. All of these things are there in Chapter 16, and you find this is the pouring out of God's final judgments.

Now, we're not going any further this morning. We'll just leave it right there and on Monday we'll turn and look again at the actual pouring out of the judgments when God releases the final vials of His wrath upon the earth. Thank you very much.