

December 25 Su Reading 359 — 1 John 4:7-21 — God is Love

⁷ *Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.* ⁸ *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.* ⁹ *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.* ¹⁰ *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* ¹¹ *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.* ¹² *No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*

¹³ *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.* ¹⁴ *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.* ¹⁵ *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.* ¹⁶ *So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.* ¹⁷ *By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.* ¹⁸ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.* ¹⁹ *We love because he first loved us.* ²⁰ *If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot^[fn] love God whom he has not seen.* ²¹ *And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

ESV Footnote

(4:20) Some manuscripts *how can he*

Merry Christmas! — What a great passage to read on the day that we celebrate the birth of Jesus! Three times it is said that God “*sent his Son*” to the world (vv. 9, 10, 14). It even includes the third member of the Trinity, by mentioning that God also “*has given us of his Spirit*” (v. 13). All of this Christmas giving was motivated by God’s love: “*...love is from God ... because God is love*” (vv. 7-8). Notice how closely love is tied to giving in these paragraphs. This giving connection is why we practice giving gifts at Christmas time. Love wants to give. God gave His Son to us for three stated reasons. First, it was “*so that we might live through him*” (v.9). It was the gift of eternal life. The second reason was for Jesus “*to be the propitiation for our sins*” (v. 10). It was a gift that paid the penalty for our sins, satisfying God’s justice by appeasing His wrath toward our sin. Third, God sent Jesus “*to be the Savior of the world*” (v. 14). It was the gift of salvation. God’s love provided the greatest gift ever.

[For God so Loved the World - YouTube](#)

<p>For God so loved the world, He gave His only Son To die on Calvry's tree From sin to set me free. Someday He's coming back; What glory it will be! Wonderful His love for me. — Alfred B. Smith (1938)</p>
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⁴ *John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,* ⁵ *and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.*

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood ⁶ *and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.* ⁷ *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail*^[fn] *on account of him. Even so. Amen.*

⁸ *"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty."*

ESV Footnote

(1:7) Or *mourn*

Grasping Eternity — Much of today's reading centers on Jesus Christ, but it begins and ends with identical statements about the Father, "... *who is and who was and who is to come*" (vv. 4, 8). That speaks of the eternality of God. Using a metaphor of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, He referred to Himself as "*the Alpha and the Omega*" (v. 8). He is the beginning and the end. Actually, He was *before* the beginning and will be *after* the end as far as time is concerned. He exists outside of time. He sees the beginning of your life and the end of your life simultaneously. He is timeless in His nature. That is hard for us to understand because all of our experience has been in the realm of time. We only know about eternity because of what God has told us about it in His Word. Someday, however, we will be ushered into the realm of eternity, when we leave this body and go to be with God. Only then will we really be able to grasp eternity.

Eternity - YouTube

I will be Yours; You will be mine
Together in eternity.
Our hearts of love will be entwined
Together in eternity.
Forever in eternity.

We will worship;
We will worship You forever.

— Brian Doerksen (b. 1965)

¹ *After this I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this."* ² *At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne.* ³ *And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald.* ⁴ *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads.* ⁵ *From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings*^[fn] *and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God,* ⁶ *and before the throne there was as it were a sea of glass, like crystal.*

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: ⁷ the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. ⁸ And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

*"Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!"*

⁹ And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, ¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

*¹¹ "Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created."*

ESV Footnote

(4:5) Or *voices*, or *sounds*

Awesome God — You may have noticed in this chapter that John made little attempt to describe the One who sat on the throne, except that He *"had the appearance of jasper and carnelian"* (v. 2). This is an indication that God's appearance was indescribable for John's limited ability. He made no effort to define His clothing or what He looked like. Maybe it was just too indistinct—just a splash of splendor. Of course, God is invisible, so when there is any "appearance" of God, He is only providing something for human eyes to see. God's splendor was not only visual (*"jasper and carnelian ... [and] flashes of lightning"*), but also audible (*"rumblings and peals of thunder"*—vs. 5). Sensory overload! How about those beings who were constantly in God's presence? The four living creatures *"never cease to say, 'Holy, holy, holy ...'"* (v. 8). They praised His holiness, His might, and His eternity. Then, the 24 elders were repeatedly falling before Him in submission, honor, and worship, saying, *"Worthy are you ... to receive glory and honor and power..."* (v. 11). As John had difficulty describing the glory of what he saw, so we often have a hard time expressing our praise to God. How about just memorizing verse 11 and praying it to God when you run out of your own words? Be a 25th elder! God is worthy of our praise.

Here is a fitting song of praise suggested by a reader in the Philippines.

[Unbroken Praise - YouTube](#)

Praise unbroken, praise unending,
Be Yours, be Yours forevermore.
Praise untainted, praise unfading,
Be Yours, be Yours forevermore.
Be Yours, be Yours forevermore.

— Matt Redman (2015)

¹⁵ *Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever."* ¹⁶ *And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,* ¹⁷ *saying,*

*"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
who is and who was,
for you have taken your great power
and begun to reign.*

¹⁸ *The nations raged,
but your wrath came,
and the time for the dead to be judged,
and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints,
and those who fear your name,
both small and great,
and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."*

Righteous Government — Most New Testament scholars believe that the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet signals the Second Coming of Christ, when "*The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ*" (v. 15). That is when the Millennial Kingdom on earth begins. This is what Jesus' disciples thought was going to happen in their time, when Jesus would defeat the dominance of Rome over the then-known world, and rule in righteousness. No, that reign is still to come. Can you imagine government rule without selfishness, greed, corruption, and injustice? One day, godly people will have no fear or distrust of government. The Lord will reign through His Son over all the earth. Bring it on!

[Jesus Shall Reign - YouTube](#)

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
does its successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
till moons shall wax and wane no more.

— Isaac Watts (1719)

ACCOUNTABILITY TIME!

¹ *Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.*

² *And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.* ³ *And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,*

*"Great and amazing are your deeds,
O Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways,
O King of the nations!^[fn]*

4 *Who will not fear, O Lord,
 and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
 All nations will come
 and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

5 *After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent^[fn] of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶ and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ And 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, ⁸ and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.*

ESV Footnotes

(15:3) Some manuscripts *the ages*

(15:5) Or *tabernacle*

Just and Good — Today, we step back in time from yesterday's reading. The judgment of the wrath of God will be poured out on the earth before the Millennial Kingdom is established. The singers with "*the harps of God ... had conquered the beast*" (v. 2) during the Great Tribulation by maintaining their faith, even though they were martyred. They sang to the Judge, "*Just and true are your ways*" and "*your righteous acts have been revealed*" (v. 3). As terrible as it will be when God's wrath is executed, it is just and it is righteous. It is sometimes hard for us to balance in our minds the justice and the goodness of God, but He is both just and good. Thankfully, by the grace of God, we will also stand in heaven with those martyred for their faith. We will sing this deserved praise to Him: "...*you alone are holy*" (v. 4).

I could not find a video for this hymn by Isaac Watts,
but it fittingly shows the justice and goodness of God.

We bless you, Lord, the just, the good;
You fill our hearts with heavenly food;
You pour Your blessings from the skies,
And give to each Your rich supplies.

You break the captive's heavy chain,
And prisoners see Your light again.
In You the poor and helpless find
A judge that's just, a Father kind.

We'll praise Your name! Your saints of grace
Sing songs of joy before Your face.
You are our God, by You we're blessed,
You our defense, our joy, our rest.

— Isaac Watts (b. 1674)

ACCOUNTABILITY TIME! If you are up to date in your reading for this month,
please [click here](#) to leave your email address or let me know today at
accbibleread@gmail.com.

ACCOUNTABILITY REMINDER!

December 30 F Reading 364 — Revelation 16:4-7 — Just and True

⁴ *The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.*

⁵ *And I heard the angel in charge of the waters^[fn] say,*

*"Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,
for you brought these judgments.*

⁶ *For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
and you have given them blood to drink.
It is what they deserve!"*

⁷ *And I heard the altar saying,*

*"Yes, Lord God the Almighty,
true and just are your judgments!"*

ESV Footnote

(16:5) Greek *angel of the waters*

Just, Holy, Eternal — In this chapter, the seven bowls of God's wrath are being poured out in judgment on the earth. With the third bowl, there is a statement about who God is. The angel responsible for turning drinking water into blood said, "*Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was*" (v. 5). God is just, holy, and eternal. Those judgments will be just because He is just. Their punishment "*is what they deserve!*" (v. 6). We would be in the same deserving category if we had not turned in submission to Christ, accepting His sacrifice that paid the penalty for our sin. God is also the "*Holy One*," who alone meets His high standard because He is perfect. He is set apart from us in terms of purity and goodness. His holy perfection is the target for our own conduct. Finally, as we have seen many times, God is eternal. He exists outside of time, so He has always been and will always be. We who know Jesus will spend the rest of eternity with Him.

[Ancient of Days - YouTube](#)

Blessing and honor, glory and power,
Be unto the Ancient of Days.
From every nation, all of creation,
Bow before the Ancient of Days.

— Gary Sadler and James Harvill (1992)

ACCOUNTABILITY REMINDER! If you are up to date in your reading as of December 30, and did not report yesterday, please [click here](#) to leave your email address or let me know today at accbibleread@gmail.com.

ACCOUNTABILITY FINAL DAY!

December 31 Sa Reading 365 — Revelation 19:6-10 — The Almighty Reigns

⁶ *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

*"Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.*

⁷ *Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;*

⁸ *it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure"—*

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ *And the angel said^[fn] to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." ¹⁰ Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

ESV Footnote

(19:9) Greek *he said*

The Last Hurrah — Those of us who are born-again believers will be a part of that heavenly multitude that cries out, "*Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns*" (v. 6). Our struggle with sin will be over and all resistance against God will be finished. From then on, God will reign in a way we have never seen before. The Creator and Savior is King! We won't mistakenly fall down to worship an angel, but we will "*Worship God*" (v. 10) alone.

Please sing along with this great hymn of the church as we close out this year.
Imagine yourself in heaven with that great multitude of redeemed saints.

[O Worship the King - YouTube](#)

<p>O worship the King, all glorious above, And gratefully sing His power and His love; Our Shield and Defender, the Ancient of Days, Pavilioned in splendor, and girded with praise. — Robert Grant (1833)</p>
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ACCOUNTABILITY FINAL DAY! If you have not reported in the last two days, please let me know today the status of your reading for the month, at accbibleread@gmail.com.

Thanks for being a faithful part of our reading group this year.