

Revelation Chapter 15

15:1 The Vials of God's wrath are seen

“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.”

John continues to be shown visions of coming events. He sees another sign, and additional one.

Already in this book we have looked at the opening of the seven seals and the events and judgements connected with each of them. Then we have looked at the sounding of the seven trumpets, and the events and judgements connected with them. And now, in chapter 15 and 16, God will show us seven vials of judgement which are also called the seven last plagues in which is filled up the wrath of God, and which will be poured out by seven angels upon the earth, evidently very near the end of the tribulation. A vial is a flask, bottle, bowl, or basin. And each angel will have a vial. We will see them being poured out in chapter 16. Here they are simply introduced to us. But first God would have us see other things.

15:2-4 A Victory service in Heaven

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

A. John sees as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire. The floor of God's throne, already described as a sea of glass like unto crystal, Revelation 4:6, is now seen as it were mingled with fire. Evidently the reason for this description given at this time is connected with the great wrath of God as it will be poured out upon earth during the vial judgements. This mingling of fire through the floor of the throne is symbolic of the judgements of God emanating from him going through the floor of the throne room and striking upon the earth.

B. Standing upon the throne room floor are those who have gotten the victory over the Antichrist, over his mark, and over his name. This victorious throng are those we encountered in chapter 7, the 144,000 sealed Jewish servants, and the unnumbered multitude from all nations who have been murdered and who come out of the great tribulation into heaven, to the very throne of God. These are the re-

deemed of the tribulation and they are seen with harps upon which they play beautiful music to a blessed song called the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. About these songs:

(1) The song of Moses. In Exodus 15 we find one of his songs. Here, Moses sang and the children of Israel a song of deliverance. They were rejoicing in their deliverance from Egypt's bondage by the mighty power of God. Then, in Deuteronomy 32, we have another of Moses' songs, it sets for the perfections of God and praises him for his faithfulness. Hence, the song of Moses mentioned here is one giving glory to God for his faithfulness, and their deliverance and victory. You see, even though they had been murdered, they are rejoicing. There is victory, even in death, for the one who dies in Christ.

(2) The song of the Lamb. This seems to be a reference to the song sung by the Church in heaven, Revelation 5:8-10. It is a song of redemption through Christ's blood. And the tribulation saints also must sing it! There is no salvation for anyone at any time apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. The song of the Lamb contains these words, “Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are manifest.” Hence, this song also speaks of the soon coming Millennial reign of Christ and his eternal kingdom. It is during the Millennium that all nations shall come and worship Christ, compare Zechariah 14:16-21, Isaiah 2:1-4.

It's interesting that these saints who come through the tribulation time sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb. It indicates clearly that after the Church leaves this world, God will deal with the nation Israel again, and with the world through them, and they will be under an economy similar to that of the old testament in their relationship and service to God.

15:5-8 The Vision of Heaven's temple

“And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.”

John receives one tremendous vision after another. Notice these things about this great vision:

A. The heavenly temple is opened to his view. In the northern part of this great universe there is a literal heaven where God lives and in his heaven is a literal temple, his literal throne is there, literal angelic beings are there, and many saints are there.

B. This temple in heaven was the pattern by which the temple of the old testament was built, Hebrews 8: 1-5, 9: 1-25. Moses constructed the tabernacle according to how the temple in heaven was designed. As there was the ark built by Moses, which would contained the testimony (the tables of stone, commandments, Exodus 25:21), the pot of manna (which spoke of Christ, Hebrews 9:4, John 6:31-58), and Aaron's rod that budded (identifying the priesthood of Aaron as God's choice and speaking of Christ's resurrection, Hebrews 9:4). So there is an ark in heaven of which the one on earth spoke.

It seems that one of God's purposes in showing these things to John at this time was to remind him of God's past and future dealings with the nation Israel. God yet has great things in store for that nation. During the Millennium they will be the head nation of the earth.

C. In verse 6, John sees seven angels coming out of that heavenly temple, they have the seven golden vials earlier referred to in verse 1, containing the seven last plagues of judgement described in chapter 16, to be poured out on earth near the end of the tribulation. The angels are clothed in pure and white linen, having their breast girded with golden girdles. These garments are similar to those worn by the old testament priest and judges. Angels are involved in the ministry of judgement during the tribulation.

D. In verse 7, one of the four beasts of chapter 4:6-11 gives to the seven angels seven golden vials, one to each one of them. These containers contain the wrath of God. God's eternity is particularly referenced at this time, "who liveth for ever and ever." This of course stands in contrast to everything else in life that is temporary.

E. In verse 8, the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. Compare Exodus 40:34 where God's glory filled the earthly tabernacle of Moses. His glory presence is here said to be as smoke. Why ever this is, it is clear that no man was able to enter the temple at this time and could not until all God's judgement plagues were poured out. Compare I Kings 8:10-1