

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES!

The Seven Bowl Judgments

Revelation 15:1-8

Chapter Fifteen is a short chapter, but a very important one. In this chapter we will see the seven angels who have the seven last plagues. John sees the vision of the angels with the bowls of wrath of Almighty God. So we can conclude that *Chapter Fifteen* is preparatory in nature. Simply stated these eight verses serve as an introduction to the seven vial or bowl judgments described in *Chapter Sixteen*.

Chapters 15 & 16 belong together. They form one whole, touching one important subject, to wit: the third or last *woe*. The contents bear a close analogy to the conclusion of *Chapter 11*, if and one could go as far as to say that they are indeed the continuation and amplification of what was summarily introduced in *Chapter 11*; for all these visions are very intimately related, both in general subject and time. There the temple in heaven was opened, and lightning, voices, thunders, earthquake, and great hail followed. Here the same temple is opened, and out of it issue seven angels, with the seven last plagues, who empty their bowls of the wrath of God in calamities upon the wicked world, culminating in the very things named as the result of the opening there. There the Elders said that the nations were enraged, that God's wrath had come, and that the time to destroy them that corrupt the earth had been reached. Here we are shown the pouring out of that wrath, its particular instruments, subjects, operations, and results.

John begins by telling of "*another sign in the heaven.*" In *Chapter 12* he told of two signs: the sign of the sun-clad Woman, and the sign of the great Red Dragon. It is with reference to them that he calls this "*another sign.*" These signs were given to Moses, Gideon, Saul, and Elijah. Three signs are mentioned in *Matthew 24* as heralding the Lord's coming, —the sign of the Son of man in heaven, the putting forth of leaves by the withered fig-tree, and the lapse of the world into the condition in which it was at the time of the flood. And so we have here three signs. The signs of the Woman and the Dragon, answer to the first and second chapters of Exodus; the sign now before us, answers to the judgments which followed, through the ministry of Moses and Aaron.

This sign is "*great and marvellous.*" It is great, as involving so much more in range and intensity than anything of the kind that has ever been; and it is marvellous, with reference to the unparalleled character of what it foretells. Here we now arrive at a time at the consummation of marvels in this present world.

Let's investigate.

I. ANOTHER SIGN IS SEEN IN HEAVEN

Verse 1: 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.

- A. The seven angels who have the seven trumpets must undoubtedly be angels of a very high order: "*They stand before God.*"
 1. The sign John now views in heaven is awe-inspiring.
 2. Seven angels—possibly the seven angels or messengers of the seven churches mentioned in *Chapters 2* and *3*—are about to pour out the final seven plagues upon earth.



The Seven Bowl Judgments (Revelation Chapter 15)

3. This is the completion of God's judgment when His wrath is unleashed against rebellious mankind.
- B. This is not said of the vial angels in our present chapter. The vials held by these seven angels are filled with the **full fury** of God's wrath, and they are ready to pour out this fury upon the earth. The actual pouring out of the vials begins in **Chapter 16:1**.
- C. After the vials of God's fury are all poured out.
1. Jesus comes in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God.
 2. This is the time when every eye shall see Him, when He comes in person to finish the judgment against the ungodliness of earth's dwellers.

This is it!

II. THE TIME HAS COME FOR JESUS TO FINISH HIS JUDGMENT

Verse 2: 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.

- A. John sees a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had gained the victory over the Beast, over his image, over his mark, and the number of his name are standing on the sea of glass, "having harps of God." As explained in **Revelation 4:6**, the *sea of glass* speaks of tranquility. It is calm and stable, and typifies:

1. The Church at rest, standing firmly upon God's living Word.
2. Solomon's Temple contained a sea of glass, depicting the Word of God, as a means of sanctification.

As I often do, allow me to deviate from my outline for just a moment. I want to make mention of the sea of glass in our text and how it is mixed with fire. This is a beautiful picture of believers standing firmly for Christ under the test of fire, having their feet planted on the Word of God. The Apostle Peter speaks of this matter when he says, *That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:7)*. Thus, there is no doubt whatsoever that the Tribulation saints enjoy victory over the beast, his image, his mark and the number of his name (666) by the Word of God and prayer. They died for the name of Jesus and are conquerors because of death. Had they remained alive by accepting the beast and his number, they would have been losers. Instead, they are victors, because to die in Christ is gain (see *Philippians 1:21*). This is why they stand upon the sea of glass—a picture of the Word of God—and are also serenaded and soothed by heaven's harpists.

So next we see:

- B. Note that these over-comers are standing. Their position denoted victory.
 1. They sealed their testimony with their life's blood.
 2. They will be given a martyr's crown.
 3. Can you imagine the music that will come from this great company of heavenly musicians playing on harps of God? **What a day that will be!**

III. THE SONG OF MOSES AND THE SONG OF THE LAMB

Verse 3: 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.

- A. *Verse 3* reveals the song they play and sing:
 1. "...the song of Moses the servant of God"
 2. "...the song of the Lamb"
- B. A significant understanding is given here. They are saying "*Great and Marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and, true are thy ways, thou: King of saints.*"
 1. The song of Moses celebrates the deliverance of His people, His wife, Israel - the elect of God.
 2. The song of the Lamb celebrates the deliverance of His people through the shed blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb.
- C. The last part of the verse reveals a very important fact that is sometimes overlooked.
 1. The fact that Jesus is King over the Saints.
 2. The fact that He is King over all that there is. When Jesus died on Calvary's cruel tree his death was for the remission of all sin, from the "original sin" all the way to the end of all time the "last sin" that will ever be committed by Jehovah's creation. Jesus died and His death is not limited by time.

IV. ALL NATIONS TO COME AND WORSHIP CHRIST THE KING

Verse 4: *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.*

In this fourth verse we have three reasons why all should fear the Lord and glorify His name:

- A. “*For Thou art holy*” God alone is worthy of worship.
 - 1. The nations have been worshipping the Beast.
 - 2. The cry to the nations is “fear God”
- B. “*For all nations shall come and worship before thee*”
 - 1. Nowhere in the history of all mankind has it ever been recorded that all nations of earth worshipped before God, and they will never **all** worship before God until this time.
 - 2. There is coming a day when all nations will bow down and worship He who is worthy.
- C. “*Thy judgments (thy righteousness) are made manifest.*” Here God is declaring Himself to be righteous in judgment and certainly that is reason enough for all peoples, to fear God.

There are some important facts that need to be brought forth before progressing further. These facts will assist us in our study.

Remember Israel? We always tend to forget about Israel, we tend to be a very inclusive group, we Christians. We tend to think all things center around us. I submit to you the following:

This group, saved out of the Tribulation, sings the song of Moses. The meaning? Back to ***Exodus, Chapter 14***. Moses and his people were being hotly pursued by Pharaoh and his armies. Finally the Israelites arrived at the Red Sea. There God parted the waters so that His people could cross over on dry land. As Pharaoh’s military geniuses followed, the waters closed in upon them, and they died. The Israelites, realizing the protection of God on their behalf in sparing them from the Egyptian ruler—a type of the Antichrist—began to sing a song of worship, praise, and adoration to Jehovah: *The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea (Exodus 15:1)*. Now, centuries later, redeemed Jews who through death left earth’s Tribulation miseries behind, sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. This does not mean they use the same lyrics as the people of Moses’ day, but rather that they—as Jews—identify with Moses, the great Jewish leader. They belong to Moses, nationally and to the Lord Jesus Christ, spiritually, for their song is also about the Lamb. The words are *Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.*

Verse 4 reflects the attributes of the King of the nations during the Millennium. Then He is revered because the world fears and glorifies His name. Also, in homage and respect to His holiness and His mighty acts of judgment and subjugation, all nations come to worship in His presence. For the first time in the history of all mankind, all nations! This is in harmony with ***Isaiah 2:2-3***: *And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways,*

and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Zechariah agrees, note: ***Zechariah 14:16-17***: *And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.*

V. THE TEMPLE OF THE TABERNACLE (OF THE TESTIMONY) IN HEAVEN OPENED

Verses 5-7: *And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: ^[6]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. ^[7]And one of the four beasts [Living Ones] gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.*

- A. The Ark of the Testimony was kept in the Temple or the Tabernacle or the Holy of Holies.
 - 1. Under Moses, it was concealed from the eyes of the people.
 - 2. Its mysteries were beyond them. That day is now finally over.
 - a. The way of the Holiest is open to all, including the Tribulation saints.
 - b. Now they may view His workings, because they have access to His abiding place.
- B. After “*these things*” in verse five, note a break... a change of procedure in the judgments.
 - 1. The vials of God’s wrath are in a group all to themselves.
 - 2. These vials contain the wrath of God against the organized systems of evil, which are in power here on this earth at that time.
 - 3. The pouring out of these vials of God’s wrath will mean the consummation of all evil power here upon earth.
 - 4. Gods judgments upon evil men and their systems are being completed in order that the Millennium can begin, and there will then be peace on earth.
- C. In ***Verse 5*** we learn that John saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in Heaven opened.
 - 1. From ***Revelation 11:19 to 19***, it is the “*TEMPLE OF HEAVEN*” from which action on earth proceeds, and not the throne. The temple in Heaven is the residence of Almighty God and God’s angels.
 - 2. What a sight John saw when the temple was opened.
 - a. John did not see the priest of God ministering in the holy place, but seven mighty angels with bowls, vials, containers... filled to the brim with the fury and the wrath of God.
 - b. The sight of the seven angels coming out of the Temple is breathtaking and frightening.
 - 3. In the earthly Tabernacle and Temple, men were not allowed entrance.

- a. Even the high priest could go in but once each year, and then only after rigid ceremonial standards had been observed.
- b. The angels, however, have been admitted because they are created beings of holiness to administer the upcoming bowl judgments.
4. The pure and white linen and golden girdles worn by these angels are the same items of clothing worn by Old Testament priests.
 - a. In other words, angel-priests are about to judge the world from the place where God's Law rests—the Holy of Holies.
 - b. This judgment is necessary because mankind has desecrated God's laws globally.
5. The fact that there are seven angels— the number of perfection and completeness—proves that no stone will be left unturned as they execute their seven judgments upon planet earth. Hence, as they leave the Temple, they are given their bowls or vials of judgment.
6. God Himself commissioned and equipped these angels for the terrible job they are to perform.
 - a. God's temple of old was a temple of grace and mercy.
 - b. Here His temple is open for judgment such as the world has never known.
 - c. God's holiness demands righteous judgment, and it is therefore imperative. There is no alternative.
- D. The word Beast in *Verse 7* is best rendered four "Living Ones" who reside in heaven.
 1. This is not the first time we hear of these "Living Ones" taking part in the actual administration of judgment.
 2. They are indeed glorified men. Note *1 Corinthians 6:2-3* ⁽²⁾*Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*³ *Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?*
 3. When the horsemen of *Chapter 6* were sent forth, *one from among the four "Living Ones"* gave the command, as with a voice of thunder.
 4. Here a corresponding part of the same judgment work is to be executed, and the vessels containing the wrath of God are handed out by one of the same "Living Ones."
- E. The vials mentioned in *Verse 7*, the vessels themselves were not *bottles* [vials], as our English translations might indicate.
 1. These vials are shallow, pan-like, golden bowls, or censers, such as were used in the temple to hold the fire when incense was burned.
 2. They are priestly censers, as noted in *Revelation 8:5*. These belong to that which gives power or force to the prayers of the saints and sustains the worship of Jehovah our God.
 3. At the same time this power itself ignites the coals of judgment upon the wicked. That which seethes and smokes in these holy censers is God's punishment upon

transgression, the consuming intolerance of His holiness toward sin and sinners.

4. Seven of these bowls, full to the brim with the wrath of Him who liveth for the ages of the ages, are thus handed to the seven priest-angels to be poured upon the sacrifice preparatory to its final consumption of all that is evil. And terrible will be the smoke of their burning.

VI. THE TEMPLE IS CLOSED TO ALL BUT THE ANGELS UNTIL THE SEVEN PLAGUES ARE FULFILLED

Verse 8: 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.

- A. There are three distinct steps in this judgment of the seven angels who held the seven vials and came out of the temple of God, which was opened in Heaven:
 1. The angels were commissioned and equipped in the temple. That does not sound like the lovely “grandfather God” some talk about.
 2. One of the four creatures gives to each angel a golden bowl filled with God’s fury and wrath.
 3. The angels cannot act until God gives them the command to move and pour out the vials.
- B. God is long-suffering. He is patient. He is good. He is kind; but He is also a consuming fire. Paul warns us in **Romans 11:22** “Behold the goodness and the severity of God.”

In concluding this chapter, *Verse 8* conclusively proves that the Temple area is sealed to angels and men during the final forty-two months of the Tribulation hour. God’s throne, which symbolizes mercy and love, is shut to the public until the period of judgment ends. This, of course, is during the outpouring of the seven bowls of unprecedented judgment. When God’s judgment has been completed, men may then again approach the Mercy Seat. Until that time, however, all is hazy and dark because of the smoke which fills the Temple.

When the first tabernacle was dedicated, a cloud filled it, and Moses was not able to enter into it because of the cloud of the glory of the Lord. (**Exodus 40:34-35**) “^[34]Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. ^[35]And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.” When Solomon’s temple was dedicated the cloud of the divine glory so filled the house that the priests could not stand to minister because of it (**1 Kings 8:10-11 KJV**) “^[10]And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, ^[11]So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.”

So then it was a *cloud*, veiling the all consuming brightness emanating for Jehovah, the Lord God. In the presence of His holiness, we who are sin would literally be obliterated in the presence of His holiness. Sinless and Holiness will always destroy that which is sinful and unholy. It is the law of all there has been or ever will be. If it were not for His grace and the atoning death of Christ at Calvary

there would have never been a way we could exist in God's presence in Heaven. The temple of God has always represented Heaven itself and the role you and I play in the worship of God.

When one studies the history of the temple and the intricacies of God's law, it is soon discovered that often times when the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, on behalf of those seeking forgiveness of sin, the sin offering was either accepted or rejected. If the offering was not the first-born of the herd and the purest of all the sheep it would summarily be rejected. It was the priest's responsibility to inspect the offering to insure the offering was the best and the purist. If the priest was negligent in his work, the work of assuring that the temple not be defiled, then in the same instance that the offering was rejected by God the priest would also forfeit his life simultaneously with God's rejection of the offering. It has been noted throughout history that the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies with a rope tied around his ankle. You get the idea. If the offering was rejected then they would be able to pull the priest out from behind the veil without being in danger of God's wrath themselves.

We have now arrived in our study to that point in time, that certain day, the day of the fierceness of divine wrath, and in place of the shadowing cloud is the lurid fiery smoke; —the same which Isaiah saw in his vision of Jehovah occupying His throne (*Isaiah 6:1-4 KJV*). The smoke fills the temple of heaven; and so intense is the manifestation of the divine glory and power that no one, even of the sons of God, is able to enter until the filled censers have been quite emptied out upon the doomed world. And from the midst of those awful signs a great voice sounds, like the trumpet sounding from the smoke and fire on Mount Sinai, saying to the seven angels, "*Go, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.*"

Next:

CHAPTER SIXTEEN,

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF THE WRATH OF GOD Poured OUT!