

Prelude To The 7 Bowl Judgments

(Revelation 15:1-8)

Rev. 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

2 And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. **3** And they sang the song of Moses the bondservant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvelous are Thy works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.

4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?
For Thou alone art holy;
For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THEE,
FOR THY RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”

5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, **6** and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts with golden girdles. **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 temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Intro: This morning we return to our on-going study in the Book of Revelation. The last time we were together we concluded the 14th chapter with a picture of God’s final harvesting of the wicked for judgment. The harvest pictured the reaping of the wicked Beast worshippers of earth, who, like ripe clusters of grapes, will be thrown into the great wine press of the wrath of God. This final judgment of God will be carried out on the Beast worshippers who have spurned God’s repeated offers of salvation. They spurned the witness of the 144,000 who preached God’s grace to them (Rev. 7:1-8; 14:1-5). They spurned the two witnesses who preached God’s grace to them for the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation (11:1-19). They spurned the witness of God’s angel who flew

across the skies preaching the everlasting Gospel to every person on earth (Rev. 14:6-8). The wrath of God will come upon this wicked world. God's wrath is His righteous response to man's sin. He is loving, longsuffering, and compassionate, but He is also a holy and righteous Judge.

Let me just say at the outset of this message, while Revelation is primarily a book of judgment, Christians have nothing to fear. One of the many benefits that come to us who know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and God, is we have been delivered from judgment. **Paul writes in Romans 8:1** "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." **Is this good news or what?** As believers our judgment is behind us, for Christ bore our judgment on the cross. All those who reject Jesus Christ will face judgment in the future. The fact that you and I will not face judgment should never lead to sinful complacency. The good news that we will never have to face judgment because Christ was judged and suffered in our place should cause us to praise God with a thankful heart, and lead us to obedience and service. The knowledge that the majority of mankind will face God's judgment should cause us to grieve in our hearts, and lead us to share Christ with everyone we come in contact with.

Now, we have learned that the Book of Revelation presents three successive series of sevenfold judgments: the 7 seals, the 7 trumpets, and the 7 bowls. The seven seal judgments were presented in chapters 6 through 8, verse 5. The seal judgments were depicted as a scroll with seven seals. As each seal is broken God's judgments unfold one after another. The breaking of the seventh seal introduces the seven trumpet judgments recorded in chapters 8, verse 6 through chapter 9, verse 21. Six angels sound their trumpets announcing judgment. When the seventh trumpet is blown in chapter 11, verse 15, the seven bowl judgments are introduced. The seven bowl judgments recorded in chapter 16 will be poured out as the ultimate expression of God's wrath on unbelieving humanity. These horrific judgments will culminate with the Battle of Armageddon, and the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory (Rev. 19:11-21).

Chapters 15 and 16 of Revelation form one connected vision, depicting the final 7 judgments of God that will terminate the Great Tribulation. Chapter 15 serves as a Prelude or Introduction to the final 7 judgments to be executed in chapter 16. These seven plagues or bowl judgments represent the final expression of God's wrath to be poured out upon all those who worship and serve the Beast, Anti-christ. As we shall see, these seven bowl judgments are catastrophic in extent and occur in rapid succession. This final series of judgments will culminate with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory (Rev. 19:11-21).

I. The Sign In Heaven (v. 1)

1 John sees another sign in heaven, which he describes as great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

This “sign” is actually the third sign John has seen. The first two signs referred to the woman, Israel in 12:1, and the red dragon, Satan in 12:3. John describes the scene in heaven as great and marvelous. As he watches these 7 angels come forth out of God’s temple with seven plagues, described in verse 7 as “seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God,” he is filled with awe and wonder. He comes to the realization that these seven plagues or bowls of judgment, which he describes as *the last*, represent the final outpouring of God’s wrath. **This is it!** These seven angels with the seven last plagues point to God’s judgment on Anti-christ, his system, and his worshipers.

I should point out that the number 7 is mentioned 8 times in this chapter. Seven you will recall symbolizes God’s perfection and completeness. The 7 angel’s pouring out these 7 last plagues will complete the pouring out of God’s wrath on unbelieving humanity.

John next sees something resembling a sea of glass mixed with fire, v. 2

II. The Sea Of Glass And The Victorious Tribulation Saints (v. 2)

2 And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

John witnessed a similar sea of glass-like crystal surrounding the throne of God back in Revelation 4:6. There as here, the translucent crystal sea stands for the perfect righteousness of God. This is another classic example of John’s wrestling with the conventions of human language in an attempt to describe the indescribable scene surrounding God’s glorious throne. The transparent sea surrounding the throne of God also serves to reflect His glory. The glass mixed with fire portrays God’s righteous judgment against unbelieving humanity.

John describes a large crowd of people standing on the sea of glass mixed with fire. He identifies these people as those who had come off victorious from the Beast and from his image and from the number of his name. What had been

perceived as their defeat on earth resulted in their being described as victorious in heaven. These Tribulation saints who had been martyred for their faith in Jesus Christ are pictured as standing on the glassy expanse surrounding the throne of God. Each is holding a golden harp. The harp described here is a stringed instrument similar to a guitar. This group of Tribulation saints join two other groups in the Bible who will play harps and sing praises to God and to the Lamb. We were introduced to the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders in chapter 5:8, and to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists in 14:3.

These Tribulation saints celebrate their victory over the Beast and his minions by singing two new songs, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, vv. 3-4

III. The Song Of Moses And Of The Lamb (vv. 3-4)

3 And they sang the song of Moses the bondservant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying,

Great and marvelous are Thy works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Thy ways,
Thou King of the nations.

4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?

For Thou alone art holy;

For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THEE,
FOR THY RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”

The song of Moses refers to Exodus 15, in which God’s people celebrated their triumphant deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The Israelites crossed the Red Sea on dry ground, and witnessed God’s judgment on Pharaoh’s pursuing army. They praised God for His faithfulness and mighty deliverance. A second song ascribes praise to the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, for providing redemption and deliverance from judgment.

The lyrics recorded in this song ascribe praise to God for four things: His great and marvelous works; His holy character, His just and righteous ways, and His sovereign Kingship over all nations. In verse 4 the question is asked, “who will not fear and glorify Thy holy name O Lord.” The answer is no one! While men have rebelled and rejected God throughout human history, the day will come when the Lord God, the Almighty will make every knee bow of those who are in

heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

As believers we have the privilege of worshipping God in song and praise for the great and marvelous salvation He has provided for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Remember all the wonderful things God has done for you brothers and sisters, and give Him praise, worship, and thanksgiving!

As John continued looking at the heavenly vision, he next sees the sanctuary in heaven opened, v. 5

IV. The Sanctuary In Heaven Opened (v. 5)

5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened.

As John keeps looking heavenward, his attention shifts to the Holy of Holies in the temple. He describes it as open. We know he is viewing the Holy of Holies because it was here that the testimony, the 10 Commandments of Moses were kept in the Ark of the Covenant. Throughout the Old Testament era, only the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies once each year on the Day of Atonement. After offering the sacrifice for the nation of Israel, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the blood of the Lamb over the Mercy Seat.

Dr. Harry Ironside suggests that, “the scene John describes here reminds us that the Gentile nations who have oppressed Israel must be punished. Those who have vented their hatred upon Israel cannot escape the wrath of God” (*Lectures On The Revelation*, 273).

V. The Seven Angels With The 7 Plagues (vv. 6-7)

6 John next sees the seven angels who had the seven last plagues come forth out of the temple. He describes the angels as being clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts with golden girdles. The linen clean and bright speaks of the angel’s purity as representatives of God’s holiness. The golden sashes around their chests point to the glory of God. These seven angles will go forth as God’s ministers of righteous judgment.

7 And one of the four living creatures, first seen in Revelation 4:6, gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. These seven golden bowls contain the full measure of God's wrath to be poured out on the wicked and unrepentant followers of Antichrist. The bowls here refer to the shallow pan used in the tabernacle and temple to transport coals from the altar of sacrifice to the altar of incense.

The golden bowls are described as full of the wrath of God. This speaks of the utter devastation to be poured out from each of the seven bowls. I should point out that the seven bowl judgments seem to occur in rapid succession at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. These final judgment will be followed by Christ's second coming (Rev. 19:11-22).

VI. The Smoke Filled Temple

8 Once the seven angels receive their golden bowls of judgment, the temple is filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power. No one will be able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels are finished.

Conclusion: Taken as a whole, Revelation 15:1-8 presents a fearful picture of impending divine judgment on a wicked world. It serves as a Prelude, an Introduction to the 7 bowl judgments to be poured out in chapter 16. Absolute and undiluted wrath will be the business of these final days.

Applications:

1. As believers in Jesus Christ we have nothing to fear. Remember what the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." **No condemnation. This is really good news.** As believers our judgment is behind us. Christ bore the judgment our sins deserved on the cross. We will never face God's righteous judgment.
2. The fact that you and I will not face God's judgment should never lead to sinful complacency. The good news that we will never have to face judgment because Christ was judged and suffered in our place should cause us to praise God with a thankful heart, and lead us to obedience and service.
3. If you are here this morning and have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord you will most certainly face God's judgment in the future. If you want to be able to celebrate God's ultimate victory and escape His final judgments you must have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Will you step out of the darkness and invite Christ into your heart?