

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Revelation Chapter 15

## *Bible Study Notes on The Prelude to the Bowl Judgements*

### Revelation Chapter 15

#### *What is the nature of Chapter 15 – is it parenthetical or sequential ?*

- Chapter 14 was the final of the parenthetical (overview) chapters and was a prelude to the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath
  - It is, like the other parenthetical chapters, giving an overview of this tribulation period – but in chapter 14 the very end of the tribulation period was in view
- Chapter 15 is a Sequential chapter, picking up the narrative after the sounding of the seventh trumpet in *Chapter 11 vs. 15-19*
  - We see in this chapter the very last days of the Tribulation period of 7 years
  - We see the Seven Angels with the seven last plagues, given bowls of wrath to pour out on the earth as a completion of God's wrath (*verse 1*)
  - We see the Tribulation Saints again praising God (*verses 2-4*), as they were doing in *Chapter 7, verses 9-17*
  - We studied verses 1 to 4 in our study of the Tribulation Saints

## Ch 15 Vs 1            The Seven Angels with The Seven Last Plagues'

### The Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

### *Verse 1*

#### *What sign does John see in Heaven and What does it Signify?*

- A sign (see *Revelation 1: 1*)
  - The third 'sign' or 'wonder' (Greek: *sēmeion*) John has seen (see the first two signs in *Revelation 12: 1 and 3*)
  - Great (Greek: *megas*) – in quantity (big) and intensity (loud and mighty)
  - Marvellous (Greek: *thaumastos*) – remarkable and to be wondered at
- Seven Angels – God's messengers and executors of His will
  - Seven is the biblical number representing perfection or completion
  - Having the Seven 'Last' Plagues – the plagues are contained in bowls from where they are poured out (*verse 7*), hence they are commonly known as the 'Bowl Judgements'
    - Following on from the Trumpet judgements (*Revelation Chapters 8 & 9, & verse 1 of Chapter 15*) – the Last Plagues are found in *Chapter 16*
    - The first Plague – sores on those with the 'mark of the beast'
    - The second Plague – the sea becomes blood and every thing in it dies – reminiscent of the second Trumpet judgement (where 1/3 was affected)
    - The third Plague – the rivers and springs become blood – reminiscent of the third Trumpet judgement (where 1/3 was affected)
    - The fourth Plague – the sun becomes very hot, scorching men with fire and great heat

- The fifth Plague – the Beast’s kingdom becomes dark and men chew their tongues because of great pain (from the sores of the first Plague)
  - The sixth Plague – the River Euphrates is dried up, the Euphrates featured in the sixth Trumpet judgement
  - At seventh Plague – the Earth is Utterly Shaken
- ‘Last’ (Greek: *eschatos*)
  - The final and uttermost judgements and wrath of God – at the latter part of the 70<sup>th</sup> week (the 7 year Tribulation period) – see *Daniel 9: 24*
    - To finish the transgression and make an end of sins
    - To make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness
  - These are the final judgements on the earth and unbelieving mankind, just prior to the return of Yeshua
- In them the Wrath of God (judgement of rebellion and sin) is filled up (KJV) or complete (NKJV) (Greek: *teleō*, meaning to accomplish or conclude)
  - When these ‘last’ plagues are released – the wrath of God against sin and rebellion will be completed (see *Romans 1: 18-23*)
  - We are in the very last days of the Great Tribulation here – that is the end of the last half of the 7-year Tribulation period
  - These ‘last’ plagues complete God’s wrath and judgement – and the way is clear for the coming of Yeshua and the final battle on ‘the great day of the Lord’ (*Revelation 16: 14-16*)

## **Ch 15 Vs 2-4      The Tribulation Saints – Singing the ‘Song of Moses’ and the ‘Song of the Lamb’**

### **The Company of Saints Singing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb**

*Verses 2-4*

#### ***What signified by the ‘sea of glass mingled with fire’?***

- Sea of Glass – ‘something like’ – John is using a simile here to describe what he sees
  - This Sea of Glass is one we have encountered before (*Revelation 4: 6*) – it is before the throne of God – like a pavement upon which saints can stand
  - The Sea is modelled in the Old Testament by the ‘Bronze Laver’ in the Tabernacle (*Exodus 30: 18-21*) and ‘The Sea of Cast Bronze’, a large laver, in the Temple (*1 Kings 7: 23-26*) – these were for the priests to wash in prior to serving in the tabernacle/temple... a symbol of purification
- Mingled with Fire – an allusion to the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit

#### ***Who are the people standing on the ‘sea of glass’ with harps of God’?***

- A Company of Saints are Standing on this Sea – these are Tribulation Saints
  - Standing on the Washing and Cleansing of the Word and Spirit
  - This company of saints are overcomers – those who have victory
    - Over the beast (over the Coming World Leader [the ‘anti-Christ’])
    - Over his image (over false worship)

- Over his mark (no false allegiance or compromise)
- Over number of his name (through their loyalty to Christ)
- These attributes indicate that they are Tribulation Saints – they were no doubt martyred for their faith (*Revelation 13: 15-17*)

### ***What are these Tribulation Saints Doing?***

- Singing – after Trial, after Tribulation, and after Victory (*1 Corinthians 15: 54-56*)  
...now before the throne of God they are singing!

### ***What is ‘The Song of Moses’?***

- The Song of Moses – sung also in the Old Testament
  - The song sung by Moses and the children of Israel after the crossing of the Red Sea (*Exodus 15*), celebrating deliverance from slavery in Egypt
  - The song words spoken by Moses to all the assembly of Israel after the appointment of Joshua as Moses successor (*Deuteronomy 31: 30 – 32: 43*)
  - Moses’ song concerns Israel’s Exodus from Egypt and these Saints sing it because it is an allusion to their own victory over Satan and the two Beasts

### ***What is ‘The Song of The Lamb’?***

- The Song of the Lamb – like other songs sung elsewhere in Revelation
  - The song sung by the 24 elders (the redeemed saints) in *Revelation 5: 9-10*, celebrating their redemption through the blood of the Lamb
  - The song sung around the throne by the angels, the elders and the four living creatures in *Revelation 5: 11-12*, celebrating the worthiness of the Lamb; and by every creature in heaven and earth in *Revelation 5: 13*.
- The ‘Song of the Lamb’ praises God:
  - For His Works – great and marvellous
  - For His ways – just and true
  - For His Kingship – king of the saints
  - For His Awesome Nature – ‘who shall not fear Him’
  - For His Name – to be glorified
  - For His Holiness – none other is holy
  - For His Authority – all nations shall come and worship
  - For His Judgements – now manifest on the earth
- Both Songs are Songs of Redemption
  - The Song of the Moses celebrates the deliverance of Israel from slavery and release to worship and serve God
  - The Song of the Lamb celebrates the final deliverance from Satan and all foes of spiritual life
  - The Songs mark the two bounds of Redemption history, and between them lies the whole history of God's ransomed people
  - One day we shall see the rightfulness of all that God has done
  - Clothed in the righteousness which He gives us, we may stand in His presence and sing His praise

### ***What is the timing of this vision of John’s?***

- Timing - this is happening at the end of the tribulation period
  - These tribulations saints are from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues (*Revelation 7: 9-10*)
  - Their song says ‘Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?’
  - One day (very soon!) all men and all nations will render unto God, in awe and fear, acknowledgement of His glory, and worship Him, due to such a discovery of his truth and justice – or they will suffer eternal punishment

## **Ch 15 Vs 5-8      The Final Prelude to the Seven Bowl Judgements – The Seven Angels Coming From The Temple In Heaven**

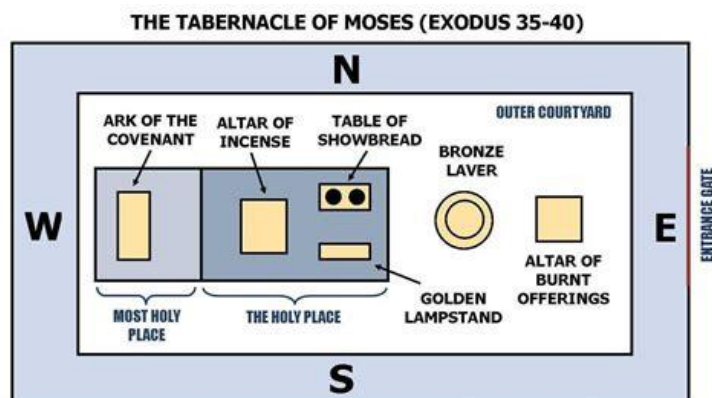
### **Ch 15 V 5      The Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony in Heaven is Opened**

*What does John see Opened in Heaven and What does it Signify?*

- The Temple
  - The Temple is not mentioned in the first three chapters, but mentioned 15 times from chapter 4 onwards – emphasising the Jewish focus after the *harpazō* (the rapture)
  - Specifically – Temple of the Tabernacle of the Testimony
    - This refers to the location of the ark of the covenant in the Holy of Holies where God dwells (see *Exodus 25: 10-22*)
    - The Ark of the Covenant and other elements of the earthly Temple are replicas of the true Tabernacle and Ark (the Testimony) in Heaven – see *Revelation 11: 19* and *Hebrews 9: 11, 23-24*

*What is in the Tabernacle of Testimony?*

- John is seeing right into the most sacred part of the Tabernacle/Temple in Heaven
  - The place where, in the earthly Tabernacle/Temple, the High Priest alone could only go once a year, on Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)
    - The Opening of the Temple of the Tabernacle indicates the way into God’s presence is opened for saints, though the blood of Yeshua – see *Hebrews 9: 14-15*
    - It mirrors the Temple Curtain, torn in two at Yeshua’s death – see *Matthew 27: 50-52*
    - In the Most Holy Place, behind the veil, was the Ark of the Covenant



### ***What is in the Ark of the Covenant?***

- Inside the Ark of Testimony were 3 items of testimony to God's faithfulness (see *Hebrews 9: 3-4*):
  - 1. The Stone Tablets of the Law (*Exodus 34: 1-4, 28; Deuteronomy 10: 1-5*)
  - 2. Aaron's Rod that budded (*Numbers 17: 1-10*)
  - 3. The Golden Pot of 'hidden' Manna (*Exodus 16: 32-34; Revelation 2: 17*)



- Above the Ark in the Holy of Holies was the Mercy Seat
  - The 'Mercy Seat' was a pure gold cover – it was the "mercy seat" for the Divine Presence – see *Exodus 25: 17-22*
    - The mercy seat was a place where God often met with Moses
    - The mercy seat, supplied the meeting-place between God and man
  - It had a second more significant role in the ritual worship practice of Israel – on Yom Kippur the high priest would sprinkle blood on the mercy seat; in that way he made atonement for his own sin and the sin of the people
  - Mercy Seat (Hebrew: *kappôreth*) comes from the Hebrew word, "*kâphar*" which means to atone – the mercy seat's original purpose is, therefore, "atonement"

### **Ch 15 V 6    The Seven Angels with the Seven Plagues**

#### ***Who does John see Coming out from the Holy of Holies?***

- Seven Angels with Seven Plagues
  - Seven symbolizes completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual)
  - Angels are God's messengers and holy servants
  - They come out from the Temple (the place of worship)
- The angels – bearing the most terrible and final elements of God's wrath proceed out the most Holy (the Holy of Holies) to the most sinful and wicked (the Earth worshipping the Beast)
  - These angels were acting in all things under the divine appointment and direction, and they were going to prepare a sacrifice to the Lord, called the supper of the great God (*Revelation 19: 17*)
  - They are equipped to execute righteous judgment by which God will be glorified

### ***What is the Significance of the Angels Garments?***

- They are Clothed in Pure Bright Linen
  - The fabric represents holiness and purity (*Revelation 19: 8, 14*)
  - The angels are the ministers of divine justice, and they do everything in a pure and holy manner
- They have Golden Bands Around Their Chests
  - These are belts or girdles, running from the shoulder to the waist, that each of the seven angels wears over his garments
  - The bands demonstrate authority, riches, royalty, and untarnished glory
- These garments are similar to the high priests' garments made for Aaron (see *Exodus 28: 1-43*)
  - The Angels garments, like the High Priests' garments reflect God's holiness, purity and authority and splendour

### **Ch 15 V 7      Golden Bowls of the Wrath of God**

#### ***What are these Seven Angels given?***

- Seven Golden Bowls
  - Each Angel is given a bowl
  - Each bowl is full of the wrath of God which, one by one, each angel will pour out upon the earth (*Revelation 16: 1*)
  - They have (in bowls) seven plagues – the final and most severe judgments from God – these are described in *chapter 16*
  - Seven – indicating completeness – the pouring out of these bowls of plagues will be the completion of God's judgement
  - Together with the coming of Yeshua as king and judge, these bowls bring the completion of God's agenda for His people – see *Daniel 9: 24*

#### ***Who are these Living Creatures?***

- The Four Living Creatures
  - We first encounter these four living creatures when John sees the Throne Room of Heaven – see *Revelation 4: 6-8*
  - Living Creatures
    - Greek: *zōon* meaning a live thing, an animal – derived from the Greek word *zaō* meaning to live
    - Literally "four living ones or beings" – these are the cherubim (singular, cherub), those angels frequently referred to in the Old Testament in connection with God's presence, power, and holiness
    - Cherubim are first mentioned as guarding the way to the 'tree of life', after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (see *Genesis 3: 24*)
    - Ezekiel gives a description of Cherubim whom he sees in visions (see *Ezekiel 1: 4-14; 10: 1-22*)
    - Gold Cherubim are guarding the Ark of the Covenant overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings

- The Bowls are given to the Angels by one of the Four Living Creatures
  - We are not told which of the four living creatures (see *Revelation 4: 6-8*) gave these bowls
- The Golden Bowls
  - These are shallow cups, familiar items often associated with various functions of the temple worship, such as wine and blood sacrifice
  - Their flat shallowness pictures how the divine judgments will be emptied instantly, rather than slowly poured, drowning those who refused to drink the cup of salvation

### ***What is the Significance of the Origin of these Bowls of Wrath?***

- Judgement flows out of the Temple of God – from the domain of the Father, from the mercy seat of His presence
  - It is the Father’s judgement and His wrath that is revealed in the seven bowls
  - Judgement flows from the Holy of Holies where the Ark of Testimony is:
    - It flows from His Word (the Stone Tablets of His Law)
    - It flows from His Faithful Priests & Disciples (Aaron’s Rod which Budded)
    - It flows from His Gracious Bounty (the ‘manna’ which God provided for sustenance of His people)
- The Wrath of God
  - Divine wrath is not an impulsive outburst of anger aimed capriciously at people God does not like - it is the settled, steady, merciless, graceless, and compassionless response of a righteous God against sin
  - These bowls contain the final judgments of the Great Tribulation which affect all of God's enemies, not just a portion of them
  - The bowls contain God’s wrath – God’s righteous anger and judgement against sin and rebellion – the judgements proceed from God, not from Satan’s enmity or activity
  - Wrath – Greek: *thumos*, meaning passion (as if breathing hard), fierceness and indignation
  - The bowls are in contrast with those containing the prayers of the saints borne by the 4 living creatures and 24 elders (see *Revelation 5: 8*) – both are golden; one, the prayers of the saints, are a sweet incense before the Lord; the other, the bowls of God’s wrath, are terrifying plagues of judgement
  - God’s eternal nature is referenced “who lives for ever and ever” – in contrast to the brevity of sinful man and his wicked world systems and brief existence (no eternal life for the wicked)
    - The redeemed saints, of course, have eternal life, with the Lord
  - Matthew Henry writes: “*The interests of antichrist were so interwoven with the civil interests of the nations that he could not be destroyed without giving a great shock to all the world;*”

## **Ch 15 V 8     The Temple Filled with Smoke**

### ***What does John now see in the Temple in Heaven?***

- The Glory of God in the Temple
  - The temple is filled with smoke – they emanate...
    - From the glory of God
    - From His power
  - Smoke (Greek: *kapnos*) means literally ‘smoke’ – it is different from the glory of God – Glory (Greek: *doxa* and Hebrew: *kābôd*) which mean splendour, honour and glory – the Hebrew carries the sense of ‘weight’
  - The cloud of glory was the visible manifestation of God's presence in the tabernacle and temple
    - It was a sign of protection at erecting the tabernacle and at the dedication of the temple
    - But, in the judgment of Korah, the glory of the Lord appeared – then he and his companions were swallowed up by the earth (*Numbers 16: 1-40*)
  - The emblem of smoke from the glory of God expresses the execution of judgment, and the awesome power of His presence
  - The Temple full of smoke is reminiscent of:
    - Mount Sinai (*Exodus 19: 16-20*)
    - Tabernacle in the Wilderness (*Exodus 40: 34-38*)
    - The Ark brought into Solomon’s temple (*1 Kings 8: 10-11*)
  - Both the cloud of glory and smoke proceed from the power of God, and in both he is glorified
  - In the previous chapter, smoke was associated with unending torment of those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name – see *Revelation 14: 11*

*See Supplementary Note 54: ‘Smoke in the Bible’*

### ***Why could no one then enter the Temple?***

- No man could enter the temple
  - Not until the seven plagues were fulfilled (completed)
  - No priestly intercession was possible – nothing can now delay God's wrath
  - There is no escape from this judgment

### ***What is the Significance of the last word of this Chapter?***

- Complete Judgement and the Completion of Judgement
  - Completed (NKJV) – Fulfilled (KJV)
    - Greek: *teleō* meaning to *end*, that is, *complete, execute, conclude, discharge*
- God’s Wrath and Judgement will be completed with the pouring out of these seven bowls – the end of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week when Yeshua returns to rule and reign
- After these Bowl Judgements will come the return of Yeshua, the final battle of Armageddon, the casting of the Two Beasts into the Lake of Fire, the binding of Satan for 1000 years, and Yeshua’s Millennial Rule on Earth
- After the Millennium, Satan is released and a last rebellion ends with Satan cast into the Lake of Fire, followed by the final judgement at the Great White Throne



- After this comes a new heaven and a new earth and the Eternal Kingdom
- There are Similarities and Differences between the Trumpet Judgements and the Bowl Judgements
  - The first four Trumpet Judgements were judgements on a third of creation – vegetation, seas, waters and the heavens
    - In the Bowl Judgements all of creation is affected
  - In the fifth Trumpet Judgement mankind was afflicted with sores but not death
    - In the Bowl Judgements all men are afflicted with sores, scorching heat, and darkness and pain
  - In the sixth Trumpet Judgement angels from the River Euphrates afflict a third of mankind with fire, smoke and brimstone – and a third die
    - At the pouring out of the sixth Bowl Judgement the River Euphrates is dried up and all nations are gathered to battle on ‘that great day of God Almighty’ – at Armageddon

