

Revelation 15 Part 2



1. Preliminary Considerations (DISCUSSED)

2. Contextual Interpretation

CHAPTERS 15 REVEALS THAT WHAT IS ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE IN THE FINAL FIVE MONTH SIEGE AND DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM (APR/70 AD – SEP/70 AD) BY TITUS AND THE ARMIES OF ROME IS THE RESULT OF HEAVENLY WORSHIP.

"Titus began the (final) siege of Jerusalem in April of 70. The defenders held out desperately for five months..." –F.F. Bruce

(1) "Then I saw" = Indicates the beginning of a new movement or set of visions/signs in the book. As such they are to be viewed in linear/chronological fashion to each other but not necessarily in relation to the previous set of visions/signs we see at the end of 14 (verses 14-20); "another sign great and amazing" = see 12:1, (sign = *shmei/on*) symbol or symbolic reference to something literal; "in heaven" = the location of the events which take place in this chapter (heaven v. earth). As such, "worship because of judgment" is immediately inferred since in the book (of Revelation), this is the most frequent reason for its appearance (e.g. Rev 4-5.6; Rev 12 -- guilty charges of apostasy against Jerusalem are established as the "hinge and spine" of the book": 1) (1-2) abdication of her motherly messiah duties, 2) (3-4) attempted murder of her messiah son, 3) (5-6) abandonment of her messiah son, 4) (7-17) anarchy against the est'd govt; Rev 19:1-5; Rev 20:11-15).; "seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished" = God's judgment against the nation of Israel for their apostasy will reach its climax in the final five month siege represented symbolically by these seven angels and their impending earthly plagues/bowls of wrath (see as support Rev 16:17-19). As discussed before angels are used throughout the book of Revelation to represent those events which God has ordained to take place on earth (e.g. Rev 8:3-12). Important also to note: one of the big "takeaways" from these heavenly worship/courtroom scenes is the fact that whatever takes place on earth is always the reflection/expression of such decisions in heaven. This is especially true in relation to the decisions of the church (Mat 18:18 – consider even fn #3 – perfect tense in original).

(2) "sea of glass mingled with fire" = the specific place of John's heavenly vision is the throne room of God -- see Rev 4:5-6 ("before the throne were burning seven torches (i.e. fire)...before the throne...a sea of glass"); "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." = Christian martyrs from the Neronian persecution (64-68 AD) who now stand ready for worship ("conquer": common way in Rev to refer to those who resist/overcome evil even unto death = 2:7,11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21, 12:11, 13:7, 21:7; "harps": the instrument of worship = 2Sa 6:5; 1Ki 10:12; 1Ch 15:16; Neh 12:27; Psa 33:2, 71:22, 81:2, 92:3, 144:9, 150:3; negatively speaking - Rev 18:22).

(3-4) = A song which praises God for avenging the blood of His people against their enemies (Exo 14:27-15:19). In this case those who are being avenged are the Christian martyrs giving the praise (“they sing”—i.e. those who had conquered...” -v2), and those experiencing such vengeance, the Jews (those most culpable/responsible for the “wrath of the beast” —Rev 13:7 w/ 13:13, 15, 17:3, 5-6, 18:20, 19:1-3). This is what makes it uniquely “the song of the Lamb”. The mention of it being “the song of Moses” also no doubt alludes to the prophecy made by God to Moses regarding the future apostasy of Israel and His forsaking of them (Deu 31:14-22...Deu 32)¹.

(5-6) “sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven” = Another reference to the throne room of God, His specific heavenly dwelling place and that which the earthly tabernacle under the OC was patterned after as an indication of His dwelling among/with men (Act 7:44; Heb 8:5; Exo 25:8-9). It is also known as “the household/house of God” and exists on earth today as the church (1Ti 3:15; 1Ch 6:48). This is (in both heaven and on earth) the place of worship as well as where God’s will and judgments are revealed—which is what the “seven angels with the seven plagues” represent as previously discussed (Act 15:28; Mat 18:17-20; Exo 25:22); “clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chest” = because these angels function to reveal and enforce God’s judgments, they are dressed in the vestments of the OT priests—those charged with the same duties (Exo 28:39; Lev 10:10-11; Deu 17:8-13).

(7-8) “seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God” = another way of referring to the “seven plagues” to be manifested in the final five month siege against Jerusalem and the Jews. As such, these “seven bowls” or “seven plagues” also represent the fulfillment of warning prophecy placed upon Israel for apostasy (Lev 26:14-28); “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” = an allusion to both the “holiness” of the work which is about to be performed and God’s presence with/support of His people in such work (Exo 40:34-37; 1Ki 8:10-13; Deu 20:16-17—see fn #1; Mat 18:20).

¹ The fact that the text mentions this as not only “the song of Moses” but also “the song of the Lamb” indicates that the area of focus and congruency which is being alluded to in relation to the plurality of Mosaic songs found in the OT is one of purpose (v. the content). In this way, common ground can be found between both Moses and Jesus and the prophetic place of their people in redemptive history.