

REVELATION 15 – PRELUDE TO THE BOWL JUDGMENTS

A. Those victorious over the beast.

1. (1) Seven angels with seven plagues.

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

a. I saw another sign in heaven, great and

marvelous: Revelation 14 seemed to describe the consummation of all things, ending with the fury of the Battle of Armageddon. But now John will go back and describe God's judgment in more detail. This idea of stating and re-stating in more detail is common with prophecy, and with Hebrew literature in general (see [Genesis 1:1-2:7](#) and [Genesis 2:8-25](#)).

i. "As is the plan of the prophet, he reviews, he recapitulates, he enlarges upon the scene he has already sketched." (Erdman)

ii. Remember, we already saw what seemed to be the end in [Revelation 6:12-17](#). Then John took us over the same material in greater detail again. This reminds us that Revelation is not strictly chronological in its arrangement.

b. **Seven angels having the seven last plagues:** This idea is also in [Leviticus 26:21](#): Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. These **seven last plagues** are God's judgment on a disobedient and contrary world.

c. **For in them the wrath of God is complete:** The ancient Greek word for **wrath** is thymos. As was the case in [Revelation 14:10](#), there are two words for wrath or anger in Biblical

Greek: thymos (a volatile, passionate anger) and orge (anger from a settled disposition). This is a place where God's anger flashes hot.

i. Orge is the more common word for God's anger in the New Testament. Thymos is used only 11 times, and 10 of the 11 are in Revelation. It is the book that reveals the judgment of God against a Jesus-rejecting world.

d. **Is complete:** The word **complete** (the ancient Greek word etelesthe) means, "to reach an end or an aim." Here, the hot wrath of God will fulfill an eternal purpose. God isn't just blowing off steam.

2. (2) A multitude on the sea of glass.

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

a. **I saw something like a sea of glass:** The sea of glass is **mingled with fire**. This may be a reminder of the "fires" of judgment.

i. "The sea is designed to reflect the glory of God. In chapter 4 its description 'like unto crystal' speaks of the holiness of God. Here the sea mingled with fire speaks of divine judgment proceeding from God's holiness." (Walvoord)

ii. Because many of the images in this chapter are connected with the Book of Exodus, some simply see an indication of the color red, with it an allusion to the Red Sea and the deliverance from bondage. Also in this chapter we see plagues, Moses, the tabernacle, and the cloud of God's glory. This chapter shows the

ultimate Exodus, the freedom of God's people from a sinful and persecuting world.

b. **Those who have victory over the beast:** These are those who were victorious over the beast through their faithfulness unto death. They are the tribulation martyrs, described in [Revelation 7:9-17](#).

i. They are not those who survive the tribulation. As much as we can discern any sort of chronology from Revelation (which is difficult), we are still very much in the tribulation – the bowl judgments still wait.

ii. Therefore, even though the Antichrist kills them, they **have victory over the beast** – they are not losers. The early church consistently described the day of martyrdom as “a day of victory.”

c. **Standing on the sea of glass:** The ancient Greek word for **on** (epi) can mean on, over or beside. Many believe that in the architecture of heaven, the sea of glass is a physical representation of the Word of God, connecting to the idea of the tabernacle's laver and the washing of water by the word ([Ephesians 5:26](#)). Perhaps we could say that these saints are standing on the Word.

d. **Having harps of God:** The only people seen with **harps** before were the twenty-four elders ([Revelation 5:8](#)). These tribulation martyrs are given the blessing of worshipping God with music in heaven.

3. (3-4) Their song of praise.

They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying:

**“Great and marvelous are Your works,
Lord God Almighty!
Just and true are Your ways,
O King of the saints!
Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy.
For all nations shall come and worship before You,
For Your judgments have been manifested.”**

a. **They sing the song of Moses:** Only one song is sung, but this song goes by two titles (**the song of Moses** and **the song of the Lamb**). The two titles refer to a single song. Here is a perfect union between law and love, between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant.

b. This song, deeply rooted in the Old Testament, gives praise to:

- God’s works (**Great and marvelous are Your works**).
- God’s ways (**Just and true are Your ways**).
- God’s worthiness (**Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy**).
- God’s worship (**all nations shall come and worship before You**).

c. **Your... Your... You... Your... You... You... Your:** These martyrs are only focused on God. They did not even focus on their own costly and glorious victory. They have the heart of true worship, understanding that it’s all about God, not about us.

B. Seven angels are given seven bowls of judgment.

1. (5-6) Seven angels, distinctively clothed.

After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

a. **The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven:** Exodus 25:8-9 and Hebrews 8:9 remind us that the tabernacle God told Moses to build was based on a heavenly pattern. The **temple of the tabernacle** here refers to the heavenly reality of the **tabernacle**, not the earthly copy.

b. **Out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues:** These angels bring God's judgment. It is significant that they came directly from heavenly temple, from the presence and throne of God. They do not act on their own authority, but God's.

c. **Pure bright linen... their chests girded with golden bands:** Their clothing is a reminder that God's judgment is always completely pure and righteous. They are not like the modern anti-hero or vigilante, who sink down to the level of the criminals they fight.

2. (7-8) The bowls are given; the cloud of God's glory fills the temple.

Then 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. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

a. **Seven golden bowls:** These **bowls** are broad, flat bowls or saucers used ritually for drinking or for pouring libations in sacrifice. The contents of such a shallow bowl were quickly, easily, and completely poured out.

i. The King James Version says that the angels had seven golden vials full of the wrath of God. The word vials is really a poor translation. They are really "shallow, pan-like, golden bowls, or censers, such as were used in the temple to hold the fire when incense was burned." (Seiss)

b. **The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power:** When the cloud of glory fills the temple in heaven, no one can enter. It was the same when Moses could not enter the Tabernacle when the smoke of the cloud of God's glory, sometimes called the Shekinah filled the tent (Exodus 40:34-35).

c. **Filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power:** Both the **bowls** and the cloud came **from the glory of God and from His power**. This is a reminder of God's special presence and glory, even in the midst of devastating judgment.

d. **No one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed:** This declares that judgment was now irreversible. Nothing could hinder it any longer, because access to this temple in heaven would not long be denied.