

Revelation 15:1-8

Chapter 15 - Prelude to the Bowl Judgments

Chapters 15 and 16 bring to consummation the chronologically ordered events leading up to the second coming of Christ described in chapter 19.

Verse 1

And I saw another sign in heaven – John has already mentioned two preceding signs in 12:1 and 12:3.

- The first sign – Israel
- The second sign – The final world empire under Satan
- The third sign – The seven angels – divine judgment

Great and marvelous – Because it signifies the climax of the outpouring of God's wrath on nature, humankind, the dragon, and the two beasts.

Seven angels who had seven plagues – The seven plagues have similarities to the plagues of Egypt. God's purpose then and with these plagues is to punish godless idolaters and to liberate the godly for future blessing.

Which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished – The seven plagues, or bowl judgments, are the final outpouring of God's wrath. The word "last" is emphatic in the Greek emphasizing the final nature of God's judgments during the tribulation period. In John 19:30 Jesus cried, "*It is finished!*" The price for our sins was fully paid. Here *the wrath of God is finished!* Those who reject the finished work of Christ will receive the finished wrath of God.

Verse 2

And I saw a sea of glass mixed with fire – This sea of glass is first mentioned in 4:6. The sea represents the glory, holiness, and majesty of God that separate Him from His creation. The fire speaks of the divine judgment that is about to come.

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 – The fact that the martyrs of the tribulation can stand on the sea reflects the faithfulness of God in keeping His own. Some believe the sea represents the Word of God with its many precious promises to the saints.

Holding harps of God – The ability to offer special worship before the throne is granted to the tribulation martyrs.

Verses 3-4

And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God - Moses records two songs in the Old Testament: one in Deuteronomy 32 and another in Exodus 15. The song of deliverance in Exodus 15 probably best parallels the deliverance of the martyrs who sing. This song probably relates to the Jews who were slain.

And the song of the Lamb – No specific song is previously recorded unless Revelation 5:9-14 is considered. This song is for all saints as it speaks of redemption from sin made possible by the sacrifice 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. Note Deut. 32:3ff.

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy... Note Jeremiah 10:6-7

For all the nations will come and worship before Thee, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed. Note Isaiah 66:23

Verse 5

After these things I looked and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened – "*I looked*" denotes something new and dramatic. The "*temple*" refers to the inner holy place of the tabernacle. Perhaps John saw the curtain that separated the inner holy place from the outer tabernacle pulled back. When Jesus cried, "*It is finished,*" the curtain of the temple was torn from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). Now it appears the heavenly temple is opened to finish the wrath of God.

Verse 6

And the seven angels... came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright – The clean and bright linen represent holiness and righteousness. Note Revelation 19:8, 14

And girded around their breasts with golden girdles - If gold reflects the glory of God then these angels glorify Him when they pour out the judgments. Jesus wears a similar golden girdle in Revelation 1:12. The angels attire may represent their authority from Him.

Verse 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 – Golden bowls were used in Israel's temple worship (Exodus 25:29). We also see golden bowls used in the heavenly worship in Revelation 5:8. It is interesting that they hold the prayers of the saints in 5:8 and in 6:9-10 the martyrs pray for God to avenge them. There may be a correlation between the two.

Verse 8

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power – Note the parallel in Exodus 40:34-35. In Exodus 19:18 the presence of God is associated with the mountain being engulfed in smoke. In Psalm 74:1, God's anger is equated with smoke. Note also Isaiah 6:4, 30:27 where the presence of God is associated with smoke. The fact that no one could enter God's presence until He finished judging the earth dwellers points to the climatic and rapid outpouring of these judgments.