

## Chapter Fifteen

### The Song of Moses & the Lamb, and the Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

This short chapter serves as an interlude, and is a major division in the book. Everything has been fulfilled, including the full measure of the Jews' disobedience. There also appears to be completion of the saints' persecution, as they now stand before God. What happens from this point on is God's issuance of a "divorce decree" against adulterous Israel. The striking thing about this chapter is the combining of Old and New Testament figures: Moses and Jesus, the Law and the Promise, and the fulfillment of the whole plan coming together.

**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.**

The third and final sign in heaven that completes God's judgment. The church, Satan, and the Last Judgment make up the three signs, summarizing the essence of God's plan of salvation. This particular sign is described as "great and marvelous."

Chapter 4 showed us the seven seals, while chapter 8 spoke of seven trumpets, warnings, both written and then announced. Now, we have before us, seven bowls—a pouring out of those predictions and warnings upon the Jews. Six seals, six trumpets, six bowls, the number being the symbol of man. The number '3' is spiritual completeness or unity, stemming from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Seven angels—seven plagues:* The number '7' means *completeness* or *perfection*, so these are 7 angels holding God's complete and final judgment. As the 7th seal contained the 7 trumpets, so also does the last trumpet usher in 7 plagues.

*Wrath of God is finished:* God's works were finished from the foundation of the world. (Heb 4:3) In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, *then the mystery of God is finished*, as He preached to His servants the prophets. (Rev 10:7) God's work, His plan of redemption was done. Now, His wrath will be consummated. Since the work of the cross finalizes the answer to sin, justification, and reconciliation, what remains is God's judgment.

**15:2 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.**

*Sea of glass mixed with fire:* The sea is the Gentile nations. It is a shifting, unfathomable darkness, also translated *abyss*. Its absence in the new city (Rev 21:1) indicates that the sea is undesirable or incompatible with God's kingdom. In other words, there are no nations in the kingdom, only God's people. This sea of glass is much different than the metaphorical ocean. It is unmovable, solid, and able to provide a foundation for the righteous. (15:2) It is clear instead of dark. (Josh 24:7) This sea of glass first appears in 4:6, where it is *before* God's throne. At that

point, it is “like crystal,” and there is no fire mixed with it.

Transparent glass (21:18, 21) signifies purity. (Clear glass did not appear until 300 AD, when manganese oxide was introduced into the firing process.) This sea of glass is now *mixed with fire*, and on it stand those “victorious from the beast, his image, and his number.” Since fire usually signifies testing, the foundation has been tested with fire. In speaking of the heavenly inheritance reserved for the faithful, Peter speaks of “the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though *tested by fire*, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor *at the revelation of Jesus Christ*.” (1 Pet 1:7)

Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ...*standing firm* in one spirit (sea of glass), with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel; *in no way alarmed by your opponents* (mixed with fire)—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. (Phil 1:27-28)

It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm (sea of glass) and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery. (Gal 5:1)

Thus, the faithful overcame the beast’s kingdom, the heathen world. They stand firm, having endured the testing of their faith.

*Beast’s number and image:* Men exalting themselves to God’s level (666) while promoting the worship of Satan’s doctrines (image). (See notes on 13:17-18.)

*Holding harps of God:* Harps are symbols of that which soothes the spirit. (See notes on 14:2) These saints are now at peace, having overcome sin and evil. They will use the harps to accompany the song about to be sung.

**15:3-4 And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant 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. 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.”**

*Song of Moses:* This song can be found in Exodus 15. It encompasses the theme of God as a Savior/Warrior, bringing His people out of bondage and defeating their enemy. It ends with the following: “Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” (Exo 15:17-18)

*Song of the Lamb:* This is the song of Moses and of the Christ, where the Law and the Gospel come together as one. “Thy righteous acts have been revealed” point to the revelation of the mystery of the ages, which God kept hidden in times past. (Col 1:26-27)

Jesus and His apostles sang a hymn before going to the Mount of Olives. (Matt 26:30) It was sung prior to Him telling them one last time of His impending death and before His prayer in Gethsemane. The song of the Lamb is most likely the same song cited in 5:9, which identifies God’s plan of salvation and His establishment of a kingdom upon the earth. The earthly kingdom is the church, not a future millennial reign of Christ in Jerusalem.

**15:5-6 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, 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.**

*Tabernacle of testimony:* Appears once in Revelation and also in Acts:

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. (Acts 7:44)

The tabernacle of testimony can also be translated as *tabernacle of witness*. This was an OT figure of good things to come, the true tabernacle that the Lord pitched, not men. (Heb 8:2) It is *the temple of God, which is in heaven* that is opened. (Rev 11:19) It is the *temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven* that is opened. (15:5) These angels emerge from the temple—they were messengers sent by God.

Under the Mosaic system, the glory of God dwelt within the temple. (Exo 19:18; Isa 6:4) When the Word became flesh, it “dwelt among men” and they “beheld His glory.” (John 1:14) In the New Jerusalem, the Lord God and the Lamb are the temple which dwell among men. (21:22) This temple is now opened, revealing God’s glory and coming judgment.

*Angels clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts with golden girdles:* Messengers fully arrayed with purity and righteousness, impartial representatives with holy attributes. As the OT high priest wore fine linen (Exo 39:28), so too these angels appear as priests to minister to those who inherit salvation. (Heb 1:14) White linen is a symbol for righteousness. (19:8) The golden girdles are precious belts, symbolizing their readiness to do God’s will (see notes on 1:13).

**15:7 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.**

No mention is made which of the four living creatures gave these bowls. These creatures symbolize Christ’s manifestation in the creation (see notes on chapter 4). Indeed, the first four bowls (4 = earthly) are poured out on the creation itself—earth, sea, rivers, and sun. The last three bowls (3 = spiritual) are poured out on the powers of darkness.

They are *golden* bowls, signifying their valuable cargo. A bowl was considered a vehicle of produce, or the instrument wherein bread was made. (Deut 28:5) Like ground that did not yield trees or vines, a bowl could be cursed due to its emptiness and impotence. (Deut 28:17) “The golden bowl” is a metaphor for the physical body. (Ecc 12:6) Plagues are always in reference to the plagues of Egypt, and typify God’s judgment. (Amos 4:10) The plural form appears six times in the OT. According to Strong’s, ‘plague’ means ‘defeat’ and/or ‘calamity.’

**15:8 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.**

The temple filled with smoke whenever God was made manifest. (Exo 19:18; Isa 6:4) Clouds are sometimes described as smoke. (Isa 4:5) (Psa 104:3) When God or heaven itself touched the earth and mountains, they smoked. (Psa 104:32; Psa 144:5) Something was being hidden.

*No one was able to enter the temple:* This was a time of judgment. The prayers were done and the sacrifice was complete. The temple was shut down for normal business until the unsavory-but-necessary work of judgment was completed.

After Solomon had the ark brought into the temple, the priests gave glory to God. At that point, the temple was filled with a cloud, and the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God. (2 Chron 5:13-14)