

The Book of Revelation
Revelation 15 (NIV)
“Seven Vials Of Wrath, Singers On The Sea, Smoke From The Sanctuary”

Introduction

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues — last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb:

**“Great and marvelous are Your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are Your ways,
King of the nations.
Who will not fear You, Lord,
and bring glory to Your name?
For You alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before You,
for Your righteous acts have been revealed.”**

After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple — that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law — and it was opened. Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, Who lives for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

Revelation 15

The **Fifteenth Chapter of Revelation** shifts back to the heavenly perspective as John sees a great and marvelous sign. This is the third “great sign” that John records in the book. The first two being the “woman clothed in the sun” (**Revelation 12:1**), and the “enormous red dragon” (**Revelation 12:3**). Those two “signs” (*simeion* in the Greek) represent the nation of Israel and Satan respectively. But now John describes this third “sign” as “great and marvelous.”

The only time the words *great* and *marvelous* are used together in all of Scripture occurs both times in this chapter (**vs. 1 and vs. 3**). The word *great* (*megas*) means exactly what it is translated to mean. The word that John uses here for “marvelous” is *thaumastos*, which speaks of something that is awe inspiring and terrifying all at the same time. In this short passage of *Revelation*, we are witnessing the sign of the end of days. The prophesy given by the angel in **Revelation 14:10** is about to be fulfilled. The wicked world is about to be served the wine of God’s fury poured full strength.

Throughout history, God has been patient with mankind (**2 Peter 3:8-10**), but His patience will one day come to an end. On that day He will hold back nothing in His judgment against those who have refused to listen. By the end of the tribulation, the people of earth have been bombarded with messages of the gospel and repentance. They have heard the preaching of the 144,000 (**Revelation 7:14**) and that of the two mighty prophets (**Revelation 11**), as well as angels broadcasting the truth from the heavens (**Revelation 8:13** and **14:6-9**). And as if that should not have been sufficient, they have witnessed a multitude of people who have refused the mark of the beast and have instead placed their faith in the Only Begotten Son of God.

Here in **Chapter 15**, we see the bittersweet reality of the redeemed multitudes delivered from out of the tribulation, juxtaposed against the backdrop of the countless millions of people that are about to be destroyed by God’s final outpouring of righteous judgement. The people of God can only watch and wait for the outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath as they sing the praises of their Redeemer, Who has

delivered them from God's righteous indignation poured out upon man's sinful rebellion. Whatever a man sows, the same shall he also reap (**Galatians 6:7**). Now the harvest is ripe for judgment. As the angels prepare to swing the dreadful sickle for the final reaping of the earth, we are given a window in time to behold *The Seven Vials of Wrath*, *The Singers On The Sea*, and *The Smoke From The Sanctuary*.

Seven Vials Of Wrath

God despises sin. It has always been just that simple. His perfect holiness can tolerate nothing other than purity (**Habakkuk 1:13**). The sinfulness of man has put him at enmity with a Holy God (**Romans 8:7-8**). Therefore, mankind would never be able to be in the presence of God unless a substitute for sin's punishment was given. God, in His Holiness, declares that **the wages of sin is death** (**Romans 6:23**), because death is the only fitting punishment for man's rebellion against the law of God.

However, God, in His great mercy, sent His only Son to take the punishment for all mankind. Jesus, who never sinned, took our sin on Himself at Calvary. The horrible torture He suffered there is a vivid testimony to just how much a just and Holy God despises our sin. God poured out His hatred for sin full-strength on His only Son. He did this so that no one else would have to endure it. However, millions have rejected and even ridiculed this amazing act of grace. Because of this foolish decision, they too will have God's wrath for sin poured out upon themselves in the final days of the tribulation.

The end will come in the form of seven vials (bowls) of wrath. The word that John uses to describe these bowls is "*phiaias*" (meaning shallow saucer), and it is an *Old Testament* reference to the bowls which were used to remove the ashes of the coals from underneath the altar of the Temple (**Exodus 27:3**). It is no coincidence that this reference is used here, for it was from underneath the altar that the martyrs of God had previously been crying out for God's vengeance upon their tormentors as the fifth seal was opened (**Revelation 6:9-10**). At the time, those martyrs were told to be patient. Now here we see that their prayers are about to be answered as from under the altar the bowls of wrath are filled and distributed to God's avenging angels (**vs. 7**). The judgment upon the wicked is now at hand. **Hebrews 10:29** states:

"How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of Grace?"

In the verse above, God likens the rejection of the unbelieving to the despicable trampling upon the blood of His Son. Meaning that He gave them a way to be saved, and they despised it. This insult to Christ will not go unpunished. God hates sin, and the unbelieving world will one day find out, too late, just how strong a hatred it truly is. With the seven bowls of wrath, God will pour out upon the earth the deserved punishment for the sins of mankind. How tragic it will be, since Christ has already taken the wrath of God for the sins of the world, but the millions who will be destroyed here at the end of days have refused to accept God's grace and have chosen to take His vengeance instead.

Singers On The Sea

Standing before the Crystal Sea of God's throne are all of those who have been harvested from the earth (**vs. 2**). In John's great and marvelous vision, he saw the "glassy sea" that stretches before the throne of God, with crimson reflections from the fire of God's divine judgment. Those who have been saved out of the tribulation are standing around this glassy sea in expectation of God setting things right once and for all. They are given harps and are gathered around the sea of God to sing songs of deliverance. These are the ones who chose the redemption of the cross of Jesus over the mark of the Beast. They are the children of God. The prayers of these martyrs are about to be completely answered. God is now ready to avenge them. All the horrible tortures they have suffered at the hands of the anti-Christ are soon to be recompensed. It is the settlement of a lawsuit that is long over due. And the harpists are playing and singing the "song of Moses and the song of The Lamb", as they await the coming day of judgment.

The striking similarities between this scene in heaven and the account of the Jewish exodus cannot be ignored. For you see, the Israelites also crossed over a “Red Sea” of their own, and God’s judgment fell upon Pharaoh and his soldiers, who tried to destroy the people of God. When the waters of judgment overtook Pharaoh’s army, Moses and the children of Israel stood on the banks of the Red Sea and sang a song of deliverance and vengeance.

The Song of Moses and Miriam

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord:

“I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted.

Both horse and driver He has hurled into the sea.

“The Lord is my strength and my defense; He has become my salvation.

He is my God, and I will praise Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt Him.

The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name.

Pharaoh’s chariots and his army He has hurled into the sea.

The best of Pharaoh’s officers are drowned in the Red Sea.

The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone.

Your right hand, Lord, was majestic in power.

Your right hand, Lord, shattered the enemy.

“In the greatness of Your majesty You threw down those who opposed You.

You unleashed Your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble.

By the blast of Your nostrils the waters piled up.

The surging waters stood up like a wall;

the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea.

The enemy boasted, I will pursue, I will overtake them.

I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them.

I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.’

But You blew with Your breath, and the sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Who among the gods is like You, Lord?

Who is like You — majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?

“You stretch out Your right hand, and the earth swallows Your enemies.

In Your unending love You will lead the people You have redeemed.

In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling.

The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia.

The chiefs of Edom will be terrified,

the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling,

the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall on them.

By the power of Your arm they will be as still as a stone—

until Your people pass by, Lord, until the people You bought pass by.

You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of Your inheritance—

the place, Lord, You made for Your dwelling,

the sanctuary, Lord, Your hands established.

“The Lord reigns for ever and ever.”

Exodus 15:1-18

Now in **Revelation 15**, the harpists are singing the song of Moses. The song of Moses is a song of deliverance. The children of Israel sang this song to God after they had crossed over the Red Sea and turned to watch God drown Pharaoh’s army. How fitting for the redeemed saints to sing this song as they stand delivered around the fiery red sea before the throne of God and see their enemies destroyed.

The worshippers continue with their praise service by singing the song of the Lamb, found in **Revelation 5:12**,

Worthy is the Lamb, Who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

And as they are singing, they add an additional verse of their own that is entirely unique to them (**vs. 3-4**), for they alone have a unique testimony regarding the deliverance of God. They sing, **"Who will not fear you, LORD, and bring glory to Your Name?"** And they are exactly right. For after the seven bowl judgments are poured out upon the earth, there will be no one left in the entire universe who does not fear The Almighty and Everlasting God.

I have a feeling we will be hearing those songs a lot in heaven! It would probably be a good idea for all Christians to memorize them now, so we will be ready to worship on opening day! The mighty praise team assembled around the glassy sea will witness the Power of God as no one ever has before, as the angels dressed as the high priest on the Day of Atonement (**vs. 5-6**) come out of the temple and are given the seven bowls of God's wrath. This is the final judgment. Hell will be unleashed upon the earth. The Day of the Lord has come!

Smoke From The Sanctuary

After the worship service with the saints singing and playing the harps of God, an awesome thing happens: God's presence fills the temple in heaven with such power and holiness that no one else can enter (**vs. 8**). The word here for "temple" is "naos" in the Greek, and it is a reference to the inner sanctuary where only the priest's could serve, as well as The Holy of Holies, where the Glory of God dwells. The smoke that fills this portion of the Tabernacle is reminiscent of an *Old Testament* phenomena that occurred when God was about to do a mighty work among His people (**Exodus 40:34; 1 Kings 8:10-11**). When Moses completed the work of the tabernacle in **Exodus 40**, the Glory (shekinah) of God filled the Holy of Holies, and no one was able to come near. When Solomon built the temple and dedicated it in **1 Kings 8**, the Glory of God entered and forced out all the priests. Here in **Revelation 15**, we see the angels dressed as priests leaving the temple as the Glory of God fills it. As the reign of Satan is about to be brought to an end, God displays His glory in His temple and nothing can withstand it. As the prophet has written:

"The LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." **Habakkuk 2:20**

The time has come for "The Great and Terrible Day of The LORD", and our God shares His glory with no one. I believe the temple will be cleared out at this time, because it is God, and God alone, Who is worthy and righteous, and therefore, the only One qualified to bring judgment upon the world. And on this day, all eyes shall be focused upon Him in His holiness, for He is not merely holy, He is "Holy, Holy, Holy!" (**Isaiah 6**). In the Hebrew way of speaking, to say something three times makes it infinitely so. God is, and always shall be, infinitely holy. There is none like Him. And just as Jesus cleansed the temple of the money changers before His work on the cross to defeat Satan (**Luke 19:45**), God will, from His temple, cleanse the earth and overthrow the workings of the devil and his angels. The Day of the Lord will result in everything in the universe being brought into perfect holiness.

The temple of God is a Holy place, the Saints of God are Holy, and the earth itself shall one day be cleansed with the baptism by fire. Our God, Whose eyes are too pure to look upon sin, shall soon rid the world of it. We can only imagine what it will be like when every vestige of evil will be completely destroyed. Though we strive to be holy as Christians in this fallen world, in the Day of the Lord, we will strive no longer. The children of God will go from justified, to sanctified, then ultimately to glorified (**Romans 8:18**). And we shall be like Him!

Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as He is pure. **1 John 3:2-3**

TRUTH!