

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – Message #18
Revelation 15:1-8 – The Temple of Judgment
(11/29/09 PM)

(Outline Map of the Tribulation)

Chapter 15 is the shortest chapter in the book. It is an introduction to the seven final Bowl Judgments which will be poured out in chapter 16. These judgments continue the chronological narrative.

1. **The Sign in Heaven (1)**

The Focus Shifts from Earth to Heaven

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous:”

• **The pattern in Revelation**

John’s vision of the throne in heaven in chapters 4 & 5 preceded the Seal Judgments of chapter 6. John also saw a vision of the throne in chapter 7 before the Trumpet Judgments of chapters 8 & 9. This continually reinforces the fact that the throne in heaven presides over the events on earth. This is the third sign that John has seen. In chapter 12 he saw the woman, representing Israel, and the red dragon, representing Satan. He described this sign as “great and marvelous”. This is the only place in the New Testament where these two words appear together. This emphasizes the importance of what John saw.

• **The completion of divine judgment**

“...seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.”

The number seven appears 56 times in Revelation. It appears to be the number of perfection or completion. The word for plague literally means “a blow or a wound”.

MacArthur writes “the seven plagues are not really diseases or epidemics but powerful, deadly blows that will strike the world with killing impact.”

These are called “last” because the Seal and Trumpet Judgments preceded them as the Seven Sealed Scroll contained all three sets. The Bowl Judgments finish “the wrath of God.” God’s wrath is not reserved for a part of the Tribulation but is poured out throughout the entire seven years. This is the “third woe” (11:14). John Walvoord speaking of God’s wrath says “In view is not divine wrath as an attitude, but divine judgment as an expression of God’s wrath.”

The Earth Dwellers Have Refused God’s Grace Now They Will Experience the Final Measure of His Wrath

2. **The Sea of Glass (2)**

A Vision of God’s Throne

“And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire...”

John has seen this before. (4:6) “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.” John again is describing the crystal clear pavement leading up to God’s throne. The sea reflects the glory of God.

• **The fire symbolizes God’s judgment**

Previously John mentioned the emerald rainbow which symbolizes God’s throne of mercy and grace. Now he sees fire which reveals that judgment is proceeding from God’s holiness. Psalm 97:2-3, “Clouds and darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. A fire goes before Him, and burns up His enemies round about.”

Hebrews 12:29, “For our God is a consuming fire.”

- **The people are martyred believers**

“...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.” The text identifies them as martyred Tribulation saints. These are the people referred to in 14:12-13. They have overcome by their unfailing faith. The fact that they are “standing on the sea of glass” indicates that they have trusted Christ as their Savior.

Romans 5:1-3, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

The harps are symbolic of praise.

These Martyred Saints Stand in Triumphant Expectation of God’s Vengeance upon Their Enemies

3. The Songs of the Saints (3-4)

An Anthem of Praise

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

- **Songs of deliverance and redemption**

Moses sang a song of deliverance at the Red Sea when God destroyed Pharaoh and his army. This is not that song exactly but the theme of deliverance is the same. There are clear references to Old Testament passages in the song. God is praised for His works and His character. Psalm 86:9 is quoted by “for all nations shall come and worship before You.”

Through These Final Seven Judgments God’s Will Make Himself Known to the Nations

4. The Seven Angels (5-8)

The Opening of the Temple

(5) “After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.”

John “looked and behold”. This is again used by John to introduce startling events. What has caught his attention is the opening of the God’s Temple in heaven. He saw something like this in (11:19) “Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail.” That was in anticipation of what is now about to happen. The “testimony” is referring to the Law, a copy of which was kept in the Ark of the Covenant. God’s wrath is because God’s law has been broken. The scene John depicts is incredibly dramatic.

- **These judgments come forth from the very presence of God**

(6-7) “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. 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 word “temple” is *naos* meaning the inner temple or Holy of Holies. It in the earthly temple it contained the Ark of the Covenant and symbolized the presence of God. As each angel parts the curtain coming out of the Holy of Holies he is given his “golden bowl” by “one of the four living creatures”. We saw in chapter 4 that these are most likely cherubim an exalted type of angelic being. Each bowl is “full of the wrath of God”. The word “bowl” means a shallow saucer. When the seven angels pour out their bowl they empty the entire contents upon the earth.

- **There is no more opportunity for an appeal for divine mercy**

(8) “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.”

The “smoke” is a visible symbol of God’s “glory” and “power”.

This is the Shekinah glory cloud that was seen in the Old Testament Temple.

Something similar occurred when the Tabernacle was completed. Exodus 40:34-35, “Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle of meeting, because the cloud rested above it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.”

It occurred again when King Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem. 2

Chronicles 5:13-14, “...the house of the Lord, was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.”

Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, “Until the seven plagues are finished, no one is able to enter the temple. Once the time of final judgment has come, none can stay the hand of God. The time for intercession is past. God in His unapproachable majesty and power has declared that the end has come. No longer does He stand knocking; He enters to act in sovereign judgment.”

The seven angels each wear a “golden” sash and carry “golden bowls”.

Gold Symbolizes the Glory of God