

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### JROC – Rev. 15 – Prelude to the Seven Last Plagues

February 25, 2018

Rev. 15:1 - *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.* Revelation 15 is the shortest chapter in the entire book, 8 verses in length. We remain in the “intermission” as we go through Rev. 15. The chronology is not advanced. Rev. 15 is a prelude to the seven bowl judgments that God will POUR out onto the earth. God is telling us He is not yet finished judging the wickedness of the earth. John sees another sign in heaven. This is the third of three great signs in heaven. The first was the sun-clothed woman (Israel); the second was the great red dragon (Satan); the third are the seven angels with seven last plagues. Job wrote that God “does great things, and unsearchable, marvelous things without number” (Job 5:9), “God thunders marvelously with His voice; He does great things which we cannot comprehend” (Job 37:5). One of the marvelous things that God did was his division of the seas in the Exodus from Egypt (Ps. 78:12-13). Another is His creative work as manifest in marvels of the human body (Ps. 139:14-15). God told Israel, “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you *are* shall see the work of the Lord” (Ex. 34:10).

These “seven plagues” complete or finish God’s wrath. The verb “finished” means “reaches its goal” rather than “comes to an end.” The seven bowl judgments represent God’s final response to the world’s unrepentant wickedness.

Rev. 15:2 - *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.* We saw the sea of glass first in the throne room of God in Rev. 4:6. The sea which typically symbolizes agitation because of its waves, was subdued in the throne room – in the presence of God. Here we see that the sea is mixed with fire which suggests that judgment is about to be poured out. The people standing on the sea are not identified. They might be the souls of the tribulation martyrs. These have the victory (some translations use *overcome*) the beast, his image, not having taken his mark. Believers are overcomers (I John 5:4) as we have overcome the world. Have you ever considered that the victory of the believer is often achieved by apparent defeat. We overcome by losing. Often those who have been persecuted the most worship the most. Why is this? Typically, it is because these saints arrive at the realization that they have nothing or no one but God.

Rev. 15:3 - *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!* “They” are the ones who have victory over the beast. We read the Song of Moses in Exodus 15. The Song of Moses was a celebration of God’s redemptive deliverance from bondage to slavery in Egypt. And, the children of Israel were also delivered from the wrath of the angel of death through the means of the blood of the lambs. It was also a celebration of God’s deliverance from the Egyptian army as they passed through the Red Sea. The deliverance under Moses was a foreshadowing of

the greater deliverance through the Lamb of God, Jesus. The Song of the Lamb praises the redemptive work – deliverance through Jesus’ shed blood on the cross. Both songs praise God for His merciful deliverance.

Rev. 15:4 - *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.* Here’s a recipe for worship – declaring Who He is – magnifying His person and His work. The songs conclude with three reasons for fearing/respecting and bringing glory to God. First, God is holy. Holiness means that God, by His very nature, demands that sin be punished. God cannot overlook sin. If He did, He would be violating His holiness. He is doing so through the judgments upon the rebellious world. The second reason to fear and glorify God’s name is because all the nations will come and worship before the Lord. Psa. 46:10 - *Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!* Psa. 86:9 - *All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.* Rev. 11:15 - *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdoms<sup>l</sup> of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!”* This is a fulfillment of God’s plan! The third reason God should be feared and glorified is because His righteous acts will be revealed.

Rev. 15:5 - *After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.* The temple in heaven will be opened and the tabernacle of the testimony, the ark of the covenant/the ark of the testimony, will be seen. The ark contained the law. The law reveals sin. The temple is a manifestation of judgment for those who fall short of the testimony of the law. Rom. 4:15 - *the law brings about wrath; for where there is no law there is no transgression.*

Believers are not under the law.

- Col. 2:13-14 - *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,<sup>14</sup> having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*

- Rom. 7:6 - *But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

Rev. 15:6 - *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.* The seven angels came from God’s presence. They wore brightly shining garments (Luke 24:4 – the angels at Jesus’ tomb wore the same)/ Bands – “belts” which Jesus wore (Rev. 1:13)

Rev. 15:7 - *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 seven bowls of the wrath of God are the culmination of God’s wrath poured out on the earth during the Tribulation.

Rev. 15:8 - *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.* Here we have perhaps one of the most mysterious and wondrous verses in all of Scripture. It surely must indicate a period of great privacy and intensity in the mind of God attending the final outpouring of His wrath. Perhaps there is also great sadness in knowing that nothing further can be done, no more will turn. All that remains is the hand of judgment. Perhaps behind the smoke the heart of God is weeping even as Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Such intense judgment to come during the outpouring of the seven bowls! Such grief on the part of the Creator for the creature which refuses to acknowledge Him. Yet He *must* judge for His very holiness and justice require it!