

Session 11. Heavenly Temple: Releasing the Seven Bowls (Rev. 15:1-8)

I. JOHN SEES THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY AROUND GOD'S THRONE

- A. John describes a heavenly sanctuary scene. It is both the place our prayers ascend and where God's judgments are released. The heavenly temple is the place of God's full manifest presence. John sees the end-time saints in victory and the seven angels who release the final judgments on natural history. This passage begins the fourth chronological section in Revelation (Rev. 15-16).

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.² I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the Beast ... standing on the sea of glass.³ They sing the song of Moses ... 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!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." (Rev. 15:1-4)

Behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.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.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.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. (Rev. 15:5-8)

- B. There are three parts to this passage. He introduces the angels with the bowl judgments (Rev. 15:1). Next, he describes the victorious saints thanking God for His judgments (Rev. 15:2-4). Finally, he writes of seven angels leaving the heavenly temple to release these judgments (Rev. 15:5-8). After the sign of the seven angels (v. 1), then John sees two visions (v. 2-4 and v. 5-8).
- C. **The context**: the last event in chronological storyline in the book of Revelation was the sounding of the seventh, or last, trumpet to begin Jesus' second coming procession with the rapture of the saints (Rev. 11:15-18; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thes. 4:16-17).
- D. The mystery of God in the Church is complete at the seventh trumpet and the rapture (Rev. 10:7). God's wrath on the wicked is not completed until the bowls are poured out. The seventh trumpet is the third woe. It describes significant events as well as releasing the seven bowls.
- In the days of the sounding of the seventh angel ... the mystery of God would be finished. (Rev. 10:7)*
- E. After the seventh trumpet, the saints are seen here on a sea of glass in great victory. At the rapture, the veil between the earthly and heavenly realms will be lifted so that all people (Rev. 1:7) see Jesus in the sky with all the angels (Mt. 25:31), with the Father's glory (Mt. 16:27), great power (Mk. 13:26), and flaming fire (2 Thes. 1:8) as He raises the dead (1 Thes. 4:14-16).
- Every eye will see Him ... all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)*

II. INTRODUCING THE ANGELS WITH THE BOWL JUDGMENTS (REV. 15:1)

- A. **Sign in heaven:** the sign is of seven angels having the last plagues. “Another sign” points back the first two signs in heaven of the woman clothed in the sun and the dragon (Rev. 12:1, 3).
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. (Rev. 15:1)
- B. **Last plagues:** John sees the last worldwide judgments in natural history. The word “plagues” is used to connect these end-time judgments with the ten plagues of Egypt. In these, the wrath of God will be complete (Rev. 15:1, 7). The seventh bowl probably coincides with the judgments associated with Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21; Ezek. 38:22; Zech. 14:12-15).

III. THE VICTORIOUS SAINTS PRAISE GOD FOR HIS JUDGMENTS (REV. 15:2-4).

- A. **Victory:** the end-time Church as a whole will be prepared (Rev. 19:7) and victorious. It is possible that John sees all the saints who were just raptured, not just the end-time martyrs.
I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the Beast [Antichrist] ... standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. (Rev. 15:2)
For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. (Rev. 19:7)
- B. **Sea of glass:** it is estimated that several billion people will comprise the redeemed from all history. The saints are gathered all together in one place, never to leave Jesus’ presence. It is possible some of these will be on the ground marching into Jerusalem with Jesus, while some will be eyewitnesses of these events from the “amphitheatre in the sky” (sea of glass?) as a cloud of witnesses. The sea of glass in Revelation 4:6 has no people and no fire as in Revelation 15:2.
We who are alive and remain shall be caught [raptured] up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air ... we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thes. 4:17)
He will send His angels ... and they will gather together His elect from. (Mt. 24:31)
- C. The sea of glass was foreshadowed by the bronze (brazen) laver in the tabernacle of Moses that was filled with water. The priests washed their hands and feet in it before entering the sanctuary or the tabernacle of meeting (Ex. 30:18-21).
- D. The bronze sea in Solomon’s temple was for washing and purification of the sacrifices (1 Kgs. 7:23-24; 2 Chr. 4:2-15). It typified Israel going through the Red Sea (Ex. 14-15). Both the brazen laver and the bronze sea were made of brass or bronze and were in the outer court. The saints stand on the sea in the outer court before entering the service in the sanctuary in the age to come. Glass speaks of transparency without deception. It is mingled with the fire of holiness.
- E. **Harps of God:** harps and the trumpets are the only musical instruments highlighted in Revelation. They are played by the elders (Rev. 5:8) and the heavenly singers (Rev. 14:2). Harps were also used in David’s tabernacle (1 Chr. 16:42; 23:1-4; 25:1-7).

IV. THE SONG OF MOSES AND OF THE LAMB: AGREEING WITH JESUS' LEADERSHIP

They sing the song of Moses ... 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! 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." (Rev. 15:3-4)

- A. **Song of Moses:** in Exodus 15, Moses sang of Israel's victory over Pharaoh at the beginning of his ministry. In Deuteronomy 32, Moses sang at the end of his ministry.
- B. **Song of the Lamb:** the song of Moses is the OT song of redemption, as the song of the Lamb is in the NT. The OT and the NT saints will sing of their experience together. Beautiful songs will stand in great contrast to the demonized oppressed world.
- C. We see heaven's evaluation of the seven bowls seen in Revelation 15:3-4 (Rev. 11:15-19; 16:5-7; 18:20; 19:1-4). We must agree with Jesus' leadership and break any agreement we have with the secular view that hates God and His judgments.
A great multitude in heaven, saying, "Alleluia ... ² For true and righteous are His judgments, because He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth." (Rev. 19:1-2)
- D. **All nations shall worship:** when God's judgments are completed, then all the nations will worship Jesus (Ps. 86:9-10; 102:13-22; 66:1-7; 72:1-4; 86:8-12; Isa. 2:3; 49:22-23; 60:14; 66:23-24; Mic. 4:2; Zeph. 2:11; Zech. 8:20-22; 14:16-16).
- E. **Fear and glorify:** judgment causes the saints to worship, in contrast to angry blasphemy of the Antichrist's worshippers (Rev. 11:18; 16:9, 11). This is radically different than our natural mindset and will require the presence the Holy Spirit to empower us.
- F. **Great and marvelous are Your works:** John is overwhelmed with awe at the greatness and the marvelous fruit of the fullness of God's wrath. His great works will destroy the Antichrist kingdom. The saints join the 24 elders who praised God for His judgments in the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-18). This gives us insight into the response of the saints then. What the enlightened saints say then is what we proclaim now.
- G. **Just and true are Your ways:** God's ways of judgment are neither too severe nor too lenient, but just and true. God's judgments manifested in the bowls are righteous (Jn. 5:30).
As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous. (Jn. 5:30)
- H. **The principle of judgment:** God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone's free will.
- I. **Holy:** this is in contrast to the Antichrist's evil ways of oppression and perversion.

- J. **King of the saints**: God's title as "King" (Ps. 22:28; 47:2, 7-8; 82:8) is one of the main themes in the book of Revelation (Rev. 1:5; 19:16).

He has on His robe ... a name written: King of kings and Lord of lords. (Rev. 19:16)

- K. **Lord God Almighty**: Jehovah Elohim is the All-Sufficient Redeemer-Creator. This title can apply to both the Father and the Son (Rev. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:7). God shows His omnipotence in judging the Antichrist and suddenly reversing the evil governments on earth and replacing them.

V. **ANGELS LEAVE THE TEMPLE TO RELEASE GOD'S JUDGMENTS (REV. 15:5-8)**

After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 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. 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. 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. (Rev. 15:5-8)

- A. **Temple of the tabernacle of the testimony**: John combined the words "tabernacle" and "temple." The tabernacle of Moses' day was replaced by the temple in Solomon's day. They were the two OT structures that were referred to as God's dwelling place. They were the place God's presence was most manifest. Both were shadows of the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-5; 9:1-10, 23-24).
- B. The testimony refers to the Ten Commandments, because it was God's testimony that revealed His holiness to the nations. Moses placed the Ten Commandments in the ark which was kept in the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle (Ex. 16:34; 25:21). They testified against sin in Moses day and will testify against the deeds of those in the Antichrist's empire and prove their guilt.
- C. The Holy of Holies was "opened" for the high priest on the Day of Atonement during the Feast of Trumpets (Feast of Tabernacles). In other words, the Holy of Holies will be opened in heaven. The nations on earth have access to God's immediate presence in the millennial kingdom.
- D. **Out of the temple came the seven angels**: the temple was opened at the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-19. This is the event that occurs just before Revelation 15:1-8. However, now we see that the seven angels will come out of it with the seven bowls of wrath. John repeats what he saw in Revelation 11:19 about the temple being opened (to reveal the ark), then gives us more information.
- The temple of God was opened in heaven ... the ark of His covenant was seen. (Rev. 11:19)*
- E. As the ark brought judgment on the Philistines, so revealing the ark was related to the seventh bowls.

- F. God opens seven things: He opens a door (Rev. 4:1); opens the scroll with the seven seals (Rev. 6:1-9); opens the bottomless pit (Rev. 9:1-2); opens the little book (Rev. 10:2); opens the heavenly temple (Rev. 11:19; 15:5); opens heaven (Rev. 19:11); and opens the books (Rev. 20:12).
- G. ***Seven bowls:*** the bowls speak of pouring out God's judgment in fullness without any delay or hindrance. These are full to the brim of the hot wine of God's love unto judgment (Rev. 14:8, 10). There were golden bowls in the Jerusalem temple (1 Kgs. 7:50; 2 Kgs. 12:13; 25:15).
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. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. (Rev. 15:6-7)
- H. As the drink offerings were poured out before the Lord in the tabernacle and temple so these bowls are poured out from heaven's temple on the wicked. The seals alert us of something important to come. The trumpets warn us of something more severe to follow.
- I. The bowls of wrath are full, just as the bowls of incense were full of prayer (Rev. 5:8; 8:3-5).
- J. ***Four living creatures gave the bowls:*** the angels receive the golden bowls after they leave the temple from the living creatures, who were also involved in releasing the seals (Rev. 6:1-8). The four living ones are associated with God's judgments.
- K. ***Bright linen, and golden bands:*** the angels are seen wearing priestly attire and are associated with prayer and end-time judgments. The linen worn by the angels represents righteousness in priestly action. Clean and bright also describe the Bride's garments (Rev. 19:8, 14). The purity of their clothing points to their role in cleansing the earth.
- L. ***God who lives forever:*** God judges the earth with an eternal perspective of the consequences.
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. (Rev. 15:7)
- M. ***Smoke from God's glory and power:*** the temple was filled with God's glory and power. The smoke comes from God's fire. The glory and fire of God's wrath is about to break out in fullness on a sinful earth. It is not the smoke of the incense of prayer, but the smoke of judgment.
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. (Rev. 15:8)
- N. God's smoke of glory was seen on Mt. Sinai and in Isaiah's vision of the heavenly temple.
Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. (Ex. 19:18)
In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple ... ⁴ and the house was filled with smoke. (Isa. 6:1-4)

- O. ***One was able to enter the temple:*** when the cloud of glory filled the tabernacle, Moses could not enter it (Ex. 40:34-35). The cloud of glory filled the temple so the priests could not enter (2 Chr. 7:1-3). God's smoke of judgment was so intense that no one could enter. The smoke of God's presence is related to the fire of the judgments (Ex. 19:18; 40:34; Ezek. 11:23; 44:4). God's glory and power will be manifest on earth in the seven bowls.
- P. When the smoke of the glory of God fills the temple, it means none can enter to offer intercession until the wrath is finished! There is no place for intercession to stop the seven bowls at this time in history after the rapture. None can stand in God's presence in that day to change His anger.
- Who may stand in Your presence when once You are angry? (Ps. 76:7)***
- Q. God told Jeremiah not to pray for Jerusalem (Jer. 11:14).
- So do not pray for this people, or lift up a cry or prayer for them; for I will not hear them in the time that they cry out to Me because of their trouble. (Jer. 11:14)***
- R. Moses and Samuel were known for their powerful intercessory ministry.
- Even if Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people. Cast them out of My sight, and let them go forth. (Jer. 15:1)***
- S. Moses prevailed with the Lord in intercession to turn away His wrath. However, at the time of the seven bowls of wrath after the rapture of the Church, no intercessor will even be permitted to enter the temple to approach the altar of incense where the saints' prayers come (Rev. 8:3-5).
- Let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.”¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: “LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people ...? ”¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people.¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’ ”¹⁴ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:10-14)***
- T. Rejecting God's mercy leaves only the alternative of His wrath.