

Revelation 15: Another Great and Marvelous Sign in Heaven

Revelation 15:1

15 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues, (which are) the last, for in them is finished the wrath of God.

John saw another great and marvelous sign. *Another* links this sign with the one previously so described, that of the beautifully adorned woman, the church, in Revelation 12:1:

12 And a great sign was seen in heaven: a woman arrayed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars;

That chapter dealt with the security and victory of the God's people over the dragon. Chapter 15 begins dealing with the seven last plagues, which complete the wrath of God. John is also nearing the end of the completed revelation of God. Revelation 10:7 has said:

7 but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then is finished the mystery of God, according to the good tidings which he declared to his servants the prophets.

When that seventh trumpet sounded, loud voices in heaven declared the final accomplishment in Revelation 11:15:

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there followed great voices in heaven, and they said, The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Chapter 15 forecasts the completion of God's wrath and the harvest. The seven plagues are the last and with them God's wrath is complete along with his revelation and kingdom. In the following chapters, the seven angels will pour out their seven bowls of God's wrath. Next, a certain one of the angels will show John the fall of Babylon, the eternal destruction of the beast and the false prophet, the end of the dragon, the devil, the destruction of the wicked, the final destiny of death and Hades, the victory of the church, and the reward of the righteous.

Seven Angels with Seven Last Plagues

Revelation 15:2

2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that come off victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name, standing by the sea of glass, having harps of God.

Chapter 14 contained an opening vision of those offered as firstfruits. Now we see those who had been victorious over the beast, his image, and the number of his name. They stand before what was like a beautiful sea of glass mixed with fire. The scene appears to be like that one before the throne of God in Revelation 4:6: "and before the throne, as it were a sea of glass like a crystal."

Revelation 15:2b-3

. . . *having harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are your ways, King of the ages.*

In the figures and symbols, they had harps of God, and in verse 3, sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: The allusion here is to the victory song that Moses wrote for the Israelites after their escape in Deuteronomy 31:19 beginning and recited fully in Deuteronomy 32:

19 Now therefore write you this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel.

Harps, as used here, are symbolic of the *sound like harps* of Revelation 14:2:

2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and the voice which I heard (was) as (the voice) of harpers harping with their harps:

In the church, the instrument, with melody is made, is the heart in Ephesians 5:18-20:

18 And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; 19 speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father.

Nowhere in the New Testament does the church use mechanical instruments of music.

The Triumphant God

Revelation 15:4

4 Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you only are holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before you; for your righteous acts have been made manifest.

Our victory song continues as one of triumph for God and victory for the church.

The song begins with holy and reverent praise of God's name by combining the phrases *Lord God the Almighty* and *King of the ages*—a two-fold expression of the great glory of God. *King of the ages* carries special significance since *ages* indicates *eternal* as in "*life eternal*," in John 17:3. John uses this same word commonly in the phrase *eis ton aiona* which does mean literally "unto the age" but in English *forever*.

More important to this song is the connection of the King of the ages to the final statement of victory in Revelation 11:15:

The kingdom of the world is become (the kingdom) of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The clause—*who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?*—reflects the degree to which the God Almighty has won this victory. Revelation 14:6-7 predicted this fear and glory to God:

6 And I saw another angel flying in mid heaven, having eternal good tidings to proclaim unto them that dwell on the earth, and unto every nation and tribe and tongue and people; 7 and he said with a great voice, "Fear God, and give him glory; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters."

In the preceding chapter, the first of the three angels, who had the eternal gospel to proclaim, said, "Fear God and give him the glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." Later in Revelation 19:5, during the hallelujah section, fear again returns as a theme:

5 And a voice came forth from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you his servants, you that fear him, the small and the great.

Paul had used similar language in Ephesians 3:20-21,

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 unto him (be) the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen.

That all nations shall come before God and worship him shows the totality of God's victory when final judgment comes. Indeed, Paul writes that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Christ is Lord to the glory of the father in Philippians 2:9-11:

9 Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; 10 that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of (things) in heaven and (things) on earth and (things) under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The Tabernacle of the Testimony

Revelation 15:5-6

5 And after these things I saw, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 and there came out from the temple the seven angels that had the seven plagues, arrayed with (precious) stone, pure (and) bright, and girt about their breasts with golden girdles.

The tabernacle of the testimony and the temple in heaven are one and the same. In Revelation 11:19, at the conclusion of the experience with the two witnesses, upon whose testimony the word of God is secure, the ark of God's covenant was within his temple:

19 Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant.

That it is *the testimony* makes the testimony specific to God's purposes. Later, in Revelation 19:10, the angel tells John:

And I fell down before his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, "See that you do it not: I am a fellow-servant with you and with your brethren that hold the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

God will base his judgment on the testimony of his witnesses, the prophets, as it exists in his covenant. Paul confirmed this in Romans 2:15-16:

15 in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing (them) 16 in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation itself begins and ends with statements concerning the testimony. The first use of the word connects it to the word of God in Revelation 1:2:

2 who bore witness of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, (even) of all things that he saw.

At the end of the book in Revelation 22:16 Jesus says,

16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.

Bowls Filled with God's Wrath

Revelation 15:7-8

7 And one of the four living creatures gave unto the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and none was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels should be finished.

Each of seven angels receives a golden bowl filled with the wrath of God. In the preceding chapter, we learned that the wicked must drink the wine of God's wrath poured into the cup of his fury (14:10). Isaiah 46:9-10 and Isaiah 48:3 teach that God knows the end from the beginning, and that his purpose will always stand:

9 Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; (I am) God, and there is none like me; 10 declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not (yet) done; saying, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

3 I have declared the former things from of old; yes, they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them: suddenly I did them, and they came to pass

The entire New Testament speaks of God's wrath as an accomplished fact. In Romans 1:18, Paul wrote:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness;

Again, in Colossians 3:5-6, he said:

5 Put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; 6 for which things' sake comes the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience.

In 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, Paul writes using the perfect tense, showing that God's wrath has already begun at a point in the past. He said,

15 who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove out us, and pleased not God, and are contrary to all men; 16 forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved; to fill up their sins always: but the wrath is come [OE *has come* the perfect tense designating an action begun in the past and continued to the present] upon them to the uttermost.

The seven plagues of the seven angels are to begin and finish in chapter 16, as they pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth. However, the wrath of God was a fact established by the victory of the Lamb and the church forever, as God foreknew according to his eternal purpose. Romans 8:29-31 teaches:

29 For whom he foreknew, he also foreordained (to be) conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: 30 and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. 31 What then shall we say to these things? If God (is) for us, who (is) against us?