

## 16. God's Wrath Completed: Seven Last Plagues (Revelation 15)

*15:1 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.*

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 chapter 12. That chapter dealt with the security and victory of the church 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 when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets.” When that seventh trumpet sounded, loud voices in heaven declared the accomplishment: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.” Revelation 11:15.

Chapter 15 forecasted the completion of God's wrath and the harvest. The seven plagues are the last. With them God's wrath is complete. Now John will see them in great specificity. 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**

*2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name.*

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 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: “6 Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal.”

*They held harps given them by God 3 and 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. Harps, as used here, are symbolic of the *sound like harps* of Revelation 14:2-3: “The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps . 3 And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders.” In the church, the instrument with strings was the heart in Ephesians 5:18-20: “19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” *Make music* (to play on a stringed instrument) has a specified instrument, *your heart*.

### **The Triumphant God**

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

*“Great and marvelous are your deeds,*

*Lord God Almighty,  
Just and true are your ways,  
King of the ages.  
4 Who will not fear you, O 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."*

The song begins with holy and reverent praise of God's name by combining the phrases *Lord God 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 not mean "unto the age" but "forever." Vine, from whom these notes are taken, speaks specifically to the multiple translations of this passage:

(2) In Revelation 15:3, the RV has "King of the ages," according to the texts which have *aionon*, the KJV has "of saints" (*hagion*, in inferior mss.). There is good ms. evidence for *ethnon*, "nations," (KJV, marg.), probably a quotation from Jeremiah 10:7. (from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

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 has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever."

The clause—*Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to 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 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people. 7 He said in a loud voice, 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come.'" 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 Then a voice came from the throne, saying: 'Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great!'" Paul had used similar language in Ephesians 3:20-21, "20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!"

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:

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,  
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11

### ***The Tabernacle of the Testimony***

*5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. 6 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.*

The tabernacle of the Testimony stands in apposition to the temple in heaven, making them the very 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 to "hold to 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: "16 This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."

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 1:1-2, "2 who testifies to everything he saw – that is, the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ." At the end of the book in Revelation 22:16 Jesus says, "16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

*7 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. 8 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.* 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 48:2-3 teach that God knows the end from the beginning, and that his purpose will always stand.

The entire New Testament speaks of God's wrath as an accomplished fact. In Romans 1:18-19, Paul wrote, "18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness." Again, in Colossians 3:5-6, he said, "5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming." In 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16, Paul writes in the present perfect tense, showing that God's wrath has already begun at a point in the past. He said, "They displease God and are hostile to all men 16 in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last."

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 and ever.