



## Revelation - Chapter Fifteen

### Summary of Chapter Fifteen

John is shown seven angels with seven plagues. They are clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. They were given seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. No one was permitted to enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were all finished.

### **VI Revelation 15:1-16:21 - God's final wrath**

Another view of the victors' choir prepares for the seven last plagues, envisioned as 'bowls full of the wrath of God' poured out on the earth's inhabitants. Futurists see these bowls as representing future global judgments unlike anything seen before in history. They occur at the end of the great tribulation period and culminate in the battle of Harmageddon, just prior to Christ's return to establish his millennial Kingdom.

#### **VI.a Revelation 15:1-8 - The Angels with the Seven Last Plagues**

Just as earlier vision cycles began with an opening of God's heavenly sanctuary (4:1, 8:1 and 11:19), so the cycle of bowls containing the last plagues, in which God's wrath on rebels is completed, is preceded by a scene of celebratory worship offered by believers who share the Lamb's victory.

<sup>1</sup> Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and amazing: seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

#### **Revelation 15:1**

**Another portent in heaven.** Like the woman and the dragon (12:1-3), these **angels** signify another turning point in the war between Christ and Satan: the completion of God's triumph in the destruction of his enemies, **for with them the wrath of God is ended.**

As with Chapter Eight, seven angels are ceremoniously introduced. The first seven went on to each blow their trumpet in turn. These seven have seven plagues, later described as bowls containing the wrath of God, and they will each go on to pour out the contents of these bowls in judgement on those who have opposed God. God had warned the people of similar penalties for disobedience: <<*If you continue hostile to me, and will not obey me, I will continue to plague you sevenfold for your sins*>> (Leviticus 26:21).

<sup>2</sup> And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. <sup>3</sup> And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

‘Great and amazing are your deeds,

Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

King of the nations!

<sup>4</sup> Lord, who will not fear  
and glorify your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come

and worship before you,

for your judgements have been revealed.’

#### Revelation 15:2-4

The harps of God and the song of the Lamb suggest to some that this choir is the same as the 144,000, i.e. the redeemed people of God, who appeared with the Lamb before God’s throne (7:9-12 and 14:1-3). Others see them as those converted and perhaps martyred during the great tribulation. They conquered the beast, its image and the number of its name, i.e. every aspect of it, by holding fast to their faith even when threatened with death (12:11).

The sea of glass is the transparent pavement surrounding God’s throne (4:6), <<*and they saw the God of Israel. Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness*>> (Exodus 24:10), and: <<*Over the heads of the living creatures there was something like a dome, shining like crystal, spread out above their heads*>> (Ezekiel 1:22). Yet it is brought to life with colour because it is mixed with fire, a picture of dancing and shimmering light coming from heaven.

Moses, the servant of God. Despite his position of leadership over the people of Israel, he was still viewed as a humble servant, even after death: <<*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun,*

*Moses' assistant, saying, 'My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites'>> (Joshua 1:1-2).*

The song of Moses, celebrating Israel's exodus from Egypt and the defeat by God of Pharaoh's army, is recorded in Exodus 15:1-18, and here it is fulfilled in the song of the Lamb, which tells of a greater redemption of a new kingdom of priests (5:9-10). A later song of Moses extolled the Lord whose ways are just and true (Deuteronomy 32:1-43). John records the redeemed singing a new song (14:3). It seems likely that the words recorded here are the song of the Lamb. As with the eternal gospel proclaimed in heaven (14:6), this song is not specifically Christian but, in fact, is Jewish to the core. Yet it encompasses Jew and Christian, Hebrew and Greek, Moses and the Lamb alike, with the Lord God Almighty as its focus, with any barriers broken down by his gracious gift of life: <<*There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus*>> (Galatians 3:28).

Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty! From creation through sending his Son to reconcile all things to himself to the final judgement and consummation, God has not stopped performing amazing works, as it is written: <<*He does great things and unsearchable, marvellous things without number*>> (Job 5:9).

For you alone are holy. Although the term holy denotes purity, it also speaks of uniqueness. Holiness is that which is uniquely God's: <<*For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy*>> (Isaiah 57:15a), which sets him apart. It is an attribute which only the creator truly has. All other creatures which are said to be holy derived their holiness from their association with God and his righteousness; thus Paul writes: <<*he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him*>> (Colossians 1:22).

Lord, who will not fear and glorify your name? Reverential fear of God is a natural response for those who come to know and experience his love that leads naturally to offer him praise. The wise King Solomon once wrote: <<*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight*>> (Proverbs 9:10).

In keeping with the angel's eternal gospel (14:7), the King of the nations will be feared, glorified, and worshiped by all nations: <<*All the nations you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name*>> (Psalm 86:9), and: <<*Who would not fear you, O King of the nations? For that is your due; among all the wise ones of the nations and in all their kingdoms there is no one like you*>> (Jeremiah 10:7), for his righteous acts of judgment: <<*The Lord has made known his victory; he has revealed his vindication in the sight of the nations*>> (Psalm 98:2).

<sup>5</sup> After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, <sup>6</sup> and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, with golden sashes across their chests. <sup>7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven

angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever; <sup>8</sup> 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 ended.

### Revelation 15:5-8

Seven angels emerge from the opened temple or sanctuary, the inner chamber, of the tent of witness in heaven: <<Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up. For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. They offer worship in a sanctuary that is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly one; for Moses, when he was about to erect the tent, was warned, 'See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain'>> (Hebrews 8:1-5), to execute God's final sequence of judgments upon a defiant world, the seven plagues.

Robed in pure bright linen provides a preview of the bride's holy beauty (19:7-8). The angels' golden sashes across their chests resemble that of the Son of Man (1:13), and is similar to: <<I looked up and saw a man clothed in linen, with a belt of gold from Uphaz around his waist>> (Daniel 10:5).

The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. As when the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35), and temple (1 Kings 8:10-11), were consecrated, God's holy glory was so intense that no one could enter the temple. In this case, they could not enter until the seven plagues were ended.

The seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, given to the angels by one of the four living creatures, are further revealed in Chapter Sixteen, and represent the pouring out of the seven plagues that complete God's judgment and mark the end of history, as confirmed by the severity of the judgments.