

Text: Rev 15.1-8

Outline of Revelation:

1. The things you have seen (the vision of Christ) Rev 1
2. The things which are (the letters to the churches) Rev 2-3
3. The things which must come after these things (Rev 4-22)
 - a. The overture: the scene in heaven (Rev 4-5)
 - b. The seal judgements begin (Rev 6)
 - c. (Parenthesis): the believers of the Tribulation (Rev 7)
 - d. The seventh seal which reveals the seven trumpets (four in chapter 8)
 - e. The fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev 9)
 - f. (Parenthesis): Voices in heaven (Rev 10)
 - g. (Parenthesis): The Two Witnesses | the seventh trumpet (Rev 11)
 - h. (Parenthesis): The Long War Against God¹ (Rev 12)
 - i. (Parenthesis): The Beasts (Rev 13)
 - j. (Parenthesis): Triumph of the Saints foreseen (Rev 14)

k. (Prelude): Another Sign in Heaven

“This chapter is really more of a prelude to chapter 16 than a conclusion to chapters 12–14. Chapters 12–14 record prophetically historical information about the Great Tribulation but not in the chronological sequence of the three sets of seven judgments (seals, trumpets, and bowls). Chapter 15 is similar to 8:1 in that it prepares for the next set of judgments. It prepares for the resumption of the chronological progression of events on earth that ended temporarily in 11:19.”²

Preparation for the cup of God’s wrath (14.8, 10; cf. Isa 51.17, 22)

I. Sign in Heaven (1)

This verse forms a ‘superscription’ or title verse to ch. 15-16, perhaps for rest of the book

- A. “Then I saw:” formal introduction of a new scene
 1. The scene is in heaven, another sign appears
 - a. Previously, the woman of 12.1 appears as a sign in heaven
 - b. And the dragon also, 12.3

¹ I borrow the title of Henry Morris' book of this same name for our chapter heading here.

² Tom Constable, *Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible* (Galaxie Software, 2003), Rev 15.8.

c. These signs signify:

- 1) The woman is Israel, on whom this seventieth week of Daniel is determined

Dan 9.24 ¶ “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy *place*.”

- 2) The dragon is Satan, opposed to God, his program, his people, and his Seed since the beginning of creation (Gen 3.15)
- 3) The angels are the ministers of God, delivering final judgement against Satan and all his works opposing God and his people, represented in Revelation by Israel

2. Signifies God’s final judgements on the earth during the Tribulation: “the final step in the outpouring of **God’s wrath** on the earth”³

B. The sign is impressive (“great and marvelous”) — the seven angels who bear the seven last plagues

1. Impressive because this is the climax of the judgements of the Tribulation (‘which are the last,’ ‘wrath of God is finished’)
2. Impressive because of the solemn arrival of the seven angels on the scene

C. Their nature: punitive (wrath) – but liberating also

1. Similarity to plagues of Egypt
2. Similar purposes: punish evildoers and deliver God’s people

II. Saints assembled (2-4)

A. The place of the saints (2)

1. The sea of glass is the focal point (4.6, cf. Ex 24.10, Ezek 1.22)

³ John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 965.

2. The glass is 'mixed with fire' – a symbol, likely pointing to the fires of judgement
3. The people gathered on the sea are tribulation saints, those who overcame the beast (6.9–11; 7.9–17; 12.11; 14.1–5, 13)
4. Their location on the sea may be a parallel with the crossing of the Red Sea – these saints are to be led by Christ to a great victory

B. The song of the saints (3-4)

1. Seems to echo the song of Ex 15
 - a. Praises God's works and ways (3)
 - b. Praises God's worthiness due to his holiness (4)
 - c. Praises God because of the nations' anticipated response to God's word (4b, quote of Ps 88.9 / Isa 66.23)

"This description of praise to God and prediction of universal worship is in keeping with many other Scriptures and relates, of course, to the second coming of Christ and worship of God by the entire world in the millennial kingdom (Pss. 2.8–9; 24.1–10; 66.1–4; 72.8–11; 86.9; Isa. 2.2–4; 9.6–7; 66.18–23; Jer. 10.7; Dan. 7.14; Zeph. 2.11; Zech. 14.9). The awful hour of wickedness and blasphemy against God, which will characterize the period leading up to the Second Coming, will be followed by a full vindication of God's judgment and holiness in the next period."⁴

2. Some commentators think there are two songs, one from Moses and the song recorded here, uniting the two Testaments
3. The song here anticipates God's victory, soon to come to fruition

"Note that the martyrs do not refer to what they did in overcoming the beast but to what God is and did."⁵

⁴ Walvoord, 966.

⁵ Constable, *Expository Notes*, Rev 15.4.

III. Seven angels presented (5-8)

A. A new vision: the open temple (5-6)

1. 'After these things' – a phrase of transition (5a)
 - a. A new vision, new subject
 - b. A new category: most intense judgements yet
2. 'Tabernacle of the testimony' – the temple as the building that houses God's law (5b)
 - a. The design of heavenly temple is the counterpart of the earthly tabernacle/temple
 - b. The OT tabernacle/temple housed "the testimony" — the two stone tablets of the Law (10 commandments) until the Babylonian captivity
3. The seven angels appear, leaving the temple and the presence of God (6)
 - a. Called the angels 'who had the seven plagues' – though not given to them as yet
 - b. Clothed in clean linen – mark of holiness and purity (*cf.* 19.8, 14)
 - c. Golden sashes (see 1.13, the golden sash of Jesus as he begins *the Revelation*) — these angels are on a mission to deliver a message of judgement

B. The delivery of the plagues (7)

1. Wrath of God depicted as liquid poured into bowls
2. Compare the prayers of the saints, stored in bowls (5.8)
3. The bowls and their contents are different, but there is a suggestion that one is in response to the other
4. These angels operate under the authority of the eternal God

C. The final scene of intense solemnity and glory (8)

1. The temple is filled with smoke
2. No one able to enter the temple during this period of intense divine activity (compare 1 Kings 8.10–11; 2 Chron. 7.1–3)

Conclusion:

“Taken as a whole, Revelation 15:5–8 presents a fearful picture of impending divine judgment on a wicked world. The judgments which are to be poured out (chap. 16) fully justify this ominous introduction.”⁶

The stage is now set for the deliverance of the bowls of wrath which we will cover next week.

⁶ Walvoord, “Revelation in BKCNT,” 966.