

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- This is the shortest chapter in Revelation. It is about God's greatness and His righteousness. His ways are right, even in judgment.
- This chapter does 3 things: 1) concludes the events in chapters 10-15, which conclude the first part of the Tribulation, or first 3 ½ years; 2) introduces the last half of the Tribulation (the "Great Tribulation"); 3) reveals truths about God's wrath.
- Chapter 15 is the final prelude to the pouring out of the Bowl Judgments (the last set of 3-Seals, Trumpets, Bowls). The last set of judgments is delivered very quickly, and this interlude before the end is a time of grace.
- In chapter 14 we saw the entire world given the Gospel, and we also saw two very different harvests. The world has been adequately warned of what is coming.

¹ *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.*

- *"Then I saw another sign in heaven..."* there are 7 such signs in Revelation, and connect with those started in chapter 12:
 - 12:1 woman clothed with the sun (nation of Israel, God's divine plan)
 - 12:3 red dragon (God's enemy, opposition to God's plan)
 - 13:13 2nd Beast (from Sea, false prophet) misleading God's people
 - 13:14 false prophet signs - deceiving God's people
 - 15:1 7 angels with 7 last plagues (final unraveling of God's wrath)
 - 16:4 work of demons (deceiving mankind preparing them for final battle)
 - 19:20 same deceptions of false prophet, just before final doom
- *"Great and marvelous"* is *"mega kai thaumaston"* in Greek, and is the ONLY place these words are used together in the entire New Testament. This would indicate that these angels with their plagues are wonder-filled, and will produce astonishment (not a pleasant wonder!)
- The last set of judgments, called the **"Bowl" or "Vial" judgments**, also called the 7 last **plagues**, is imminent. The seven angels who will dispense these plagues are standing ready.



- These last plagues will **be the completion or finishing of God’s wrath**, all the judgments will be poured out.

² And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

- This **sea of glass is only mentioned in the book of Revelation**, first in chapter 4 as appearing around the Throne of God, and here in chapter 15. Remember John is trying to describe something he has never seen before. This is not an actual “sea” but a vast expanse that appears like glass. The saints are standing ON it, not next to it (notice the *“something like”* in the description.)
- In chapter 4 this sea of glass was representative of God’s vastness and holiness. It is **now mixed with fire, a symbol of judgment**, originating from a holy God who cannot tolerate evil. But those who stick with God during the Tribulation, will stick with Him throughout eternity, in His Presence, as they are here.
- *“those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name...”* this is a very clear reference to tribulation saints who have not taken the mark, and have not worshipped the beast. If they are now here, before the Throne of God, then they are in heaven. This would seem to indicate that they were martyred for their faithful stand for God.
- It seems that harps are standard issue when we get to heaven! The elders in chapters 4 and 5 had harps as well. They are the Church. Here the Tribulation saints are now able to join in the unceasing praise **song of the redeemed** in heaven.

³ They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, 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.”

- Like the **Israelites who stood on the shore of the promised land** after crossing the Red Sea, these overcomers also now sing the Song of Moses. The original song is in Exodus 15:1-21. This first song was to celebrate the deliverance from the Egyptians. The Song of Moses here is combined with the Song of the Lamb, to celebrate the deliverance of the Tribulation saints from the beast, into the real Promised Land of heaven.



- This new song is a **combination of the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb**. Both celebrate deliverance, and both celebrate the goodness and strength of God Almighty. He does indeed deliver His people. (the song of the Lamb is first sung in Revelation 5)
 - It is interesting to note that **every Jew knows the Song of Moses** (*Exodus 15*). It is sung at Sabbath evening services, followed by a prayer: *“True it is that Thou art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers, our King, and the King of our fathers, our Savior, and the Savior of our fathers, our help and our deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting, and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to Thy name by the sea shore; together did all praise thee King, and say, Jehovah shall reign, world without end! Blessed be the Lord who saveth Israel!”* **All believers** can now sing this song, and pray this prayer.
 - The entire **Exodus story is not only a real event in our history, but it also stands as a type for a greater, more marvelous deliverance**. We could even assign roles to the cast of characters: **Pharaoh** may represent the antichrist, Egypt is the world system, **Moses** represents the greatest Deliverer, Jesus. Moses led God’s people out of slavery to the Promised Land, but only in the body, in the physical. **Jesus**, the Lamb, leads God’s people out of spiritual slavery into the ultimate Promised Land, heaven. Moses and Jesus are frequently compared in the New Testament, but Jesus is always said to be “greater.”
 - The song sung here is **composed almost entirely of Old Testament references**: Exodus 15:14; Leviticus 11:44; Deuteronomy 32:3-4; Psalm 86:8-10, 145:17; Isaiah 66:23. We should note that this song is all about God, not the achievements of the victorious. All the glory belongs to Him! **A Commentator (R. H. Charles) has said “In the perfect vision of God, self is wholly forgotten.”** Amen!
- **COMMENTARY: (H.B. Swete): “In the presence of God the martyrs forget themselves; their thoughts are absorbed by the new wonders that surround them; the glory of God and the mighty scheme of things in which their own sufferings form an infinitesimal part are opening before them, they begin to see the great issue of the world drama, and we hear the doxology with which they greet their first unclouded vision of God and His works.”**
- **“Great and marvelous are Your works....”** This first phrase of this song testifies of God’s works and ways. The last part of the song deals with His character (holy).
 - **“O King of the saints!”** Various translations have this as King of the saints, or King of the nations, or King of the Age. Either way, He is King! There is no one above Him.
 - **“Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name?”** Not many in this day. People don’t fear God, nor do they glorify His name, aside from His saints. But someday they will indeed fear Him. And every knee will bow and every tongue will confess to God. (Romans 14:10)
 - **“For all nations shall come and worship before you...”** This is not true today, but it will be. In the Millennial Kingdom, every nation will come to worship the King on His Throne.
 - **“For Your judgments have been manifested.”** This phrase literally means *“your righteous acts have been revealed.”* God has shown Himself to be righteous, even in His wrath. All of His ways are revealed to man.

⁵ *After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.*

- We now see a very **sudden mood and scene change**. There is shift occurring here, as the last judgments are prepared to be poured out. No one can stand against, or defy, the law of God, or His will. His wrath will continue as prophesied, until it is complete.
- Note again the word **“behold.”** It means to listen up, pay attention, because something big is coming.
- **“...the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven...”** First of all, this temple is the one in heaven. It is not the earthly tabernacle/temple. Secondly, the word for temple used here is *naos*, which is not the word for the overall temple, but the word for the most sacred place, the Most Holy Place (Holy of Holies). The “tabernacle of the testimony” is a phrase for the Ark of the Covenant (*it literally means “the dwelling place of the witness”*). The temple is mentioned 15 times in Revelation, but only after chapter 4. The one on earth is only a replica of the one in heaven (see Exodus 25:40; Hebrews 9:23).
- The tabernacle was originally built under Moses’ leadership, so it seems natural to see the temple mentioned here after singing the song of Moses. **But this is not the tabernacle on earth**; it is not the temple built by Solomon, Ezra, Herod, or any human hands. This is the heavenly tabernacle, but notice it only refers to the inner place, the Most Holy Place, not the entire tabernacle. There are no outer courts or chambers to get through to the presence of God here. No veil of separation. We see only the place of God’s presence, the Ark inside the Most Holy Place.



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.*

- And now, coming from the Most Holy Place (the very Presence of God) come the seven angels bearing the last seven plagues (or calamities, literally). Their clothing is mentioned, which is pure bright linen, with golden bands across their chests. Perhaps this indicates royal service to God. Their brightness reflects the glory of God. These may be those **“Angels of the Presence”** we discussed earlier.
- These angels and their associated **plagues are authorized by God Himself**. We know that even in wrath, God is holy.
- People have attempted to symbolize these plagues. Before they begin, we will state up front again that **these are literal**. We cannot attempt to make them less than real, literal catastrophes that will befall earth. We don’t attempt to reduce the plagues of Egypt to symbols. We interpret those as real. These are also real.

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.

- The **four living creatures seem to be integrally involved** in the dispensing of God's wrath. We recall in chapter 6 when one of the living creatures gave the command to "Go!" to each of the horses of the first 4 seal judgments. This may be appropriate, as the living creatures may be understood as representing God's creation, all of it. These judgments are given against the creation. All of the creation is under God's authority and does His bidding. Egypt worshipped nature, the creation, rather than the creator, so God used the gods of Egypt against them. The same is true here. Man today also worships the creation, and himself, and God will use it against him. All that man finds security within, this earth, will crumble before his eyes. God is the only rock of security and salvation. As the song says "all else is sinking sand."
- The **golden bowls** are also translated as "vials" from the word in Greek *phiale*. It is a broad, flat bowl, similar to those used to carry the incense. Instead of incense, however, now these bowls carry wrath.

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.

- The altar of incense placed directly before the veil and entry to the Most Holy Place was to fill the tabernacle with smoke so that the view of God's seat of mercy was obscured, so the priests would not die in His presence. **Smoke also represents the glory of God.** In Exodus 19 (note the similarities in this book to the story in Exodus!) smoke surrounded the mountain of God, where He spoke to Moses. Smoke acted to obscure the glory of God so man does not die when looking at Him.
- This should also remind us of the beautiful picture of Isaiah 6, when Isaiah had a vision of the temple, the place of God's Presence: *"... I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke."* (6:1-4) This scene should sound very familiar to us, having witnessed the same thing in Revelation chapters 4 and 5. God's Word is perfectly consistent.
- The **Temple is associated with the Law and judgment** in Revelation. The Law demands totally righteous behavior. Our inability to meet the requirements of the Law is covered only by the blood of Jesus. If we abide under that covering, we are immune from judgment. If not, we are under the curse of the Law.
- In the **New Jerusalem, the Temple does not exist because the old order of things** (the Law and its requirements) **is gone**. God and the Lamb (Jesus) are the temple. (chapter 21).
- *"...no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed."* God's dwelling place is holy, and now in the final execution of His wrath, no one can enter the Temple. This is God's alone, not man's, not the enemy's. It is wrath, but it is holy wrath. Man has no part of the price God paid for His redeemed. God is alone in His payment for the sins of mankind, and He is alone in the delivering of His holy wrath for sin.

- Again, **seven is the number that means perfectly complete**. God's holy wrath is complete with the pouring out of these final seven plagues.
- Some say that the 7 SEALS **REVEAL** God's wrath, the 7 TRUMPETS **ANNOUNCE** God's wrath, and the 7 BOWLS **EXECUTE** God's wrath. However, there are judgments found in all of these. The 7 seals were on a ¼ part of the earth. The 7 trumpets are on 1/3 of the remaining, and the 7 bowls are poured out on ALL of the earth. **But the climax is still to come.**

THE INTERLUDE BEFORE THE FINAL JUDGMENTS IS NOW OVER. THE 7 PLAGUES WILL BE Poured OUT NEXT.

