

"The Prelude to the Bowl Judgments"

Revelation 15:1-8

Introduction: Today in our study of Revelation we have come to chapter 15. This chapter has caused me to ask many questions in my time of preparation. The main question is, "Why is this chapter here?" In chapter 16 we will start right into the Bowl Judgments but here in chapter 15 we are given the details of what happens in heaven before the Bowl Judgments are poured out.

As I read through this chapter I began to realize that the details found here are very important for we see within this chapter the righteousness and the justice of God. We see in this chapter that God's judgment that is about to be poured out in the Bowl Judgments, will be poured out in God's wisdom and His righteousness.

Now we know from our previous studies that in the Tribulation the world will be warned repeatedly about the need of repentance. The world will witness many supernatural acts which will completely devastate the inhabitants, and all of this will be used by God in an attempt to grasp the attention of the unsaved during the Tribulation. It will be a time of TESTING for those who miss the RAPTURE of the church.

Revelation 3:10

¹⁰ Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

God will use the Seal Judgments and the Trumpet Judgments. He will raise up the two witnesses and the 144,000 Jewish men to proclaim the Gospel and to manifest His power here on the earth. He will send the angle to preach the everlasting Gospel across the globe. In all this many will turn to Jesus Christ and many will continue to harden their hearts.

Revelation 9:20-21

²⁰ And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

²¹ Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

There will be many who will pledge their allegiance to the Anti-Christ and receive his MARK and thus seal their eternal destiny.

Revelation 14:9-10

⁹ *And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,*

¹⁰ *The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:*

Those who refuse to repent and turn to Jesus Christ will experience the UNDILUTED WRATH of God. This brings us to chapter 15 for in this chapter we see the preparations for the pouring out of the undiluted wrath of God.

We shall look at chapter 15 in 3 sections. The SIGN, the SONG and the SCENE.

I. The Sign

Notice Revelation 15:1

The word "another" here means "another of the same kind". This is a continuation of what we looked at in Revelation 12.

Revelation 12:1-3

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

² *And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.*

³ *And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.*

The word "wonder" here means "SIGN".

The word "MARVELLOUS" here has a very interesting meaning. It means "BEYOND HUMAN COMPREHENSION".

Notice Revelation 15:1 again.

These 7 last plagues will **FILL UP/COMPLETE** the wrath of God. The wrath of God started with the Seal Judgments and has continued through the Trumpet Judgments. It will reach the pinnacle in the Bowl Judgments and will complete His wrath. The number 7 is the number of completeness and so here we have 7 angels who are given 7 last plagues, and all of this will complete God's wrath. These Bowl Judgments will lead right up to the Campaign of Armageddon.

Notice Revelation 15:2

Here John sees a sea of glass mingled with fire and standing on the sea of glass are those who gained the victory over the Anti-Christ. They are those who follow Christ and refuse to be intimidated by the False Prophet or the Anti-Christ. They have been martyred for their faith but now their sufferings are over. This group seen here is the result of something we looked at in Revelation 14.

Revelation 14:6-7

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

The people standing on the sea of glass will repent and receive the Gospel preached by the angel. These people will be saved out of the darkness of the Great Tribulation.

Application:

Let us never forget the power of the Gospel.

Romans 1:16

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

The fire mingled with the sea here speaks of the judgment of God.

Matthew 3:11-12

¹¹ I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:

¹² Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.

II. **The Song**

Notice Revelation 15:3-4

These who are redeemed sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

God makes a very clear connection between Israel coming out of Egypt and what will unfold in the Tribulation.

"Commentator John Phillips compares and contrasts the two songs: "The song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea, the song of the Lamb is sung at the crystal sea; the song of Moses was a song of triumph over Egypt, the song of the Lamb is a song of triumph over Babylon; the song of Moses told how God brought His people out, the song of the Lamb tells how God brings His people in; the song of Moses was the first song in Scripture, the song of the Lamb is the last. The song of Moses commemorated the execution of the foe, the expectation of the saints, and the exaltation of the Lord; the song of the Lamb deals with the same three themes."

Let me give you some parallels between Israel and the Tribulation saints.

1. **Israel was under persecution by Pharaoh. The Tribulation saints will be under the persecution of the Anti-Christ.**
2. **God brought great plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt. God will bring very similar plagues on the Anti-Christ and his kingdom.**

Revelation 11:6

⁶ These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

3. **God delivered Israel through the Red Sea. God will deliver these Tribulation saints through a "Red Sea". They will be delivered through a Red Sea of their own blood for they will be martyred.**
4. **God destroyed Pharaoh and the Egyptians with the Red Sea. God will destroy the Anti-Christ and his armies with a "Red Sea".**

Revelation 14:19-20

¹⁹ And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

²⁰ And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

5. **God gave Israel a song after they came through the Red Sea. God will give the Tribulation saints a song after they are delivered.**

Let us now notice 3 points about the song. Their song is amazing considering God will permit them to be persecuted and die for their faith.

1. **They will sing of God's works.**

Notice Revelation 15:3

As these saints stand on the crystal sea in heaven they will at this time fully grasp the wonderful works of God. Before they are martyred they will have a very distorted view of what God is doing in their lives and in the world. But in heaven they will see clearly. They will understand just how marvelous His works (NAMELY THE WORK OF SALVATION) really is.

Application:

In our lives today, our view of God's works is also distorted but when we step into eternity our view will be crystal clear.

2. **They will sing of His ways.**

Notice Revelation 15:3 again.

They say, "Just and true are thy ways".

What they are saying in this song is so important for us to grasp. We must think of what these people will go through and understand how God will permit them to suffer and even die for their faith. They will witness the death of many others also. In the midst of their suffering they may question God's ways but once they reach their eternal home they have a full understanding that God's ways are best.

Application:

There have been many believers who have questioned the ways of God. You may be in such a situation right now. The events in your life are nothing like you had planned. There is pain and there is confusion from where you stand.

Let us learn from these saints that in the most painful and the most frightening times that god's ways are just and true. The bottom line is, "HIS WAYS ARE BEST". He is working out His will and He will use His ways to do so.

Deuteronomy 32:1-4

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

² My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

³ *Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.*

⁴ *He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.*

Psalm 85:10-13

¹⁰ *Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*

¹¹ *Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven.*

¹² *Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good; and our land shall yield her increase.*

¹³ *Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps.*

3. They will sing of His worship.

Notice Revelation 15:4

The declaration here is something that will be fulfilled in the future. This is where the plan of God is going. God is Holy, and He alone is worthy of worship.

Psalm 46:8-10

⁸ *Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.*

⁹ *He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.*

¹⁰ *Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.*

Psalm 86:8-10

⁸ *Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works.*

⁹ *All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name.*

¹⁰ *For thou art great, and doest wondrous things: thou art God alone.*

III. The Scene

Notice Revelation 15:5-8

Here is a very solemn view of heaven before the Bowl Judgments are poured out. Just before the Bowls are poured out we see that smoke fills the Temple and no one is permitted to enter until the plagues are completed. Why is this?

This seems to be a time of great intensity for God. It is not His will that any should perish but when these judgments are poured out many will perish. Listen to the words of Garland on this scene:

"Here we have perhaps one of the most mysterious and wondrous verses in all of Scripture. It surely must indicate a period of great privacy and intensity in the mind of God attending the final outpouring of His wrath. It probably indicates an unwillingness to allow for even the possibility of distraction until what has been initiated finds its completion and likely signifies the holiness of the moment, as when Moses could not enter the tabernacle when the glory fell upon it (Ex. 40:35) and the priests could not minister in Solomon's Temple (1K. 8:11). Perhaps the idea is that of the finality of the action:"

Listen to the words of Mills on this scene:

"It may suggest that God will, at this point in history, seal the doors of Heaven, making it impossible for any who have not hitherto accepted Jesus as Savior to do so. In other words, from this time forth until God has executed the human race, no additional souls will be saved. This is reminiscent of the previous great judgment, for, in the age before the flood, God said, "My Spirit will not strive with man forever" (Gen. 6:3). What a fearsome prospect: God closeted in His sanctuary until His wrath is satisfied, and no one able to approach Him. Sin will cause this; sin is never a light matter."

Let me give you another thought from Barnhouse:

"What insight we should have here of the holiness of God, and may we not be allowed to think that behind this hiding smoke the heart of God is weeping, even as the Lord Jesus wept over Jerusalem, as He acknowledged that all the efforts of His mercy has been in vain, and that the city refused all of His offers of pardon and love? And as we shall be in Heaven at that moment, yet outside of the presence of God, shall we not know that he suffers alone for the horror of the sin that separates men forever from Himself and forces Him to send them away to outer darkness forever?"

Conclusion:

Let me close with a few verses that show the heart of God.

Ezekiel 18:31-32

³¹ *Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

³² *For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye.*

Ezekiel 33:11

¹¹ *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*