

I. BKGRD.

Chapter 15 is the shortest chapter in the book of Revelation and serves as an introduction to Rev. 16, the last of the three series of judgments – the 7 bowls of the wrath of God (“vials,” KJV; Greek is *phials*). It sets the background from which the judgments in Revelation 16 will emerge, and brings us to the final judgments of God upon the earth prior to the return of Jesus Christ. The scene is in Heaven (v. 1).

The events in Rev. 15 and 16 will be taking place before the Lord's Second Coming. These are the details of God's judgments to be poured upon this earth very soon because of the rejection of His love and grace. Chapter 15 shows us what is happening in heaven while Revelation 16 describes the corresponding events taking place upon the earth during the Great Tribulation period. The Church shall be in heaven with Christ at this time.

II. TEXT

vv. 1-3 The redeemed Israel, who have been saved during the great tribulation period, who have received Jesus Christ as the result of the two witnesses and the 144,000 who would also be bearing witness to him at that time, so they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God.

v. 1 “Another” is the same kind as before (ἄλλος). The other 2 great signs appeared in 12:1,3 where we saw that the *woman* represented Israel and the *great red dragon* represented Satan and the kingdom he would rule during the Tribulation. The final sign John describes as great and glorious before with them these 7 angels administer the divine judgment of God upon the satanic kingdom and the political power of the beast (the Antichrist).

“God’s wrath” – cf. 6:16 is the first mention; word occurs 10 x’s in Rev. (6 x’s ὀργή; 4 x’s θυμός).
Remember:

- “God has not appointed us unto **wrath**” (1 Thess. 5:9).
- 1 Thess. 1:10 “...Jesus, who rescues us from the coming **wrath**.”
- Rom. 5:9 “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's **wrath** through him!”
- Rev. 3:10 “Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from [lit., “out of;” the Greek preposition is ἐκ] the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” (Jesus’ promise given to the faithful church at Philadelphia).

The Greek word used here and in v. 7 is *thumos*; the other word translated “wrath” is *orge*; both are used in Rev., twice mentioned together (16:19 and 19:15 “the fierceness [or “fury”] of His wrath”) and are very similar in meaning.

Note: YHWH is “the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin...” (Exodus 34:6).

“Completed” is the same root as the word Jesus uttered on the Cross: “It is finished!” (τεταλεισται; here is τελέω). On the Cross it indicated the *debt of Man’s sin* against God was finished; here it means that those who have rejected this finished work of Christ on their behalf find that God’s *patience* is finished!

Question? Has God judged the world before? YES! And He will do it again!

- The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11),
- the Flood (Gen. 6-9),
- the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18),
- the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD., etc.

He will not destroy the earth again with water (Gen. 9:11,15); next time it will be with FIRE (2 Peter 3:7,10,12)!

In Gen. 15 God told Abraham that the Israelites would spend 400 years in a strange country where they would be enslaved and afflicted because the sins of the Amorites had not yet reached their full measure. In other words, while God was building the family of Jacob into a nation for 400 years, He was giving the Amorites time to repent! 400 years; that's PATIENCE! How long has He given America? It's coming up on 400 years (the pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock (Massachusetts) on Dec. 11, 1620). It's almost 2020 . . . make you wonder.

v. 2 Cf. 4:6 "Sea" often pictures the restless masses of mankind (Rev.; also Isa).. = compares nations to a troubled sea in a storm. Prob. the same sea we saw in 4:6.

"Fire" speaks of judgment; can't be martyred Trib. saints because they stand BESIDE (Greek is ἔπι; can mean *on, over, upon* [more likely with the accusative, as here] the fiery sea. Prob. a ref. to the sea of mankind about to feel the last of the wrath of God.

They were **"victorious over the beast"** (i.e., the Antichrist), overcoming *"him by the blood of the Lamb and by the Word of their testimony"* (Rev. 12:11; cf. 7:14).

The seven last plagues will complete the judgment of God against this Christ-rejecting world. It will also complete God's purging process. Once this is over, Christ will come back with His Church to set up His kingdom, and the righteous government of God over the earth will begin. "I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire" (Rev. 15:2). Before the throne of God in heaven there appears a "sea of glass." In Revelation 4 John said the sea of glass was clear "like unto crystal" (Rev 4:6). But here John sees it as "mingled with fire." This could be a foreboding of the impending fiery judgment when the seven vials are poured upon the earth.

This is not the Church standing in heaven on this sea of glass. It is probably the 144,000 who were sealed in Revelation 7. These have the victory over the Antichrist and over his image; he can't be revealed until the Church is taken out of the way, until that which hinders is removed (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8). Then the Antichrist shall come with all his lying signs and wonders, deceiving if possible even the very "elect." Many Jews will be drawn into a pact with him.

v. 3 The Song of Moses was sung every Sabbath evening in the synagogue to commemorate Israel's great deliverance from the hand of Egypt; reminded them to be GRATEFUL and THANKFUL!

Note that praise and worship are very important activities in Heaven! Should be on earth as well! Note also that praise and worship is NOT a spectator sport! It's not something you WATCH, but something you DO! It's not "performance," or entertainment, but honor and praise we lavish upon God ourselves; it flows from a heart of profound gratitude, humility and a sincere desire to worship.

v. 4 Who shall not come and worship? All the nations will come and worship before Christ when He returns again. He'll rule over all the nations and *"every knee shall bow, every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:10-11).

Zec. 14:16 *"Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles."* The Feast will be reinstated during the Millennial reign of Christ – why? It's TEMPORARY!

v. 5 Note: there **is** a temple in heaven. The earthly tabernacle that God commanded Moses to build was patterned after the heavenly temple and included the various courts, the holy place, the Holy of Holies in the center of the temple where God dwelled, and the mercy seat (Hebrews 8:5).

Here called **"the tabernacle of the Testimony,"** the ancient tent (note: *temporary* dwelling place of God!) that served the nation of Israel in their desert wanderings for 40 years had the Ark of the Covenant within. It contained the 2 tablets of stone that God had written His Commandments on at Mt. Sinai (ca. 1445 BC. or about 3,450 years ago). The Feast of Tabernacles celebrated by the Jews every fall is an annual reminder of our *temporary* earthly sojourn; this world is NOT OUR HOME!

v. 6 John now watches as the 7 angels come forth and the cherubim give them the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. In Revelation 16 these seven angels pour out the bowls of God's wrath upon the earth -- the plagues which are the final judgment before the return of Jesus Christ in glory. The angels wear “**golden sashes**” symbolic of royal and priestly functions.

v. 7 “**Wrath of God**” – here *thumos*, “**wrath**” used 10 x’s in Revelation. Cp. to *orge* (used 6 x’s in Rev., starting in 6:16,17 ending in 19:15). Is there a substantial difference between the two words as used in Rev? Not really; very close to being used synonymously; are used almost interchangeably.

v. 8 Jesus, as our High Priest, did not enter into the earthly tabernacle built by hands but entered into that heavenly place to offer His blood as sacrifice for our sin (Hebrews 9:24).

The smoke speaks of the glory of God and the visible manifestation of His Presence:

- In the vision of Isaiah the whole house was filled with smoke (Isa. 6:4);
- “*Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle*” (Exodus 40:34f);
- At the dedication of Solomon’s Temple the same idea occurs: “*When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple*” (1 Kings 8:10f).

No approach of man to God could halt the coming judgments...

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION / RESPONSE

Taken as a whole, Revelation 15 presents a fearful picture of impending divine judgment on a wicked world. The judgments which are to be poured out in chap. 16 fully justify this ominous introduction. But 3 major points are to be noted from this chapter:

- Some day the redeemed will all stand before the Lord! (Mt 12:36; Rom 14:12; Heb 4:13; 13:17; 1 Pet 4:5);
- Note the importance of praise & worship! We too can sing the “song of deliverance,” the song of Moses! As he is described as the “servant of God” so we should strive to be the “servant of all” (Mk. 9:35). Note also that in the song there is not a single word about their own achievement! Nearly all is OT quotes. Heaven is a place where men forget themselves and remember only God!
- God is love . . . but He is also a jealous God who must, by His nature, judge ALL sin!