

BOOK OF REVELATION

Part 23 – Preparation for the Seven Vials Judgment of God: Chapter 15

I. INTRODUCTION

REVIEW: We have just completed our study through the third parenthetical passage in the book of the Revelation that consists of Chapters 12 through 14. We have just completed our study in the middle of the tribulation in Chapters 11 through 13. Chapter 11 dealt with the death of the two witnesses and their subsequent resurrection and ascension back into heaven, the seventh and final trumpet sounding. Chapter 12 dealt with the woman, the nation of Israel, giving birth to the man child, the Lord Jesus Christ and his ascension into heaven, the war in heaven between God and Satan, Satan's defeat and being cast down to the earth, and Satan going after the nation of Israel and the Tribulation Saints helping to protect her from persecution and destruction. Chapter 13 dealt with the unveiling of the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and the Image of the Beast. Lastly we saw what the Mark of the Beast is and its true nature. Chapter 14 dealt with a preview of the 144,000 Jewish male witnesses on Mount Zion with the Lord Jesus Christ, then the three angelic messengers and their special messages: (1) The Everlasting Gospel, (2) The fall of the two Babylons and (3) Those who worship the Antichrist or take the mark of Antichrist will be in the Lake of Fire for all eternity without rest from their torment. Then we saw a preview of the Battle of Armageddon described by the picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and an angel reaping the fully mature crop of iniquity. The last verse tells us that this is a picture of a real event.

II. EXEGESIS - Preparation for the Seven Vials Judgment of God

A. VERSES 1-4: THE SEVEN ANGELIC CARRIERS AND THE PRAISE OF THE SAINTS.

VERSE 1: "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

The last scene in the vision of the Apostle John was a preview of the Battle of Armageddon being viewed as the "Winepress of the wrath of God". Now the vision moves from the earth back into heaven once again. Notice the phrase "great and marvellous" to describe them. The upcoming judgments are to be different and more intense than the previous sets of judgments that have been decreed by God to come upon the earth. The Apostle John is introduced to seven angels that will carry out the final set of judgments in the Tribulation: The vial judgments. The phrase "seven last plagues", clearly indicates that these set of judgments are final set of judgments in the Tribulation. Notice the phrase, "for in them is filled up the wrath of God". This phrase indicates that these final set of judgments are full and complete and will be without the mercy of God. The time for mercy has passed and the full and complete judgment of God is about to commence.

*VERSE 2: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire:
and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image,
and over his mark, and over the number of his name,
stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."*

This the second occurrence in the book of the Revelation to "the sea of glass" along with a description of the four seraphim special angels of God. The first occurrence was in Revelation 4:6

*Revelation 4:6 "And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal:
and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full
of eyes before and behind."*

The phrase "sea of glass" is once again a reference to the saints of all the ages: Old Testament, Church Age, and Tribulation. The word "sea" is used repeatedly in the book of the Revelation as a reference to a large mass of people and the word "glass" is a reference to stability and tranquility. The number of saints before God's throne is enormous and their status of being believers, and therefore saints, is forever fixed and cannot be disturbed or changed. Praise God for that status.

However notice a difference in the description this time. The phrase "like unto crystal" is substituted with the phrase "mingled with fire". It is possible and very likely that we see reflected in the sea, the view from inside the temple, which is where the throne of God is located. This is very likely the time that the seven vials of God's judgments are being filled with their judgments. The judgments of God that are being poured in the open top of the vials.

We know that the "sea of glass" now includes a large number of Tribulation saints. Notice here their description "and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass." These Tribulation saints have achieved victory over the Antichrist, the Image of the Antichrist, and the Mark of the Antichrist, by not bowing down to the will of the Antichrist or his decrees. These Tribulation saints were true to the statement in Revelation 12:11.

*Revelation 12:11 "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the
word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."*

These saints were true to their faith and testimony. Now they are just beginning to receive their award for their faithfulness and testimony. The first part of that reward is that they have rest from their weary work of earth and from persecution. The second part of that we now see that they join the saints of the other ages in giving glory to God.

Notice also that they have "the harps of God". They are using string instruments with the song of praise they are about to give to God.

*VERSE 3: "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God,
and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works,
Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints."*

Now we see the saints of God from all the ages that are before God's throne and the temple, witnessing the final set of judgments being prepared to be set upon the earth. What is the reaction of the saints? The expression "And they sign the song of Moses" is a reference back to the song that Moses and the Israelites sang to God in thanks for their delieverance from Pharaoh and his armies. Pharaoh and his armies attempted to bring back the nation of Israel into bondage once again after their deliverance out of bondage by the power of God, which culminated in the ten plagues upon Egypt. God drowned the army of Pharaoh in the Red Sea after the Israelites had crossed where God had parted the Red Sea. The full story of their deliverance is in Exodus 14. Moses and the Israelites sang a song giving thanks to God for delieverance.

Exodus 15:1 "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the LORD, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

The expression "song of the Lamb" is a reference back to the song that the saints sang unto God before the throne of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ, was the only One found worthy to take the scroll from God the Father, which contained the judgments to come.

Revelation 5:9-10 "(9) And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; (10) And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth."

The saints are not necessarily singing the exact words of the song that Moses and the Israelites sang after their deliverance or the exact words that the saints sang before the throne of God in Revelation 5, praising the Lord Jesus Christ for being worthy to take the scroll. The saints here are singing a song of praise to God for deliverance from evil `that was overwhelming to them and to praise to God for being the only One that is just in judging the world.

Their reaction is not one of self-vention but one of awe and amazement at the sovereignty of God. In the phrase "Lord God Almighty" the saints are acknoweldging that God is omnipotent or "all powerful" According to the Merriam Webster dictionary the word "almighty" means "having absolute power over all". God is truly almighty and so the phrase "Lord God Almighty" is very fitting.

The phrase "just and true" expresses beautifully the main attributes of the Godhead: God, being the creator of the universe and the originator of our salvation is totally righteous to judge the world. God created the world, allowed the world to continue to exist after mankind choose to rebel against His will, and then provided all of mankind the way of redemption from his sins by sacrificing the Second person of the Godhead, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross outside of Jerusalem, if mankind would accept.

Sadly, only a minority of mankind accepted His great gift of salvation, but the majority rejected His unique and generous offer of redemption and even continued in rebellion against their own Creator. Therefore God is totally just in bringing down the previous sets of judgments and the judgments that are about to commence. God is also true to keeping His word concerning our salvation and His judgment upon sin.

*VERSE 4: " Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?
for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee;
for thy judgments are made manifest."*

The saints are proclaiming in song and wind instruments that all mankind should fear and glorify God. The saints are in amazement that the majority of mankind does not honor and glorify God at this point in time. But in the Millennial Kingdom and in the New Heaven and the New Earth all the nations of the earth will give God the proper honor and glory He is justly due. They are also acknowledging that His judgments have been made manifest so far and the last of His judgments are about to be manifest upon the whole earth.

B. VERSES 5-8: PRELUDE TO THE VIAL JUDGMENTS CONMENCING.

*VERSE 5: "And after that I looked, and, behold,
the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:"*

Now we see the doors of the temple in Heaven are opened. The doors of the temple, where God's throne is located, have been temporarily closed while the vials of the judgments of God have been filled with the contents of this final judgment. The scene is almost unimaginable. Why were the temple doors closed during this brief time period? Perhaps the judgments being filled into those vials were too horrible to be observed by the saints and or would have been overwhelming. Only God knows for sure.

*VERSE 6: "And the seven angels came out of the temple,
having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen,
and having their breasts girded with golden girdles."*

Now the seven angels are coming out of the temple of God in heaven. They are prepared to fulfill the assignment that God has given them. Notice that they have pure white robes and a golden girdle, or belt, around the waist and chest, similar to the appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. However the eyes are not as a flaming fire or their feet as burned in a furnace. They have been specifically chosen and appropriately are wearing a wardrobe similar to that of the Lord Jesus Christ, because they have the role to be the carriers of the judgments to come. The Lord Jesus Christ will bring the final judgment of God upon the earth during His Second Coming.

VERSE 7: "And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever."

Now we see one of the four seraphim angels, which one we do not know, give each angel a vial. The word "vial" according to the Merriam Webster dictionary means, "a small closed or closable vessel especially for liquids." A vial used in ancient times would have had a long narrow neck and a wider bottom and a top that in many cases could be sealed up. If the vial was lined in animal skin, it could be easily closed. God the father or more likely the Lord Jesus Christ filled these supernatural vials while the doors to the temple in heaven had been briefly closed. That could explain the mingled fire with the sea of crystal:

VERSE 8: "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

We see here a very unusual scene. The temple in heaven is filled with smoke from the glory of God. Previous views of the temple in Heaven show it being filled with the nearly indescribable glory of God. This time His glory is hidden in smoke. Also what is noteworthy is what you do not see before the throne of God at this moment: worship, praise, and adoration. This is the time where God is executing judgment upon a world who has rejected Him and His gift of salvation and now the final judgments are in preparation. During this time no one could approach the throne of God in worship or praise, which usually went on continually.

In the next chapter, we will see the unveiling and execution of these judgments one by one. It will not be a good time to be upon the earth and many, both sinner and even saint, will die under the onslaught of these terrible judgments.

III. APPLICATIONS

- Our salvation causes our status before God to be forever fixed. Our salvation is eternal and God will never take it away nor can we lose it for sinning again!!
- One of the best ways to worship God is in song. Do you sing to the Lord in worship privately and do you sing in worship in the public worship service? You may not have a melodious singing voice now, but you will when we receive our glorified bodies. We will sing to the Lord then before His throne, so why not practice now!!
- God's judgment upon the earth at this time will total, without mercy, and complete. God will not extend His mercy forever. It is better to accept His mercy now, while it is still available.