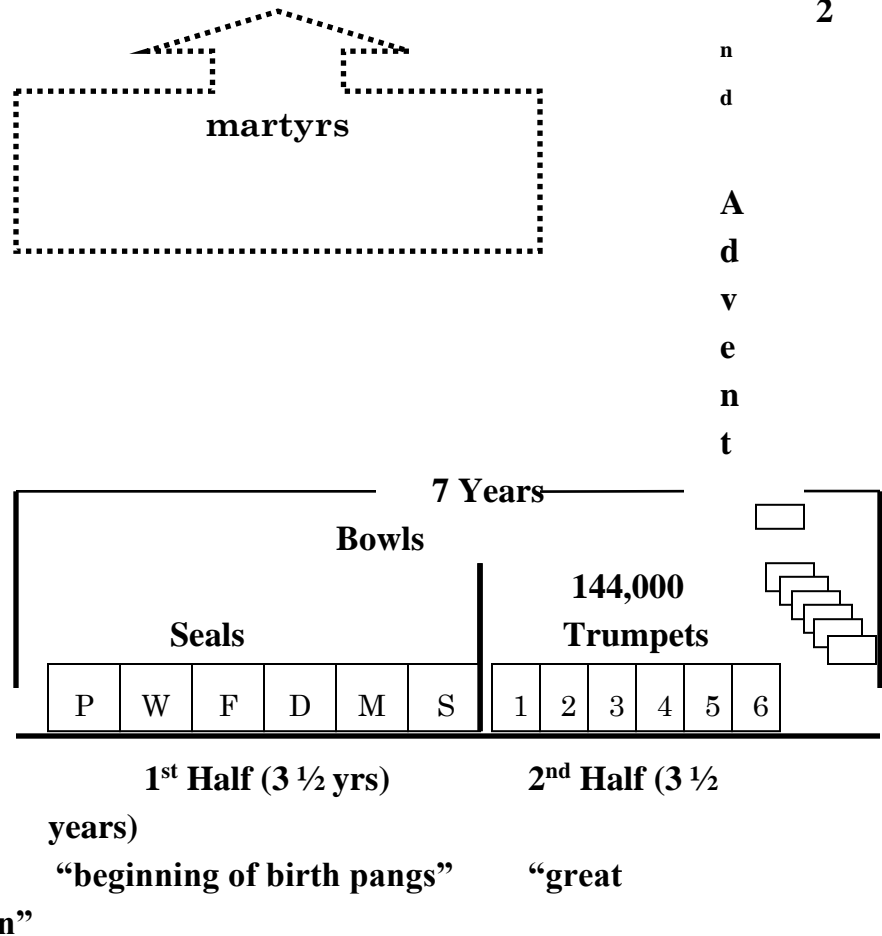


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**A0614—April 2, 2006 – Rev 15:1-8 – The Seven Angels & The Seven Bowls**

Let's briefly review where we are from the standpoint of the seals, trumpets and bowls.

**70<sup>th</sup> Week of Daniel 9**  
**2 Divisions of Birth Pangs**



The seals take place during the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the Tribulation, the period Jesus called “the beginning of the birth pangs” (Matt 24:8). Before the trumpets begin the 144,000 will be sealed so they are protected from the trumpet judgments. This seal protects them from the

wrath of God but not from the wrath of the Antichrist. As such, chapter 14 answered two questions. In light of the tremendous power of the unholy trinity and their religious, political, and economic system what will happen to the 144,000? The answer: they will be martyred at the hands of the beast but they will stand victorious in resurrection bodies with the Lamb on Mt Zion at the initiation of the Millennial Kingdom. The second question was “what will happen to the Antichrist, the False Prophet, and the one’s who take the mark of the beast or the number of his name? The answer is that they will be annihilated by the wrath of God in the seven bowls. Now, since these two events are introduced prior to their actual occurrence John is then given extensive revelation regarding the final judgments which lead to this ultimate conclusion. And thus, the bowl judgments are introduced in chapter 15 and they are poured out beginning in chapter 16. So, we are about  $\frac{3}{4}$  or more of the way through the Tribulation and nearing the climax of Revelation, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Christ.

## **I. THE SEVEN BOWLS OR LAST SEVEN PLAGUES (15:1-)**

Chapter 15 is a vision in heaven. Many people wonder if we will see what is happening on earth during the Tribulation from heaven. We want to know whether we will be able to see loved ones who are left behind and whether they take the mark of the beast or not. I do not know for sure, I doubt it will be of much concern. I think the best one can say is that we will know what is happening on earth because announcements are made in heaven before the judgments are poured out on earth. More importantly there will be...

### **A. Heavenly Rejoicing Over the Seven Bowls (15:1-4)**

***Revelation 15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the last seven plagues, for in them the wrath (thumos) of God was finished.***

***And I saw (kai eidon)*** signifies a new scene in this vision. ***another sign in heaven, great and marvelous.*** The previous ***great sign*** John saw ***in heaven*** was in Rev 12:1 where he saw a woman clothed with the sun having the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars and the fiery-red dragon. This ***sign in heaven*** is the first to be described as both ***great and marvelous.*** What he sees is ***astonishing.*** John is in awe of this sight because the ***seven angels have the last seven plagues*** and ***in them the wrath of God is finished.*** These angels are awesome instruments of God’s final outpouring of wrath. Angels are often used to carry out God’s judgments (cf Rev 8:2; 16:1).

The judgments are called *plagues* and reminds us of the Exodus *plagues*. Several of the seals, trumpets and bowls are very similar to the Exodus *plagues*. This shows that the Exodus event is a mini-tribulation. Both events are completely devastating but the Exodus only destroys Egypt while the Tribulation destroys the whole world.

<b>EXODUS PLAGUE</b>	<b>EFFECT</b>	<b>REVELATION PLAGUE</b>
1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Blood</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Trump, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Bowl, 3 <sup>rd</sup> Bowl
5 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Pestilence</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Seal
6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Boils/Sores</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Bowl
7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Hail</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Trump, 7 <sup>th</sup> Bowl
9	<b>Darkness</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> Seal, 4 <sup>th</sup> Trump, 5 <sup>th</sup> Bowl
10	<b>Death</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Seal, 6 <sup>th</sup> Trump, 7 <sup>th</sup> Bowl
Red Sea	<b>Water Dries Up</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> Bowl Euphrates River

The *wrath of God* is the venting of His anger against sin. Since these refuse to believe in His Son who paid for their sin on the cross His wrath is released against them. The judgments reach their climax with the seven bowls, for in them is the *last* of God's judgments. Thus, *in them the wrath of God was finished*. This verse is also a summary verse for everything in chapters 15 and 16 and perhaps even until the end of the visional portion of the book (cf 21:9, Thomas, 228).

*Revelation 15:2 And I saw [something] like a glassy sea having been mixed (perfect passive participle) with fire and those overcoming from the beast and from the statue of him and from the number of his name, standing (perfect active participle) upon the glassy sea having harps of God.*

*And I saw (kai eidon)* signifies a new scene in this vision. What John sees is *[something] like a glassy sea...mixed with fire*. We saw a glassy sea in Rev 4:6 just in front of the Father's throne. There it was like crystal, here it is *mixed with fire*. The *glassy sea* pictures the majesty and splendor of God and His separateness from creation. The *fire* looks toward the fiery judgments that will come in the final seven bowls.

***Standing upon the glassy sea*** are *those* who overcame the beast, His statue and His number. They are victoriously standing in heaven on this ***glassy sea***. They did not submit to the beast, his worship system or his economic rules and regulations. They did not love their lives even unto death. They have been martyred and now stand victorious in heaven (Rev 12:11). Later they will be resurrected and rewarded for their perseverance and faithfulness (Rev 20:4-6).

They hold ***harps of God***. *harps* and trumpets are the only instruments mentioned in Revelation. Since they are ***harps of God*** they are dedicated to worshipping Him.

***Revelation 15:3 And they sing the song of Moses, the slave of God, and the song of the Lamb saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty (pantokrator), Your ways are righteous (dikaios) and genuine (alethinos), King of the nations,***

Together ***they sing the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb***. There are two songs of Moses, Exodus 15 and Dt 32. I take it that this ***song of Moses*** refers back to Exodus 15:1-21 when Pharaoh and the Egyptian Army were finally destroyed in the Red Sea just as all the enemies of God will be finally destroyed in the seven bowls. Both of the events which inspired these songs involved God's deliverance of His people and His decisive judgment upon His enemies. Since the themes are the same they sing the same song. But here an additional song is sung, ***the song of the Lamb***. While Moses was instrumental in the defeat of the Egyptians so the Lamb is instrumental in the final defeat of world powers. Both Moses and the Lamb are deliverers or saviors.

In this song the words describe God's ***works*** as ***great and marvelous***. ***Great*** because of the stupendous scale of His awesome judgments (Ps 111:2). ***marvelous*** or ***astonishing*** because the destruction is beyond comprehension (Ps 139:14). While we shudder at such devastation it stems from God's righteousness (Hos 14:9).

He is called ***Lord God Almighty***. ***Lord*** means master. He is master of the universe and has full right to judge. ***Almighty*** is the Greek word *pantokrator* and always refers to His omnipotence. The destructive power of His judgments comes from His infinite wealth of power.

***Your ways are righteous and true***. His ***ways*** of judging ***are righteous and true***. The idea that God's judgments are righteous is found in

**Revelation 16:5-6** "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; <sup>6</sup> for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

This is righteous vindication. They poured out the blood of saints and prophets, they will be given blood to drink. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth. This is the principle of *lex talionis*, the "law of compensation". They have taken blood therefore they will receive blood as compensation (cf Exod 21:24). This is what they earned or deserved. God is completely *righteous* in dealing with men this way. His judgments are also *true*, perfectly discriminating between those who deserve blood and those who do not.

So far we have seen three attributes in this verse; omnipotent, righteous, and true. Next we have the title *King of the nations*. This looks forward to His reign as *King* in the millennium. A King must have a Kingdom, a realm over which He rules, and a King also has must have subjects over which He rules. The realm of His rule is the whole world, the subjects of His rule are *the nations* who inhabit the world. His kingdom is global in extent.

***Revelation 15:4 who will not (ou) not (me) be afraid, Lord, and glorify (worship) Your name? Because [You] alone [are] holy, because all the nations will come and worship before You, because Your regulations (dikaioma) have been made known (aorist passive indicative)."***

In the Greek text verse 4 begins with a double negative. ***Who will not not be afraid?*** The implied answer is "no one". Inevitably all will fear Him and all will glorify His name. It is better to do it now and willingly rather than later and unwillingly. No one is forced to bow to the King now but they will be forced later.

**Philippians 2:9-11** For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Jeremiah 10:7** Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? Indeed it is Your due! For among all the wise men of the nations And in all their kingdoms, There is none like You.

Who would not fear a King who could level every mountain in the world and move every island? One who rules in perfect righteousness and truth never erring?

**Psalm 86:9** All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And they shall glorify Your name.

The first reason given here why all should fear Him and glorify Him is *because He alone is Holy*. This is a rare word for *Holy*, *hosios*. This word refers to His character as the standard. He is the only standard of holiness. We do not make up the standard. He is the standard. Everything will ultimately be judged according to the standard of His character. Morality is not relative it is absolute and embodied in the character of God. For this He is to be feared and glorified.

The second reason given here is because *His righteousness has been made known*. The word for *righteousness* here is *dikaiomata* which means “regulations”. His *regulations have been made known*. His legal regulations, the standard, will have been made known clearly and for this He alone will be feared and glorified.

It is amazing that this song does not focus on the salvation of the singers but on the great and marvelous works of God, the mighty power of God, the righteousness of God, the truth of God’s judgments, the holiness of God and His righteous standard, all of which issue forth His destruction of the godly and establishment of His kingdom.

## **B. Heavenly Preparations for the Seven Bowls (15:5-8)**

In verses 5-8 we shift to the final heavenly preparations of the last seven bowls which contain God’s overflowing wrath.

**Revelation 15:5** **And after these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony was open in heaven,**

The first words are crucial. *And after these things* (*meta tauta*) is the customary formula that introduces an entirely new vision (Rev. 4:1; 7:9; 15:5; 18:1). The bowls are so severe they are kept distinct from the previous seal and trumpet judgments of God. These judgments will unleash a rage of fury with the intent to destroy all who remain (cf 11:18).

John sees *the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony open in heaven*. This is the heavenly temple as in 11:19. This language recalls the OT tabernacle which was a pattern of the heavenly things.

**Hebrews 8:5** who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned *by God* when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, "SEE," He says, "THAT YOU MAKE all things ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WHICH WAS SHOWN YOU ON THE MOUNTAIN."

Within this tabernacle was the testimony of God written on the tablets of stone on Mt Sinai by the hand of God Himself. Those who have continually violated the standard of God's testimony are about to be slaughtered by the seven bowls.

*Revelation 15:6 and the seven angels having the seven plagues came out of the temple wearing (perfect middle) clean bright linen and wrapped around (perfect middle) the chests with golden belts.*

The instruments of judgment, *seven angels came out of the temple*, clad in *clean bright linen and wrapped around the chests with golden belts*. They are clad similar to the Son of Man in Rev 1:13

**Revelation 1:13** and in the middle of the lampstands *I saw* one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His chest with a golden sash.

The *linen* garments represent "righteousness". The adjectives *clean* and *bright* represent "purity". They are righteous and their mission is to purify the earth of all unrighteousness. The bride of Christ is similarly clad in Rev 19 when we return with Christ.

*Revelation 15:7 And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filling (present active participle) with the wrath of God who is living forever and forever.*

The *four living creatures* were introduced in chapter 4:6 as sitting around the throne and having eyes in front and behind. They are aware of all that is going on; they sit in the immediate presence of God. One of these is instrumental in giving *the seven angels seven golden bowls*. The *bowls* are *philiias* which are shallow bowls used in ancient

offerings. Thus, *bowls* is a better picture than “vials”. The word *filled* is actually a present active participle and should be translated *filling with the wrath of God*. The picture is that of a bowl filled to the brim yet continuing to be filled. It is overflowing *with the wrath of God*; a bitter, poisonous, concentrated wine that will stupefy and destroy the earthdwellers. This concoction is what will be poured out on the earthdwellers beginning in 16:1.

**Revelation 16:1** Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). Lastly, this verse adds another attribute of God. He is *living forever and ever*. He is a living God, not a static force and He is an eternal God, living forever and ever.

**Revelation 15:8** *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and His power, and no one was able (imperfect middle) to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.*

Verse 8 describes the incredible effect at this moment in heaven. *the* heavenly *temple* in which God dwells *was filled with smoke from the glory of God and His power*. This is the Shechinah Glory, the visible presence of God in the heavenly *temple*. When God works in such direct ways He is completely unapproachable. None can be in His presence.

**Exodus 40:34** Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle. <sup>35</sup> Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud had settled on it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

**1 Kings 8:10** It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, <sup>11</sup> so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

“Smoldering fires of indignation are here at the point of erupting into eternal punishment issuing from an arsenal of divine wrath” (Moffatt).

Finally, this smoke from the glory of God and His power will remain in the heavenly temple *until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished*. You might be tempted



to think this means until the end of the Tribulation but there is good evidence that the heavenly temple will remain this way until the New Jerusalem is seen coming down out of heaven to the New Heavens and New Earth after the Millennium.

## **CONCLUSION**

What we have in chapter 15 really marks the beginning of the bowl judgments in heaven. The previous sign was great (12:1) but this sign is great and marvelous. Seven angels holding the seven last plagues in bowls filled to the brim and overflowing with God's wrath. The consummation of the age contained within. A moment for great rejoicing in heaven as those who have overcome the beast by rejecting worship of his image and the number of his name, now martyred, standing in heaven on a sea of glass holding harps that belong to God and serve to worship Him alone. They sing two songs, the song of Moses, the physical deliverer of Israel from Egyptian bondage; the song of the Lamb, the spiritual deliverer of all who trust in Jesus as Savior. In this song they sing that God's works are great, overwhelming in magnitude and astonishing, beyond comprehension. He is the Lord God Almighty, omnipotent, His ways of judging are righteous and true. He is King of the nations and as such will rule over His kingdom on earth and His subjects are the nations. As such, who will not fear O Lord and glorify Your name? The answer is no one. All will bow before the King of the nations. It is better to bow now willingly rather than later forcibly. Why should all fear and glorify His name? Because He alone is holy, His character is the standard of measure. His regulations that issue forth from His character have been revealed and all will ultimately worship and glorify Him. No man is without excuse.

Then John looked and he saw the heavenly temple of which the earthly tabernacle was patterned and where one copy of the stone tablets of Ten Commandments was kept. The violators of God's standard will be slaughtered. The seven angels marched out of the temple in linen garments, clean and bright. They are pure and seek to carry out their mission of purifying the earth. One of the four living creatures handed out the seven bowls to the seven angels. Each of them is full to the brim and overflowing with the wrath of God, the wrath of the eternal God who has neither beginning or ending. And at this juncture the heavenly temple will be filled with the Shechinah Glory, the visible presence of God for in such times of direct intervention of God He is completely unapproachable. For His glory and His power take on a qualitative from which no man can survive.

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