

Seven Angels with Seven Plagues  
Revelation 15  
9/20/2015

If you were riding a bike into the wind, then stopped and turned around, you might think that the wind changed because it went from hindering you to helping you. In actuality it didn't change, you did. God does not change like shifting shadows, even though it sometimes feels to us like He does. What is really happening is that we are changing. God never changes. One of the clearest ways we see that God does not change is the way in which the Exodus is the model for salvation for all the rest of Scripture. The Exodus is the key to understanding this chapter of Revelation. The reason that the Exodus is a model for salvation in Scripture is that God's people are rescued while the forces that hold God's people prisoner are destroyed through plagues. Well, that is exactly what we see happening here in Revelation 15. There are seven ways that Revelation 15 is supposed to remind us of the Exodus.

The first connection with the Exodus is the word “sign” God told Moses that He would use great and mighty signs to prove that He was the Lord, so that even Pharaoh would eventually have to acknowledge the one true God. Here in Revelation we see another sign in Heaven, great and marvelous.

Secondly, we see that the angels are the ones having the plagues. Of course, the last and greatest plague against Egypt featured a destroying angel. In Revelation, however, everything is bigger. It is not just one angel, but seven angels. It is not just one plague at the end, but seven final plagues.

Thirdly, they have the seven last plagues. Plagues will immediately make us think of the ten plagues that God inflicted on Egypt, but even more so here in Revelation, because they are the last plagues (the first plagues were the ones God unleashed against Egypt).

Fourthly, as we saw in our studies of Exodus, the plagues were not just against the people of Egypt, but they were also judgments against Egypt's false gods. It was not just a territorial battle: it was a cosmic conflict. Which god is the true God? Here in Revelation, we see the false gods judged in verse 2. We saw in chapters 12-13 that the saints will have the victory over the false gods of the dragon and the two beasts, because Christ has already conquered that false trinity. Well, here we see the saints standing triumphantly on the top of the sea of glass. Remember that the sea is a metaphor for the place of evil. The sea has transformed. No longer is it the source of the beast that the dragon calls up. It is now calm and tranquil. It is made of glass in order to tell us that it is no longer the source of evil and chaos. So the false gods of this world have been judged. Just as the people of God walked through the Red Sea on dry ground while the Egyptians perished, so also God's people here stand on top of the sea of glass, with their

enemies under their feet.

Fifthly, the people of God sing the song of Moses, as it says in verse 3. The song of Moses is recorded for us in Exodus 15. Now, the words are not the same at all. So, how can this song in Revelation 15 be called the song of Moses? The answer is that there are six things that this song and the song of Moses have in common. 1. God's judgment over nonbelievers and over the false gods; 2. God saving His people; 3. God's superiority over any false gods; 4. Nations will wind up fearing God; 5. Nations will come to worship; 6. God will reign forever.

A sixth way that this text reflects the Exodus is the language about the tent and the priests. The sanctuary of heaven (which was the model for the wilderness tabernacle) is opened. Several angels come out of the heavenly sanctuary dressed like priests. Pure linen with golden sashes is the language of priesthood. So, these angels are supposed to remind us of what the priests in the Old Testament looked like.

A seventh way that Revelation 15 reflects the Exodus is the presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary. If you remember, when the Israelites finished building the tabernacle, and they had done all the ritual cleansing and prayers, then the Lord filled the tabernacle with His presence, which manifested itself in the form of smoke. The glory of the Lord was so intense that no one could go near the tabernacle. The same thing is true here in verse 8 of Revelation 15.

Of course, smoke filling the dwelling place of God is true of several places in the Old Testament. Isaiah saw the temple of the Lord filled with smoke and the thresholds shook. When Solomon had finished building the temple of the Lord, the glory of the Lord filled the temple at that time as well. It means that God has come to dwell among His people without consuming them.

One of the main things that the echoes of the Exodus accomplishes for us is to tell us in plain language that God is for us. This chapter is all about God's love for His people and His protection of them from their enemies. In the process of saving His people He also and at the same time, and by the same actions, judges both His and our enemies. The same plagues that judge the unbelievers free the believers, just like the Exodus.

We said at the beginning that God does not change, and that the Exodus is the pattern of salvation for the rest of the Bible. We have mentioned this before, but what Jesus came to do is also called in exodus in the Scriptures. In Luke 9:31, at the time of Jesus' transfiguration, Moses and Elijah came down from heaven in order to discuss with Jesus His departure. The word "departure" is actually the word "exodus." Of course, the parallels between Christ's work and the Old Testament Exodus are numerous as well. Jesus goes down to Egypt as Israel did. Jesus comes up out of Egypt as Israel did. Jesus crosses the Jordan as Israel did. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days as Israel was tempted in the wilderness for 40 years. Most importantly, Jesus, by the greatest sign of them all,

brought about deliverance for his people from their Egypt of sin and death by his death on the cross. He was the firstborn of God from all eternity. In the Exodus, all the firstborn of Egypt died, but in Christ's work, it was the good guy who died for the bad guys. So there are differences, which are just as marvelous as the similarities.

The result of Christ's work is that all those who put their faith in Christ are victors and conquerors. Can you sing this song in verses 3 and 4? No one who is of the world can sing this song. They sing an anti-Exodus song that goes something like this: "Small and trivial are your deeds, O dead god. Arbitrary and false are your ways, O pretender to greatness. No one will fear you or glorify your name. For you are stupid, and no nation in its right mind will come and worship you, for your horrible character and bloodthirsty deeds have been revealed." Everything in this song is something that only God's people can sing and truly mean it.

How do they sing this song? They sing it with harps in their hands. Now here is where we get some pretty crazy ideas about what heaven is like. Most people's ideas of heaven is that we all sit around in one gigantic and interminably long church service with harps in our hands and no bodies to speak of, and sing until our voices go hoarse. The harps, at least, come from this passage. However, there is no indication here at all that this is what believers will always be doing for all eternity. Most people confuse the place we will be after we die with the place where we will be for all eternity. They are not the same thing at all! That is proven easily by the fact that we will not have our bodies immediately after death, but we will have them again in the new heavens and the new earth. The last chapters of Revelation show us the bride of Christ, which is the entire church coming down out of heaven to the renewed earth. In other words, eternity will be spent on the new earth with no veil between heaven and earth. Imagine everything that you like about earth that is good. Now imagine that the good is made so much better that it is perfect. Now imagine that everything you hate about earth because it is bad is completely gone. That is the easiest way to imagine what the new heavens and the new earth will be like. For anyone who is reading Randy Alcorn's book on Heaven, know this: you've got a much more biblical picture of heaven in that book than most Christians have in their minds. The picture that most people have in their minds is of a heaven that I wouldn't want either. In fact, some people say that if heaven is singing with harps sitting on a cloud all day long for all eternity, they would rather have Hell. Of course, those people have no idea what they are wishing for. However, it seems fairly true that if this was the picture of Heaven that the Bible gives us, then it wouldn't be a very attractive place. Why would we want to go there? However, the fact of the matter is that one of the reasons we love living in this world so much is actually that it reminds us of what heaven will be like. On your very best days, when you wake up and are brimful of energy, and

everything goes right for you all day long. I'm sure we can all think of golden days like that. Those days are a much better picture of Heaven, my friends. Imagine working with no frustration, and being able to create what you want with no lack of materials, no one trying to swindle you. Imagine being able to play whatever game you want and do it perfectly. Imagine being able to go wherever you want at the snap of your fingers. Imagine never being tired, hungry, or thirsty. We'll talk more about Heaven as we get to the final chapters of Revelation. Just know this: Heaven is better by far than your very best days. Our passage does not tell us that singing with harps is what believers do for all eternity. This is but one thing among many that they can do.

Now, worship is a very good thing, and it is certainly one of the things that we will do in the new Heavens and the new earth. But it will be something that we will love a lot more than we do now. Sometimes we have to force ourselves to come to church and worship God, don't we? But in the new Heavens and the new earth, it will never be a burden. Of course, we should not think of worship as a burden even now. We should think of worship as a great privilege. We *get* to sing to the Lord. We *get* to hear God speak to us in His Word. Imagine that: God speaking directly to us! How could that ever be ho-hum! We *get* to give to God's work. We *get* to pray to the Lord. Let us never imagine for one second that these things are small and trivial because we do them every week. Imagine the opposite situation, where you could never, ever pray to God, never sing to Him, never hear from God's Word every again. Imagine that you have no opportunity to give to God's kingdom work. I would imagine that most of us have never tried to imagine a situation like that. And that is because we take worship for granted. If we really tried to understand what it is that God has done for us, and Who this God really is, worship would seem very much a privilege.

One final word on this passage: It can be exceedingly helpful in our war against sin to imagine the future without sin. Imagine the future with a conquered Satan no longer trying his hardest to derail your faith. Imagine the future with pain, sorrow, death, and sickness all gone. Those things will be gone when sin is gone. So let's try to get rid of sin in our lives, always relying on the grace of God to do so. Truly great and marvelous are God's deeds! For we serve a God who saves us in our own Exodus to His own great glory. Amen.