

God loves music that exalts Himself and brings attention to His redeeming work. Just stop and think how much emphasis the Bible places on the use of music for God's glory. We see it in the Pentateuch with the Levites using music in the tabernacle (and later the temple). We see Moses singing. We see David singing. We see the use of music in the Psalms. We see Jesus and the apostles singing. We see Paul exhorting the churches to sing. And in the final book of the Bible we see singing. In fact, we see an amazing song in Revelation 15 that brings to a climax the redemption story.

Review: Highlights from our previous studies...

- *Chapters 6-11 present the Lord's future judgments upon the earth.
 - Seven *Seal* judgments (chs 6-7)
 - Seven *Trumpet* judgments (chs 8-11)
- *Chapters 12-13 record how the enemy will respond to the Lord's judgments.
 - Satan will energize two "beasts" (the first representing a powerful secular authority, and the second a deceiving religious authority).
 - People will follow the deception of the beasts, and receive the mark of the beast.
 - The second beast will attempt to kill all who refuse to worship the first beast.
- *Chapter 14 puts the spotlight on the Lamb and His judgment of the rebellious world.

New Material: Revelation 15 "The Judgment Climaxes"--part 1

In chapter 15 we find a vision of preparation for the final series of judgments, known as the *Bowl* judgments. Again, the chronological connection between the flow of visions recorded by John is difficult to determine.

The actual record of the seven bowl judgments begins in chapter 16. In chapter 15 John relates three heavenly scenes he saw that set the stage for the impending bowl judgments. We'll notice three phrases of observation: "I saw (1)," "And I saw (2)," and "After this I looked (5)."

The Setting: Back in 11:14 John recorded, "The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon." The seventh trumpet had no plague of its own. Apparently, the seven bowls constitute the third woe, with which "the wrath of God is ended" (15:1; as Ladd suggests, p. 203). Ladd comments, "These plagues are poured out only on those 'who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image' (16:2), and, like the seven trumpets (9:20), have the oblique purpose of bringing men to their knees before God in the last opportunity for repentance (16:9)."

I. John saw another great sign (1).

Read verse 1.

A. What was true of the sign?

Q: John saw "another" sign. When did he see others? 12:1, 3 Apparently, the *first* sign is the material John records in chapters 12-14. This is now the beginning of *another* sign (does this sign necessarily follow the first sign chronologically?).

Q: This sign was "great and marvelous."

B. What was the substance of the sign?

1. He saw seven angels.

Q: Who are they? We're not told. Strauss suggests the possibility that these are the seven pastors/messengers to whom the seven letters were addressed in Revelation 2-3, and writes (p. 277), "The fact that these angels are assigned to the administering of God's judgment...should not surprise the student of Scripture. 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?' (1 Cor 6:2)"

Q: What did the angels possess?

2. The seven angels had the seven last plagues.

Q: Why are they called the *last* plagues, according to verse 1? Because with these God's wrath

is completed.

II. John saw some victorious singers (2-4).

A. Where were they?

Read verse 2. They were standing beside what? What "looked like a sea of glass." Where is that? See 4:6--before the throne of God.

Just who are these singers? We learn when we consider this...

B. What had they done?

According to verse 2...

1. They had been victorious over the beast and his name.
2. They had been victorious over the number of his name.

C. What were they singing?

1. They held harps (2b)

Q: Who gave them the harps? God did.

Q: What does that signify?

2. They sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb (3a).

Q: Where do we find the song of Moses? Exodus 15 is one. Deuteronomy 32 is another.

Q: Is this one song or two? I think it's one. It's the song of God's victory. Moses experienced it. So did the Lamb. The exact words of the song may vary, but the meaning is the same.

We're actually given the lyrics of this song...

D. What were the lyrics of the song?

The song has three parts...

1. They made a declaration.

"Great and marvelous are your deeds."

"Just and true are your ways."

2. They asked a question.

"Who will not fear you, O Lord?"

"Who will not bring glory to your name?"

3. They made another declaration.

"You alone are holy."

"All nations will come and worship before you."

"Your righteous acts have been revealed."

There's the goal of history. God is worthy of worship and praise. The theme of Scriptures is that one day *all nations* will give God what He deserves (see Ps 86:9; Zeph 3:8; Mal 1:11; Rev 22:2b).

Note: This is not a song about personal redemption so much as a song that acclaims the mighty works of God. It celebrates what God did to defeat His enemy, deliver His people, and bring the world back to Himself.

Application: Why does God allow His people to face tribulation? Why does He often choose to take His own right *through* trials and tribulation?

Here's the answer. So His people can declare His praise. That's what's happening in this scene. The tribulation martyrs are singing God's praises. They're extolling God for what He had done.

When did Moses sing his song? Exodus 15 is right after what event? When God took His people right through the Red Sea. That great victory gave Moses and his people reason to sing!

What was true for the Lamb? First came the cross, then the crown.

What's true for the saints? First comes the suffering, then the deliverance.

Think about it: Who appreciates the security of the harbor more: the man who's never been to sea, or the sailor who went through a vicious storm at sea? Which man will sing more heartily about the safety of the harbor?

Discuss: Why does God allow us to face trials? Why doesn't He protect us from trials?

III. John saw the heavenly temple (5-8).

What did he notice about the temple?

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A. The temple was opened (5).

B. Seven angels with seven plagues came out of the temple (6).

1. How were they dressed (6)?

2. What were they given (7)? Seven bowls filled with the wrath of God

Note: What is the relationship between the "seven plagues" mentioned here and the "seven bowl" judgments? They seem to be closely related, if not synonymous.

3. By whom (7)? One of the four living creatures

4. What was true of the temple (8)?

--It was filled with smoke which was caused by God's glory and power.

--No one could enter the temple until when? Until the plagues are completed (which we'll see beginning in ch 16).

One Final Application:

If Revelation 15 makes any point, it's this one. Redeemed people are always a singing people. We have a song to sing, don't we? The world will one day call these people fools for refusing the mark of the beast and facing martyrdom.

But that accusation won't stick. The real fool is the person who refuses to live in obedience to God, who goes with the flow of the world because he's afraid of what people will think. God will have the final word.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10