



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The Holy Book of Revelation

## Chapter 15

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# Introduction

- With the main adversaries identified (the dragon, the sea beast, the land beast, and Babylon) and the people of God reassured of ultimate victory (chapters 12-14), the full out-pouring of God's wrath is about to be shown
- Chapter fifteen is an introduction to the seven bowls of wrath described in chapter 16

## Chapter Outline

- Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 1-4
- Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 5-8



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- From the Sea Beast of Revelation 13:1 to the vision of these 7 angels and the crystal sea in 15:2, John has had 7 separate visions
- However, only this sign (which is the 5<sup>th</sup> sign of the 7, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> sign in heaven) is described as both *great and marvelous*, On account of the terrible nature of the events depicted
- *great*, because of the awesome power of the judgments
- *marvelous*, because it represents the final vindication of God's people and His divine judgment against everything evil and wicked





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- *in heaven*, It does not happen accidentally or without planning, but it comes from heaven
- St. John describes what he sees subsequently
- He sees the actions of the "seven angels" in succession
- The number seven denotes the universal, all-extending nature of the plagues, Revelation 1:4; 5:1
- They are the last plagues, these set of visions now commencing carry us down to the end of the age



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- They lead on to the description of the final fall of the power of the devil in its various forms, and to the account of the last judgment of God and the eternal joy of the saints in glory
- They are plagues, because they are sent forth, not like the trumpets to warn men to repent, but upon those who have adamantly refused to return
- The time for intercession is past; God's judgment will now be completed
- These plagues will conclude with the wrath of God on sinful mankind for rejecting His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- The Lord hastens to bring the believers, through the Apostle's person, to see how the state of the Church is going to be in her triumph and glory, that she might not get confused when she sees the bitter punishments
- The believers will see themselves as conquerors of the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name
- This scene is like the Red Sea experience of the Exodus, the righteous have been victorious and are standing on the edge of the Sea singing a victory song, Exodus 15





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- How are they going to be?
  1. *standing on the sea of glass*, We have seen before that the sea of glass which is before the throne indicates baptism
- Without it no one can cross over to Him, who is seated on the throne, to be in His bosom
- St. Paul described the Red Sea deliverance as a "baptism" of God's people in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- As the talk here is mainly directed to people who taste the bitterness, during the period of the Antichrist as God says, *“For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be.”* (Mark 13:19)
- That is the reason why He showed the sea mixed with fire of temptations they go through
- The first great persecution of the New Covenant believers was indeed the Church's baptism of fire and so it is fitting that the great crystal sea is seen filled with a fiery mixture





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

2. *having harps of God*, They are victorious have gone through all the days of their life
  - The time of escape, pain, and grief has gone, and now they are “*standing*,” visible in public, holding the harps of victory and joy
  - The harps are not theirs, but the “*harps of God*,” His reward to those who conquer on His behalf
  - He makes from the soul and the body a harp, that praises Him with a divine tune, and a spiritual heavenly praise of His inspiration



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- It is worth noticing, that the victorious mentioned here are *those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name*
- This shows us clearly the eternal glory in its fullness and splendor, that the believers will not be awarded until they all finish their struggle
- The life which has been a disharmony to the world rises into true music before God



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- Those who will make their life a melody must take it first as a conflict
- The harps they hold are called harps of God, not merely because they are dedicated to Him, but because they are truly God's
- St. John knows that the noblest melody in the ears of God is the noble life of faith, suffering, and love





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- What a wonderful view!
- We had seen this view symbolically when Moses and the people crossed the Red sea, and emerged to the shore singing, 'the song of Moses' (Exodus 15), the song of salvation, and the symbolic song of victory
- Israel stood on the margin of the Red Sea and saw the tokens of the overthrow of the great world-power of that day; so these saints stand by the border of *sea of glass mingled with fire*, and sing the song of triumph over the end of the great world-powers of every age



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- The Church sings this song whenever she praises God:  
“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!  
The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea!”  
"The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my  
salvation;  
He is my God, and I will praise Him.  
My father's God, and I will exalt Him.  
Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power.  
Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces."



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- They also sing *the song of the Lamb*, The Apocalypse is full of Christ; the Lamb
- He is the key of earth's history
- The victory of the saints is in Him, Revelation 12:11
- Their song of triumph is of Him who put a new song in their mouth and in whom all things are reconciled, Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:10-11





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- The song of the Lamb is itself the song of Moses
- The song of the Lamb one is the true one, the song of Moses is the shadow and symbol
- It is the song of victory over the devil
- The motives of praise are expressed in our singing, O Lord, how *great and marvelous are Your Works!*
- We cannot worship the Lord until we know something about His person and work



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- They are admiring the greatness and marvelousness of what God had done in their deliverance, and giving Him the glory of His Almighty power
- *"And in the greatness of Your excellence You have overthrown those who rose against You"* Exodus 15:7; also Psalm 111:2, 139:14
- This song, like that in Revelation 4:8, is addressed to the *Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!* Acknowledging, that all the acts of His providence were both just



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- Now the righteous acts of the Lord are manifested
- Now it is acknowledged that, *“Surely there is a reward for the righteous; Surely He is God who judges in the earth.”* (Psalm 58:11)
- Though *Clouds and darkness* have sometimes been round about Him, it is now beyond doubt that *“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne”* (Psalm 97:2)
- <sup>4</sup> *Who shall not fear You, O Lord*, It is inevitable that everyone fears God and glorifies Him





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- Acknowledging, that for this God deserved to be worshipped and served by all the world
- Because of His holiness, much seen in the justice and truth of His ways
- Declaring their faith and hope, that now all nations should own and acknowledge Christ, and be subject unto Him
- Now that His judgments upon antichrist, and His justice in all His dispensations, was made so evident to the world
- *For all nations shall come and worship before You*, The song is one in anticipation



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- The *Song of the Lamb* concludes with three reasons for bringing glory to God (note the three-fold repetition of the word “for” in verse 4)
- First, God is *holy*
- The word used for “holy” (*hosios*) is an unusual term that means God is devout or absolutely right in vindicating persecuted believers and judging wicked earth-dwellers
- Holiness means that God, by His very nature, demands that sin be punished



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- God cannot overlook sin
- If He did, He would be violating His holiness
- Sin must be punished
- That's why Jesus had to die on the cross
- The second reason to glorify God's name is all the nations will come and worship before the Lord
- During the tribulation, it will seem that the world is worshipping the Antichrist





# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- He will appear to have succeeded in his mission
- Yet this verse points to Rev 21:24-26 when all the nations will come to acknowledge God
- In that day, the nations will worship God when Christ returns
- It is worth mentioning that the phrase *all nations* is the same phrase found in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; cf. Zechariah 14:16)
- It expresses the scope of God's discipleship agenda
- God's plan includes every tribe, tongue, people, and nation



# Prelude to the Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:1-4

- The third reason to glorify God is because His righteous acts have been revealed
- This statement is in contrast to the Antichrist's wickedness
- This refers to God's tribulation judgments in particular
- Of course, this also reminds us of God's many works down throughout history
- God has accomplished so much in each of our lives
- We must actively recount His many acts
- What a powerful song!

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- *After these things I looked,* Now the scene is changed, and the Apostle displays a second revelation
- *the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened,* The tabernacle was well called the tabernacle of witness, for it contained the ark of the testimony with the Law of God, and was a continuous witness of God's presence among His people
- The temple of the tabernacle then is the shrine, or inner sanctuary, of the heavenly true tabernacle, after the pattern of which the tabernacle of Moses was fashioned, which is now opened



# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- This is the **true** Tabernacle whereas the Tabernacle on earth was only a shadow, *“who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle.”* (Hebrews 8:5)
- The "temple" is the holy of holies which contained the ark of the testimony is seen in connection with the judgments of God
- Therefore, proceed the angels bearing the plagues for men

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- The temple is the inner shrine, or sanctuary
- It was this which was measured, Revelation 11:1
- It was out of this that the angel with the sharp sickle came for the vintage of the earth, Revelation 14:7
- And out of this now came the seven angels with the seven plagues
- It is well to remember this, for these plagues are not, like the judgments of the trumpet, calls to repentance

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- They are plagues on those who have refused to return, who have rejected the sanctuary, the tabernacle of witness
- Each of them had received a plague (judgment) from God, 8:2
- Their *pure bright linen* garments represent holiness and righteousness, 19:8,14, and their *golden bands* mark them as on a disciplinary mission, 1:18
- Their clothing fits their purpose, which is to purify the earth



# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- This angelic view relates to the Person of the Lord Jesus, clothed in a robe, reaching to the feet and girded across the breast with a golden girdle (1:13)
- They too are clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts ready for service
- This shows that their work is a priestly one
- The seven angels went out ready for the task they are sent for

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- *One of the four Living Creatures* gave them seven bowls
- However they do not pour the bowls before the issuing of the divine order
- This is how God is always slow in His punishments He allows
- St. Jerome says, that each bowl has a narrow mouth, so that anger would not pour heavily from them, but comes out drop by drop

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- *was filled with smoke*, As in the wilderness, Exodus 40:34-35, and as at the dedication of Solomon's temple, 1 Kings 8:10-11
- The tokens of God's presence filled the temple, so it is now, but with a difference: it is smoke, not cloud, which is the symbol of God's presence
- The purpose here seems to have been, partly to represent the smoke as the proper symbol of the divine presence, and partly to represent it as so filling the temple that no one could enter it until the seven plagues were fulfilled



# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- John tells us that this smoke proceeds from two sources
- First, from *the glory of God*, The word “*glory*” refers to God’s divine essence, righteousness, and justice
- Together they form the holiness of God
- Second, the smoke proceeds from *His power*,
- The word “*power*” refers to God’s inherent and sovereign capacity to execute and carry out the demands of His holy character

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- *no one was able to enter the temple*, Until those vials had been poured out, and all that was indicated by them was accomplished
- The meaning here seems to be, that no one would be permitted to enter to make intercession - to turn away His wrath - to divert Him from His purpose
- The purpose of punishment had been formed, and would certainly be executed
- The agents or instrumentalities in this fearful work had been now sent forth, and they would by no means be recalled

# Seven Angels and Seven Bowls of Wrath 15:5-8



- The mercy-seat, in this respect, was inaccessible; the time of judgment on the great adversary had come, and the destruction of the grand enemy of the church was certain
- All the preparations are made for the infliction of the threatened punishment on the grand anti-Christian power which had so long stood up against the truth
- The agents had prepared to go forth
- No intercession will ever avail to turn away the infliction of the divine wrath
- The detail follows in the next chapter





# Discussion

- Why is this particular sign called *“great and marvelous”*? What does it mean that the *“wrath of God is finished”*?
- When did Israel sing the *“song of Moses”*? What is the “song of the Lamb”? What is particularly meaningful to you about these songs?
- How can you be victorious over the beast, his image, and his number?
- What is the dominant emotion in chapter 15?