

The Book of Revelation

Chapter 15

Introductory Notes

- We transition now out of the parenthetical section in Chapters 12-14.
 - Walvoord – “Chapters 15 and 16 of Revelation bring to consummation the chronologically ordered events leading up to the second coming of Christ described in chapter 19. These are introduced in this chapter as “the seven last plagues” which are the divine judgments preceding the second coming of Christ. As previously indicated, the chronological order of events in Revelation is presented basically in the seven seals (6:1-17; 8:1). The seventh seal includes all of the seven trumpets (8:1-9:21; 11:15-19). The seven vials or bowls of divine judgment are included in the seventh trumpet. From this it can be seen that the order of events is one of dramatic crescendo, the seventh seal being all-inclusive of the end-time events including the seven trumpets, and the seventh trumpet including the events described in the seven vials. The second coming of Christ follows this order of events immediately after the seventh vial. The intervening sections such as 10:1-11:14; 13-14; 17-19 do not advance the narrative chronologically. Chapter 19 of Revelation follows immediately after chapter 16 in the chronological development.”
- A heavenly scene introduces the final series of judgments: the Seven Vials.

Outline

- The Scene in Heaven - vs. 1-4
- The Seven Angels - vs. 5-8

Notes

- vs. 1 – this verse introduces what is to come outside of chronology.
- vs. 1 – another sign in heaven - the same Greek word used for “sign” (*semeion*, Strong’s G4592 is translated as “wonder” in 12:1 (referring to the Woman, or Israel) and in 12:3 (referring to the Dragon, or Satan). There is a connection between Satan’s war against Israel and the judgments that are about to revealed.
- vs. 1 – The introduction here of the Seven Vial judgments is like the introduction of the Seven Seals in Chapters 4 and 5. It is an interesting study to compare the two.
- vs. 1 - plague – Greek word *plege* (Strong’s G4127) means “a stroke; by implication a wound; figuratively a calamity: - plague, stripe, wound”. It is the word used by the Jewish translators of the Septuagint for the plagues in Egypt.
- vs. 2 - sea of glass - before God’s throne as in 4:6, but here it is “mingled with fire”, picturing judgment.

- vs. 2 - “them that had gotten the victory” - martyrs of the Tribulation and the Beasts of Chapter 13. Note that they are not defeated in their deaths. See Revelation 12:11
- vs. 3-4 – the Tribulation martyrs sing a song of victory and praise.
 - song of Moses – we have three songs written by Moses preserved for us: Exodus 15:1-19, Deuteronomy 32:1-47, Psalm 90. There are several parallels in setting (plagues, Israel in danger, etc.) and content to the one in Exodus 15, but cases can also be made for the others.
 - song of the Lamb – see 5:9-14
 - Gaebelien – “The song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-27) is the song of an earthly deliverance and the song of the Lamb concerns a spiritual deliverance. They are redeemed by power and by blood.”
- vs. 5 – the opening of the Temple draws us back to 11:19 and we return to the primary chronology of events.
- vs. 6 – the seven angels are acting in a priestly role – they are dressed as priests, they come from the Temple, and they have vessels associated with worship.
- vs. 7 – vials – the Greek *phiale* (Strong’s G5357) means “flat vessel, dish, flat bowl for drinking or sacrificing” (etymonline.com) or “a broad shallow cup” (Strong’s).
 - There is not a good equivalent word in English that I am aware of. A modern *vial* is something like a test tube or a small medicine container.
 - Some translate this as “bowl”, which is an acceptable translation though our modern bowls are quite different (deeper and with smaller width) than a *phiale*. A modern dinner plate is closer to the size and shape of a *phiale*.
 - This word only appears in Revelation, first appearing in 5:8 where incense/prayers are offered to God. All the other uses are from this chapter on referring to these seven objects.
- vs. 7 – the seven angels already had the seven plagues in vs. 6, but now are given the Seven Vials full of God’s wrath. This seems to indicate that the plagues and Vials are not the same. Perhaps this shows that God’s judgment and wrath are separate in the application of His justice.
- vs. 8 – smoke from the glory of God – the shekinah glory of God.
 - There are similar appearances of the shekinah glory at the dedications of the Tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and the First Temple (I Kings 8:10-11). This would indicate how momentous the coming Kingdom is.
 - Since it also blocked access for men, it could indicate that God will no longer extend mercy. If so, it would mean that no repentance or salvation available to men until God’s judgment is completed - see 16:9,11.