

The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues

Revelation 15:1-8

This is the beginning of the vision of what is known as the “seven vials of the wrath of God.” This chapter introduces the characters involved in this vision and sets the stage for their delivery of those awful judgments of a holy God.

This introduces the last in the chronological order of events that began with the opening of the first seal. Remember, the seventh seal contained the seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet judgment either contained the seven vials (bowls), or, at the very least, was immediately followed by them.



I. THEIR “PRECEDING” – VS. 1-4

By that is meant the events that precede the actual seven bowls, or seven last plagues.

A. Vs. 1 starts with "another sign in heaven" – this shows that this was a separate vision from the one of the beast and that of the woman (ch. 12) – this brings the reader back to the time-line of the book of Revelation following the "parenthetical" pause

B. This sign is said to be "great and marvelous"

1. The only times in the NT that these three words are used together are here and in verse 3
2. The word "great" means great in extent
3. The word "marvelous" means "suited to excite admiration" – they were suited to hold the mind in astonishment (Albert Barnes)
4. Put together it is pointing to the events about to unfold with the seven last plagues and how they will extend to all of creation and will be so disastrous as to make the mind stand in awe

C. It refers to these as "plagues" – that is, they were wounds that were inflicted upon creation by God Himself

D. They are call "the seven last plagues" – they are the last to come, showing that

the previous events were also plagues, or wounds – “seven plagues which are the last”

E. “For in them is filled up the wrath of God”

1. The words “filled up” mean brought to an end, or, as it is most commonly translated, finished – “for in them (the seven last plagues) the wrath of God is finished”
2. It’s in a tense (the prophetic aorist) which speaks of a thing foreseen and decided as if already done (Vincent)

F. In these preceding events that usher in the seven vials of the wrath of God is seen “a sea of glass mingled with fire”

1. The introductory phrase – “as it were” – shows this to be a type, not a literal sea for there is only one Person to ever walk on water
2. The “sea of glass” is seen as a reflection pool where those that walked on it, or stood on it, could reflect on how they got there, and what it cost for them to be there – some consider the sea of glass to be the Word of God
3. “Mingled with fire” is to be seen as the reflection of those that stood on it was cause by great destruction, and it represents both the blood they shed to attain heaven, as well as the blood that Jesus shed for them

4. There was another sea mentioned in ch. 4:6 but there it was “a sea of glass like unto crystal” which was pointing to the holiness and beauty of God – this sea, however, points to His judgment

G. Standing on that sea are seen those that had died for their faith during the Great Tribulation – vs. 2

H. Their seen singing “the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb”

1. These are two separate songs, seen in the use of the article “the” in relation to both – they were not the same song
2. The “song of Moses” is most likely the song he is seen to have written and read to the Israelites in Deut. 32 – this song is a comprehensive picture of God’s faithfulness to His people and His ultimate purpose to defeat their enemies (Walvoord)
3. The “song of the Lamb” speaks of redemption from sin made possible by the sacrifice of the Lamb of God

I. This song had two parts to it:

1. “Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty” – pointing again to the fact that they extend to all of creation and are meant to put the mind in awe of His greatness

2. "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" – points to the faithfulness of God to His people, and His righteous dealings with mankind

J. Vs. 4 points to the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the earthly reign of Christ in Jerusalem, when all of the earth will be "his footstool" and He will reign supreme

Psalms 2:6-9

(6) Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

(7) I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou *art* my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

(8) Ask of me, and I shall give *thee* the heathen *for* thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth *for* thy possession.

(9) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

Psalms 110:1

(1) **A Psalm of David.** The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.

II. THEIR POSITION – vs. 5-6

A. These angels are seen coming from the "temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven" – vs. 5

1. The "temple" was the place of habitation on earth for God – it was patterned after that heavenly temple where God is

2. "Of the tabernacle of the testimony" is referring to the Ark of the Covenant that contained the original tablets of the commandments (the Word of God) and the manna and Aaron's rod that budded – all pointing to God's provision and protection of His people

Revelation 11:19

(19) And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

Exodus 25:21-22

(21) And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee.

(22) And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which *are* upon the ark of the testimony, of all *things* which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.

Numbers 1:50

(50) But thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that *belong* to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and they shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle.

Numbers 1:53

(53) But the Levites shall pitch round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel:

and the Levites shall keep the charge of the tabernacle of testimony.

B. As they come "out of the temple" they are seen

1. "Having the seven plagues"
2. They are "clothed in pure and white linen" – points to the absolute righteousness and holiness of their nature, and the holiness of the contents of the plagues
3. And they have "their breasts girded with golden girdles" – points to the authority they have been given to bring these plagues to the earth, and the glory of their service to the King

III. THEIR PURPOSE – VS. 7-8

A. Their purpose was to bring the "vials full of the wrath of God" to the earth

B. Vs. 7 mentions the "four beasts" – these are the four beasts that were around the throne, as found in 4:6-11

1. We cannot be absolutely certain what these beasts represent for it does not say but we can compare this with other passages in the Bible and see that they are more than likely a part of the angelic body – either the cherubim or the seraphim – or both
2. One of these is the one that gives the 7 angels the vials – it shows the authority

these beasts have

C. The vials are seen by John as "full of the wrath of God"

1. This word "wrath" literally means "anger" – it is the absolute righteous anger of God unleashed on earth, on the beast, the false prophet and all the hordes of hell
2. The extent of the divine judgment is indicated by the word "full" indicating the devastating character of this divine judgment – Walvoord
3. The last part of vs. 7 references the eternity of God and shows that He has the power and might to do what He wants with what He created

D. As they emerge, or after they emerge, the temple is "filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power" – this points back to the Shekinah glory that filled the tabernacle in the wilderness and the Holy of Holies in the Temple

Exodus 40:34

(34) Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

1 Kings 8:10

(10) And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy *place*, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD,

2 Chronicles 5:14

(14) So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

Isaiah 6:1-4

(1) In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.

(2) Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly.

(3) And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory.

(4) And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

E. No one could enter the temple until the plagues were fulfilled – it would seem that the vision John saw here was that the place of God’s dwelling in heaven was stirred with His justice and wrath and no one could stand in His presence in that form

Conclusion: What is about to follow is an awful thing but even in that horror there are some awe-inspiring things found about our heavenly Father. Even though during the Tribulation the aspect of the Fatherhood of God is not seen as much as His Almighty power is, there are still reminders for us to see the God we serve, and the God that loved us. Keep that in mind as you read what is to follow.