

The Preparation for God's Vials of Wrath

Revelation 15:1-8

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Introduction: The chronological order of events in Revelation is covered in the 7 seals (6:1-17; 8:1). The 7 trumpets come out of the 7th seal (8:1-9:21; 11:15-19). The 7 vials (bowls) are included in the 7th trumpet. It seems best to conclude that the seal & trumpet judgments cover the first 3 & 1/2 years of the Tribulation, while the 7 bowl judgments occur during the last 3 & 1/2 years. Therefore, chapters 15 & 16 bring us up to the second coming of Christ, seen in chapter 19. These 2 chapters describe the "*seven last plagues*", that is, the judgments preceding Christ's return in glory. Note with me the Sign, the Songs, & the Scene.

I. The **Sign** (:1-2)

A. Its significance >

1. This is the third "*sign*" in Revelation (12:1 - Woman; 12:3 - Satan).
2. This word is translated elsewhere as "*wonder*" & "*miracle*" - Henry Morris says, "Certain miracles were signs of the unique power of God, & their purpose was both to attest to that power & also to teach a spiritual lesson suggested by the sign."

B. Its scope - "*great & marvellous*" >

1. "*Last plagues*" - Seven is the number of completion; these are the final judgments.
2. "*Filled up the wrath of God*" - They bring to a conclusion, to the goal, the fulfillment of divine purpose: God's wrath is expressed by divine judgment.

C. Its subjects >

1. Seven angels - Represent all of God's angels? (Since all are concerned about God's purposes being fulfilled, see I Peter 1:12 & Ephesians 3:9-11).
2. Martyred saints - from the Tribulation.
 - a. "*Sea of glass*" - reflects the glory of God (see 4:6); "*mingled with fire*" - speaks of God's judgment upon His enemies.
 - b. "*Harpers of God*" - "The harpers' privileged position before the throne contributing to the heavenly harmony of the chorus of the redeemed is their reward for refusing to worship the beast, receive his mark, bow to his image, or be identified with his number." (Wal.)

II. The **Songs** (:3-4)

A. Their determination >

1. The Song of Moses: Exodus 15:1-2? Deuteronomy 32:1-43? Psalm 90:1-17?
Probably refers to the song of Exodus 15:1-2, describing the victorious children of Israel having passed through the Red Sea & delivered from the Egyptians.
2. The Song of the Lamb: Seiss says this is, "...the song of victory over sin & death, the song of justification & eternal life through the blood & triumph of Jesus, whose domain & right as the King of the nations are attested by these mighty judgments."

B. Their declaration >

1. The **exaltation** of God (:3) - "exalt" - magnify, lift up, praise.
 - a. His works - "*great & marvelous*." [Phrase used only 2 times in Scripture > 15:1 & 3.]
 - (1) Majestic - "*Lord God Almighty*" - He is omnipotent, Creator of all, & Sovereign.
 - (2) Marvelous - cf. Psalm 8:3-4 & Psalm 19:7-9.
 - b. His ways - as "*King of saints*" - Acknowledge His rule:
 - (1) "*Just*" - righteous; cf. Gen. 18:25, "...shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" - Our response: Psalm 119:128.
 - (2) "*True*" - holy, pure, tried, refined. - Our response: Psalm 119:140 & 151

2. The **expectation** from God (:4).
 - a. Fear God:
 - (1) O.T. verses: I Sam. 12:24; Pro. 1:7; 9:10; Ecc. 12:12-14.
 - (2) N.T. verses: Acts 9:31; Rev. 14:6-7.
 Defined: "An awareness of God's presence & power in our lives & purpose for our lives" (Aware that we are His temple, treasure, & tool - I Cor. 6:19-20).
 - b. Glorify God (magnify, honor, exalt):
 - (1) Submitted to Him as our Savior.
 - (2) Surrendered to Him as our Lord.
 - (3) Serving Him as our Master.
3. The **explanation** about God.
 - a. His holiness - cf. Rev. 4:8.
 - (1) Our recognition of His holiness - mentioned over 750 times in the Bible.
 - (2) Our response to His holiness - I Peter 1:14-16.
 - b. His honor.
 - (1) Our recognition of His honor - He is worthy > Rev. 5:9-10.
 - (2) Our response to His honor – He is to be worshiped > John 4:23-24.

III. The **Scene** (:5-8)

- A. The **open** Temple (:5) >
 1. The "*temple*" – "*naos*" - the inner holy place or sanctuary (Holy of Holies).
 2. The "*tabernacle*" – "dwelling place" - the tent-like structure covering the sanctuaries.
 3. The "*testimony*" - the Ten Commandments within the ark, Ex. 25:22 & Num. 10:11.
- B. The **obedient** angels (:6-7) >
 1. Proceeding from the presence of God.
 2. Preparing to pour out the wrath of God.
 - a. "*Clothed in pure & white linen*" - cf. 19:8, righteousness in action.
 - b. "*Girded with golden girdles*" - gold represents the glory of God.
 3. Presented with bowls (censers, cf. 8:3). [Shallow pans?]
 - a. They had the plagues (:6), now given authorization to use them by the beasts (4:6-8 & 5:8)
 - b. "The extent of the divine judgment is indicated by the word "full" indicating the devastating character of this divine judgment" (Walvoord).
- C. The **ominous** smoke (:8) >
 1. Used of smoke from a fire (18:9); smoke from sweet incense (8:4) & cloud of God's glory.
 2. Used of God's presence in Ex. 40:34-35, filling the tabernacle & in I Kgs. 8:10-11, filling Solomon's temple; speaks of "...the ultimate presence of God at times of great crises in God's dealings with man" (H. Morris).
 3. "No man can ever approach God in His ineffable (awesome) omnipotent holiness, but the glory smoke assures man of the divine presence & the certainty of the divine accomplishment" (H. Morris).

Conclusion: Walvoord suggests that the cloud of smoke "...is an ominous sign of impending doom for those who persist in their blasphemous disregard of the sovereignty & holiness of God." The earth is about to be purged as God pours out His last plagues upon the earth. Will you be exposed to this outpouring of God's wrath, or will you escape from it? The only way of escape is to be saved by the blood of Christ. As Paul said in I Thessalonians 5:9, "*For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Do you know Him as your Savior? Are you telling others about the Savior, warning them of the coming day of God's wrath & judgment?