

Message #38**Revelation 15:1-8**

One book of the Bible that has been neglected and butchered is this book of Revelation. There are a group of ministers who teach people that the purpose of the Great Tribulation is to purify the church.

If you systematically crawl through the entire book and if you take the words literally, there is absolutely no way you can legitimately conclude that.

When you look down through these verses, one thing that catches your attention is what is being sung is actually called “the song of Moses” (v. 3). **Moses is not a man connected to the Church; Moses is the great leader of Israel.**

What most people don’t realize is that God has a future eschatological program for the Church, and God has a future eschatological program for Israel, and God has a future eschatological program for the nations. Each of these programs is distinct and each of these programs has specific revealed texts that address this fact.

For example, the Apostle Paul said to Titus concerning the church, “Looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.” What we the Church are looking for is for Jesus Christ to appear in the sky and take us up to be with Him.

We are not looking to receive the wrath of God in the Great Tribulation and it is very clear that the Tribulation is about unleashing God’s wrath in rapid fire straight out of heaven.

Revelation 15 is the shortest chapter in Revelation, but it is a powerful chapter, which gives us a great introduction and great information to the finale of God.

This chapter features three visions, which are all introduced to us by John saying, “and I saw” **15:1; 15:2-4; 15:5-8.**

The fact that John saw these things means we take them literally. He is not writing mystical dream stories. He actually saw this:

VISION #1 – John saw a vision of God’s finished wrath. 15:1

John begins by saying, “then I saw another sign in the heaven.” The conjunction “then” means there is a sequence to this. One thing happens and then another thing happens. One cannot see this and not realize that this book of Revelation is chronological and sequential.

The angels have been using their sickles to destroy people on earth and after John saw that, he saw this. He saw “another” sign.

The pronoun “another” means this is another one of those same kinds of signs that John has been seeing ever since Revelation 4. John is seeing this sign in “the heaven” which is at the Throne of God.

Contextually this is another of the judgment and wrath signs that John has been witnessing.

Now a sign in Scripture is something that is designed to reveal plain truth about something:
A sign in the Bible may be something verbal and it also could be something visible.

There were various instances in the life of Jesus Christ when a verbal sign was used to illustrate His death and the kind of death He would experience (John 12:33; 18:32). In fact, Jesus used a verbal sign to Peter in informing him how he would die (John 21:18-19).

What we have here is John seeing a visual sign. The sign is classified as being “great” and “marvelous.” That word “great” refers to greatness in size, degree, rank (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 281). This is a mega sign John is seeing.

It is also a “marvelous” sign. What this word means is it is a sign that when you see it you marvel at it. You stand amazed by it and it is wondrous (*Ibid.*, p. 203).

Now this is how John views the sign in heaven, but **what this sign turns out to actually be is a glimpse of the seven last plagues that God will pour out on this earth that will finish the wrath of God.** In heaven this is a great and marvelous moment; but on earth this will be the worst of the worst of judgments.

The earth is about to experience the seven last “plagues.” That word refers to death wounds, death calamities, and death blows (*Ibid.*, p. 364). What John is seeing in heaven are the seven angels who are about to pour out the final series of death blows on the earth that will bring to a conclusion and culmination the finale of the wrath of God.

In heaven this is a great moment of praise and rejoicing, but on earth this will be the most terrifying death edict and disaster to ever hit.

We think in view of the next vision that Israel is certainly in view. If our chronology is accurate, during the first 3 ½ years of the Great Tribulation, God’s wrath is going to be poured out primarily on the Gentile world. Israel will not be hit with the things hitting the rest of the world. She will be rebuilding the Temple and re-establishing worship. So the disasters that have hit the rest of the world have not primarily hit Israel during the first 3 ½ years.

Everything changes at the 3 ½ year point of the Tribulation. Things turn directly to Israel and these final things of the Tribulation do include and focus on Israel.

VISION #2 – John saw a vision of victorious worship. **15:2-4**

It is so interesting to note that the wrath of God judgment that causes men to blaspheme and curse God (Rev. 16:9) is the same thing that causes those right with God to worship God.

Every now and then you will hear someone say when we get to heaven, we won't know about God's wrath because it would be too sad. Take a look at this. We will know about it and we will praise God and worship God for it.

As John looked at this vision, he saw some very impressive things. He recorded five facts:

Fact #1 - He saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire. **15:2a**

When John first got to heaven, and saw the Throne of God, he saw something “like a sea of glass, like crystal” (Rev. 4:6). The critical difference is that the “Sea of glass” is not mixed with fire like the Sea of glass in Revelation 15:2.

So a logical question would be “why?” Why is there a difference? The answer lies in dispensationalism. The first glimpse John got of heaven occurred at the end of the Church Age, not near the end of the Great Tribulation. The judgment that occurs for the Church is not a judgment of wrath. The Bema Seat judgment is not a wrath judgment, but a rewards and loss of rewards judgment. Revelation 15:2 is a wrath judgment and that is why the sea of glass is mixed with fire.

By virtue of the fact the sea is mingled with fire indicates that those standing there have been severely judged as by fire and are now able to stand in purity before God's Throne. These were obviously people who believed in Jesus Christ during the Tribulation.

Fact #2 - He saw people who had been victorious over the Antichrist. **15:2b**

What we specifically learn here is that these people were victorious in heaven because they refused to join the Antichrist on earth. These believers refused to take his mark and were obviously executed for it. They were worshipping the true God, while the rest of the world was worshipping the Antichrist.

They refused to give their allegiance to the Antichrist during the Tribulation and, as a result, are now standing before God's Throne, totally and completely pure and are holding harps of God.

Fact #3 - He saw the people standing on the Sea of glass. **15:2c**

This may literally mean they are standing on water. Jesus walked on water and this could actually mean now that they are in heaven they have the ability to literally stand on a sea of glass, which means standing on a crystal clear sea.

Fact #4 - He saw the victorious people holding harps. **15:2d**

The fact that they are holding harps of God indicates they are now prepared to worship God at the most sacred of places, the Throne of God. Now I doubt that during the time of the Antichrist, and the days of the Great Tribulation, these believers are taking harp lessons. What this shows us is that in eternity, God gives His people the skills to do what He wants them to do.

Fact #5 - He saw the victorious people singing a song. **15:3-4**

There are at least 12 critical themes that develop in this song:

Theme #1 - They are singing a song of Moses, the bondservant of God. **15:3a**

This certainly is a song that honors the one who led Israel.

Theme #2 - They are singing a song of the Lamb. **15:3b**

This certainly is a song that honors the God Savior lamb sacrifice and specifically it has Israel in view.

Theme #3 - They are singing that God's works are great and marvelous. **15:3c**

Theme #4 - They are singing that God is the Lord God. **15:3d**

Theme #5 - They are singing that God is the Almighty. **15:3e**

God is the Almighty God with Omnipotent power.

Theme #6 - They are singing that God's ways are righteous and true. **15:3f**

Everything God does is always right and it is always true.

Theme #7 - They are singing that God is the King of the nations. **15:3g**

God is the Sovereign King and supreme ruler over all the nations of the world.

Theme #8 - They are singing that God will be feared by all. **15:4a**

This is a trembling kind of fear that is in total awe and reverence of God.

Theme #9 - They are singing that God's name is to be glorified by all. **15:4b**

God will be exalted at the level He deserves.

Theme #10 - They are singing that God alone is holy. **15:4c**

This is a majestic holiness that only God has. Even those in heaven realize that.

Theme #11 - They are singing that all nations will worship God. **15:4d**

Theme #12 - They are singing that God's righteous acts have been revealed. **15:4e**

How were God's righteous acts revealed? By Him pouring out His wrath.

VISION #3 – John saw a vision of Temple and tabernacle Glory. **15:5-8**

When we see the words “the temple of the tabernacle” we immediately must think of National Israel.

So all of the things connected to Israel are on the verge of being fulfilled.

Sight #1 - John saw the Temple of the tabernacle of testimony opened. **15:5**

Sight #2 - John saw seven angels who had the seven last plagues. **15:6a**

Sight #3 - John saw the seven angels come out of the Temple. **15:6b**

Sight #4 - John saw the seven angels clothed in clean and bright linen. **15:6c**

This certainly has a connection to the priestly side of their ministry.

Sight #5 - John saw the seven angels with golden sashes around their chests. **15:6d**

Sight #6 - John saw one of the four living beings give the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. **15:7**

This is the God who lives forever and ever. The golden bowls indicate this is God's pure, sacred wrath being poured out.

Sight #7 - John saw the Temple filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power. **15:8a**

John actually sees the Glory of God Himself at this Temple. This is the same kind of way that God did display Himself in the days of Moses. This has a direct connection to Moses and the Temple.

When that cloud was in the tabernacle, no one, not even Moses, was permitted to enter (Ex. 40:34-35).

When Solomon's Temple was dedicated, smoke filled it and no one could enter (I Kings 8:10-11).

When Isaiah saw this smoke in the Temple of God, he thought he was doomed because he had just seen a manifestation of God (Is. 6:4-5).

Sight #8 - John saw no one could enter the Temple until the seven plagues were finished. **15:8b**

In any relationship with God, one cannot enter until the wrath issue has been resolved. What is literally, physically happening here is the final wrath of God is about to be poured out on the world that will open up access to God, the likes of which has never been seen or experienced.