

**Revelation 15: 5-8; “The Temple of the Tabernacle”, Sermon # 112 in the series –  
“The True and Faithful Witness”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall  
on February 2nd, 2014, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

This afternoon I want to speak to you about “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven”. This is not an easy phrase to interpret, in the context of this chapter, but our Lord would have us to learn what all of the spiritual pictures of this book of the Revelation mean, by comparing Scripture with Scripture. “Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near,” it says at the beginning of the book. It is very important to the correct understanding of this passage that we understand: 1<sup>st</sup> of all – That the Church of Jesus Christ is a temple which bears a testimony of purity against the Antichristian systems of deception. (verses 5 and 6a) 2<sup>nd</sup> – That it will be one of the Living Creatures who will hand the bowls of wrath to the angels to pour out upon the Antichristian systems of deception. (verses 6b and 7) And 3<sup>rd</sup> – That no one can enter this temple until the bowls of wrath are poured out. (verse 8)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – The Church of Jesus Christ is a temple which bears a testimony of purity against the Antichristian systems of deception.**

This vision that the Apostle John beholds, is preparatory to the pouring out of the vials of God’s wrath on the Antichristian systems of religion of Roman Catholicism and all of her daughters, and also the religion of Mohammedanism in the eastern section of what used to be the Roman Empire. Both of these false systems were raised up by the Devil, over 1200 years ago, as his greatest strategies against the advance of Christ’s kingdom and His gospel coming to all the nations of the earth. The Great Commission in Matthew 28: 18 says: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

It is my conviction that we are still living in the times when Satan is deceiving the nations. The Church of Jesus Christ is still in her Babylonian captivity of the 1260 years prophecy of Revelation. Satan has pulled the wool over the eyes of the unbelieving by the propagation of false doctrine. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians Chapter 4, verse 3 says this: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them.” It is true that Christ is presently reigning. It is true that He has bound the strong man Satan in regard to the conversion of all of the elect. But it is not true yet, that Satan is bound in the sense in which Revelation 20, verse 2 states: “Christ laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were finished.” The Apostle John is not speaking about the deception of individuals here; he is speaking about the deception of whole nations and people groups.

About 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world’s people are deceived by Islam; the followers of the false prophet Mohammed who hold to the Koran. They believe that you can save yourself from your own sins. They believe that Mohammed is the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, who was sent by God to lead all men into the truth. But we know that this was only lies imposed upon the Holy Scripture, the Bible, which is the word of God; lies which deny the Person and work of Jesus Christ being the only way of salvation. And what is just as bad, or worse, within what is called Christendom, that is Christ’s visible kingdom around the world, a great proportion of those who call themselves Christians are deceived by the false worship and false doctrines which have been propagated by the Popes over the last 1200 years.

I am speaking of the doctrines that baptism and taking the Mass are the beginning and the continuation of salvation; that the Mass is partaking of the literal body and blood of Christ; that Mary is to be worshiped and that you must add your own good works to Christ's finished work in order to be saved in the final analysis. These are grievous errors and heresies. These are the major road blocks to the forward progress of Christ's kingdom coming to rule spiritually among the nations. God saves people through the means of the gospel preached. But if the gospel is false, how can the temple be built? In order for these God-dishonoring Antichristian religions to be destroyed and dismantled, and Christ's kingdom set up in their place, it is going to take the united efforts of many of Christ's ministers and people, working together; being brought by our Lord Jesus Christ to the place where we see that we are a spiritual temple and a spiritual army.

Christ is building His church, and the gates (the schemes of the Devil) shall not prevail against it ultimately. But this is a process, as we have seen over the past two thousand years of Church history. The worship of God in spirit and truth, according to the Bible, is the testimony of God's temple. And this testimony, God intends to be a pure testimony. 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 6: 14 – “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” “For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness?” “And what communion has light with darkness?” “And what accord has Christ with Belial?” Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” “And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?” “For you are the temple of the living God.” Pure doctrine is the basis of the spiritual building which Christ is building to the glory of God. Holiness befits His house forevermore. Purity of heart and doctrine, expressed in a pure worship in all of His true churches is what He is looking for. This is what He desires above all. What we have in these verses that we are studying this afternoon is a picture of the Church of Jesus Christ as a temple of worshipers.

The language of the Old Testament temple of the tabernacle and the testimony are borrowed and converted into New Testament spiritual language describing the Church as it is being built by Christ. Verse 5 says: “After these things I looked and behold the temple of the tabernacle in heaven was opened.” Now if you look up the word “temple” in Strong's concordance you will find that the first reference to it is in 1<sup>st</sup> Samuel 1: 9. “Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of “the temple” it says in the King James version. In the New King James it says: “Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat by the doorpost of the tabernacle of the Lord.” And in the margin it says that the word tabernacle can also be translated “temple”. But what is being spoken of here is not a permanent fixed temple such as Solomon built later in Israel's history, but it is speaking of the portable tabernacle or tent of meeting for worship that God gave Moses intricate instructions about; how it was to be made, and how it was to be erected, and how it was to be carried about by Israel, during their time of their wilderness wanderings.

Turn over to Exodus 25, verse 8. “And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them.” “According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it.” There was a pattern for this sanctuary and the furniture in it. Verse 10 – “And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. Now look at verse 16. “And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.” “And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.” By testimony is meant the law written on two tables of stone; so called, because it was a declaration of the mind and will of God, what He would have done in worship. If they walked in obedience to it, it would be a testimony for blessing them. If they walked in disobedience to it, it would be a testimony against them.

John Gill says: “This was put into the ark, and preserved there, which may signify that the law was in the heart of Christ, and which He undertook to fulfil, and with pleasure did it; that He has become the fulfilling end of the law for righteousness to them that believe in Him; and that it remains with Him as a rule of the walk and behavior of His people, so far as it is of a moral, holy,

and spiritual nature.” The ark of the testimony was placed in the midst of this tabernacle in the holy of holies, surrounded by a veil. Look over at verse 33 of Chapter 26. “And you shall hang the veil from the clasps.” “Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there behind the veil.” “The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy.” “You shall put the mercy seat upon the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy.”

So let us now apply this to our study of verses 5 and 6a of Chapter 15 of Revelation. When John says that after these things he looked, and saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven being opened, he is speaking of the New Testament Church in her time of having been driven into the wilderness (as related in Revelation 12: 13 and 14) because of the prevalence of false doctrine and false worship. It says there: “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child.” “But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times, and a half a time, from the presence of the serpent.”

In those verses the Church is pictured as a woman trying to give birth to Christ (in the preaching of the gospel) to the nations. But here in these verses 1-4 of Chapter 15, John now sees a vision of these seven angels having the seven last plagues of the wrath of God which would be poured out on the Antichristian system, which would destroy it. The tabernacle, or the movable tent in the wilderness was and still is, a testimony to the finished work of Christ, the high priest of our confession who has entered the Most Holy Place of heaven with the merits of His own perfect righteousness and sacrifice to pay for the salvation of sinners. This was the testimony of the true church all during the times before the Reformation during the earlier part of 1260 years. But when the Reformation came, in a special and significant way, the temple of the tabernacle was opened and out of this temple of the true Church came ministers and magistrates and reformers who are represented here as “angels”.

I am distinguishing the actual angels of God which are mentioned some places in this book, (Chapter 5, verse 11, for instance) from the Christian “angels” of pastors and magistrates, because this is what is generally being spoken of in this book beginning with the letters to the seven churches. The text here warrants it. These preachers and reformers came out of the temple to declare God’s truth, so that false doctrine and false worship would be destroyed. These Reformers and preachers of the word, and those Christian magistrates who would help them, would set up the New Testament worship of the church, in the time of the Reformation, according to the pattern of the New Testament Scriptures, and not on the basis of the traditions and opinions of men who had introduced false doctrine and false worship into the churches. Let us now examine what exactly will happen during and following the Reformation, in an overview.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – That it will be one the Living Creatures who will hand the bowls of wrath to the angels to pour out upon the Antichristian systems of deception.**

(verses 6b and 7)

Verse 6 says, “And out of the temple came the seven angels having seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.” “And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.” Now if you have been listening closely to my messages on this book over the years, you will remember that back in Revelation 4, we were introduced to the four living creatures. So turn back to Revelation 4: 6 and I will explain these mysterious creatures and the one living creature who I think is being referred to in the verses that we are studying today. “Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.” “And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back.” “The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.”

Now I haven’t time to preach to you, over again, the five sermons that I preached on the living creatures from these verses. You can go back and read them to get a more full picture. But suffice

it to say that these living creatures are not beasts, they are not angels, they are a hieroglyphic representation, a composite picture of the gospel minister and his ministry. These 4 living creatures, each one of them representing an aspect of what a faithful minister of the gospel will look like. The lion – the boldness which is required of the pastor or preacher to make the truth known. A lion is a creature who Solomon used to describe the righteous in Proverbs 28: 1. It says there, “The wicked flee when no one is pursuing, but the righteous is as bold as a lion.” This is because the righteous has a clear conscience; he has nothing to be ashamed or afraid of, and he can be bold and decisive in going about his business. The Lord Jesus Christ is described as being “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” in Revelation 5: 5.

Next is the calf or ox. He shows forth the aspect of the gospel ministry of being a hard working servant. A calf is bred for service. An ox is put into a laboring service. The gospel ministry is a ministry of laboring service. It is the work of being in the yoke, as an oxen, pulling the plow that breaks up the ground of men's hearts and plants the seed of the gospel. The 3<sup>rd</sup> living creature has a face like that of a man. The ministry is not simply holding fast to sound doctrine and laboring hard in the word. It is also the ministry of a man to men. It is a very good thing in the ministry if a man is a lover of men, a student of human nature and one who is able to sympathize with the difficulties, trials, struggles, and needs of the people in his congregation.

And the 4<sup>th</sup> living creature is the eagle. Eagles are very sharp sighted, high flying birds, perhaps the most noble and majestic of birds. They have excellent eye-sight, they fly very fast, they build their nests very high, and they can carry their young on their own wings. The minister of the church should be a man of great spiritual discernment; one who can quickly fly to the aid of those in his congregation who need him, one who can help the people to see the importance of being separate from the world, and one who will carry them with him in preaching of the high and lofty truths of God and His grace. But the living creature of these 4, which is the one who gave to the seven angels the seven bowls of wrath, is the first one of these; the lion. We will see in the pouring out of the vials, or the bowls of wrath, that the characteristic of a minister that was most needed from the time of the Reformation on was boldness; the ability to declare the truth of God's coming judgments upon all false and heretical doctrine, by the Spirit of God.

We will see this more clearly as we go through chapter 16. It was given to the Reformers and all the godly preachers and pastors who followed them, to understand that boldness was required to confront the false with the truth of God and his word. The seven angels are clothed in pure bright linen, and have their chests girded with golden bands. This is a picture of their being clothed in Christ's righteousness because of their faith in Him alone for their salvation. It speaks of their being able to speak of the Lord's judgments upon these false systems of religion with purity of motives, the glory and honor of God, and the great desire to see people who have been deceived come out of false Babylon lest they perish.

**And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – That no one can enter this temple until the bowls of wrath are poured out.** (verse 8)

If you will recall, the temple of the tabernacle was only intended by God to last for a time. From the time of Moses until the time of David and Solomon. David would prepare the materials for the building of the temple, but God would not let him build it, because he was a man of war. God would have Solomon build the more permanent temple. All the time before this, God's temple was the tabernacle. When it says in our verses that no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed, it shows us that until the systematic Antichristian false doctrine is exposed and defeated, the Millennium cannot come. No one will be able to enter the Millennial temple; the fixed and established state of the Church where the Spirit will be poured out, and the Latter Day glory of Christ's Church will be revealed, until the smoke of God's judgments clears. The indignation of God's wrath is still being poured out upon these false systems.

But let us understand, that the smoke of His judgment will eventually clear. Someday this pouring out of God's wrath will come to an end, and the smoke from the glory of God and the power of His wrath will be burned away by the shining light of God exerting His power in the conversion of nations; the first of which will be the Jews. Let us pray for that day of Christ's power to come to His church; and especially to His angels; those bold enough to speak the truth of His word, confronting error and heresy. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God." "God is ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled." (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 10: 4-6)