

# “FINISHING GOD’S WRATH”

Revelation 15:1-8

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## INTRODUCTION

The world has been in rebellion for centuries and millennia; in the final seven years of Earth’s history prior to the Second Advent of Christ, and especially during the last three and half years, God takes action to defeat the reign of wickedness and corruption personified in the one world dictator commonly known as Antichrist and in his religious compadre known as the False Prophet. Through the first 14 chapters of Revelation we have witnessed the opening of the 7 seals and the blast of the 7 trumpet judgments; now we are about to witness the outpouring of the last 7 great judgments or “plagues” as they are called in verse 1 – the seven bowl judgments. In them we are told “the wrath of God is finished.” Humanism personified will finally be defeated and the wicked will be cast out of the earth in preparation for the absolute reign of Jesus Christ over his creation for 1000 glorious years and then for all eternity in the New Heavens and New Earth.

God’s throne is founded upon his holiness and justice and now his holiness and justice manifests itself and God’s people rejoice in his greatness and in his righteousness. They call upon all men to fear the Lord and to glorify his name.

**OH LET US FEAR GOD AND GLORIFY HIS NAME FOR EVER!**

### I. ANOTHER SIGN IN HEAVEN (1)

John introduces this passage by speaking about “another sign in heaven, great and marvelous.”

- A “sign” speaks of a visible manifestation with the intent of pointing to a significant truth. In this case it is not used with the connotation of a *miracle* as often in the New Testament.
- The sign is “great” because it represents a mighty activity of God.
- The sign is “marvelous” because it produces awe and amazement in God’s servants both heavenly and earthly.
- The sign consisted of 7 angels who had personally been given the authority by God to cast seven plagues upon the earth.
- These plagues are called “the last” because following them Christ returns and defeats his enemies at the battle of Armageddon.
- Through these plagues “the wrath of God is finished” – his judgments against sin and rebellion on earth have reached their conclusion prior to the coming of Christ.

### II. THE SONG OF THE HARPISTS (2-4)

These heavenly musicians and singers are identified as “those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name.”

- From the beast – because they had not yielded to his pressure for conformity.
- From his image – because they had not worshiped it and had remained loyal to God
- From the number of his name – because they had not received the mark of the beast in order to be able to buy and sell; they refused to compromise their faith.

#### A. Their Standing Place – “a sea of glass with fire”

- As noted in chapter 4:6, the sea of glass clear as crystal represents the pure and undefiled foundation of his throne; God bases all his activities and judgments upon his holiness, because they conform to his character.

- In this scene, fire is mingled with this sea of glass indicating God’s intention to perform his purifying judgment in order to defeat wickedness once and for all.
  - The martyred saints who have come out victorious from the tribulation period, **stand** upon the solid foundation because their cause is about to be vindicated.
  - They have attained personal victory by becoming “over comers”; now the Lord gives them ultimate victory by defeating their wicked enemies.
- B. The Title of their song (3a)
1. The Song of Moses (See Ex. 15:1-18) – this is the song of the Old Testament Saints commemorating their redemption from the land of Egypt (Passover), the crossing of the Red Sea, and the defeat of the Egyptian armies – representing all the foes of God’s people.
  2. The Song of the Lamb – this is the song of the ultimate redemption wrought through the work of the cross and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
  3. Therefore, these tribulation Saints commemorate God’s entire redemptive program both Old Testament and New Testament in anticipation of his final victory over sin.
- C. The Message of Their Song (3b-4) – *The Adoration of God*
1. God’s Character [notice that he is called “Lord God” – the equivalent of Yahweh Elohim in the Old Testament]
    - a. The Faithful One to His covenant and His people
    - b. Almighty--omnipotent
    - c. Righteous (characteristic of his ways)
    - d. True (characteristic of his ways)
    - e. Holy
    - f. Just
    - g. Eternal – “who lives forever” (7)
  2. God’s works
    - a. “Great and marvelous” (3)—causing awe and wonder and amazement in God’s people
    - b. “Glorious and powerful” (8)
    - c. “King of the nations” (some manuscripts have “King of the ages”)
  3. God’s Fear and Worship (4) – “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?”
    - a. Because of His Holiness – transcendence; God **alone** is holy.
    - b. Because of the fact of the matter – “All the nations will come and worship before thee.” (**Isaiah 2:2-3**)
    - c. Because of his imminent judgments – here called “righteous deeds.” These deeds “have been revealed”; they have been poured out on the earth and are about to be finished.
- III. THE PREPARATION FOR EARTH’S FINAL PLAGUES (5-8)
- A. The Opening of the Temple (5)
- The Greek word implies the Sanctuary itself.
  - The expression “the tabernacle of testimony” recalls the Old Testament sacred tent wherein the “testimony” – the 10 Commandments representing the entire Law – was placed inside the Ark of the Covenant. Otherwise, God judges upon the basis of his righteous character and just laws.
- B. The coming forth of the seven Angels (6)—see v. 1; the last plagues.
- They come out of the temple – indicating a divine commission and the holiness of their task.
  - They are clothed in “linen, clean and bright” – reminiscent of the sacred garment of the Jewish high priest who ministered in the holy place.

- They had a golden belt worn around their breasts – also reminiscent of the belt worn by the high priest.
  - In this case they do not minister salvation on behalf of the godly, but rather judgment against those who have persecuted the godly and oppose God’s plan and program.
- C. The Giving of the Seven Bowls (7) – given by one of the “four living creatures” described in Revelation 4:6-8.
- I had suggested in that place that these might be the equivalent of the Seraphim.
  - Isaiah 6 seems to indicate that they were special protectors of the holiness of God.
  - Notice in that place how one brings forth a burning coal from the altar of the divine presence that was used to purify the unclean lips of Isaiah.
  - How appropriate that they take a special interest in the fulfillment of God’s divine wrath that would bring purification to this sinful world.
  - Notice that these bowls are “golden” – representing the richness and purity of God’s wrath, but especially symbolizing the golden censers used to offer up the incense on the golden altar; this incense represented *the prayers of the saints*.
  - Therefore, we clearly see that these judgments are retribution for sins against the people of God and are the divine response to their pleas found in Revelation 6:10-11.
- D. Filling of the Temple with Smoke (8)
- This “smoke” is the divine Shekinah Glory manifested in the Old Testament and specifically mentioned in Isaiah 6:4 as filling the heavenly temple.
  - John tells us that this “smoke” is “from the glory of God and from His power.”
  - God’s glory was so great that no one was able to enter his holy temple until his judgments at the hands of the seven Angels was complete.

## CONCLUSION

See Exodus 40:34-35; I Kings 8:10-11.

Yes, God’s judgments are awesome and his character is magnificent and he elicits our reverence and godly fear.

But the magnificent holiness of God, and the wonderful manifestation of his holiness and justice does not bring a cowering fear to his Saints, but rather a godly fear of reverential awe.

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