

The Songs of Moses and The Lamb & The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

Revelation 15

Revelation 15 - *"Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.*

² *And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.* ³ *They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested."*

⁵ *After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.* ⁶ *And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.* ⁷ *Then 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.* ⁸ *The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed."*

Background Notes

We've seen in our studies of Revelation, thus far, that during the coming Tribulation period there will be three sets of God's future judgments on this earth. Each set will be composed of seven judgments: seven Seal Judgments in Revelation 6-8, seven Trumpet Judgments in Revelation 8-11, and seven Bowl Judgments in Revelation 16. Revelation 15 is a prelude to the pouring out of the Bowl Judgments, described as "seven plagues" (v1). Also, in verse 1 we see that these bowls of judgment will bring us to the end of the Tribulation Period, because they are said to be the "last plagues" and that they complete the wrath of God. *"Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete."*

How do we harmonize the schedule of the Bowl Judgments with the timing of the Trumpet Judgments? Remember, in Revelation 11 we saw that the seventh Trumpet Judgment also brought us to the end of the Tribulation Period, because the kingdom of Christ was set up on this earth right after the seventh Trumpet Judgment. Revelation 11:15 - *"Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

How do we harmonize the timing of the Bowl Judgments with the timing of the seventh Trumpet Judgment, both of which bring us to the end of the Tribulation Period? Commentators have harmonized this apparent discrepancy in two different ways:

1. In the first view, commentators overlap the Trumpet Judgments and the Bowl Judgments, so that both the Trumpet Judgments and the Bowl Judgments begin at the start of the Great Tribulation, and both end at the end of the Tribulation period. Supporting this view is the fact that the sealed scroll of judgment of Revelation 5 is written on both sides of the parchment. Thus, in this view, the Seal Judgments occur in the first half of the Tribulation period, as the scroll is opened seal by seal. The Trumpet Judgments are written on the front of the scroll, and the Bowl Judgments are written on the back of the scroll, and they run simultaneously during the Great Tribulation (the second half of the Tribulation Period).
2. In the second view, commentators feel that the Bowl Judgments follow the Trumpet Judgments, but they follow quickly and in rapid succession giving great intensity to the end of the Great Tribulation. In that sense they're all considered as happening at about the same time as the sounding of the seventh trumpet of judgment.

Here again, we choose not to be dogmatic because these events are still in the future. We will know then for sure!

Doctrinal Points

1. The Songs of Moses and the Lamb will be sung in the future.

Verses 2-3 tell us that, in his vision, the apostle John saw a group of people standing on a sea of glass, singing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb. Who are these folks, and where does this singing take place? And what are the Songs of Moses and the Lamb?

We believe that the sea of glass is the same sea of glass that is mentioned back in Revelation 4:6 - "*Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal.*" So, we believe that the scene here in Revelation 15 is a heavenly scene that will take place before the throne of God. Verse 2 indicates that the believers standing on the sea of glass are those who were victorious over the Beast, who didn't receive his mark or his number of 666. So, it seems that this heavenly company is specifically composed of the martyrs who have come out of the Great Tribulation. The fiery look to the sea of glass probably emphasizes that these martyrs have been through the fiery persecutions of the Great Tribulation.

Back in Revelation 6, under the fifth Seal, we also saw the martyrs of the Tribulation Period. Those martyrs were specifically the martyrs of the first half of the Tribulation Period. (The Seal Judgments will take place during the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation period, also called "the beginning of sorrows.") Do you remember what those martyrs were told when they cried out, "*How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*" The next verse, Revelation 6:11, tells us: "*...it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.*"

In the scene before us in Revelation 15, that time has come. The martyrs of the Great Tribulation (the last 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation Period) will complete the company of Tribulation martyrs. We believe that this is the same company in

heaven that will sing the new song before the throne in Revelation 14:2-3: *“And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth.”*

In Revelation 15 this company of martyrs is seen singing the “Song of Moses” and the “Song of the Lamb.” The Song of Moses probably refers to the Song of Moses in Exodus 15, which praises God for His victory over the pagan gods of Egypt and His redemption and deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt.

The Song of the Lamb (v3-4) praises God for His great and marvelous works, and His just and true ways: *“Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.”*

When the Lord reigns on this earth, all peoples and nations will acknowledge the absolute holiness and righteousness of God. What a victory song! The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb will be sung in the future.

2. The bowls of judgment will be poured out in the future.

In the last verse of Revelation 11 we saw the temple of God in heaven. It was open, and the Apostle John saw lightning, noises, thunder, earthquake and great hail. In Revelation 15:5 that same temple is once again seen. Again it is open, and the seven angels who have the seven plagues or seven bowls of judgment come out of that temple. Everything about this scene indicates that these judgments that are about to fall on this earth are righteous, just, and in no way unfair.

Holy angels will administer this judgment; they will proceed from the temple, which is filled with smoke of the glory of God and His power. The appearance of these angels emphasizes their righteous mission: *“And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands”* (v6). The judgments are contained in the golden bowls used in the temple to glorify God.

The fact that no one will be able to enter the temple until the seven angels have completed their work emphasizes that this is not the time for intercession in heaven, but rather for the righteous vengeance of God upon this earth.

Remember, these Bowl Judgments are not the present problems on this earth. No, they're will take place in the future, at the end of the Tribulation Period. The bowls of judgment will be poured out in the future.

Practical Application

Can we sing Revelation 15:3 now?

We've seen that in the future the martyred saints of the Tribulation period will sing Revelation 15:3 - *"Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested."*

They will sing this song, even though their lot in life was to undergo great hardship, persecution and martyrdom. They will not be angry that they didn't experience "the good life" while they lived here on this earth. They will not be bitter that they will be mocked, persecuted, and martyred.

What a rebuke to us! In our various trials and tribulations, which are nothing in comparison, how often we tend to question God's ways. How often we complain! In view of what the martyrs of the Tribulation will sing in the future, can we sing? Can we sing Revelation 15:3 now?