

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Glorious Scenes from Heaven

Revelation 15:1-8

INTRODUCTION:

Each week as I study this book of Revelation, I am struck by how powerfully it puts our lives into perspective. It gives us a deeper insight into what is going on behind the scenes in this world more than all of the other 65 books combined. It does it in a very unique way by showing us the spiritual conflicts that are currently being fought and even some of the details behind the conflicts that are affecting the world and the church. You see an intertwining between spiritual forces and human events here on earth. It helps us to understand how evil can exist in this world and yet know that **God** is in control. Yet, while it is showing us the calamities, persecution, and judgments that exist among us, it continually lifts us up by not allowing us to lose sight of this beautiful destiny of heaven that God is preparing for those who overcome.

That is why I think Revelation promises us a blessing that no other book does. Because it tells us of all of these dreadful events that are happening here on earth due to sin while at the same time never letting us lose sight of the reality of heaven.

This is something that we encounter, once again, in the passage that is before us as we are now introduced to the last of the three seven judgments of the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Since each series ends with the second coming of Christ and final judgment, it is pretty clear that these three sets of judgments are all occurring simultaneously at the same time.

The scene in chapter 15 is in heaven. We are introduced to the seven **bowl** judgments and then shown a beautiful picture of the victory that God's people are already enjoying even while these judgments are still being poured out on earth.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Revelation 15:1-8 (NASB)

15 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

² And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. ³ And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!⁴ “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your

righteous acts have been revealed.”

⁵ After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, ⁶ and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean *and* bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. 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 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Prayer

These visions were recorded for us in order that we could understand what is going on behind the scenes and at the same time encourage us to remain steadfast in our walk with the Lord. They tell us that Christ will have the ultimate victory and that there is an enormous contrast between the future destiny of those who have the seal of God and the future destiny of those who have the mark of the beast.

Last week in chapter 14 we saw for a third time, a vision of the second coming. This time there was a different perspective on it. We saw Jesus on a white cloud with a sickle in His hand. He would use the sickle to harvest the righteous from the earth. It is the same event as described in I Thessalonians 4 where the dead in Christ will rise first. Then those who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the air.

A second angel appeared with a sickle and gathered the unrighteous from the earth so they would stand before God for the judgment that was upon them. That is where we left off.

BODY:

I. PREPARATION FOR THE SEVEN TRUMPET PLAGUES.

Now after leaving that scene of the second coming, we are immediately introduced to a new series of **bowl** judgments.

Revelation 15:1 (NASB)

15 Then I saw **another sign** in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are the last*, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Immediately after John sees this sign, he turns around and is distracted by another scene in heaven where he sees this sea of glass mingled with fire. Beside the sea he sees the people of God who have been victorious over the beast singing this song of Moses. This is just as the Israelites who sang a victory song immediately after they were delivered from the Egyptians by crossing the Red Sea.

So John sees these seven plagues and then at the same time he sees this congregation of those who have already conquered the beast and are now in the presence of God singing this song of victory.

But as soon as he sees that, he turns back again the other way. When he turns back he sees the sanctuary of God opened up. He sees those same seven angels with seven plagues receiving the seven bowls of God's wrath that they would pour upon the earth.

So, there is this back and forth within this vision. As there is an interlocking between this introduction to the bowls of wrath plagues together with this wonderful victory in heaven. As westerners, when we read this, it seems that John is sort of piecing things together by just randomly writing things down as he sees them. But to view it that way is to really miss out on what is really going on here. Because the reality is that these scenes are interlocked for a reason. And that reason is to help us to keep things in perspective. That is because when we experience persecution and when we see sin running amuck, it is very easy for us to become discouraged. It appears to us that things are moving in the wrong direction. So what John is doing is giving us visions of heavenly glory to lift us up and encourage us to press on by highlighting certain heavenly realities. John is showing us a Savior Who is engaged with all of the calamities that are taking place on earth while at the same time is giving us a crystal clear view of the beauty and glory that awaits the saints in heaven.

As we have seen throughout this book there is a lot of recapitulation. The process of looking at an event several times from a different perspective. It could be judgments. It could be a scene in heaven. It could be the second coming or any number of other events.

So for us, as we go through Revelation, we see that the whole of this book is structured in this way. It is structured in such a way to keep us encouraged with the hope of heaven even as we live amongst all of the trials here on earth.

II. THE VICTORIOUS SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

Revelation 15:2 (NASB)

²And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

This scene in heaven is trying to show us all the wonderful, resounding victory that our God has already won for us in this battle. It is trying to etch in our minds the reality of the victory that we already have.

The scene is set in the context of one of the greatest victories in the history of redemption. And that is the exodus. In case you do not know what the exodus was, it was when God sent Moses to the pharaoh in Egypt to free the Israelites who had been enslaved to them for over 400 years. God intervened and brought seven plagues to Egypt to convince pharaoh to set His people free. But over and over pharaoh would refuse to let them go. So God brought a plague to kill all of their firstborn. Pharaoh had finally had enough so he allowed the Israelites to leave. A short time later, Pharaoh decided to change his mind and sent his army out to bring them back. The Israelites saw the Egyptians coming with their chariots and realized that they were trapped between pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. And, as you probably remember, Moses was told by God to stretch his hand over the sea. When he did the waters parted and the Israelites crossed on dry land while God caused confusion among pharaoh's army. When the Israelites had successfully crossed to the other side, God allowed pharaoh's army to enter the Red Sea to pursue the Israelites. Then God told Moses to stretch his arm back over the Red Sea and when he did, the waters collapsed and destroyed all of Pharaoh's army that pursued them into the sea.

Exodus 14:30-31 (NASB)

³⁰Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the

Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹ When Israel saw the great power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses.

Then the scriptures tell us that the Israelites broke into song of victory. Then God brought them through the wilderness until He brought them into the Land of Canaan, which was the promised land.

It is this image of crossing the Red Sea that provides the historical reference or foreshadowing of this vision. The Israelites were standing near the Red Sea and watched the judgment of God come down on the Egyptians. Here, we see God's people standing by a sea of glass while God brings judgments against the earth to attempt to bring about repentance and to destroy those who refuse to accept Christ as their Savior. Then this congregation starts breaking out in the "song of Moses". Thus this scene is clearly pointing us back to the redemption of God's people and the victory of God against the Egyptians. The beast was personified by pharaoh and Satan's followers were personified by pharaoh's army. We see how God destroyed them by His flood of judgment. That is exactly what is happening here. It is going to show the seven bowl judgments that God is using to destroy his enemies who do not repent through a flood of judgment. It is doing so in order to highlight the victory that God has already won for His people against Satan. We see the people of God, who have already passed through the wilderness of this earth, standing in the promised land even as the turmoil is still happening on this earth. **GOD HAS ALREADY WON THE VICTORY!**

III. THE SONG OF MOSES.

Revelation 15:3-4 (NASB)

³ And they *sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,

“Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!⁴ “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed.”

We see the exuberance of the saints over God's victory as they break out in song. Even as **we** are still in the midst of the conflict, **they** are already singing of His victory because the battle has already been won. That takes us back to chapter 12 where the dragon and his angels waged war against Michael and his angels.

Revelation 12:7-9 (NASB)

⁷ And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, ⁸ and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. ⁹ And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

Jesus won that battle for us when He was willing to die on the cross for our sins and then resurrected from the dead to prove that what He had taught us concerning Himself was of God.

The people of God have won victory over the beast by resisting him and remaining

steadfast in their devotion to the Lamb. They have won victory over his image by refusing to compromise and participate in the things of this earth. And they have won a victory over the number of his name by denying all association with this wicked beast and suffering the consequences of persecution even if it meant death.

All of this is here for our encouragement as we continue to wage war against the dragon, his beasts, and his followers. This encouragement is here so we will not lose sight of the victory that we already have. A victory that is promised to us. We see this congregation in heaven singing of an already conceded victory!

We are encouraged, here on this earth, when we see people standing successfully on the other side, who have gone through the same trials as we, sometimes having experienced even much worse trials than our own.

That is the purpose of this vision. It is a vision of VICTORY! A vision to show that the victory has already been won as we see the saints who are there celebrating and rejoicing in heaven. This is the perspective that we all need to have as we are embroiled in this battle here on earth.

Do you see yourself, right now, as already victorious? That you are sharing in Christ's victory? That **is** the reality! We may not be able to identify specific events to the bowls being poured out. But that is a reality and that is why they are interlocked with one another. Because that is what we should see! **The victory that Christ won at the cross is your victory! You share in that victory!**

So although we are still fighting on this earth, according to Romans 8:30 you are already triumphant. Because **"those whom God has justified, He has also glorified"**. Those who have the seal of God on their foreheads are guaranteed resurrection into a new glorified eternal body. It is so much easier to engage in a battle knowing that because we understand the importance of that battle. The outcome is that GOD WINS! It is imperative that we are on His side.

IV. THE GLORY AND POWER OF GOD.

Then our attention returns to the seven angels with the seven plagues.

Revelation 15:5-8 (NASB)

⁵After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, ⁶and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. ⁷Then 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. ⁸And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

The specifics of the seven bowl judgments will be found in chapter 16. The focus here is on holy angels who are doing God's bidding by receiving the bowls that will bring these plagues upon the earth.

Notice in verses 5-7 these angels are clothed in pure linen and are girded around their chest with golden sashes. All of this refers to their holiness. So these are not demonic beings that are bringing these plagues. Remember the fifth trumpet blast that had

demonic spirits coming up out of the abyss and tormenting those who were not sealed with the name of God on their foreheads? Well, these plagues are not coming from demons. They are being carried out by holy angels.

The fact that they are coming from God's temple, the place of God's presence that is filled with smoke because of His glory, shows that they are coming from the presence of God where they are doing His bidding.

These plagues are judgments upon the unbelieving inhabitants of the earth. And these judgments come from God. One thing we should understand about these bowl judgments is that they are not only intended to punish, but they are also meant to warn and produce repentance. If they repent, the judgment stops and they are blessed. If they don't repent, then the next judgment will be even more severe. It will continue to pile up upon them.

The plagues are intended to awaken people to their own mortality. All men will die. We are always reminded of this when we see calamity and tragedy. It is intended to awaken us to an even greater judgment that is coming.

It is only through repentance and acceptance of Christ that we do not have to fear death. Death for us is the stepping stone between this sinful, painful world and an eternity in the presence of our God.

CONCLUSION:

So what are we to take home from this text?

It is hard for us to understand why it is that we have to go through this time on earth and have to wait for sin to be eradicated. When man fell in the Garden of Eden we inherited a sinful nature that separated us from God. Bringing people back to God is a slow person by person process. God knows every horrible thing that happens in your life and He knows what it does to people. God does not distance Himself from people's pain. When mankind rejected Him, it was extremely painful for Him. It would be like us seeing our own children getting lost in a cave of darkness. We would do everything we could to find them and bring them back into the light. When one of God's children is lost it pains Him greatly. He desires that no one is lost and wants to bring us back. The torture that Jesus endured on the cross was God taking the punishment for all of His children in order to reunite Himself to them. Christ's death on the cross does not instantaneously free everyone from their sins. It requires belief and true faith on each person's part. God gave us a free will to make the choice on our own. He calls to each of us to accept His Son and receive His free gift of salvation. When you truly surrender your heart to Him and obey His commands you can have the assurance that you will become one of the saints standing before the throne and singing praises of victory to God.

This is the Day!