

## **Chapter 15**

**V.1-2 The Sign** This chapter begins with John seeing another sign. We get the impression that the signs started for John after the revelation of the mighty angel in Chapter 10. It is possible to imagine that before the mighty angel that Jesus was showing and speaking to John in person so that he was witnessing the scenes and activities as he was translated to different locations. In the last half of Revelation, it appears more likely that John is seeing a vision or visions provided by the angel which he is communicating with. He uses the word sign seven times in the book of Revelation and none of them occur before Chapter 12. John sees both signs of the dragon and the beast (Rev. 13:13, 13:14, 16:14, 19:20) and signs that appear in heaven (Rev. 12:1, 12:3, 15:1). The first verse in this chapter is the last sign in heaven that John mentions. John will see much more from heaven as we continue on in the revelation but he does not refer to it as a sign.

The sign that John sees here he calls great and amazing. John tells us there are seven angels and seven plagues and he also emphasizes twice that these are the last plagues and with them God's wrath will be finished. This is the same Greek word that Jesus uses on the cross to say that "it is finished". We get the impression that with the completion of these plagues that there is a definite finality to God's involvement in the creation story. Jesus will return and the new heavens and the new earth will come down but God appears to be done doing what He needs to do. Just as Jesus was finished doing what He needed to do at the cross God has finished His final act of releasing the wrath of heaven upon His enemies with these bowls.

It is my contention that the wrath that is poured out through these bowls is not meant to instigate repentance because it is likely at this point that there are two categories of people – those who haven't taken the mark of the beast, who have been martyred and those who have taken the mark of the beast and now are officially enemies of God. If you are pretribulation then your belief would be that the Church was raptured before the tribulation started and that all converts to Christianity since that time have been martyred. A midtribulation understanding would believe that any final believers would have been raptured in this general time frame described in Chapters 14 and 15. A post tribulation understanding would see the martyrdom of all believers by this point in the Revelation account. This is a very unique time on the earth and we have to be very careful about communicating God's wrath through these bowls. We just saw God's last attempt at using an angel to fly over the entire earth to proclaim the eternal Gospel in the last chapter and we know that it isn't possible for anyone who takes the mark of the beast to be saved. This means the only people left on the earth have rejected God's grace and His response isn't to invoke repentance, it is to display His fury on the dragon, antichrist, and the antichrist kingdom. That is why I believe that we see the more intense word used for God's actions being wrath instead of judgments which are typically referred to for the Seals and the Trumpets. There are two primary Greek words for wrath in the Bible and from Revelation 14 on we see the more severe and intense word "thumos" being used instead of the more deliberating "orge". In fact, the only place we see the word "orge" used after Revelation 14 is in the same verse with "thumos" to show intensity and completion. (Rev. 14:10; 16:19; 19:15) Orge is defined by a more intentional and deliberate action like anger exhibited by punishment. Thumos on the other hand is characterized by outbursts of anger and intense emotions resulting in rage or fury. It is this fury that is being poured out on the earth to purify the world through fire, to avenge those who have been persecuted and martyred, and to destroy all of God's enemies.

This is obviously extremely intense and outside of God's normal operation of behavior but not out of His character which is established with righteousness and justice. God's patience has been exhausted, His love has been rejected, and His ways have been ignored. His response is not apathy. The Day of the Lord has come.

This is God's response, but it is not ours as Christians. God says that vengeance is mine and He reiterates that our response is to love, forgive, and do good to those who hate you. And that is exactly how we see that those who are standing on the sea of glass with harps in their hands singing to the Lord have responded. They have conquered by the blood of the lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not being afraid to die. And because of that they have died most likely through martyrdom and now are pictured and identified as those who have conquered the beast and its image. They haven't accomplished this through ingenuity, or earthly resources, or revolt – they have accomplished this through their death following the example of their perfect Savior Jesus Christ.

The other reason that I think theologically it is accurate to talk about this period of time as God's wrath instead of judgments or discipline is because of who God's wrath is indicated for in the New Testament. It is clear throughout the Scriptures as painful as it might be to admit that unbelievers are appointed to wrath. Believers are not appointed to wrath and because of the intense actions and language described in the release of the seven Bowls I think we can be assured that the believers have been removed from the earth. It is clear from the following verses that there is a distinction between believers and unbelievers with regard to who is appointed for wrath.

Believers (Are **Not** Appointed to Wrath)

Romans 3:25

Romans 5:8-9

2 Corinthians 5:21

1 Thessalonians 1:10

1 Thessalonians 5:9

1 Peter 3:12-14

Unbelievers (**Are** Appointed to Wrath)

John 3:36

Romans 1:18

Romans 2:5

Romans 12:19

Ephesians 5:6

Colossians 3:6

2 Peter 2:9

2 Peter 3:7

Revelation 14:10

Below is a word study of the primary terms used for God's actions of judgment against humanity in the book of Revelation. What we see as actions commonly referred to as judgments throughout the Bible is the least used term in Revelation. (although there are multiple different words used to express judgment throughout the Bible) The primary point is that the most numerous words used to describe God's actions in Revelation are plagues and wrath and of the wrath that is expressed the majority are the more intense expression especially in the final half of the book. This communicates the seriousness and intensity of God's actions and reminds us that in the end God will not be silent and that He can be counted on to make all things right for His followers. We are reminded of the plagues in Egypt and God's intense desire to both free His people and judge His enemies. When does God's wrath begin? Those who believe in a pretribulation rapture understand that the Seals and the Trumpets are included with God's wrath

as well. Midtribulation and posttribulation believers would understand the beginning of God's wrath to start with the pouring of the Bowls. We know that believers will be subject to the wrath of the dragon and the antichrist as indicated in Chapters 12 & 13, but they will not be subject to God's wrath.

Plague (Plege - Strong's #4127)

A stroke, a wound, or a calamity  
Used in the New Testament 22 times  
Used in Revelation 16 times  
Revelation 9:18  
Revelation 9:20  
Revelation 11:6  
Revelation 13:3  
Revelation 13:12  
Revelation 13:14  
Revelation 15:1  
Revelation 15:6  
Revelation 15:8  
Revelation 16:9  
Revelation 16:21 (2)  
Revelation 18:4  
Revelation 18:8  
Revelation 21:9  
Revelation 22:18

Judgment (Krisis – Strong's #2920)

To separate, distinguish or judge  
Used in the New Testament 48 times  
Used in Revelation 4 times  
Revelation 14:7  
Revelation 16:7  
Revelation 18:10  
Revelation 19:2

Wrath (Orge – Strong's #3709)

Anger displayed from a settled disposition  
Used in the New Testament 36 times  
Used in Revelation 6 times  
Revelation 6:16  
Revelation 6:17  
Revelation 11:18  
Revelation 14:10  
Revelation 16:19  
Revelation 19:15

Wrath (Thumos – Strong's #2372)

Intense emotion displayed by fury  
Used in the New Testament 18 times  
Used in Revelation 10 times  
Revelation 12:12  
Revelation 14:8  
Revelation 14:10  
Revelation 14:19  
Revelation 15:1  
Revelation 15:7  
Revelation 16:1  
Revelation 16:19  
Revelation 18:3  
Revelation 19:15

[Judgment Meaning - Bible Definition and References \(biblestudytools.com\)](http://biblestudytools.com)

[Exodus 10b-11: The Plagues of Exodus and Revelation | Bethany Bible Church](#)

**V.3-4 The Song** The saints in heaven, who have conquered the beast through their death are seen singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. Throughout this chapter we see numerous references to the Old Testament through plagues, and Moses, and the Sanctuary.

We know that Moses is credited with singing two songs in the Old Testament and at least one Psalm. Moses' songs are recorded in Exodus 15 after the Red Sea deliverance and Deuteronomy 32 at the end of his life. The Psalm he authored is number 90. At this point in heaven, we see a conglomeration between the old and the new covenants that are demonstrated through Moses and the Lamb. Here in these verses this song celebrates and edifies both the Old and New Testament and somehow incorporates an emphasis on both - resulting in one new song for all believers together – Jew and Gentile alike.

“Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Revelation 15:3b-4)

We see in these words that God is praised first for His works (deeds). Then He is exalted for His ways. And then finally He is worshiped for His worth. We get the sense that this is a different group of people singing than the 144,000 mentioned in Chapter 14 because they are singing a different song and there is so much additional information and accolades given about the 144,000. Nonetheless this group of believers is no less thankful to be delivered and saved by the Lamb and to have conquered the beast. Their rewards may differ but their eternity in heaven is ensured. When we look at the context of the Song of Moses in Exodus 15 and of the song in Revelation 15 it is very poetic and profound to consider the midtribulation rapture. In Exodus the people of Israel were faced with an imposing danger and force of power in the Egyptians who were pursuing them. In Revelation the Christians will be opposed by the beast and the antichrist kingdom. In Exodus the people of God are delivered from a tremendous trial before the destruction of their enemies. In Revelation with a midtribulation rapture the people of God are delivered before the Bowls of wrath destroy their enemies. The waves of the Red Sea crash on the enemy in Egypt and the Bowls of wrath will crash on the Antichrist and his kingdom. Is this the reasoning for the inclusion to the song of Moses and the Lamb? Will they both be delivered in similar fashion with similar circumstances – one between Israel and Egypt and one between the Church and the antichrist kingdom? Time will tell but the poetic nature of this possibility is palpable and sets the scene for us to see these saints singing this song to the Lord. An interesting reminder from the Feast of Passover is that it is not only a celebration of salvation from death but it also includes the destruction of the enemy. One final relationship is between the songs themselves and I won't include the entire Song of Moses from Exodus 15 but consider this single verse in the context of Revelation 15:

“You have led in your steadfast love the people whom you have redeemed; you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode.” (Exodus 15:13)

**V.5-8 The Sanctuary** Technically this is not the sanctuary as it is the Greek word “vaos” which is almost always translated “temple”. However, the translators in this case I believe tried to communicate the inner sanctuary of the temple but typically only God or the ark of His presence would be found in such a place. Regardless, we should understand these verses to be describing the heavenly temple that we have seen throughout Revelation and specifically in Chapters 4&5. At the beginning of this chapter John sees the seven angels and the seven plagues and now he is communicating what is happening next. This entire chapter is a prelude to the seven Bowls of wrath which we will see released in Chapter 16. John starts by describing the angels and the plagues and now he gives a little more detail and indicates that the seven

plagues are given to the seven angels by one of the four living creatures. He also describes the scene as being filled with the glory of God and smoke that fills the temple. We are reminded of several other places in Scripture where the glory of God is demonstrated by a cloud of smoke that fills the temple. (Exodus 19:18, Exodus 40:34, 1 Kings 8:10-11, 2 Chronicles 5:11-14, 2 Chronicles 7:1-3, Isaiah 6:4, Ezekiel 11:23, Ezekiel 44:4) We have already discussed the angels of Revelation several times but we see again the number seven and wonder if they are affiliated or the same angels from the seven Churches and the seven Trumpets. Their dress is similar to the garments that we see on Jesus the Son of Man (Rev. 1:13) and we should understand that these angels represent Him and that they are presenting these bowls with His likeness and authority.

As we consider the Bowls of wrath it is also possible to translate this Greek word as “vial” but I think the term “bowl” more accurately pictures the cup of wrath that is to be understood through these judgments. (Rev. 14:10, 16:19) Either way we are also reminded of the incense that was collected and presented before God by the angel at the altar of incense, which contained the prayers of the saints. (Rev. 8:1-5) We get the impression that the Bowls of wrath are motivated or influenced by the prayers of the saints and that they are part of the reason for the release of God’s wrath. The view of God’s temple in these verses is indeed great and amazing with the smoke of the glory of God and the inability to penetrate the fullness of His glory. This is significant in this instance because we are used to seeing a description of the temple with the final Seal and Trumpet, but in this case, we get a description of the heavenly temple before the seven Bowls start and at the completion of the seventh Bowl. (Rev.15:5 & Rev.16:17)

As we conclude our study of Chapter 15 let us be reminded that we all like sheep have gone astray. Every single one of us ultimately deserves the wrath of God. The only reason that Christians do not receive this wrath is because of the Lamb who was slain. Our wrath was placed on Him and now we can have peace with God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us so that we might become the righteousness of God. This is incredible news and a pertinent reminder about the Revelation of Jesus. Others need this revelation before it is too late. Either Jesus will take your wrath or you will be forced to drink from the cup of God’s wrath yourself. This doesn’t happen because you are so bad (even though we all are). This only happens because you don’t have an adequate sacrifice for your sin. What we know from Scripture is that there is no amount of works or goodness or knowledge or even love that can achieve that sacrifice for you. Jesus is the only way. Trust Him, believe in Him, receive Him today.

[The Wrath of God Poured Out on Jesus for You | The HOPE Project](#)