**March 18, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 15 of the Book of Revelation**
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Seven Angels with Seven Plagues

The scenes in John’s vision have been partially in Heaven and partially on earth and this part of his vision is clearly in Heaven.  As we have often discussed, Heaven is a place that we can only imagine in this lifetime.  Try as we might, our feeble attempts to capture in our mind an image of Heaven are inadequate.  1st Cor. 2:9 says “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

In chapter 5 Jesus held the scroll which had 7 seals, then in chapter 8 the 7th seal is opened after which 7 angels were each given a trumpet.  Now we have the 3rd set of 7’s and the final set since verse one refers to them as the final plagues.  John sees 7 angels with the 7 plagues and calls it a great and marvelous sign.  That is not a description many of us would use knowing the destruction that will result from those plagues.  We must remember that this has to happen before Satan is defeated and what follows after is the 1000 year reign then eternity.  As we discussed last week, in Daniel chapter 12 reference is made to a 1260 day period which is the 42 month period we have been discussing for several weeks, however, there is an also a period of 1335 days mentioned which would indicate an additional 45 days (Dan. 12:11-12).  This may be a “last chance” call for the unsaved to repent at the end of the Great Tribulation.  With that in mind, these seven last plagues may occur during the final days of this 45 day period.  We will see later in the chapter that these 7 plagues are bowls (vials in the KJV) filled with God’s wrath.

John’s vision of a sea of glass is similar to his description of a sea of glass in chapter 4 but now the sea of glass is mixed with fire perhaps symbolizing refinement by fire of those who now stand by the sea.  Another possible explanation is that this the New Testament equivalent of crossing of the Jordan River while those in pursuit are engulfed in flames.  Regardless, these are those refused to worship the beast or accept his mark.  They overcame all manner of persecution.  In each of the seven letters to the churches in chapters 2 & 3, Jesus gave a promise to those who overcome.  They are each given a harp and they sang a song of praise, similar to John’s description of the 24 elders in Chap 5:8-9.   The song is called the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, maybe referring to both the old and new covenants.  W.A. Criswell notes that the first recorded song in the Bible is in Chapter 15 of Exodus and the last recorded song is in Chapter 15 of Revelation.  Commentator John Phillips compares and contrasts the two songs: “The song of Moses was sung at the Red Sea, the song of the Lamb is sung at the crystal sea; the song of Moses was a song of triumph over Egypt, the song of the Lamb is a song of triumph over Babylon; the song of Moses told how God brought His people out, the song of the Lamb tells how God brings His people in; the song of Moses was the first song in Scripture, the song of the Lamb is the last. The song of Moses commemorated the execution of the foe, the expectation of the saints, and the exaltation of the Lord; the song of the Lamb deals with the same three themes.”

Next John sees the temple.  The NIV says “the temple, that is the tabernacle of the Testimony”.  The King James describes it as the temple of the tabernacle of testimony.  What is confusing to us is that we see the tabernacle and the temple as 2 separate things while in the KJV here the temple is part of the tabernacle. The temple of the tabernacle may describe the Holy of Holies or the innermost part of the tabernacle and the place which contained the ark of the covenant.  When God gave Moses instructions on how to build the tabernacle, he told him to make the tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern God would show him (Ex. 25:9).  In Hebrews we read that the earthly sanctuary is a copy and shadow of what is in Heaven (Heb. 8:5) so John is seeing the original as he did in Chap 11:19.    The writer of Hebrews reminds us in 10:1 that a shadow is inferior to the original.  The Old Testament ark contained the pot of manna, Aaron’s budded rod and the tablets of the covenant.  I can’t help but wonder about the contents of the ark in Heaven.

Next John sees 7 angels coming out of the temple.  They had each been given a bowl by one of the 4 creatures (see Chap. 4:6-8).   Note the final verse stating that the temple was filled with smoke and no one could enter.  Very similar to Ex. 40:34-35 where Moses was not able to enter the tabernacle because it was filled with the glory of the Lord.

In the next chapter we will see the effects of the contents of the bowls as they are poured out.