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The Seven Angels with the Seven Last Plagues 15: 1-8

The seven angels with seven last plagues **DIG: How does John describe this new sign? Why does he say these are the last plagues? Is ADONAI unjust or unrighteous for sending the seven plagues? What picture does he paint in 15:2? Compare Moses' song of deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15:1-18) with the song sung by those delivered from the beast. What does the Bible mean when it says: You alone are holy? What praise is given to God? By whom? Why will smoke fill the Temple?**

REFLECT: The song of Moses draws on the LORD's past deliverance; the song of the Lamb looks forward to His future vengeance. Yet John's vision of joy in heaven and sorrow on the earth should turn our attention to our own situation today. How does this passage make you feel? Why? What does it make you want to do? Why? What great and mighty deeds has God done in your life for which you will praise Him today? How appropriate is the song in this passage to your experience with the Lord? Why?

The fifteenth chapter of Revelation is, by far, the shortest in the book, just eight verses, primarily serving as a prologue to **the sixteenth chapter** and a somber listing of the seven bowl judgments to be poured out upon the earth. Yet, it is critically important in its own right, providing a glimpse of heaven just before the final judgments fall.

Earlier, **John** had seen a mighty angel holding **a little scroll in his left hand (10:1-11)**. The content of **the little scroll** deals with the seventh **trumpet**, where **the mystery of God** will be fulfilled and evil will be punished.³⁴⁵ **The seventh trumpet** is the third woe. For this reason, it is the worst of all because it contains all the bowl judgments (**Revelation 15 and 16**). The mighty angel took a solemn oath to show the importance of this **mystery** and said: **There will be no more delay (10:6)**! Finally nothing will stand in the way of the final dramatic period of human history. From the middle of the Great Tribulation forward **ADONAI** will not intervene to give man further opportunity to repent. It will be the darkness before the dawn of the Second Coming. The period of **delay** will be over and **the**

Lord's wrath will be irreversibly set in motion.³⁴⁶

This will be the third of three great and marvelous signs in heaven. The first divinely given **sign** was **a woman clothed with the sun (12:1)**. The second **sign** was **an enormous red dragon (12:3)**, and the third **sign**, here, **John saw another great and marvelous sign in heaven (15:1a)**. The **sign** itself consists of **seven angels with the seven last plagues**. The word **plagues** literally means *a blow or a wound* (**Luke 12:48; Acts 16:23 and 33; Second Corinthians 6:5 and 11:23**). The Greek word for plague, *plege*, describes the beast's **fatal wound** that seemed to be **healed (13:3 and 12)**. Thus, **the seven last plagues** are not really diseases or epidemics like AIDS or influenza, but powerful, deadly blows that are the **seven bowl judgments**.³⁴⁷ **God** had said to the **Israelites: If you remain hostile toward Me and refuse to listen to Me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve (Leviticus 26:21)**. That time will be upon **them**, and the world.

*Dear **God** of the Universe, **You** are awesome in love and in holiness! **You** have promised blessings for those who choose to love and follow **You**, and **You** have also promised curses for those who choose to go their own way. The choice is up to each person. **The Father loves the Son and has given everything into His hand. He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:35-36)**. How wonderful **Your** offer of righteousness for all who choose to love and to follow **You (Second Corinthians 5:21)**. May all who read this prayer make the wise choice to love and follow **You**. In the holy name of **Your Son** and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*

These **seven last plagues** are the greatest **because the wrath of ADONAI is completed (15:1b)**. These **seven angels** are introduced as the final step in the outpouring of **God's wrath** on the earth (**Zephaniah 3:8**). A significant portion of **John's** revelation describes the coming judgments of **the LORD** against an increasingly wicked and rebellious inhabitants of the earth. But I need to remind you that if you love **the Lord Jesus Christ**, you need not fear these cataclysmic judgments. Those who accept **Messiah** will be rescued from those dreadful days of doom. Those who reject **Jesus**, however, will be left behind to suffer **the coming wrath (First Thessalonians 1:10)**.

Along with **wrath**, **God** reveals **His** grace. This is an underlying principle of **His** character. With vengeance, **He** offers victory; with judgment, **He** sends joy. So in **15:2-4 He** presents the mirror opposite of the somber doom of the **seven angels with the seven last plagues of wrath** in **15:1**. While those **seven angels** were filling up their bowls of **wrath**, **John saw**

what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire (15:2a). Earlier, we had seen this same **sea of glass**, and it was **clear as crystal (4:6a)**. When **Moses**, Aaron and the seventy **elders of Isra'el** saw **ADONAI**, **under His feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself (Exodus 24:10)**. **Ezeki'el** saw the same thing (**Ezeki'el 1:22**). But here, the **crystal** platform before **the LORD's** throne will be **mixed** with the **fire** of **God's** judgment. **Fire** is frequently associated with **God's** judgment in the Scriptures (**Numbers 11:1, 16:35; Deut 9:3; Psalm 50:3; Isaiah 66:15; 2 Thess 1:7-9; Second Peter 3:7**).

And, standing on the sea of glass, will be **those who** will be **victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name (7:9-17)**. Some of these will be believing Gentiles and messianic Jews from the Great Tribulation. The first resurrection has three parts: the Rapture of the Church, Tribulation martyrs, and the righteous of the TaNaKh at **Christ's** Second Coming (**Dani'el 12:13**). Some will be killed as a result of the seven bowl judgments that will be poured out upon the earth in the second half of the Great Tribulation, and some will die because **they** refused to take the mark of **the beast and his image**, and, therefore, will be martyred. To quote the famous line of missionary Jim Elliott, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." Therefore, they will be **victorious over the beast** because of their unyielding faith in **Christ**. But whether Jew or Gentile, when **they** reach heaven **ADONAI** will give **them harps** and they will be seen worshiping **Him** as one (**15:2b**). **Their** worshiping will never cease, because the more we see **God**, the more reason we'll have to praise **Him**.

The appearance of the righteous of the TaNaKh and Gentile believers reminds us that **Jesus** sends **His wrath** as an act of **revenge** upon those who harm **His** children. **But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea (Matthew 18:6)**. Unbelievers will be condemned to **the lake of burning sulfur (20:10)** for abusing **God's** own people, because their abuse reveals their evil, unrepentant hearts (**Matthew 25:41-46**). Rabbi Sha'ul wrote: **Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for the wrath of ADONAI, for it is written, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord (Romans 12:19)**. Speaking of **the Jews**, **Jesus** said: **Whoever touches you touches the apple of My eye (Zechariah 2:8; also see Psalm 94:1-10 and 21-23)**. So the Jewish and Gentile believers pictured here will have gone through the terrors of the Great Tribulation and suffered horrible deaths. Yet despite having endured the most intense persecution the world has ever known, their **faith**, which is **a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9)**, will endure. Eventually, they will stand **victorious on the sea of glass** and watch as **Yeshua** takes **revenge** on their persecutors.

Those **standing on the sea of glass** will sing two songs, **the song of Moses (the servant of ADONAI) and the song of the Lamb (15:3a)**. **The song of Moses** is found in the TaNaKh (**Exodus 15:1-18; Psalm 92:5, 111:2, and 139:14**), which is included in its entirety in the daily morning synagogue service and liberally quoted twice-daily in the *Shema* (**Deuteronomy 6:4**). It celebrates the victory **God** gave the children of **Isra'el** when **He** brought them out of Egypt. Pharaoh's army sped off to recapture them, but his chariots and the men they carried were drowned in **the Sea** of Reeds.³⁴⁸ **The song of Moses** was a **song of** victory and deliverance for the righteous, and at the same time of judgment and **wrath** on the enemies of **God**. Thus, in the last days, raptured believers, Tribulation martyrs, and the righteous of the TaNaKh **standing** together before the throne of **the LORD on the sea of glass** will sing the same **song** of deliverance sung long ago by **the people of Isra'el**.

And they will also sing **the song of the Lamb**, who is their eternal redeemer. That **song** was first heard in **5:8-14**. Like **the song of Moses**, **the song of the Lamb** represents **God's** faithfulness to **His** children and judgment of **His** enemies. **The song of Moses** was sung at **the Sea** of Reeds, **the song of the Lamb** will be sung at **the crystal sea**; **the song of Moses** was a **song of** triumph over Egypt, **the song of the Lamb** will be a **song of** triumph over Babylon; **the song of Moses** told how **ADONAI** brought **His** children out, **the song of the Lamb** tells how **Jesus** will bring **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 an enemy, the expectation of the redeemed and the exaltation of **the Lord**, **the song of the Lamb** deals with the same three themes.³⁴⁹

The words of the song recorded here in **verses 3 and 4** do not exactly match either **the song of Moses** in **Exodus 15**, or **the song of the Lamb** in **Revelation 5**. **But the seven themes and many of the key terms are similar to those found in the TaNaKh:**

First, **Great and marvelous are Your deeds (15:3b)**, reminds us of **Psalm 139:14**, where **David** says: **I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know them well.**

Secondly, when the righteous who **stand on the crystal sea** sing: **ADONAI, God of heaven's armies (15:3c CJB)**, it reminds us of the name by which **God** revealed **Himself** to Abraham (**Genesis 17:1**), Isaac (**Exodus 6:3**), and Jacob (**Genesis 35:11**). Those **armies** are composed of **His** angels (**Psalm 68:17; Matthew 26:53**). **Jesus** is the commander of **heaven's armies (Joshua 5:14)**. **He** can provide for our every need.

Thirdly, when in unison they sing: **Just and true are Your ways, King of the nations**

(15:3d), this reflects the truth in the TaNaKh that affirms **all [God's] works are true and His ways just (Dani'el 4:37; Deuteronomy 32:4; Hosea 14:9)**. There is one **Ruler** over all the nations, and **He** reigns supreme. **His** government is incorruptible and without equal. **His** kingdom includes people from every nation. What a wonderful Kingdom to be a part of.

Fourth, the exclamation: **Who will not fear You, ADONAI, and bring glory to Your name (15:4a)?** is taken from the prophets, where **Jeremiah** says: **Who should not revere You, O King of the nations? This is your due. Among all the wise men of the nations and in all their kingdoms, there is none like You (Jeremiah 10:7)?**

Fifthly, the truth that **God alone is holy (15:4b)**, is often repeated in the TaNaKh (**First Samuel 2:2; Psalm 22:3, 99:5, 111:9; Isaiah 6:3 and 57:15; Habakkuk 1:12**).

Sixthly, the phrase: **All nations will come and worship before You (15:4c)**, quotes **Psalm 86:9**, when **King David** says: **All the nations you have made will come and worship before You, O Lord**.

Seventh, when all the redeemed sing: **For Your righteous acts have been revealed (15:4d)**, the TaNaKh echoes with such passages as **Judges 5:11; First Samuel 12:7; Psalm 103:6; Dani'el 9:16 and Micah 6:5**.

After hearing the song of the righteous standing on the sea of glass in front of the throne of God, John looked and saw the Most Holy Place in heaven opened (15:5). The Greek word *naos* refers to **the Most Holy Place in the Tabernacle** where **ADONAI's** presence dwells. **The Tabernacle** on the earth during **Moses' day** was a mere replica of **the true Tabernacle in heaven (Hebrews 8:2)**. Sometimes the earthly **Tabernacle** was referred to as **the Tabernacle of Testimony (Exodus 38:21; Numbers 1:50; Acts 7:44)**, because the **Testimony**, or Ten Commandments, was placed there (**Exodus 25:16**). **The reason the seven angels will emerge from the Most Holy Place in the heavenly Tabernacle, is to highlight the fact that God Himself is the source of the seven bowl judgments.**



Out of the Tabernacle (see my commentary on **Exodus**, **to see link click** - **Fi The Sanctuary of the Tabernacle**) **came the seven angels with the seven bowls of plagues (15:6a)**. **Bowls** refer to shallow saucers that were part of the furniture of **the Temple (First Kings 7:50; Second Kings 12:13; First Chron 28:17; Zechariah 14:20)**; and the sacrifices of **the Tabernacle (Exodus 27:3; 38:3)**. The result will be that the wicked of **the earth** who refuse to drink **the cup of salvation (Psalm 116:13)**, will be drowned in **the seven bowls of plagues**.

They were dressed in clean, shinning linen signifying their righteousness, **and wore golden sashes around their chests** signifying their royal priesthood (**15:6b**). They move **out of the Sanctuary** and away from the mercy seat (see my commentary on **Exodus Es - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place**). They are about to pour out **the wrath of God**. Those on the earth will receive judgment without mercy. They had defied **the Lord**, believed in Satan, worshiped **the antichrist**, taken **his** mark and worshiped **his** image, followed the false prophet, and rejected **Christ**.

The TaNaKh teaches that once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest would take a bowl of blood from a goat into **the Most Holy Place**. He would dip his fingers in the bowl and sprinkle the goat's blood on the mercy seat. This was done to offer atonement for the sins of **the people of Isra'el** for the previous year. Since **the antichrist** and his followers will not accept the blood of **Yeshua** as an atonement for their sins, **one of the four living creatures** will give **the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God (Jeremiah 25:15)**, and instead of sprinkling the blood on the mercy seat, **they** will pour them out upon a sinful and unrepentant world (**15:7**).³⁵⁰

Once **the wrath of God** was poured out on **Messiah** because of what **He** did for sinners; however, in the future **His wrath** will be poured out on sinners because of what they did to

Christ. The lesson here for us today, is that if you do not accept the sacrifice of **the Lord**, then you become the sacrifice of **the Lord**.

Then the sanctuary was filled with smoke from God's Sh'khinah (Exodus 34-35; First Kings 8:10-11; Isaiah 6:1-4), that is, from His power; and no one could enter the Sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels had accomplished their purpose (15:8 CJB). Earlier the antichrist insulted the name of ADONAI, His Sh'khinah, and those living in heaven. He was given power to make war against God's holy people and to conquer them (13:6-7). Now the tables are turned, with **the Lord's** people victorious, and **His wrath** about to be poured out on those who follow **the beast**.³⁵¹ There will be no more mercy, no more delays, and no more opportunities to repent until **the seven bowls** of judgment have passed.

We've all heard the expression, "I don't get mad; I just get even." Reading about the wrath of **God** described in **Revelation**, one might assume that **the LORD** will get "even" with sinners for their phenomenal offenses throughout **the ages**. But the truth is that **God's** final **wrath** will be a necessary expression of His **holy** justice. **He** can't turn a blind eye to sin. In fact, if **He** doesn't finally carry out justice as described in the Great Tribulation, it would be a denial of His **holy** character. That's why in the midst of His **wrath**, the victorious believers will sing **His** praise: **Who will not fear You, O Lord and bring glory to Your name? For You alone are holy. . . Your righteous acts have been revealed.** Those who know **ADONAI** best do not judge **Him** for **His wrath**. Rather, they worship and affirm **His** actions.

What should surprise us is not the massive scale of **God's wrath**, but that **He** waited so long to display it. **Not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9b), the Lord** is mercifully restraining **His wrath** and giving maximum space to **His** marvelous mercy and grace. Now is the time to repent and take advantage of **His** patient love. And when we do, we'll join the believers in praising **Him** for all eternity.

*O love of **God**, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong! It will forevermore endure - believers and **angels' song**.*³⁵²