

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE SONG BEFORE
THE WRATH IS FINISHED

15:1-4

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The Song Before the Wrath is Finished

Remember the pattern in the book of Revelation of songs before judgment? Whenever there is a song, we can expect that judgment will be along shortly... Well, listen to this one... it's really a doozie!

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.
Revelation 15:1

There has been quite an interlude between the rolling out of the seals, trumpets and bowls since Revelation 10—the most recent being the sixth trumpet (otherwise known as the second woe). John has seen a strong angel with a little book (which he ate), the temple being measured, and two witnesses who were eventually killed by a beast from the abyss. He has seen a great sign of a woman (Israel) and another sign of a great red dragon (Satan).

He has watched a war in heaven between Michael and his angels and Satan and his angels. Michael's troops won and Satan was thrown down to earth where he persecuted the woman. John saw the woman flee to the wilderness where God would nourish her and he saw the earth help the woman when the dragon tried to destroy her with a flood. Then he watched the enraged dragon go off to make war with the Jews in the rest of the world.

John observed a beast come from the sea who warred with the saints and was worshiped by the world. He saw another beast come up from the earth and deceive the earth dwellers on the first beast's behalf.

Next, John looked and beheld the 144,000 (who were once on earth) singing to the Lamb on the heavenly Mount Zion. He then witnessed three angels give three messages (foreboding warnings, really) to the entire world. Most recently, he saw the earth reaped—twice...

Before the resumption of the seals, trumpets, and bowls, John observes another sign... and it is (like the others) part of a promo for the seventh trumpet (seven bowls). The sign is described as great and marvelous. We have seen other signs in Revelation, one other one that was called great—but this is the only one that is called great and marvelous. The Greek word for "great" is *meegas* and means huge. The Greek word for "marvelous" is *thaumastos* and means glorious and wondrous. It seems we would be wise to sit up and take notice of this exceptional sign...

The sign which John sees is seven angels who have seven plagues. They are identified as being the final plagues because in them the wrath of God achieves its goal. In other words, God will accomplish His purpose using the plagues of the seven angels. The Greek word for “plague” is *plēge* and means a stroke. It has the idea of a blow, wound, affliction, or calamity. Once He sends these plagues, there will be no more strikes upon the earth until the Lord comes in judgment (which will take place without delay upon the completion of the seventh bowl).

Let me ask you a “pop quiz-ish” question. Can you think of a verse in Revelation which is a good cross-reference with Revelation 15:1? (Hint: Think of the great big intersection verses.)

Yep. You got it. Revelation 10:7 says, *“but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets.”* The days of the voice of the seventh angel is synonymous with the seventh angel himself, and his seven bowls (or plagues, as they are called here). In them, in the seven plagues, the wrath of God is finished.

By the way, it is a really good idea to cross-reference your own Bible so you can find things easily and quickly. In the margin of Revelation 15:1 you can write Revelation 10:7 and in the margin of Revelation 10:7 you can write Revelation 15:1. (I suggest you use an archival pen which is bleed proof, water proof and fade proof. My favorite is called a ZIG Writer.)

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. Revelation 15:2

Does this scene remind you of anything? Do you remember the throne room scenes in Revelation 4 and 5? Read Revelation 4:5–6 *Out from the throne come flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder. And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God; and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.*

It seems we are in the throne room once again only this time those who have been victorious over the beast (not only the beast, but his image and the number of his name as well) are in attendance, as well, and standing on the sea of glass before the throne of God. These are the ones who did not love their lives unto death. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb and the Word of their testimony. They kept the commands of God and held to the testimony of Jesus. These are the saints—the holy ones of God... They persevered and were given “for worshiping God only” harps (just like the 24 elders and the choir of the 144,000 bond-servants of God). They are now standing on the sea of glass, holding their harps of God. Glorious!

This throne room “floor” is described as something like a sea of glass mixed with fire. There was fire in the Revelation 4 throne room scene as well—seven lamps of fire, the seven Spirits of God, were burning before the throne. The throne room is an amazing place, don’t you think?

And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying... Revelation 15:3a

Remember the pattern in Revelation involving songs and judgment? Songs come before judgment! The song in Revelation 15 is sung in advance of the seven plagues about to strike the earth. The song will be sung... and the judgment will come...

Think about it. What were all the living creatures doing in the throne room scenes? They were praising God, yes... but for what? In both Revelation 4 and 5 they praised God for bringing forth His judgments! So, too, in Revelation 15 we will see God being praised for revealing His judgments and wrath—His righteous and true ways. God is beyond our ability to understand Him—He is love, yes... and it is true that He loves righteousness... but we also need to understand that He hates unrighteousness... He righteously and perfectly hates it...

Once we are in His presence we will finally see Him as He is—and finally be able to understand His *righteous* hatred of *unrighteousness*. And we will finally understand the resplendence of how He took care of unrighteousness in His saints through the blood of His Son... and how He will, in His wrath, take care of the unrighteous who have refused His Son... Then we will praise Him like we never have before!

The song in Revelation 15 is identified as the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses (from Exodus 15) is the song that Moses and the sons of Israel sang to the LORD after He delivered them, by His powerful hand, from Egypt. When they had seen the great power the LORD used against the Egyptians, they feared the LORD and believed in Him and His servant Moses. Is the song of Moses also the song of the Lamb? As God’s bond-servant, Moses delivered God’s people from bondage—so too did the Lamb. Perhaps the element of deliverance from evil under the leadership of a trustworthy Shepherd is in view.

Is this one song? Or two? No one knows for sure. It sounds like it could be two songs from its title, yet we are not given words for two different songs. Could the song of the Lamb be the song that was sung to the Lamb in Revelation 5? Or could it be a delineation between Jews and Gentiles—the song of Moses referring to Israel while the song of the Lamb refers to the Gentiles? It is even possible that it is identified as the song of the Lamb because it will be none other than Himself Who will lead the saints in song at the time of His victory (just as Moses led the Israelites in song after God delivered them from Egypt). Perhaps understanding the title becomes a moot point once the words of the song, itself, are discerned...

Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! 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. Revelation 15:3b-4

The first four lines of the song follow a common pattern in the Old Testament—parallelism. Think of the four lines being identified as A, B, A, and B (1=A, 2=B, 3=A, 4=B). In other words “*Great and marvelous are Your works*” and “*Righteous and true are Your ways*” are both A’s and “*O Lord God, the Almighty*” and “*King of the nations*” are both B’s. The second of each parallelism repeats the thought of the first, adding emphasis and intensity.

Let’s look at the A’s. What are His works? This is such a great example of just how much context matters. If this line was isolated from the context it might be easy to think it was referring to the act of creation or the “things” God does for us. But that is not what it is referring to.

What about His ways? Again, if ripped from the context His ways could be construed to mean just about any part of God’s nature, but we can not rip it from its context—we must let the environment in which it dwells determine what it means.

What, exactly, is the context of this song—both immediate (this chapter) and adjoining (the rest of Revelation)? This is the book where God is unveiling the things which must shortly take place—His judgments on the earth. So which works of God’s are great and marvelous? His judgments! And which ways of God’s are righteous and true? His judgments and wrath.

Now let’s look at the B’s. Both define the power and position of God. He is the Lord God, the Almighty—the One Who determines eternity for each and every created thing and the only One Who has the power to do so. He is King of the nations—the One Who will righteously, and with justice, rule and reign over all the nations of the earth.

The song of Moses and the song of the Lamb proclaims that the works and ways of God (the horrific and cataclysmic events which are about to take place in the seventh trumpet) are great, marvelous, righteous, and true! The song declares that God is God, God is Lord, and God is more powerful than anyone or anything else in the universe. The song pronounces God to be the winner of the ultimate contest of rulership—He alone is King of the nations.

A rhetorical question is posed concerning the reaction of men once God has finally poured out His wrath on mankind and taken up His absolute rule over them—“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your Name?”. The next phrases begin with “for” and state the obvious.

The Lord *alone* is holy. The Greek word for “holy” is *hosios* and means to be right by intrinsic or divine character rather than by consecration or deeds. Of course every single

living creature should by all means fear Him and glorify His Name—He alone is holy and right! It will be proven that He alone is holy because all the nations, every last one of them, will come and worship before Him in Jerusalem in that glorious, marvelous day! Why will they fear Him? Why will they glorify His Name? Why will they come and worship Him? Because His righteous acts will have been revealed—the right and just wrath that God will pour out on the earth during the seals, trumpets, and bowls...

Right before the 7th seal (Revelation 6:15-17), all men were terrified of God's wrath, but did not fear the Lord, Himself—they continued to run their own lives. Right before the 7th trumpet (Revelation 11:13) men were terrified (of more of the same) and gave glory to the God of heaven (admitted that it was He Who had caused the events of the second woe), but were still not terrified of the Lord and His righteous demands.

The first angelic message (in the "promo" to the events of the seventh trumpet, Revelation 14:6-7) warned the people of the world to fear God and give Him Glory because the hour of His judgment had come. The victorious choir in heaven (Revelation 15) now proclaims that once His righteous judgments have been meted out, that is exactly what men will do—fear Him and glorify His Name! They will finally and forever take their place in submission before the Almighty!

After seeing His power and judgments on the earth, the only reasonable response is to fear Him—and consequently to glorify His Name! However, for the unreasonable, the Lord will readily rule with His rod of iron! The Lord will be feared! In that day, the Lord's Name will be glorified!

Take time to read through the Song of Moses thoughtfully and carefully. If you look for them, you will find a great many parallels between the songs in Exodus 15 and Revelation 15. Let God, through His Word and His Spirit, increase your faith...

Then Moses and the sons of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and said, "I will sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted; the horse and its rider He has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise Him; my father's God, and I will extol Him. The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army He has cast into the sea; and the choicest of his officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deeps cover them; they went down into the depths like a stone. Your right hand, O Lord, is majestic in power, Your right hand, O Lord, shatters the enemy. And in the greatness of Your excellence You overthrow those who rise up against You; You send forth Your burning anger, and it consumes them as chaff. At the blast of Your nostrils the waters were piled up, the flowing waters stood up like a heap; The deeps were congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, 'I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.' You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; they sank like lead in the mighty waters. Who is like You among the gods, O Lord? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders? You stretched out Your right hand, the earth swallowed them. In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; in Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

The peoples have heard, they tremble; anguish has gripped the inhabitants of Philistia. Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; the leaders of Moab, trembling grips them; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away. Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; until Your people pass over, O Lord, until the people pass over whom You have purchased. You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, the place, O Lord, which You have made for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established. The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” Exodus 15:1-18