

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
8-1-18

Revelation 15

Revelation 13 ends with the dragon and the beast making war against the Church and its members. Revelation 14 is an interlude to strengthen Christians and help them endure the persecutions they would face; it ends with the terrifying description of the final judgment of the wicked. John now resumes his chorological account of the events he saw. Revelation chapter 15 contains a vision of seven angels having seven plagues, to punish the wicked. In this vision his focus narrows. He does not see how these plagues impact the earth (as he did in chapter eight) nor how they impact mankind (as was the case in chapter nine); rather he sees the impact of the plagues on the wicked. God is a god of mercy and he is patient and long-suffering in allowing his children to repent; however, starting with chapter fifteen we see that mercy cannot rob justice as the judgments of God are pronounced upon mankind, so that all are delivered or condemned according to God's justice.

Seven Angels With Seven Plagues - Verses 1-5

¹I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God ³ and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. ⁴ Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.—⁵ After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened. ⁶ Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

15:1 The seven last plagues are also called the seven bowl judgments. They actually begin in chapter 16. Unlike the previous plagues, these are universal, and they will culminate in the abolition of all evil ("with them God's wrath is completed") and the end of the world.

15:3-4 The song of Moses celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15). The song of the Lamb celebrates the ultimate deliverance of God's people from the power of Satan.

15:5-8 This imagery brings us back to the time of the Exodus in the wilderness when the ark of the covenant (the symbol of God's presence among his people) resided in the tabernacle. The angels' garments are reminiscent of the high priest's clothing, showing that they are free from corruption, immorality, and injustice. The smoke that fills the temple is the manifestation of God's glory and power. There is no escape from this judgment.

15:8 John saw the temple filled with the glory and power of God. The key to God's eternal glory and power is his holiness (4:8). God's glory is not only his strength but also his perfect moral character. God will never do anything that is not morally perfect. This reassures us that we can trust him, yet it places a demand on us. Our desire to be holy (dedicated to God and morally pure) is our only suitable response. Our eternal reign with Christ won't begin until all evil is destroyed by his judgment. We must wait for his timetable to be revealed.