

Chapter 15

The Battle of Armageddon is to be fought at the end of the 'tribulation' when Christ returns to earth with His saints. Now, we go back to the midst of the tribulation and study in detail the events leading to the Armageddon (harvest and vintage of the ungodly).

I. Preparation for the Final Judgment of the Great Tribulation.

- A. 'Another sign' (v.1). **Note:** In chapter 12 (an important chapter in understanding the Revelation) John mentions 'two signs'. The first was the sun-clad woman (nation of Israel), and the other that of the 'great red dragon' (Satan).
- a. Now we come to 'another sign' - 'in heaven'. **Note:** The sun-clad woman was on earth. Satan was in the atmospheric heavens. And this third 'sign' is in heaven. It was 'great and marvelous', inasmuch as it outlines the terrible nature of the events which are soon to follow.
 - b. Remember: In ch.4:1, John heard a voice saying, 'Come up hither'. And everything he sees and describes in chs.4-19 is from his vantage point of heaven - looking down upon the events which transpire on the earth.
 - c. The 'sign' was 'seven angels having seven plagues' (the final plagues, or judgments, in which the wrath of God is completed). **Note:** We have discussed the seven 'sealed judgments', the seven 'trumpets judgments', and we now come to the final seven judgments - the 'seven vials'.
 - d. Throughout the Word of God, 'six is recognized as the 'number of man', while seven' is recognized as 'God's number. In fact, it is used eighteen times in the book of Revelation. **Note:** God has been patient, kind, and longsuffering, even during the terrible tribulation - but all of that comes to an end now. It's judgment time.
- B. 'Sea of glass mingled with fire' (v.2). Likely, the same 'sea of glass' mentioned in Rev.4:6, which is believed to be the floor of the 'throne room' in the heavenly temple. On the occasion in ch.4, the 'sea of glass' was unoccupied. Now, we see those who have gotten the victory over the 'beast' (Antichrist), and over his 'image' (that which was made at the direction of the False Prophet), and over his 'mark', and over the 'number of his name'. 'Then the 'sea of glass' was crystal clear, now it is 'fiery' - which symbolizes the 'fiery trials' of its occupants (Larkin). 'The fiery appearance come from the Glory of God' (Dake). 'The glassy sea mingled with fire is the frightful persecution of the beast' (McGee).
Note: Some believe these 'victors' were saved after the rapture of the Church, and were caught up afterwards without seeing death. (I disagree.) I believe they are 'victorious martyrs' that got saved after the Church was raptured, and then, gave their lives for Christ rather than worship the beast or his image, etc.
- C. Victors given harps, and sing the song of Moses and that of the Lamb (v.3). Both songs speak of God's deliverance, salvation, and faithfulness.
- a. 'Just as Israel rejoiced at the defeat of Pharaoh and his armies when delivered from Egypt (Exo.15) and through the Red Sea, so will Christians rejoice over the downfall of the Antichrist at the close of the tribulation' (Rice).
 - b. 'The song of the Lamb is the ascription of praise to Christ as the Redeemer' (McGee).

- c. Larkin says, 'They could sing both the 'Song of Moses' and the 'Song of the Lamb' because, as Israelites, they had been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb'. (I disagree. Many of these victors will not be Israelites.)
Note: Not only will these 'victors' have 'harps', but it's believed that all the redeemed will have harps; and, will sing (Rev.5:8; 14:2). The music in heaven will literally be 'out of this world'. 'What a day of rejoicing that will be!'
- d. As a result of God's judgments, all nations will come and worship Him. This speaks of the Millennium.
- D. 'The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened' (v.5). **Note:** John is gazing into the innermost part of the heavenly sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. **Note:** The 'tables of stone', given to Moses by God, contained the Ten Commandments; and they were called the 'Tables of Testimony'. They were to be kept in the 'Ark of the Covenant', which was also called the 'Ark of the Testimony'.
- E. 'Seven angels came out of the temple and were given the Seven Vials of the wrath of God' (vs.6,7). **Note:** These are not angels as we know them, but glorified men. **Note:** The 'angels of the seven churches' (ch.1) are men (pastors, elders, messengers). In ch.17:1, one of seven angels (men) showed John the mystery of the 'Great Whore' and the 'Beast' that carried her. In ch.21:9, one showed John the holy city. And when John saw, he fell down at the feet of the angel and was told that he was an ordinary man - one of the prophets (chs.19:9,10; 22:8,9).
- Too, they are clothed in pure white linen. And in ch.19:8, we are told that this is the 'righteousness of the saints'.
- a. 'Vials' (bowls) were used in temple service. **Note:** A bowl of blood was taken by the high priest into the Holy of Holies one day a year, and it was sprinkled upon the altar to atone for the sins of the people. But, now, it's a different ministry. The bowls of wrath are poured out on a Christ-rejecting world. And all who reject the blood of Christ must bear the judgment for sin.
- b. 'Temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God' (v.8). **Note:** When the 'tabernacle' was completed in the wilderness, the Bible says, 'Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle' (Exo.40:34). Too, when Solomon's Temple was completed, we're told, 'And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud (Shekinah glory) filled the house of the Lord. So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord' (I Kings 8:10,11).
- c. The 'cloud' speaks of 'grace'; the 'smoke' of 'judgment' (Isa.6:1-4; Exo.19:18).
Note: The fact that no one can enter the temple of God until the plagues are finished means that no one can intercede to stop the judgment (v.8).