

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

### "Heavenly Temple Opened"

Revelation 15:5-8

#### Introduction

1. Preceding each section of seven judgments (seals, trumpets, vials), there is an introductory vision. Prior to the seal judgments, there were two introductory chapters 4 and 5. Before the trumpet judgments (8:7ff) there is the brief introduction (8:1-6). Now before the outpouring of the vial judgments, chapter 15 is recorded.

2. Three events are given in the opening verses (vv. 1 – 4). These affirm: a sign (v. 1), a sea (v. 2) and a song (vv. 3, 4). All of these are intended to lead to 1) fear God, 2) glorify God. 3) ascribe God as holy. 4) give God worship. 5) manifest His judgments (all in v. 4).

3. Now there is a significant break introducing something entirely new. The phrase "after these things" (μετὰ ταῦτα meta tauta) denotes this (cf. 4:1; 7:1, 9; 18:1; 19:1). John says his vision brings up something absolutely spectacular, the temple.

Note: While there is considerable discussion about this temple, the following is stated in Scripture: a. There is a literal temple in heaven (Ex. 25:40 cf. Heb. 9:23). b. Articles of the temple are mentioned: 1) the ark (11:19). 2) golden altar (8:3). These matters are not in conflict with the New Jerusalem (21:22), for then God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple. 3) Judgment matters are connected with the heavenly temple (cf. 8:3-5; 11:19). God is about to fulfill His covenant promises to Israel (cf. Ro. 4:4; Zech. 12:12).

4. In connection with the temple, the following features are mentioned. These demonstrate the mighty hand of God:

#### 1. THE TESTIMONY v. 5

##### a. It is compared

Elsewhere the temple is mentioned (11:19). There the ark of the covenant was seen. The ark noted God's presence with and concern for His people. It was also the pledge of His purpose and grace. Here there is no ark. God's enemies are in question, hence this is a witness or testimony regarding the judgments on the earthdwellers. This is God's judicial testimony to the guilt of man. Here is wrath, not grace.

##### b. It is opened

The aorist passive verb is used (ἠνοίγη henoige) indicating a divine activity. Consider other openings in this book (4:1; 11:19; 15:5; 19:11; 20:12).

#### 2. THE ANGELS v. 6

##### a. Their source

These angels came out of the temple. These are not some other angels, but those already mentioned (v. 1). Think of it. John did not see priests ministering in the holy place, but angels who are ministers of judgment. This is all that God can do for man now. Incredible.

##### b. Their number

The number seven is that of completion in Scripture, hence these angels represent the full power of God in judgment. There are three numbered groups of angels: of four (7:1), of seven (8:2, 16:1), of twelve (21:12). Those associated with the trumpets are a highly honored company because they are introduced by a definite article "the seven angels" and they "stand before God" (8:2 cf. Luke 1:19). Angels have no relationship with God founded on redemption.

They are considered servants who are characterized by obedience and activity in service (Ps. 103:20; Heb. 1:7, 14).

##### c. Their clothing

The righteous character of the angel' s ministry is expressed by the pure white linen with which they are clothed (ἐνδεδυμένοι endedumenoi , perfect passive). The golden belts on the breasts, not the loins, also portray divine righteousness and faithfulness (cf. Isa. 11:5; Rev. 1:13).

#### 3. THE BEASTS v. 7

##### a. Who they are

Looking back to the previous mention of the "living" creatures, it is evident that they are creatures who apparently are executors of God' s judicial government.

##### b. What they do

One living creature, a representative of creation, gave (aorist active ἔδωκε edoke) to the seven angels seven golden vials (bowls, saucers) filled with the wrath of God (cf. v. 1). This solemn event is accented by the fact that God is the "One Who lives (present tense) forever and ever." Mark it: The ever-living, eternal God is the God of judgment. Regretfully, this attribute of His being is often overshadowed by His grace.

#### 4. THE SMOKE v. 8

##### a. What it did

Patently it filled the temple. The passive voice (filled, ἐγεμίθη egemithe ) shows there were agents to do this. They are recorded. The smoke was the result of the fire of God' s righteous anger against sin. It came not from incense of worship, but fire, a symbol of consuming judgment (Ex. 19:18; Psa. 18:8; Isa. 6:4).

##### b. Where it came from

The prepositions used (ἐκ ek) show that God' s presence as evidenced by the fire and smoke were "out of" God' s glory and power. What a spectacular display.

##### c. How it worked

The text is clear. It was vain for anyone to attempt an entrance into the temple (cf. Ex. 11:34, 35, 1 Kgs 8:10, 11). Not even a priest could enter. God' s offended majesty against sin is forthright. Nothing here below could claim mercy. The time for intercession to God was past. Judgments are now to roll forth until God' s wrath is finished (τελεθῶσιν telethosin, aorist passive subjunctive). The storm of judgment would run its course.

Conclusion God' s grace has its limits. God' s love cannot forever be rejected. What an arresting vision given to John before the seven vials are poured on the earth. If ever there was a time to flee to Christ for refuge, it is now. God grant this for any unsaved, unredeemed soul today. For all who stand justified before God, let this solemn study provoke Godliness and burden to exalt Christ in daily conduct. Amen