

Unapproachable

Revelation 15

It was a beautiful sunny day and I took my friend Shane up to the top of Sentinel Dome in Yosemite National Park. There, you can get a 360 degree view of the top of the world that staggers the mind to take it in. Shane is a reserved guy and a big guy too, but he looked around and literally started tearing up. He couldn't believe how beautiful it was.

We usually think of the wrath of God in terms of destructive horror. Most people would rather discuss some other topic. But here in this short chapter is a look at God's wrath from a heavenly perspective. You may find it surprising.

*Then I saw another **sign** in heaven, great and **marvelous**: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is **complete**.* As with the woman clothed with the sun in chapter twelve, we are told this is a sign. Before He pours out His wrath, God wants us to understand two things about it. This sign is intended to teach us something very important and fundamental. First, it is "great and marvelous". That word marvelous means wonderful and always applies to something positive. It's a deep admiration.

You see, this outpouring of wrath that's about to come is not a last minute reaction to the arrogance of the devil and his antichrist world. It cannot be

compared to the wrath of man which is irrational and without purpose. Man's wrath is driven by sin, and its expression is always in some form of sin. In fact, the wrath that is displayed in heaven at this time is an expression as far beyond man's ability to comprehend as is eternal love or the waters of life.

From heaven's perspective, this wrath is great and wonderful. That's because it will produce wonderfully positive eternal consequences. There is no sin in it, only justice and purpose. God's children will never in all eternity experience His wrath. In fact, that brings us to point number two. This sign shows us that in the seven last plagues, God's wrath is complete. There's no hang over, no lasting grudge – there's simply no sin in it. Throughout scripture, seven is the number of completion and that is true here as well. With those lessons in mind, God then shows us what has become of those people he just brought home in His final 'harvest'.

*And I saw something like a **sea of glass** mingled with **fire**, and those who **have** the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, **standing on the sea of glass**, having harps of God. It's important to notice the present tense of the victorious – they have the victory or are victorious. Heaven is the eternal 'now'. Therefore, these people don't live in some past accomplishment. They no longer dream of some*

future victory. They have it, and it is ever present.

Each of the four things they overcome requires a unique victory – the victory over the beast is one of holding to the truth in spite of amazing deception. The power of the beast was in his ability, given by Satan, to deceive. The victory over his image is one of rejecting the worship of a false god in spite of the vast majority giving in. The image of the beast caused all who would not worship the beast to be killed. The victory over his mark is one of enduring terrible hardship. Any who would not take the mark could not buy or sell; they were locked out of the economic system. The victory over the number of his name is one of a fearless understanding that the beast is just a man. By calculating his number, they came to know that and feared only God.

But what is this sea of glass? Why is it mingled with fire? Saints in the fire...hmm...sure! Daniel chapter three. When King Nebuchadnezzar threw the three Hebrews, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, into the burning fiery furnace it was stoked to seven times its normal heat. They, like these tribulation saints, refused to worship a false idol. And they had stood alone for, you know the story, when the music played, everyone else bowed down to the golden idol. But once in the fire, they were quite content, for in the fire with them was none other than the Son of Man, Jesus. Nebuchadnezzar had to command them to come out. They were in no hurry to leave – they were at

peace, perfect peace, and the flames could not hurt them.

In like manner, these tribulation saints are at peace, perfect peace. The once raging sea is now like transparent glass. It's mixed with fire, but they aren't swimming in it or drowning under it. Rather, they are symbolically standing upon it and are content in the presence of Lord. Just as Jesus walked upon the sea of Galilee by faith, so these saints learned to walk. Now, the flames have no power to hurt them. That gives them reason to recall God's faithfulness and sing His praise.

*They sing the song of **Moses**, the servant of God, and the song of the **Lamb**, saying:*

*"Great and **marvelous** are Your works,*

Lord God Almighty!

***Just and true** are Your ways,*

O King of the saints!

*Who shall not **fear You**, O*

*Lord, and glorify **Your** name?*

For You alone are holy.

*For all nations shall come and **worship** before **You**,*

For Your judgments have been manifested."

Two songs are in their heart – the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb; the servant and the Son. Clearly, these are Hebrew believers. Who else would sing the song of Moses? It may be the one recorded in Deut 32. But the song of the Lamb? That's a new one and I can't wait to hear it! On the other hand, it could be that what they are singing may indeed be both the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

Moses (they have come to understand) took them to Jesus. The law was a schoolmaster, a tutor to show them that they couldn't save themselves. And Jesus took them to heaven. His awesome gracious sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary opened the way, removed the veil from before the holy of holies and gave them access into the presence of God.

Note that they agree with John that the judgments of God are both great and marvelous or rather **wonderful**. Unlike the AC, His ways are just and true.

*After these things I looked, and behold, the **temple** of the **tabernacle** of the **testimony** in heaven was opened.* Did you ever see one of those Russian toys that open up to reveal another similar toy inside? Then you open that one and yet another is revealed, and another. In like manner, we are shown a temple within a tabernacle within a testimony. The word here for temple specifically applies to the holy place and holy of holies, the core inner sanctum. The tabernacle is the tent like covering of this holy place, and the testimony is the outward expression of all that which is within. This very place was pictured in the OT tabernacle which God specifically showed Moses how to make. He told him to make all the things associated with it "according to pattern", that is, His design. In short, (and in general) the holy place and holy of holies portray the divine ministry and nature of Christ, the tent covering them portrays His earthly

ministry, and the curtains surrounding it all portray the two groups of believers – Hebrew and gentile.

From Abraham to Christ was approximately 2000 years and so also with this present 'church' age – a perfect balance if you would. It's no accident that the entire church, Jew and gentile believers in Christ, is called the **dwelling place** of God. In fact, the curtain wall of the original tabernacle was a beautiful type and symbol of this. In Exodus 26:1-8, we see that the tabernacle's walls were made of ten curtains – grouped specifically in two sets of five each (five is the number of grace in the Bible!). The two groups of five were then joined together by 50 gold clasps. Now, 50 is the number of jubilee in scripture (refer to Lev 25:10) and when you read about it you recognize that of course, Jesus Christ is our Jubilee. And so, pictured in the design of the curtain walls of God's dwelling are those saved by grace and joined together in Christ – Jew and gentile believers.

This is the same pattern we see in the throne room itself with the Lamb in the midst of the throne (as the holy of holies was in the midst of the tabernacle), surrounded by the four living creatures who illustrate the earthly expressions of Christ (as the altars and other furniture of the tabernacle express Christ), surrounded by the 24 elders who represent all believers (like the curtains surrounding the tabernacle).

*And out of the **temple** came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in **pure bright linen**, and having their chests girded with **golden bands**.* Three things are important here – first, the seven angels come out of the holy place. They come directly from the presence of God Almighty. These plagues come straight from Him and His holiness. Second, these angels are clothed in pure bright linen indicating their righteousness and purity. Third, they are girded with golden bands just as we saw Jesus in chapter one. Gold is associated with the highest authority and pure faith in the Bible. The fact that these bands girded their chests may indicate that their hearts are pure and submitted to the Highest authority. In other words, there can be no question as to where these plagues come from.

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. This is a subtle but important event. You cannot by default, associate plagues with God's wrath. They are indeed separate. Many plagues have come upon mankind throughout history, most of them the result of man's own doings. Here we learn that the plagues sent out from God are now combined with His wrath. I'm inclined to believe that it is the lion-like "living creature" who gives them this component. And it's the wrath of God who lives forever and ever. It's like we are being

reminded that this is the eternal One; this is the same God Who made all things, Who sent His only Son the die for all mankind, Who is full of grace and mercy and love. This event is unlike any before, but yes, it is Him.

*The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no **one** was **able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.*** God's glory and power now produces a smoke that fills the heavenly holy place and makes it impossible to enter. His glory and power are ever a part of Who He is, yet at this point, they make Him **unapproachable**. I submit that it is because He is here unleashing them to accomplish His pure purpose. The expression of this power and glory are beyond even heaven's ability to bear. This fully distinguishes these plagues from any and all that have ever gone before. This tells us that there is no room for repentance at this point. God is unapproachable even in heaven. Though the remnant of Israel will yet be protected, no one on earth will be getting saved – like Pharaoh of old, all other hearts are hardened.

The hour has come. In response to absolute evil, God's wrath will begin the cleansing of His creation.