

LESSON 4

A SCENE IN HEAVEN

SEVEN ANGELS WITH SEVEN PLAGUES (15:1)

Chapters 15 and 16, which tell of the seven bowls of wrath, help to give Christians the right perspective. Chapter 15, the shortest in the book, introduces the bowls, while chapter 16 pictures the bowls being poured out.

Paul challenged every Christian when he said that we should “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). In Revelation 15, John recorded “things which are not seen” concerning the plans and power of God. We should concentrate upon these things.

1. Which five of the ten original plagues are reflected among the seven bowls?
2. How are these plagues unique among the other uses of plague imagery in Revelation?
3. What does the word translated “finished” in verse 1 mean?
4. What significant difference is obvious between the trumpets and the bowls?

THE SEA OF GLASS (15:2–4)

Since the angels with the plagues are introduced in the first verse, we might expect to proceed immediately to the dispensing of those woes. Instead, a scene of worship comes first (vv. 2–4).

5. How has worship been played a role in each of the three cycles of seals, trumpets, and bowls?
6. What factors suggest that the vision of heavenly worship is part of a new section depicting faithful Christians who had died in John’s day?

7. What was the significance of the “sea of glass mixed with fire” (15:2)?
8. What significance might each of the translations of the phrase “standing [on/by] the sea of glass” (15:2) have?
9. What was the song of Moses and the Lamb that was being sung in 15:3, 4?
10. What is the most significant characteristic of the song of victory regarding its focus?
11. How does the song of Revelation 15:3, 4 borrow from the Psalms?
12. What three convictions does the song express?
13. Does the statement “all the nations will come and worship before You” (15:4) prove the idea of universal salvation? Explain.

THE TEMPLE IN HEAVEN IS OPENED (15:5–8)

Continuing with the Exodus symbolism, John saw a replica of the tabernacle which had been constructed at Mount Sinai. The purpose of opening the sanctuary was to allow the heavenly messengers to emerge.

14. Why are the words “temple” and “tabernacle” used in the same phrase in verse 5?
15. Why might the detail of what the angels wore have been included (15:6)?
16. What might be significant about the detail of the bowls coming from the four creatures?
17. What does the Greek word translated “bowls” (15:7) mean?
18. What does the word translated “wrath” in verse 7 mean?
19. When did a similar event to that of verse 8 occur?
20. What steps were involved in preparing to dispense the bowls of wrath, and what principal do they illustrate?