

BITTER HONEY: THE REVELATION

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CHAPTER 15: PREPARING THE BOWLS OF WRATH

Verse 1

Revelation 15-16 will repeat John's vision of the seven trumpets as seven bowls of wrath. The bowls would be drawn from Revelation 8. In Revelation 8:2, John saw seven angels who were given trumpets. Then in Revelation 8:3-5, Christ filled His censor with coals from the altar and cast them to earth in judgment. In doing so, He mirrored Ezekiel's vision in Ezekiel 10:2. In Revelation 15:1, the same seven angels appeared. Instead of trumpets, the angels were given bowls of the fire which Christ had poured out in Revelation 8. As the angels poured out their bowls of wrath, John repeated his vision of the seven trumpets. Why would God repeat virtually the same vision a second time? The answer may come from Genesis 41:32. Pharaoh dreamed about cows and corn. Joseph said that God had repeated his dream because the matter was determined by God, and God would quickly bring it to pass. God may also repeat the seven trumpets as bowls of wrath because He had determined the matter and would shortly bring it to pass.

Verses 2-4

In Revelation 15:2-4, John saw the delivered church standing before God's throne. Christ's people sang the song of Moses and the Lamb. The Song of Moses referred to Deuteronomy 32:3-4 which echoed Revelation 15:3. Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 32, "For I proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God! The Rock! His work is perfect because all of His ways are just. He is a God of faithfulness and is without injustice. He is righteous and upright." Deuteronomy continued with a description of God's love and His guidance. Moses described Israel's sin, God's use of the gentile nations to chasten His people, and God's deliverance by judging the nations. The song ended with the words, "Rejoice, O nations, with His people. He will avenge the blood of His servants, and He will render vengeance on His adversaries. He will atone for His land and His people" (Deuteronomy 32:43).

In Revelation 15, this theme was repeated because God would judge the nations that had chastened His people. However, those gentiles who came to belief rejoiced in Him. Other phrases in Revelation 15 also came from the Old Testament. Jeremiah 10:7 spoke about judgment on the nations. It said, "Who would not fear You, Oh King of the nations!" David was speaking about deliverance when he added, "All nations that You have made will come and worship before You, Oh Lord, and they will glorify Your name because You are great and you do wondrous deeds. You alone are God" (Psalm 86:9-10). So the themes that ran through the Song of Moses and the Lamb were judgment on the world and deliverance for God's people whether they are Jews or gentiles.

Verses 5-8

After the Song of Moses and the Lamb, the temple in heaven was opened. Hebrews 8:2-5 claimed that there was such a temple in heaven. The earthly temple was just a copy of it. In Revelation 15, the seven angels with seven last plagues came out of the temple. Then one of the cherubim gave each of the angels a bowl full of God's wrath. The cherubim gave out the wrath for two reasons. First, cherubim in Revelation were given the authority to call nations against each other in judgment. When Christ broke the first four seals, it was the cherubim who cried "Come!" The cherubim served a similar purpose in Revelation 7:2 and 9:14. The cherubim gave out the bowls of wrath because they were calling nations against each other in judgment. Babylon's fall and Armageddon would destroy the earth through man's own violence.

The cherubim were also designated to give out bowls of wrath because these verses were drawn from Ezekiel 10. In Ezekiel, a cherub took fire from between the cherubim and handed it to Christ. Then Christ poured this fire on Jerusalem in judgment. Now seven angels would pour out this fire and would judge the world. The seven angels were dressed in a way similar to the angel of the Lord. Their clothing may have continued the parallel to Ezekiel 10. When the seven angels received their bowls of wrath, the temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and power. No one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues were finished. This again paralleled Ezekiel. When Christ took His fire from the cherub, the temple in heaven was filled with the cloud of God's glory (Ezekiel 10:3-4). This cloud was more than a symbol in a dream. When Moses dedicated the tabernacle, this cloud covered it and filled the tent. Moses could not enter because of the cloud of God's glory (Exodus 40:34-35). This cloud also appeared when Solomon dedicated the temple (II Chronicles 5:13-14). So the smoke in Revelation 15:8 showed God's presence and glory. The bowls of wrath were filled with the fire that Christ had received in Ezekiel 10. In Luke 12:49, Jesus declared that He had come to cast this fire on the earth.