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PREPARATION FOR JUDGMENT

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION
REVELATION 15:1-8
NUMBER 25

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REVELATION 15:1-8 "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest. And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled."

Revelation 15 is simply an introduction to chapter 16. We are going to study the seven last plagues and the judgments that come in the Tribulation before the Second Coming of Christ. We will see the administration of the seven last plagues. These vials or drinking cups are said to contain the sins of the world. Christ actually drank the sins of the world and then our sins were judged. Sins of the whole world were poured out on Christ. So this is the picture here of the seven vials or the seven drinking cups. Each of the seven drinking cups contain the wrath of God and each is a judgment and instead of Christ drinking the cups, seven angels are going to pour out the content of these cups on the earth. Each of these judgments poured out is for a different group--but all of them are those who have rejected Christ.

REVELATION 15:1 "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God."

We have three signs in the last half of Revelation.

1st--The sign of the woman in Revelation 12:1. The woman was Israel.

2nd--The sign of the dragon in Revelation 12:3. Satan is the dragon.

3rd--The sign of the seven angels of judgment here in our passage.

These seven angels have the seven plagues. The Greek word is "Plege" and it literally means someone giving someone else a spanking. It is the blow of a whip, or the whack of a paddle. It means discipline and judgment. These are the last judgments before the Second Coming of Christ. These drinking cups, these vials are filled with the wrath of God. God has taken all he can and judgment must fall.

REVELATION 15:2 "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God." We will now see the just and fair reason for the pouring out of these plagues. It is because of the curse of religion that has fallen on the whole world.

"I saw a sea of glass". It is a figure meaning that the wind of sin can touch you no more. Your old sin nature is gone and you are given a resurrection body. This figure is used back in Revelation 4:6 and there it refers to the church in heaven. This is the same as described in REVELATION 21:4 "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Also 1 THESSALONIANS 4:16-17 "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

Here the reference is to the Tribulational saints in the presence of God. The fire pictures the pressure which comes to the Tribulational saints. These believers were pressured by the economic system of the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire. They are described here as being constantly victorious over the enemy. This is the meaning of the present tense of the verb "had gotten the victory". They were victorious right down to the wire. They didn't allow fire and death to disturb them.

Notice the four areas of their victory--

1. Victory over the beast. This means victory over the charming personality of this dictator. This dictator will be a very attractive and persuasive man. But Bible doctrine is a greater force than the personality of this dictator.
2. Victory over his image. This is the statue placed in the temple in Jerusalem. This is the center of his religious system.
(In a similar way we have seen this in Russia and the statue of Lenin they have placed all over Russia.)
3. Victory over his mark. This refers to the economic system of ecumenical religion. This was the identification they gave to all who bowed to this dictator. If you had the mark, you were in. If not, you couldn't buy food, couldn't get a job, etc.
4. Victory over the number of his name. We studied his number last in Revelation 13:18. This is something to create public opinion. In this way they tried to arouse public opinion during the Tribulation in favor of their system. (We have many illustrations of this in the Bible. Jesse, the father of David was always trying to buy favor for his boys. He would send presents to try to bribe the good favor of superior officers. He was always sending cheese or some other gift like wine to get these officers to favor his sons. When Samuel visited Jesse, he trotted out the eldest son and Samuel wanted to make him king at once. But God slapped his wrist real good and said, "No". And then we read, "Man looketh on the outward appearance but God looketh on the heart.") It is possible for us to be greatly influenced by public opinion and that was the technique of this dictator of the Revived Roman Empire.

REVELATION 15:3 "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." Here we have a great choir breaking out into song. It is spontaneous. It comes from their own volition. They were singing impulsively. This kind of singing shows inner happiness.

Notice the Song of Moses. We have this song in Exodus 15 and in Deuteronomy 31:19--21--22--29 and in Deuteronomy 32. So we actually have the words of the Song of Moses. The general gist of the hymn is the faithfulness of the Lord. The grace of the Lord and his faithfulness is the theme of the song. Moses was one of the greatest musicians of all time.

Moses was a musical genius, as also was David. Their theme is that the Lord is faithful to believers in all dispensations. It is a song that creates something of the spirit of "Auld Lang Syne". The Scots sing this song at the end of a party in memory of their absent friends. It is a remembrance type of thing, an emotional song. These believers are looking back and they are remembering that the Lord was faithful to them during their greatest pressure period in human history. The greatest pressure in history was created by religion.

The song of the Lamb. This song has to do with their present circumstances. They are in the presence of The Lord Christ, and they sing this song to him. One day we will be in that number and can sing of the Lord's faithfulness. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of nations".

This is a song to the Lord. The Lord is in focus here. They are singing about the plan of God. They are constantly in awe of the great works of God. They realize that God does all the work in salvation. He is called "Lord God" almighty.

"Lord God" refers to his person. Lord refers to his person and God refers to his essence qualities. Almighty emphasizes one of his essence qualities, his omnipotence. So when you have the Lord God Almighty there is nothing to fear. Just and true-- this refers to the kind of God we have. This is his essence. He is immutable, he never changes. "King of the nations" is his title in the Millennium. He is to set up a kingdom and he is to rule forever.

REVELATION 15:4 "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." Here we have a form of a question to give emphasis to what is being said here. We hold God in awe. Fear here really means trust. It means occupation with Christ. This occupation with Christ is for those who get into doctrine. This is for phase two. All during their life they are to trust and not doubt. Then in heaven they will have the glory which is mentioned here. Glorify here means perpetual happiness. "Only holy" refers to the one way of salvation. He is holy and for us to be holy we must believe on him and God sees his perfection and the justice and righteousness of God is satisfied and he pronounces us "Holy". The "Only" also means there is only one way into the kingdom and that way is Christ. This is our way of saying, "There is only one door of salvation". "For all nations shall come" is future and refers to the Millennium. God has been more than fair to all these who will receive this judgment we will study in this next chapter. God gave them every opportunity and they are not to be pitied, for they had their chance and they threw it away.

REVELATION 15:5 "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened" Here we have the source of these seven last plagues. They came from God. Notice the words "Temple of the tabernacle". It means there will be a temple in heaven like the tabernacle. This temple in heaven is said to be a testimony to the person and work of Jesus Christ. Remember, everything in the tabernacle was a testimony to Jesus Christ. The furniture, the articles, the arrangement, even the colors all pointed to Jesus Christ. So this temple in heaven is based on the tabernacle that was on the earth. This is a testimony to Jesus Christ. And those who have rejected Christ are about to receive seven fantastic judgments. They by-passed the cross and now they are reaping just what they deserve. These seven judgments, terrible in nature, give them their last chance. It is evangelism by disaster. This is for the ultra hardheaded. Everything else has been tried, now God will make one final attempt to reach them.

REVELATION 15:6-7 "And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever." Here we get a picture of the administrators of these seven plagues. They are clothed, pure and white. In other words, these judgments are fair. There is no injustice or coercion here. The judgments of God are always perfect and fair. There is no prejudice in the judgments of God. The figure of "breasts girded with golden girdles" actually refers to the badge of their rank and authority. This was the mark of their authority from God. This is similar to the kind of authority John the Baptist had. He was not a graduate of their schools, he didn't have any degree, didn't have any approval of the religious systems in Jerusalem, yet he had authority from God and he had the largest crowds to hear him preach of anyone in the ancient world. When a man has his authority from God, then he can speak with authority.

(The same is true of the Pastor-teacher. He gets his authority from God and from the Word of God. You can only communicate with authority.)

So these golden belts were emblems of their authority. These angels are superior to the demons who will oppose them in chapter 16. These are high ranking angels. There are four angels who are higher than these seven, and they are called the four living creatures. The words translated "Four beasts" should be four living creatures. The word is "Zoa". How the translators got beasts out of this word I do not know. These four living creatures hand out the seven drinking cups, the seven vials, to these seven angels and the cups are full of the wrath of God.

REVELATION 15:8 "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled." The "Glory of God" here refers to his perfect essence. The temple of God was closed and there was no activity there until these seven judgments had been poured out on the earth.

REVELATION 16:1 "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth." So these seven angels are commanded to go and pour out their judgments on the earth. This great voice here is the voice of God the Father. Each drinking cup contained a different judgment and each angel goes a different way. In Rev. 5:2 and Rev. 7:2 we had the voice of angels but here we have the voice of God.

The seven plagues are very similar. Some of them are like the plagues that were sent on Egypt in the time of Moses.

You recall the first plague on Egypt was a plague involving nature, when water was turned into blood. Here the second and third drinking cups turn water into blood. The second plague in Egypt was the plague of frogs. Here in the sixth drinking cup we have a plague like frogs. The sixth plague in Egypt made sores break out on people, and we have something similar to that in the first plague here. The seventh plague in Egypt brought hail and the seventh plague here brings hail. Darkness was one of the plagues in Egypt and here the fifth drinking cup brings darkness.

So we have some similarity in these plagues and the plagues that came upon Egypt. In Egypt God put bona fide pressure on Pharaoh to release the Jews. Both in Egypt and here in these plagues please notice that the plagues were against unbelievers. The principle for this judgments is clearly stated in ROMANS 1:20 "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" The words "Without excuse" means that no one will be judged without first being given a chance to accept Christ. This has always been true and this will always be true. All of these plagues are given to manifest the power of a perfect God.