

Study 30: Revelation 15:1-8

- 1 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues-- last, because with them God's wrath is completed.**

John is seeing things from a heavenly perspective. I wrote in an earlier study that he saw reality more clearly on the island of Patmos than the churches to whom he was writing that weren't in exile like he was. Why was he able to see? Because he was "in the Spirit" on the Lord's day.

Old Testament prophets were referred to as "seers." They saw things from God's perspective. A lot of people get weird with this, but the reality is that we all have the capability of "seeing" if we can understand how to walk and work "in the Spirit."

You may think "seeing" like this is only for a special few. That may be true, but only because most believers don't understand where they are. What do I mean? Let's let Paul explain:

But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-- it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

We are seated in heavenly places. You must only look around where you "live" to be able to see the things of heaven.

Before we move on, I must comment on the number seven, used once again in verse 1. That number is used 41 times through chapter 15. I said I would not get into a study of numerology in these lessons, but the number seven is universally accepted as the number of spiritual perfection. That means when the number seven appears, it is representing a totality that goes beyond a literal number. Consider all the uses of seven up to this point:

- 1. Seven churches – 1:4,7**
- 2. Seven spirits – 1:4, 3:1**
- 3. Seven lamp stands – 1:12**
- 4. Seven stars – 1:16**
- 5. Seven lamps – 4:5**
- 6. Seven seals – 5:1**
- 7. Seven horns and eyes – 5:6**
- 8. Seven angels – 8:2**
- 9. Seven trumpets – 8:2**
- 10. Seven thunders – 10:3**
- 11. Seven heads on the dragon – 12:3**

12. Seven angels – 15:1

13. Seven plagues – 15:1

14. Seven bowls – 15:6

Each example of seven represents God's spiritual perfection in all that He is and does.

2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God

There is a reward for those who overcome the devil and his system. God honors them, if not in this life, then certainly in the next. It is interesting that God gives them harps to play. A harp is a hard instrument to master. Not many people on earth actually play a harp. But if God gives you a harp, something seemingly complicated and hard to do, then he will equip you to play it!

Notice that the saints are rewarded for overcoming, yet it is the grace of God that enables you and me to overcome. But somehow it is a partnership. I must cooperate with God's grace and agree to allow it to work in my life. Yet I can never take credit for what God has done in my life; it is His work alone.

There is a sea of glass mixed with fire. Glass reflects things and the Church is to reflect God's glory on earth. The word is also a glass for we look in it and it shows us who we are. Finally, it is hard to hide behind glass. The Church's deeds are to be pure and holy.

3 and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.

The people who were victorious over the beast sang the song of Moses. It is interesting that they would sing this song. It is also interesting that plagues were mentioned in verse one. Why this reference to Moses and the plagues of Egypt?

God delivered Israel from all the plagues He brought upon Egypt and then He delivered them from Egypt itself by the parting of the Red Sea. After the Red Sea deliverance, Moses sang a song of thanksgiving to commemorate that event. Anyone familiar with the Old Testament who would read these words of John would be able to make the connection.

It would be good to read Moses song from Exodus:

Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD: "I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. He is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The

LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has hurled into the sea. The best of Pharaoh's officers are drowned in the Red Sea. The deep waters have covered them; they sank to the depths like a stone. "Your right hand, O LORD, was majestic in power. Your right hand, O LORD, shattered the enemy. In the greatness of your majesty you threw down those who opposed you. You unleashed your burning anger; it consumed them like stubble. By the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up. The surging waters stood firm like a wall; the deep waters congealed in the heart of the sea. "The enemy boasted, 'I will pursue, I will overtake them. I will divide the spoils; I will gorge myself on them. I will draw my sword and my hand will destroy them.' But you blew with your breath, and the sea covered them. They sank like lead in the mighty waters. "Who among the gods is like you, O LORD? Who is like you-- majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders? You stretched out your right hand and the earth swallowed them. "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling. The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moab will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away; terror and dread will fall upon them. By the power of your arm they will be as still as a stone-- until your people pass by, O LORD, until the people you bought pass by. You will bring them in and plant them on the mountain of your inheritance-- the place, O LORD, you made for your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, your hands established. The LORD will reign for ever and ever." (Exodus 15:1-18)

Since God delivered His people in Revelation from the beast and his mark, then the people would worship and sing another song of deliverance.

What song are you singing? Is it a song of deliverance? A song of freedom? You cannot sing a song of deliverance from the sidelines. God must deliver you from some real danger for you to sing a song of deliverance. Yet often when the trouble comes, we want to be saved from it instead of being preserved through it.

4 Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

The focus is the nations. All the nations or ethnic groups of people will see and worship.

How committed are you to seeing the truth of God spread to all nations? In modern terms, that means a commitment to effective missions work. Everyone can pray, give or go. Jesus said to go into all the nations. I have asked many people, "What part of 'go' don't you understand?" It is a simple word that is hard to do.

God loves all the nations. There is no one culture that is His favorite, no one language that is His preferred means of communication. The objective is that as many people from

as many ethnic groups as possible will worship Him. Remember, I said in an earlier study that the battle is over worship. Everyone does worship someone and something. The options need to be reduced to one: Worship God!

5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened.

Here is another Old Testament reference, this time to the tabernacle of the testimony. I heard a preacher say once that what was begun in Genesis ends in Revelation; what starts in the Old Testament has its conclusion in the New Testament.

The writer of Hebrews explained:

Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary. tabernacle was set up. In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the Glory, overshadowing the atonement cover. But we cannot discuss these things in detail now. When everything had been arranged like this, the priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings-- external regulations applying until the time of the new order. When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! (Hebrews 9:1-14)

Old Testament worship was a type or shadow of heavenly realities. But then the tabernacle was closed, now it is open. Before only one could enter, now all can enter.

- 6 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests.**

The angels carrying the plagues were not some accident; they came from the temple itself, just as the plagues on Egypt came from God. It is interesting that while Pharaoh resisted God and his plagues, many Egyptians became sympathetic to and even joined the Israelites when they left Egypt. God's judgments, while fulfilling His holiness and judging sin, are also to bring people to Him.

Everything is bright and shiny in the presence of God. There is nothing dull or uninteresting. If God surrounds Himself with color, shouldn't we do so as well?

- 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.**

I am glad I know God and am not an object for His wrath! Notice how all heaven is involved in doing the will of God: the angels, four living creatures and elders.

In earlier studies, we speculated whether the four living creatures represented the Church. If that is the case, then somehow the Church is involved in meting out God's judgment on the earth.

- 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.**