

**A Sign In Heaven, Seven Angels
and Seven Bowls of Wrath**
Rev. 15-16

Introduction:

1. In Romans 11 Paul used the image of an olive tree to describe the people of God.
 - a. Some branches were broken off. Others were grafted in.
 - b. Those broken off represented people who were separated from God because of their unbelief.
 - c. Those grafted in represented people who had been joined with God because of their belief.
2. Rom. 11:22 says, "Behold then the kindness and the severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off."
3. This passage reminds us of the two aspects of God's nature: His justice and His graciousness. He is gracious to the penitent. Those who trust in Him for forgiveness are relieved. Those who fail to trust in His forgiveness experience the consequence of their sin in being "cut off" from Him.
4. The justice and the graciousness of God are mingled at the cross so that even here we might say, "Behold then the kindness and the severity of God:" His severity in the death of Jesus for our sin; His kindness in our deliverance through Him.
5. In Rev. 15 and 16 this theme is evident as God is praised for His righteous acts, including the pouring out of His wrath on the rebellious.

Discussion:

- I. Those victorious over the beast sing praises to God for His righteous actions (15:1-4).
 - A. Verse 1 summarizes and introduces what the seven plagues are about and defines what they mean: "in them the wrath of God is finished."
 - B. The wrath of God is always against evil, sin, sinners and those who oppose the people of God.
 1. When God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage He came against those opposed Him with ten plagues.
 2. Although the number of the plagues is different here there is some similarity. In both cases the plagues represent God's wrath against those who oppose Him and those who are His.
 - C. Verses 2-4 envision those who are victorious. Before the wrath of God is poured out they are singing praise to God.
 1. They are singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.
 - a. Not two songs, but one, but the song connects the deliverance of the Exodus and the deliverance provided by means of the Lamb (5:9-10). Both are reminiscent of the wrath of God.
 - b. When Moses and the sons of Israel crossed the Red Sea they sang the song recorded in Ex. 15. Note 14:30-31.

- c. There is another “song of Moses” in Deut. 32.
- d. “To which does Rev. 15 refer?” Perhaps a question that does not need to be answered for both address God great justice and wrath against sin.
 - 1) In Ex. 15 it is God’s wrath against Egypt.
 - 2) In Deut. 32 it is God’s wrath against Israel’s own sin.
- 2. Ex. 15.
 - a. Note the praise of God in verses 1-3. Note the statement of verse 3. It forms a sort of pivot point before addressing His wrath against Pharaoh.
 - b. Note verses 4-12 as indicative of God’s wrath against the enemy.
 - c. But in lovingkindness He led the people whom He redeemed (v. 13).
 - d. “The Lord shall reign forever and ever” (v. 18). Cf. Rev. 15:3d.
- 3. Deut. 32.
 - a. Reminds the people of God’s greatness and what He had done for them.
 - b. But they acted corruptly (5). They forsook Him (15ff).
 - c. His wrath would be upon them (35, 39-43).
- 4. Two quotations in Rev. 15:4.
 - a. Psa. 86:9 regarding all the nations coming and worshiping before Him.
 - b. Isa. 66:23 (the same).
- 5. Why do all nations worship Him? Because His righteous acts have been revealed (cf. Isa. 66:24). God delivers those who are His and brings His wrath against His enemies.
- D. What is Rev. 15 and 16 about? Read 15:5-8. It is about the coming wrath of God upon His enemies. In the first century they were epitomized by Rome, the world forces standing against God (cf. Acts 4:23ff). Later “Babylon” is going to be used as representative of the world forces that stand against God (16:19; chaps. 17-18).

II. His righteous actions involve the pouring forth of His wrath on those who worship the beast (16:1ff). Already from chap. 13 we have identified this beast as the Rome of John’s day.

- A. The first angel poured out his plague and it became a sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.
- B. The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea and it became blood. It resulted in death for every living thing in the sea.
- C. The third angel poured out his bowl on the fresh water sources and they became blood.
 - 1. They had poured out the blood of the saints and prophets and now are given blood to drink.
 - 2. In this, God’s judgment is considered righteous.
- D. The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and men were scorched with fire.
 - 1. They blasphemed God.
 - 2. Did not repent to give Him glory.
- E. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast.
 - 1. His kingdom was darkened.
 - 2. They gnawed their tongues for pain.
 - 3. They blasphemed God.
 - 4. They did not repent. Observe that these bowls of wrath could have had the effect of bringing men to repentance, but did not.

- F. The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates.
 1. The Euphrates was the river that separated the eastern forces from the west.
 2. Israel's enemies were from the east. Babylon came from the east as God's instrument to destroy Jerusalem who had turned to idolatry.
 3. But here it seems the drying of the Euphrates makes way for the gathering of hostile forces against God and those who are His.

III. Har-Megedon represents the spiritual battle that we are in (16:13-16).

- A. All the world forces of this darkness are allied together against the Lord and against His people.
- B. Armagedon or Har-Megedon (aka Megiddo) is used because it was an ancient battlefield for Israel.
 1. Deborah and Barak fought against the kings of Canaan there (Judges 5:19).
 2. Ahaziah, king of Judah, died there after the agents of Jehu shot him (2 Kings 9:27).
 3. King Josiah of Jerusalem was killed there by the Egyptian Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chron. 35:22).
- C. To look for a physical military battle between human armies to be fought sometime in the future misses the point.
 1. The people of the first century were engaged in a spiritual battle. The spiritual forces of their darkness were Rome, Emperor worship, paganism, etc.
 2. We too are engaged in such a spiritual battle. The spiritual forces of our darkness are whatever is opposed to God (false religion, ungodly political systems, all those forces under the control of Satan).

IV. The seventh bowl pours out the wrath of God upon the air (16:17-21).

- A. In Eph. 2:1ff Satan is identified as the "prince of the power of the air." Note the association between this phrase and "according to the course of this world."
- B. This bowl of wrath is poured out on the world, the realm over which Satan's influence is felt.
- C. "And men blasphemed God" (21).
- D. In this the last plague of the wrath of God the result is the same. Instead of repentance there is rebellion against God.

V. What can we take home?

- A. The wrath of God is justified and His judgments righteous.
- B. It comes on all those who are His enemies.
- C. Realization of His wrath should bring repentance.
- D. We are in a spiritual battle like those who fought in the first century. It is not fought with physical military machinery, but with the gospel of peace (Eph. 6:15), the shield of faith (16), the helmet of salvation (17) and the word of God (17).

Conclusion:

1. Can you sing the song of Moses and the Lamb? Or are you on the wrong side?
2. Are you under the wrath of God and responding with blasphemy?
3. Are you one who is victorious over the beast?
4. "Behold then the kindness and the severity of God."