



YES, NO AND MAYBE

1. The people sitting next to me make people angry more often than I do.
2. The seven last plagues are things that we have asked God for.
3. The sea of glass is a body of water in heaven.
4. Ultimately, even the lost will glorify God's name.
5. God is dragging His feet to destroy the wicked.

SEVEN ANGELS WITH SEVEN BOWLS

➤ READ Revelation 15 (NIV)

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. 2 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God 3 and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb:

*"Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.*

*Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations.*

*4 Who will not fear you, 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."

5 After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened. 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. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. 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.

« What about this scene scares you, and what about it makes you happy?

» **Vs. 1: Another great and marvelous sign** - The two adjectives are used together in verse 3 also. Great does not mean "large" or "powerful" in this context, but rather "incredible" or "important." Wonderful can be understood to mean "impressive," "amazing," "astounding." The related verb is used in 13:3, translated there as "with wonder." These are the same words used to describe God in verse 3.

« How is this visual incredible, important, impressive, or astonishing in regards to God?

• **Seven angels with the seven last plagues** - The word translated plagues (plēgas) in this section means a "blow" or "stroke" or the resulting wound or bruise.

• **God's wrath is completed** - The Greek verb translated ended means not only to cease but also to complete. In this context the seven plagues express fully and completely God's anger at sinners.

« How have you pictured God's wrath in the past? Does the wrath pictured here frighten you?

» **Vs. 2: Sea of glass** - A common Jewish belief was that there was a sea of glass that separated heaven from earth.

« What do you think Jesus is trying to say with this imagery of the sea of glass?

DIG DEEPER



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DIG DEEPER...CONTINUED

» **Vs. 3: Just and true are your ways** - The Greek word translated ways means literally “roads,” “paths.” In a figurative sense God’s ways are the things that he does, or the motives that make him do what he does. Very specifically, God’s ways are his actions on behalf of his people (see Psa 145:17). The two adjectives just and true are not to be sharply distinguished in meaning; with reference to actions they mean “correct,” “right,” “fair.” For true see verse 3:7. The same two adjectives are used to modify God’s “judgments” in 16:7; 19:2.

« How is God’s ways just and true?

» **Vs. 4: Who will not fear you, Lord?** - This is a rhetorical way of saying “Everyone will fear and glorify your name.”

» **Vs. 4: And sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb** - After the Exodus, the Israelites sang the song of Moses by the Red Sea, celebrating their victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exod. 15:1-18). Subsequently, it has been sung in every synagogue service, stamping it eternally into Jewish awareness. When Israel returned from Babylonian Captivity and reestablished their government and restored temple worship, they used this same refrain at the dedication services (Ps. 118; see especially v. 14). The song in this passage celebrates Christ as the new deliverer whom the faithful follow across the sea of persecution into the new heavenly promised land.

« Why do you think Jesus showed John the victorious people singing this song?

• **Vs. 4: For your righteous acts have been revealed** - The Greek word translated judgments appears here and in 19:8, and means either “righteous (or, just) decrees” (so REB) or “righteous (or, just) actions” (TEV, TNT, BRCL, NIV, RNAB). The latter seems more appropriate in this context. The word parallels “deeds” at the beginning of the song, in verse 3. God’s righteousness, God’s justice, is shown by what he does. The passive have been revealed may be rendered “have been seen by all” or “everyone has seen your righteous acts.”

“Revealed,” on the other hand, is not apokalupsis, as might be expected, but instead an aorist passive indicative of the verb phaneroō with the sense here of “make clear.”

« What do you think are the righteous acts of God that have not been revealed to many people?

» **Vs. 5-6: The temple** - The word translated temple (naos) is used in a specialized sense of the inner sanctuary of the Temple, as contrasted with the large worship area (hieron).

» **Vs. 6: Clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes** - This

» **Vs. 7: Seven golden bowls** - These remind the reader of the golden bowls of incense that are the prayers of the saints (Rev. 5:8; Jos., Ant. 3.143). Again it is clear that the judgments of the bowls come in response to the prayers of the saints. To continue the liturgical picture, priestly angels carry bowls of incense from the tent of the witness to pour on the earth.

« These bowls that contain the “plagues” are filled with the prayers of the people. How does that change the typical perspective of these bowls?

» **Vs. 8: The temple was filled with smoke** - This description evokes the scene in the desert after the Exodus, when “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle” (Ex 40:35). The seven plagues to follow (16:1-21) will reenact several of the Exodus plagues on Egypt, but because these are the last plagues (v. 1), the order of the Exodus events is reversed. John sees the glory of God in the tabernacle of the Testimony first, and after that the plagues, sent not to free God’s people from slavery (the redeemed are already free), but as a last effort to bring the earth’s inhabitants, like Pharaoh, to repentance.

« God seems to be stalling before bringing the final judgment upon the wicked. What does that say about Him?



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MY PRAYER...

1. What song best describes my thankfulness to God for His salvation?
2. How do I view God’s wrath?
3. What new aspect of God’s character does He want me to know?