

CHAPTER 15

Hitherto, according to the judgment of very eminent expositors, God had represented to his servant, John,

I. The state of the church under the pagan powers, in the six seals opened; and then,

II. The state of the church under the papal powers, in the vision of the six trumpets that began to sound upon the opening of the seventh seal: and then is inserted.

III. A more general and brief account of the past, present, and future state of the church, in the little book, etc. He now proceeds,

IV. To show him how antichrist should be destroyed, by what steps that destruction should be accomplished, in the vision of the seven vials. This chapter contains an awful introduction or preparation for the pouring out of the vials, in which we have,

- 1.** A sight of those angels in heaven who were to have the execution of this great work, and with what acclamations of joy the heavenly hosts applauded the great design (v. 1-4).
- 2.** A sight of these angels coming out of heaven to receive those vials which they were to pour out, and the great commotions this caused in the world (v. 5, etc.).

⌘ REVELATION 15:1-4

THE SEVEN VIALS

Here we have the preparation of matters for the pouring out of the seven vials, which was committed to seven angels; and observe how these angels appeared to the apostle — *in heaven*; it was in a wonderful manner, and that upon account,

1. Of the work they had to do, which was to finish the destruction of antichrist. God was now about to pour out his seven last plagues upon that interest; and, as the measure of Babylon's sins was filled up, they should now find the full measure of his vindictive wrath.

2. The spectators and witnesses of this their commission: all *that had gotten the victory over the beast*, etc. These stood on a *sea of glass*, representing this world, as some think, a brittle thing, that shall be broken to pieces; or, as others, the gospel covenant, alluding to the brazen sea in the temple, in which the priests were to wash (the faithful servants of God stand upon the foundation of the righteousness of Christ); or, as others, *the Red Sea*, that stood as it were congealed while the Israelites went through; and, the pillar of fire reflecting light upon the waters, they would seem to have fire mingled with them; and this to show that the fire of God's wrath against Pharaoh and his horses should dissolve the congealed waters, and destroy them thereby, to which there seems to be an allusion by their *singing the song of Moses*, in which,

(1.) They extol the greatness of God's works, and the justice and truth of his ways, both in delivering his people and destroying their enemies. They rejoiced in hope, and the near prospect they had of this, though it was not yet accomplished.

(2.) They call upon all nations to render unto God the fear, glory, and worship, due to such a discovery of his truth and justice: *Who shall not fear thee?* v. 4.

⌘ REVELATION 15:5-8

THE SEVEN VIALS

Observe,

I. How these angels appeared — coming out of heaven to execute their commission: *The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened*, v. 5. Here is an allusion to the holiest of all the tabernacle and temple, where was *the mercy-seat, covering the ark of the testimony*, where the high priest made intercession, and God communed with his people, and heard their prayers. Now by this, as it is here mentioned, we may understand,

1. That, in the judgments God was now about to execute upon the antichristian interest, he was fulfilling the prophecies and promises of his

word and covenant, which were there always before him, and of which he was ever mindful.

2. That in this work he was answering the prayers of the people, which were offered to him by their great high priest.

3. That he was herein avenging the quarrel of his own Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose offices and authority had been usurped, his name dishonoured, and the great designs of his death opposed, by antichrist and his adherents.

4. That he was opening a wider door of liberty for his people to worship him in numerous solemn assemblies, without the fear of their enemies.

II. How they were equipped and prepared for their work. Observe,

1. Their array: They were *clothed with pure and white linen*, and had *their breasts girded with golden girdles*, v. 6. This was the habit of the high priests when they went in to enquire of God, and came out with an answer from him. This showed that these angels were acting in all things under the divine appointment and direction, and that they were going to prepare a sacrifice to the Lord, *called the supper of the great God*, ~~Rev.~~ Revelation 19:17. The angels are the ministers of divine justice, and they do every thing in a pure and holy manner.

2. Their artillery, what it was, and whence they received it; their artillery, by which they were to do this great execution, was *seven vials filled with the wrath of God*; they were armed with the wrath of God against his enemies. The meanest creature, when it comes armed with the anger of God, will be too hard for any man in the world; but much more an angel of God. This wrath of God was not to be poured out all at once, but was divided into seven parts, which should successively fall upon the antichristian party. Now from whom did they receive these vials? From one of the four living creatures, one of the ministers of the true church, that is, in answer to the prayers of the ministers and people of God, and to avenge their cause, in which the angels are willingly employed.

III. The impressions these things made upon all who stood near the temple: they were all, as it were, wrapt up in clouds of smoke, which filled the temple, from the glorious and powerful presence of God; so that *no man was able to enter into the temple*, till the work was finished. The interests of antichrist were so interwoven with the civil interests of the

nations that he could not be destroyed without giving a great shock to all the world; and the people of God would have but little rest and leisure to assemble themselves before him, while this great work was a doing. For the present, their sabbaths would be interrupted, ordinances of public worship intermitted, and all thrown into a general confusion. God himself was now preaching to the church and to all the world, by terrible things in righteousness; but, when this work was done, then the churches would have rest, the temple would be opened, and the solemn assemblies gathered, edified, and multiplied. The greatest deliverances of the church are brought about by awful and astonishing steps of Providence.