

OBSERVATION STUDY SERIES

REVELATION

THE SANCTUARY IS
FILLED WITH SMOKE

15:5-8

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The Sanctuary is Filled with Smoke

Wow! I don't know about you, but I think Revelation 15 is one of the most awesome chapters in the entire Bible! It's timing is the brink of the climax of mankind's existence and its setting stunningly displays God in His temple—in all His power and Glory!

If only the world would take their eyes off themselves for a moment and look at Him... He is worthy... in every way... of everything...

After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened... Revelation 15:5

After what things? It could possibly refer to the most recent of the signs in heaven which John had seen—the seven angels who had the seven plagues (including the throne room scene in which those who had been victorious over the beast sang the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. It is also possible that “these things” include everything John saw in the interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet, which is most of Revelation 10:1 through 15:4. Most probably, it refers to the first six trumpets. In other words, when John looked, it was *after* the first six trumpets. No matter, the phrase denotes a forward movement in time of the final events.

What is the temple of the tabernacle of testimony? This is the real temple, the heavenly one, the one after which the earthly temple was patterned. This isn't the temple where God is merely manifested, but the one where God literally dwells. This is the sanctuary of the dwelling place of the actual testimony. The ark of the covenant (housed in the Holy of holies inside the tabernacle) held the tablets of the Law, but this testimony is the very Word of God... the Reality...

When John looked he saw that the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened. This should ring a bell—remember Revelation 11:19? *And the temple of God which is in heaven was opened; and the ark of His covenant appeared in His temple, and there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.* The sanctuary of God was opened and the ark of His covenant was seen inside by John.

The question becomes—is this two different times that the temple is opened or is it the same time? Let's line up what we find in the text.

When is the temple of God opened the “first” time? Re-read Revelation 11:14-19 to recapture the context. Revelation 11:19 happens after the second woe (sixth trumpet)

and before the third woe (seventh trumpet). Hmmmm... How does that compare to Revelation 15 and the time when the temple is opened? Here we find that the temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened right *before* the seven bowls of the wrath of God (the seventh trumpet), which is exactly the same time period—right after the sixth trumpet. Just to remind you, both of these verses are referring to the time period of the great intersection of events (mid Daniel's 70th week). So, is the temple opened once or twice? It would appear that it opens once—and that the opening of the temple is a very, very, very big deal!

...and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. Revelation 15:6

John saw a sign in Revelation 15:1-4 in which he indirectly viewed the throne room of God; now, in verse 5, the temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened and he is able to see its interior first-hand.

He watches as the seven angels (the ones who had the seven plagues) come out. They are clothed in pure, radiant linen with golden belts wrapped around their chests. It is interesting to remember that the vision of Jesus in Revelation 1 showed Him girded with a golden sash around His chest. Notably, the bride of the Lamb will be clothed in the same bright and clean fine linen, and the armies in heaven which will follow Him to earth in Revelation 19 will also wear fine bright white linen.

No matter the full import of their apparel, their purity is not in question. They have no motive of their own—evil or otherwise. There is no doubt these seven angels are righteous and ready to do the will of their God. And what, exactly, is the will of their God? They will dispense His wrath—the righteous, pure, and holy will of God.

Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. Revelation 15:7

The seven angels are given seven bowls full of the wrath of God by one of the four living creatures. If you will remember, they were introduced in Revelation 4 where they were in the center and around the throne of God. Each of them called forth one of the four horsemen (the first four seal judgments)—here, again, one of the creatures is instrumental as the final sequence of God's judgment is discharged.

The Greek word for bowls is *philiias* and refers to a broad shallow cup—pouring out a broad shallow cup would take place quickly compared to a deep narrow one. These are the same type of bowls which were full of the prayers of the saints and held by the four living creatures (and the 24 elders) in Revelation 5:8. The Greek word *gemizo* is the word used for “full”. The wrath of God fills these seven bowls to the brim—when they are poured out their terrible judgments will take place suddenly and irrepressibly upon the inhabitants of the earth.

The judgments are righteously sent by God, Who lives forever and ever, a proper contrast to the finite lives of the earth dwellers...

And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. Revelation 15:8

When the seven angels are given the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God by one of the four living creatures, an amazing thing happens—the temple is filled with smoke. The smoke is the result of the Glory of God and His power.

This part is amazing—no one is able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels are finished. Wow! The seven bowls will take exactly 3 1/2 years (this event takes place in the middle of Daniel's 70th week which lasts for a total of 7 years). So, for 3 1/2 years no one will be able to enter the temple in heaven...

Although, at face value, that seems straight forward enough, no one knows for sure what that means. Could it be that during this time no one on earth will be saved? Could it be that after the last of the witnesses (the 144,000, which have now been taken to heaven) and the final messages (the preaching of the three angels) that there is no time left for salvation? Is this the moment the church is raptured and therefore no one else is ushered into the church? While it is true that many will come to believe in the Lamb during that last 3 1/2 years, they will not be part of the actual church—the body of Christ. Interesting thought, isn't it...

But if it isn't referring to salvation, and instead, refers to the creatures in heaven—it is still an amazing thing that no one has access to the presence of God during this time. I don't know what it means. I wish that I did. I just know that it's incredibly awesome. No one is able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels are finished... they are about to begin and they're going to last awhile—3 1/2 years in "earth" time...