

Revelation 15:1-2 **Who are the Ones who are Overcoming?**

Revelation chapter 15 at verse 1. John says, **And I saw another sign in Heaven.** The word *another* in Greek (**ἄλλος**, *allos*) means *another of the same kind*. **I saw another sign in Heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having seven last plagues, because in them was completed the fury of God.**

And I saw something as a glassy sea having been mixed with fire. And the ones overcoming from the beast, and from its image, and from its mark, from out of the number of his name, had been standing upon the glassy sea, having harps of God.

And they sing the song of Moses the servant (or slave) of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord, God Almighty, righteous and true are Your ways, King of the saints.

Who should never fear You, O Lord, and should glorify Your name? Because You only are holy. Because all the nations will come and will worship before You, because Your righteousnesses... (not good English but that is what it is - righteousness plural) ...Your righteousnesses should be made known."

And after these things I saw; and look, the temple of the tabernacle of the mystery was opened in Heaven!

And seven angels came out, having the seven plagues from out of the sanctuary (or temple), having been clothed with pure and bright linen, and having been wrapped around the chests with a golden belt.

And one from out of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls being full of the fury of God, the One who is living forever and ever.

And the temple was filled with smoke from out of the glory of God, and from out of His power. And no one was able to enter into the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels should be completed.

Since chapter 11 verse 15 - that is the point when the seventh trumpet was blown - we have been in a parenthesis. What we will study in chapter 16 is the pouring out of the seven last plagues from the seven bowls from the seven angels. And since chapter 11 verse 15 there has been a parenthesis because when that trumpet blows - that seventh trumpet or shofar blows - then these seven plagues take place. So John has been stopped. He heard the trumpet sound, and he has been shown the spiritual history that has been active since the beginning of time up to the end of time, all within that timeframe. And so we have seen this panoramic view of the history of the spirit realm.

But now in chapter 15 we have The Introduction to the Seven Bowl Judgments. Some of your texts say *vials*. But it is literally *the bowls*. They are shallow dishes, they are censers,

saucers, if you will, that are used in the temple for the burning of incense. And these seven bowls are the seven last judgments.

The first thing we have in verse 1 is The Scene.

In verses 2 though 4 we have The Song.

In verses 5 through 8 we have The Seven Angels.

With The Scene we have four things we want to point out to you:

1) The Sign

He says, **And I saw another sign.** Again the word *another* means *another of the same kind*, **ἄλλος** (allos). The Greek word **ἕτερος** (heteros) means *a different* sign but this is *another of the same kind*. This is the third sign that John has seen in the book of Revelation.

The first one was in chapter 12 verse 1: the sign of the woman that we identified as the nation Israel.

The second sign was in chapter 12 also, but this one in verse 3, the sign of the great dragon.

He now sees a third sign, another sign of the same kind as Revelation 12:1 and Revelation 12:3. **Another sign.**

2) The Significance

Look at the adjectives used to describe this sign: **great and marvelous.** This is to express the significance and importance of the sign. It is great and it is marvelous.

3) The Strikes

We go down to the word for *plagues*. What he saw were **seven angels having the seven last plagues.** The word for *plague*, **πληγή** (plēgē), does not mean *disease* or *pestilence*; it means *to hit* or *to strike* something. It was used in chapter 13 verses 3 and 12 to describe the wound of the beast. Remember, supposedly he died and came back to life. He was healed of his wounds - the strike (or the blow) to his head and to his arms. So this is not a *disease*, this is actually a *strike*. That when these plagues are poured out, the earth will be struck with them, it will be *a mighty blow*, if you would.

Also secondly let me point out to you about how it is termed. **These seven angels having**, listen to its literal translation, **having the seven plagues, the last ones.** The emphasis in the Greek is on *the last ones*. It is translated *the seven last plagues*, but it is

[literally] *the seven plagues, the last ones*. So he is emphasizing that portion of being last. In other words this is God's final expression of judgment. Up till now, even with judgment He has held everything back. Now it will be the full fury of His rage poured out upon the earth.

We have seen the sign. We have seen its significance. We have seen the strikes, and now the severity of God's anger.

4) The Severity

These seven angels have the seven last plagues because **in them was completed the fury of God**. Notice the translation. Not *anger*, that is **ὀργή** (orgē). This is **θυμός** (thumos). This is an *emotional passion*. This is a passionate outburst by God. He is furious. And after He expresses His fury the judgments of God will be completed.

Verse 2. Verses 2 through 4, The Song. We are only going to take a part of this, we are not going to get into the song itself. But I want you to notice the people there.

First of all, the Sea. **And I saw something as a glassy sea having been mixed with fire**. We saw this glassy sea before. In Revelation 4:6 it is presented as a sea of glass like crystal. And as I made mention at that time when we look forward at the end of the book of Revelation we will see that the new city Jerusalem will be a crystal city. That was its appearance. It will be like glass, pure glass like crystal, and the glory of God will be in the middle of this city.

Now the people of God make up the city. Paul said at the end of Ephesians 2 that we are the sanctuary of God. Not only individually here, but collectively. When we get up into heaven we are going to be a building, a spiritual dwelling, in which the glory of God will be housed. And as His glory, His power is expressed, His glory will be seen through like shining a light through crystal. What you see is a prism.

That is why John said, when he saw the city, "I saw its streets like gold." They are not going to be gold but there will be a gold beam coming through the streets as God's glory shines through the city. And all of the colors of the jewels will be present. It will not be jewels; it will be the color of jewels throughout the city as God's light shines through the various aspects of the city. But the city itself, you and I, will be clear glass as crystal. We will be spirit bodies. It will be in the spirit realm. It will not be anything physical to see, but we will be in the spirit realm.

This sea of glass that is like crystal we saw in chapter 4 verse 6, which is the pavement area that is before the throne of God where the multitudes will stand. It looks like a glassy sea. Sometimes we joke around with each other when we drive into town, and we see all these fields lined with plastic tarps. We say, "Oh, somebody left the water on last night." It gives you the appearance of water, you know?

"Oh, look at that lake."

"It's not a lake. That's plastic."

So what he saw was this glassy area that looked like a sea, a calm sea, back in chapter 4 verse 6, but it was really crystal. It was really a glass like crystal.

But here it is **mixed with fire**. So now, all around the throne it is on fire, because God's anger and fury is about ready to be poured out.

So first of all, The Sea that you see in the text. Secondly, and we will stop on this one, The Survivors.

Look what he says, **And I saw something as a glassy sea having been mixed with fire. And the ones overcoming from the beast, and from its image, and from the mark, from out of the number of his name, they had been standing upon the glassy sea, having harps of God.** I want to take a couple minutes to emphasize these people. Notice how it is translated: **the ones overcoming**. The -ING word signifies that this is a present participle. These are ones who are continually overcoming.

These are the people who were killed during the tribulation, tribulation believers. And they overcame the beast and its image by not taking the mark and by being killed. You say, "Well, how is that overcoming?" Well first of all, they responded.

Remember the 144,000 of the Jews - Jewish evangelists - have been evangelizing since the beginning of the tribulation period. And we also remember that the two witnesses in Jerusalem, that began at the midway point all the way to the end. Nobody is going to be able to kill them and they are going to give testimony. There is also the angel flying in mid-heaven all through the major portion of the last half of the tribulation. So that every single human being on earth will be reached by just that angel going in mid-heaven. Everybody. The text indicates that every person, tongue, nation, and tribe is reached just by the angel alone. And the message was, "Do not take the mark." Remember the three angels that we studied in chapter 14, the three angels that came and said, "Do not take the mark of the beast. Believe in God. Believe in the truth."

There are some during the tribulation period that actually respond. They know what their options are. They know that if they worship the image and that gives them the right to get the mark on the back of their hand or on their forehead that they will be able to buy and sell. Self-survival even if it is temporary. There will be people that say, "I do not care. I want to eat. I want to live. Even if it is for one more day, I do not care if I have to face the judgment. I am just out for self-survival."

Then other people are going to say, "No." They are going to respond to the message. That is the gospel message. And they are going to be rounded up and they are going to be put to death because they refused to worship the image. Therefore they cannot get the mark and they are going to be put to death. But they are called *the overcomers*. Present tense. They are continually overcoming. They are called *the continuous overcomers*.

I want to emphasize to you three things about the term overcome. First of all, the Greek word is **νίκη** (nikē). The tennis shoemaker. That is the Greek word. **νίκη** (nikē) means *victory*, or *to overcome*.

And Jesus used this word in John 16:33 where He told the disciples, **These things I have spoken unto you, because in the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.** *I have overcome the world.* Jesus presented it as a done deal at the time that He spoke to the disciples.

Which John relates to and quotes in I John 4:4. I John chapter 4 tells us about the warning from John. We are supposed to test the spirits and that the spirit of antichrist is in the world. But he says, **But you are of God, little children, and you have overcome them.** Perfect tense. Everybody that is born of the Spirit of God has already overcome the spirit of antichrist that is in the world. You say, "How's that?" Well, Jesus overcame, and He lives inside of me. And that is what John says in the next verse. He says in verse 5, **Because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.** That is why you have overcome.

So what if, "But it does not look like I am overcoming"? And again in today's culture, in the Christianity of today's culture, victory is gauged by your flesh. "God does not want you to be poor," they say, "God does not want you to be sick. God does not want you to be unhappy." And so the gospel message goes on that basically says how well you are doing in the human and in the flesh is victory. Not in the Bible. Not in God's kingdom. If that were true, Jesus failed because He got killed before He could be triumphant. He suffered for His holiness and His purity and His goodness.

No, victory in the Bible - as this group is a representative here for us, an example - is that they refused the mark of the beast, they refused to worship his image, they were put to death, and they are called *the overcomers*. Because they are standing before the throne of God. And as we will see next week, they have harps, they have been given harps by God so they can rejoice and sing praise to God. Not because they were put to death but just because of who God is.

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 - for every single church of the seven churches in Revelation - the message is addressed: *To those who are overcoming*. Notice how I quoted that. In each instance in Revelation 2 and 3 for every church the message is given to those who are already overcoming. It is not a challenge. It is not a condition by saying, "if you overcome you will be in heaven." He is speaking to people who are already overcoming. That is the believer. You and I are already overcoming even if we suffer in the flesh.

Let us say tomorrow you have a bad day. Let us say today you are having a bad day. But tonight if you are still here, Christ is still with you, you are still with Christ, nothing has changed. No matter what happens to you today, nothing has changed spiritually. And if you should die then you are in the presence of your Lord. So why is there not victory? Romans chapter 8, **Nothing shall separate us from the love of Christ.** Nothing. So that when we suffer we look inward because we already have the victory. Already. Before we even get to that bad day tomorrow, we already have the victory, so let it go.

Sometimes we bring on things, Peter says in I Peter 2, sometimes we suffer for our own things. But sometimes we suffer for doing right, for doing what is right in the eyes of Christ. And for that God gives us His grace, the grace that gives us the victory.

We always have the victory in Christ, Paul said, always. Paul said in every situation of trouble that God delivered him from out of them all. It is a new perspective as to what does it mean to have the victory? It is not gauged by the flesh. It is gauged by the spirit. And God makes it possible for us to be at peace, knowing that He is in charge. God has made it possible for us to be satisfied. God has made it possible for us to have a hope that expects the Lord to come, or for us to go be with Him before He comes if we die. God gives us the ability, just let it go.

We started needling one another, in a very nice way. You know, whenever one of us gets really into it. It is like, "Oh did you hear what he...?" It is like, "Don't get into it. Let it go." It is one thing to notice it. It is another thing just to dwell on it, and think about it, and keep it. It is like, let it go. Do not let Satan draw you in. Commit it to Christ. Move on. Be at peace. He is in charge. The Bible says that God works all things for the good; it does not say that everything is good.

You remember and Genesis chapter 50 when Joseph stood before his brothers. Remember his brothers threw him into a pit, then gave them to some Egyptian merchants. Got to Egypt. Tried to do was right in the sight of the Lord. Pharaoh's wife tried to seduce him, so he runs away, and so she goes and tells her husband, "He tried to hit on me," so he put them in prison for something he did not do. Just for doing what is right. And while he is in there he helps one of them interpret a dream, and he is let out, and he says, "Well remember me once you get out." Well, he forgot. And then they needed someone to interpret a dream, and then the guy remembered, "Hey, there is a guy in prison that can do that." So he came out and interpreted the dream. So the Pharaoh was so impressed he says, "I am going to make you second in charge, under me, over the whole kingdom."

And, of course, later on when the famine struck elsewhere, and then began to spread in Egypt, Joseph's brothers had to come down looking for food. They did not recognize him as the brother that they ambushed and sent away. And when they did realize it was him he says, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." Even the evil that happens to us, God works it out for the good. It all happens for a reason. You see Joseph went through all that abuse, all of that difficulty, all that hardship for doing what is right, just to prepare him for leadership.

David the king, remember he was pursued by Saul. Saul wanted to kill him because God said, "Saul is no longer king, David is king." So Saul chased him all over the countryside. The only friends that David had were the criminals that were living out in the wilderness. So he gathered them together and said, "You are my men, let's go." Later to be exalted to the position of king that God had already anointed him to do. Why did God put him through all that? To get him ready. Get him ready to lead God's people the way they are supposed to be led. What better way than to take a bunch of criminals and be out in the wilderness and have to lead them? Kind of like body of Christ but you know it is a little different.

God works everything for the good, no matter what it is, no matter who does it. Even Job, Satan was allowed to attack Job with God's permission, but in the end it was all for the good.

The overcomers, that is you and me. No matter if I am humanly weak, my faith is weak, my strength is weak, it does not matter. I will overcome. I will make it through another day with Christ and Him with me because He is the one that takes me through. Not because of my strength and I am not a failure because of my weakness. He carries us all the way through.

Let's close with prayer.