

THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels having the seven last plagues; [last] because by them the wrath of God was to be completed." Rev. 15:1. DIAGLOTT.

Among the pictures of this wonderful book of symbols, this one of the pouring out of the "seven vials of wrath" stands out in marked prominence. As its name indicates, it is understood to be the closing act in the drama of this age. An important difference exists between our view and that of many others, however, in that they suppose the end of the age to be accompanied by the destruction of the people, and of the earth itself; while we understand that it is the ending of the present reign of evil, and a necessary preparation of mankind for the reign of righteousness. The connections in which we find the vials mentioned in the record, are in harmony with our views, and contradictory to theirs: it is followed by the symbolic pictures of the new age – new Heaven and Earth, binding of Satan, and reign of Christ.

The great source of error in understanding these, as all of Revelation's symbols, is a too literal interpretation. It is read as though it were a statement of facts, instead of a statement of symbols. Before proceeding to the account of the plagues, the inspired penman records another symbol – the "sea of glass." This indicates that it stands related to the plagues, hence we will consider it first. From all the connections, we understand that it immediately precedes the plagues.

"And I saw as it were a glassy sea, mingled with fire, and the conquerors of the Beast, and of his Image, and the number of his name, standing on the glassy sea, having harps of God."

Who these are, is shown by what they overcome – viz., the Beast, Image, and Number. Here we see the importance of an understanding

of the symbols of chapter thirteen; for unless we understood what those symbols meant, we could not understand who is overcoming their influence. In this way God has made his Word self-interpreting. The understanding of one part or symbol is the key to an understanding of another. In harmony, then, with Rev. 13, we understand the overcomers here referred to, to be those Christians who are free from Papacy – the Beast – and from organized sectarian Protestantism – the Image – and from all who bear the characteristics of the number – that is, free, to the extent that these have not the slightest influence over our actions, professions, or thoughts – free indeed.

This serves, too, to show about when the plagues are due, and when this sea of glass condition may be reached; for, if, as seems clear, the Image was formed by the organization of the "Evangelical Alliance," in 1846, then it is equally clear, that the overcomers of the "Image" could not occupy this position of favor and exaltation prior to that date. This furnishes a general reason for believing that the plagues must commence this side of the date mentioned, since it is during the pouring out of the plagues that the overcomers occupy this "sea of glass" condition.

Having, then, ascertained who these overcomers are, and about when they thus stand, we pass on to consider the sea of glass mingled with fire, on which they stand. Sea, as heretofore explained, we understand to symbolize the masses of the people, and fire to symbolize judgments, or trouble. We therefore interpret this to mean – the people in trouble, under the judgments of God. Above the troubled people are the overcomers – calm, serene, untroubled. Their position shows that their standing is by faith. (Matt. 14:29.) To the eye of faith all is transparent.

These overcomers sing a song. A song is a beautiful and harmonious expression. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb. That is, the song or preaching of these overcomers is in perfect accord with the

Law and the Gospel. It is the same which Jesus (the "Lamb") taught, and which Moses taught in the Law and types. Not only does the description of the overcomers indicate that they are but a little fragment of the nominal church, but the words of this song teach us the same – that the class who proclaim these things are few. The words of the song are given, or the leading points of the preaching which will be done by the overcomers – "saying, Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God, the omnipotent."

Alas! how few are sufficiently acquainted with God's plans to recognize the fact that they are great and wonderful. Very few can sing this first note of the song, and fewer yet can sing it to its close. The second note is, "Righteous and true are thy ways, O King of the nations." [Diaglott.] Look at this; we can sing of the righteousness and justice of God's dealing with the nations, since we have come to see how he has permitted evil and death to come upon all, as a lesson to teach us to appreciate life and righteousness. We can see righteousness, justice, mercy, and love in God's dealings, since we see in his Word that there is to be "a restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21.) Who, but those who see the restitution to be accomplished in the next age, could sing this part of the song? Not one; Christendom in general fears to think of God's justice in dealing with the nations in general, the great majority of whom have gone down into death without any knowledge of the only name whereby we must be saved. The righteousness, and justice, and love of God's dealing, can only be seen by looking at the work of the next, as well as at that of present and past ages. Yes indeed, we rejoice to proclaim to all who have an "ear to hear" – Just and true are Jehovah's ways in ruling the nations.

The next note is in perfect harmony with the last – "Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? Since thou alone art

bountiful." Our great Creator's every dealing is an act of favor – even the evil which man was permitted to bring upon himself is to be overruled for good; and we ask ourselves the question, Who shall not fear and glorify God when, in the coming age, his wonderful goodness is manifested, and when the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the whole earth. We would be inclined to believe that every one should praise his love everlastingly, were it not that Scripture clearly discloses a second death, which tells of some who will be accounted worthy of it.

"For all the nations shall come and worship in thy presence, because thy righteous acts are manifested." This is the last note of the song, and is full of force and meaning. How few are proclaiming, either publicly or privately, this part of the song. Some believe that many of the nations now dead are in a place of mental or physical torture, there to remain to all eternity. Others claim that they are dead, and will never again have life; others that those who are dead, will be raised from death to pass a mock trial, and be destroyed. But how few can sing this song of restitution, declaring that all nations shall yet come from death, and shall worship their Lord and Redeemer, when brought to a knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:4.) Even Sodom, a nation long since destroyed, shall come and worship. (Ezek. 16:48-63.)

Another symbol is the "harp of God." The song is sung in tune and harmony with the harps. The harp of God we believe to be the Bible, its many strings or chords are the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, and Revelation. Many Christians have the "harp," but few have it so strung and tuned that they can bring forth harmony enough to accompany the song of Moses and the Lamb. The overcomers have the harp well in hand – in fact, without it and the inspiration of its music, they never could have been overcomers. They have them tuned, too. How forcible this picture! Truly, it would have been incomplete without the harp of God.

Another thought is suggested – the overcomers not only have the harp, and know how to sing this song of restitution, but they do sing it. There are some of God's children who have their harp considerably in tune, and who know the song, but who do not proclaim the glad tidings of coming restitution; they fear to face the opposition which this course would bring – the unpopularity which would attach to anything outside the religious rut of so called orthodoxy. These are not among the overcomers; they have not yet got a victory over the influence of the Beast and Image; they are yet in some bondage. All of the overcomers sing the song. Each of us should inquire of our own hearts whether we are tuning our harps and singing this song – Now is the time.

Many of the Lord's dear children in mystic Babylon's captivity, have sat down beside her rivers so defiled by the mire of worldliness, and wept when they remembered God's favor to Zion in times past. They laid aside the harps of God, hanging them on the willows that weep over the grave of truth in Babylon. They that carried them away captive (the Babylon system) require of them a song and mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." Yes, Babylon would like to see Zion's captives happy beside her muddy streams; and in the midst of her worldliness, would like to hear an occasional song of Zion, that she might boast of the Lord's favor. But "how shall the captive daughters of Zion sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" (Psa. 137:1-6.) To all such we cry: Take down your harps from the willows; flee out of Babylon into full liberty of thought and expression; tune your harps and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Sing of God's mighty love and the "restitution of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all the holy prophets."

The next thing shown to John is the coming of the seven messengers out of the temple to pour out the plagues. Since it is the saints who are "to execute the judgments written," (Psa. 149:9), we

interpret this "seven angels" to mean the saints. The living saints being the representatives or active agents of the entire anointed company – as "the [R395 : page 7] feet of Him." It is the feet, or last part, who sing the restitution song of Moses and the Lamb, upon the glassy sea mingled with fire. How beautiful are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. (Isa. 52:7.) These same feet, as representatives on earth of the entire body, are to pour out the seven vials, or be associated more or less directly with the judgments coming. These are clothed with white linen; these have kept their wedding garments; they are robed in the righteousness of Christ – "justified by his blood." They are the servants of God; the girdle representing a servant, and the gold of it representing divinity. They, as the servants of God, have a divine service to accomplish.

When they had all gone forth from the temple it was filled with smoke, so that none could enter it. The temple symbolizes the church. The coming of the messengers out of the temple, symbolizes the coming of the overcomers out of the nominal church. When all such have come out, the temple (church) will be so full of smoke, (confusion) that no man would care to go into it. The messengers are now nearly all out, and already the smoke, or confusion, in the church, is considerable. Few care to enter even now, and recent reports of various sects show that the increase has been very slight for the past year. When we remember that the large proportion of new members received is from the Sunday School, we can realize how, even now, very few men (persons of mature thought) enter the nominal temple. The nominal church will be in this confusion until the seven plagues are poured out; during that time the Babylon, or confusion element, will be destroyed, and the cleansed temple of truth be again opened to receive justified believers – then as heirs of the earthly promises.

[TO BE CONTINUED IN NOVEMBER NUMBER.]