

## THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

### Revelation: God's Revelation To His Servants Today On Events About To Occur

#### Part IV: "The Things Which Shall Be Hereafter": Events After The Rapture Of The Church

##### C. The Great Tribulation Period, Revelation 6:1-19:21

##### 5. A Second View Of The Great Tribulation Guiding Us To Avoid Group Idolatry, Revelation 11:1-19:21

##### f. God's Encouragement To Stay Faithful To His Word Due To His Future Work With Our Persecutors (Revelation 15:1-8)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Last Sunday in the Fellowship Hall, a Church member told me he faces hurtful persecution for his Christian faith in the workplace, and another member later spoke of similar spiritual hostility faced from a relative.

Such persecution can not only hurt, but Satan can amplify its effects so as to confuse and thereby tempt the believer to doubt God's will for his life, ultimately leading him to stop performing God's assignments. We thus need God's encouraging insight to handle the debilitating effects of persecution.

However, when I later began to study Revelation 15:1-8 in depth, the next passage we are set to view in this series out of Revelation, I saw it directly instructs believers on this very issue! We thus view it (as follows):

***Need:*** *We thus ask, "Since we can become hurt and confused over the persecution we face for staying faithful to God's Word, how does God suggest that we deal with the discouragement faced under such persecution?!"*

- I. **Revelation 15:2 reveals that many who reject Christ in the Church era, and even thus persecute Christians now, will trust in Christ after the Church is raptured, and many of them will be martyred:**
  - A. Rev. 15:2 shows John reporting he saw what looked like a sea of glass mingled with fire in heaven, recalling Isaiah 43:2 where God promised individual believers (2nd person singular) He would bring them through the waters and the fire, a picture of all the dangers they face (E. J. Young, The Book of Isaiah, v. II, p. 142-143). This sea then signifies the great trials the Great Tribulation believers will face but overcome by God's help.
  - B. Thus, after the Church is taken to heaven in the rapture, many who rejected Christ in the Church era and who even persecuted Christians will trust in Christ and not accept the antichrist's mark. Many of them will then be martyred and go to heaven, and stand "on" (*epi*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 873) this sea (Rev. 15:2 KJV) like Peter by faith in Jesus once literally walked "on" (*epi*) the stormy sea back in Matthew 14:29; *Ibid*, p. 55.
  - C. With the harps of God, these overcomers will sing their testimony of the Lord's deliverance, Rev. 15:2c-3a.
- II. **Rev. 15:2-4 that presents these martyred saints is sandwiched between the Rev. 15:1 introduction of the angels who administer the last plagues and their Rev. 15:5-8 commissioning, so God's PURPOSE in the plagues is seen in Rev. 15:3-4 with an ENCOURAGING lesson for PERSECUTED BELIEVERS TODAY:**
  - A. The martyred Great Tribulation saints will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, of Christ, Rev. 15:3-4:
    1. Though there are several songs of Moses in the Bible, the Rev. 15:3 sample of the lyrics these martyrs will sing alludes to part of Deut. 32:3 (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, cross reference) and to part of Deut. 32:4 (*Ibid.*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T., fn. cross reference), revealing the **particular** "song of Moses" these martyred saints will sing is Moses' song in *Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47*.
    2. That song was composed *specifically* to teach Israel that in view of her future apostasy (Deut. 31:28-29), God would let her foes trouble but not annihilate her (Deut. 32:22-35) until her power was gone and she learned to trust in the Lord (Deut. 32:36-39). However, that song adds that in the latter days when Israel repents, a prediction finding its ultimate fulfillment in the Great Tribulation, God will take vengeance for His people, punishing Israel's persecutors, Deut. 32:40-42, leading Israel to praise the Lord, Deut. 32:43.
    3. In application, the Great Tribulation martyred saints will acknowledge they did not trust in Christ in the Church era, some even as persecutors of Christians, so God had [raptured the Church and] let Satan's antichrist rule and plague them until they trusted in Christ and lost their lives in martyrdom. However, in heaven, these Great Tribulation martyred saints will sing the Rev. 5:9-10 song of the Lamb, praising Christ for saving them in His grace while anticipating God's program in Moses' song in turn to take vengeance on their persecutors as these saints had once persecuted Christians so that God in turn might graciously save even some of their persecutors who still follow the antichrist! (Rev. 15:3b-4; Deut. 31:30-32:47)
  - B. So, ***God has a gracious plan to disciple persecutors that encourages persecuted believers who apply it today:***
    1. Saul (Paul) of Tarsus in unbelief once persecuted Christians (Acts 7:57-8:3) until Christ confronted him, resulting in Paul's conversion, Acts 9:1-15. God then let Paul suffer great things in his ministry, Acts 9:16.

2. Paul's testimony teaches us of God's patience and grace toward past persecutors in general, 1 Tim. 1:12-17.
3. Thus, those who like the former Saul of Tarsus who persecute believers today will either face trials of God's vengeance before the rapture directed to disciple them unto the truth, or after the rapture they will face God's vengeance trials under the antichrist to lead them to Christ. Many of them (Rev. 14:6-11) will trust in Christ and be slain, and testify in heaven of God's grace unto them as Paul did after his conversion.
4. In turn, the antichrist's followers will themselves become objects of God's vengeance as well as His grace as God turns to pour out the severe bowl judgments upon them not only to judge them for their sin, but in hope that some of even these persecutors might thus trust in Christ to be saved, cf. Revelation 16:9b.

**III. Accordingly, Revelation 15:5-8 reports on God's angels who prepare to administer the last, great plagues of God's wrath, *PARTLY* to JUDGE the PERSECUTORS of the GREAT TRIBULATION SAINTS and *PARTLY* to URGE these HARDENED PERSECUTORS to REPENT and so TRUST in CHRIST:**

- A. John then saw the heavenly temple of the tabernacle of the testimony, the original tabernacle after which Moses had the earthly tabernacle built when God showed it to him on Mount Sinai, Rev. 15:5; Ex. 25:8-9, 40.
- B. The heavenly tabernacle opened and seven angels with God's last plagues exited it to signify His judgment on the antichrist and his kingdom for his desecration of the Jerusalem temple, Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; Rev. 15:6a.
- C. These angels were clothed in pure white linen and girded with golden girdles (Rev. 15:6b) recalling Christ's Rev. 1:13b clothing where He was dressed as a priest and judge (Ibid., Ryrie, fn. to Rev. 1:13), so these angels administer Christ's own judgment of wrath on the world to Christ's glory as was taught in John 5:22-23.
- D. One of the four cherubs around the throne, acting as God's messenger, gave the seven angels the seven bowls full of God's wrath, and the heavenly temple filled with smoke from the glory and power of God, with no one being able to enter the temple until the seven last plagues were administered, Rev. 15:7-8. This filling of the temple with smoke recalls the similar event in Isaiah 6:1-13 with its prediction by God of Israel's Babylonian Captivity judgment for sin that would leave her land desolate while also saving a remnant in Israel, Isa. 6:13.
- E. So, even in these last great expressions of His wrath, God will offer lost men an opportunity to trust in Christ.

***Lesson:*** *God will discipline and/or disciple our saved or unsaved persecutors before the rapture or He will use the horrific reign of the antichrist to take vengeance on today's lost persecutors of Christians (cf. 2 Thess. 1:6-8) as well as to direct them to trust in Christ for salvation (Deut. 32:36-39). However, once many of them believe and are consequently martyred by the antichrist, they will testify in heaven about God's grace in saving them from their initial rejection of Christ and persecution of Christians, and they will also anticipate God's vengeance on their persecutors in hope of even their repentance in the expression of God's great, final, seven-bowl-judgment plagues.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. (2) If persecuted for the faith, may we trust God to exact just vengeance on unjust foes as well as use that judgment to elicit repentance even in our persecutors, be it before or after the rapture, much as God revealed His grace and long-suffering with Saul of Tarsus! (3) God thus wants Christian believers who face persecution today to see the great ETERNAL VALUE in KEEPING their stands in view of what it may mean for the FUTURE DISCIPLING of even some of their PERSECUTORS!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the message . . .)

Consider what might have happened had the Church's first martyr, Stephen, decided to recant his Christian faith to avoid being executed by the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-60). Saul of Tarsus, a leading party in Stephen's death (Acts 7:58), would not have had his conscience greatly bothered about the claims of Christ (Acts 26:14) to where he would eventually trust in Christ for himself (Acts 9:1-6). Saul, later known as the Apostle Paul (Act 13:9), would not have had Stephen's great sermon as his template for all of his great sermons in the book of Acts and become the greatest missionary in Church History, dramatically inhibiting the formation of Western Civilizations. Also, nearly half of the New Testament books, those penned by Paul, would not have been written, to the impoverishment of the Church.

Yes, it is true that Christ would have built His Church some other way, for He promised in Matthew 16:18 to get that great work done. However, Stephen would have been bypassed as a key part of that work. To the contrary, Stephen held his ground, he stuck to his testimony under fire, he paid for it with his life, and the rest is wonderful history, with Stephen receiving God's enormous eternal reward.

**May we trust in Christ to be saved. Then, may we also trust GOD'S work to handle even ungodly persecution that we face, for we know that the Lord will address the persecutor to be disciplined and/or discipled and richly glorify Himself in our lives!**