

Revelation 15:

**J.D. Greear writes:**

Wake Up, Christian. This Is God's Alarm Clock.

PASTOR J.D. MAY 4, 2020

*When I was in high school, a book was released called 88 Reasons Why Jesus Is Coming Back in 1988, and it took the Christian world by storm. The author, a NASA scientist who was also a Christian, identified a three-day span when he said Jesus would return.*

*This book was a big deal at my Christian school. On the afternoon of the third day, September 13, my soccer coach ended practice 30 minutes early and said we were going to sit on the bleachers and wait it out.*

*Then he looked at me and said, "If Jesus does indeed come, J.D., make sure all the equipment gets back in the bin." Unkind.*

*Of course that day came and went, and Jesus didn't come back. But the next year, the author released a follow-up book called—you guessed it—89 Reasons Why Jesus Is Coming Back in 1989. He explained that he had miscalculated the dates the year before because he used the Gregorian calendar and not the Hebrew one.*

*Happens to the best of us.*

*Christian history is littered with false predictions about the end of the world. Though Christians have often botched this up, and we can't know the day or the hour (or even the three-day span) of Jesus' return, it is true that Jesus is coming back, and Scripture says it could be at any moment. Jesus will come like a thief in the night—that is, unexpectedly, when we're not looking for it.*

*It's also true, Jesus said, that there will be pointers as it gets closer, such as wars and rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and plagues. In Matthew 24 he compares these things to labor pangs the world will show before it gives birth to the new world that Jesus will bring at his coming. Like a woman who, in the hours leading up to childbirth, has moments of intense anguish, so the world will experience painful moments—like the coronavirus—showing that the coming of Jesus is near.*

*In his new book, [Coronavirus and Christ](#), John Piper says that through this virus, Jesus is saying to us, "This world you are living in will not last forever. You need to think about the world that is coming and prepare for it. Wake up!"*

*We don't know when he's coming, but signs like this show us it is likely not far away. The last words of the New Testament are Jesus saying, "Surely I come quickly." He's coming back!*

[When was the last time you went to bed with Jesus' second coming on your mind or got up in the morning with the thought, "Today might be the day"? We are so busy taking care of our daily needs that we never even think about it, much less make sure we are telling others about it.](#)

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*When was the last time you went to bed with Jesus' second coming on your mind, thinking, "It could be tonight" or got up in the morning with the thought, "Today might be the day"? We are so frantically busy taking care of our daily needs that we never even think about it, much less make sure we are telling others about it.*

*I don't think the coronavirus marks the end of the world. But this world does have an end, and if we ignore that reality, we are asleep at the wheel. The coronavirus, as disastrous as it is, represents God's merciful wake-up call for us to get ready.<sup>1</sup>*

### **Outline:**

- I. In verses 1-2 we see the first section of what John sees.
  - a. 7 angels
  - b. Sea of glass mixed with fire...
  - c. People who were victorious over the antichrist holding harps.
- II. In verses 2b-4 we see what John hears described.
  - a. Singers
  - b. The song of Moses
- III. In verses 5-8 we see the second section on what John sees.
  - a. The temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened (verse 5).
  - b. Seven angels who have the seven plagues come out (verse 6).
    - i. They are clothed in linen, clean and bright.
    - ii. They have golden belts or sashes.
  - c. In verse 7 one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels golden bowls or vials. These are the wrath of God.
  - d. The temple is filled with smoke.
  - e. The smoke is from the glory of God and from His power. This could be the Shekinah Glory.
  - f. He sees the assignment of the seven angels to pour out judgment.

### **Detailed analysis:**

IVP BBC NT:

*Ancient texts sometimes began and ended on the same point, thus bracketing it off (this design is called an *inclusio*). The heavenly perspective on the judgments on earth is bracketed by 15:1 and 8.<sup>2</sup>*

The Moody Bible Commentary:

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<sup>1</sup> [https://jdgrear.com/blog/this-is-your-wake-up-call/?utm\\_source=JD+Grear+Newsletter&utm\\_campaign=42d9697550-BLOG\\_DIGEST\\_DAILY&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_009733a9e6-42d9697550-87118783](https://jdgrear.com/blog/this-is-your-wake-up-call/?utm_source=JD+Grear+Newsletter&utm_campaign=42d9697550-BLOG_DIGEST_DAILY&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_009733a9e6-42d9697550-87118783)

<sup>2</sup> Craig S. Keener, [\*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament\*](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 15:1.

*This verse forms a superscription for chaps. 15 and 16 (Johnson, Revelation, 546), introducing the final phase of retribution. The seal and trumpet judgments had now passed. The bowl judgments remained and were called the seven [last] plagues. The wrath of God would be quickly consummated in these.<sup>3</sup>*

ESV Study Bible:

*The Bowls of God's Final Wrath: Another view of the victors' choir prepares for the seven "last" plagues, envisioned as "bowls full of the wrath of God" poured out on earth's inhabitants. Futurists see these bowls as representing future global judgments unlike anything seen before in history. They occur at the end of the great tribulation period and culminate in the battle of Armageddon (16:14–16), just prior to Christ's return to establish his millennial kingdom.*

I. In verses 1-2 we see the first section of what John sees.

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.*

*<sup>2</sup> And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.*

- a. This is the shortest chapter in Revelation.
- b. Verse 1: *This verse serves as a superscription for chapters 15 and 16 and even, perhaps, for the rest of the book.*<sup>4994</sup>
- c. Dr Constable: *This sign, however, is both great and marvelous, especially awesome. It is awesome because it signifies the climax of the outpouring of God's wrath on nature, humankind, the dragon, and the two beasts. The sign itself is the seven angels who control seven plagues. As with the seals and trumpets, angels were God's agents in pouring out His wrath in this series of judgments. These angels were now ready to do their duty (cf. [Ps. 103:20](#)). They appear seven times as a group (vv. [6](#), [7](#), [8](#); [16:1](#); [17:1](#); [21:9](#)) and nine times individually (vv. [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [8](#), [10](#), [12](#), [17](#); [17:7](#); [21:9](#)). John simply introduced them here. They do not begin to act until verse [6](#) (cf. [8:2](#); [12:6](#); [21:2](#)).*<sup>5</sup>
- d. *The bowl "plagues" that follow have many similarities to the plagues that God sent on Egypt, as we shall see. All seven of these judgments repeat in varied ways the plagues of Egypt. These similarities suggest that God's purpose in both series of*

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<sup>3</sup> The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Location 83137). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>499</sup> 499. Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Revelation*, pp. 137–40, argued that verse 1 concludes the previous revelation rather than introducing what follows, but his reasoning is unsatisfying.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 15:1.

<sup>5</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 15:1.

*judgments is the same: to punish godless idolaters and to liberate the godly for future blessing and service.*<sup>6</sup>

- e. ESV Study Bible shares: *Just as earlier vision cycles began with an opening of God's heavenly sanctuary (4:1; 8:1; 11:19), so the cycle of bowls containing the last plagues, in which God's wrath on rebels is completed, is preceded by a scene of celebratory worship offered by believers who share the Lamb's victory.*
- f. First set of plagues was in Revelation 8 and 9 and followed the 7 trumpets and that brought partial destruction. Now, we see the final plagues with devastating destruction.
- g. It says this is a sign so the seven angels may be symbolic of the heavenly host. This is what Henry Morris believes.
- h. These are the 7 last plagues not a repetition of the previous mentioned. This is not a repetition of the 7 seal judgments or 7 trumpet judgments.
- i. This is another sign. He had seen signs in heaven before. Revelation 12:1 and 3 are cases in which he had seen signs in Heaven. In Revelation 11:19 he saw the ark of the covenant opened in Heaven.
- j. This sign is described as "great and marvelous."
- k. John is stretching language to describe amazing things.
- l. John sees seven angels and these seven angels have the last seven plagues.
- m. John says why these are the last.
- n. In these plagues the wrath of God is finished.
  - i. This is huge we have seen the wrath of God in chapter 8 and 9 and now we will see the culmination of the wrath of God.
  - ii. This will be the last of the wrath of God and then everything will be made right.
- o. We will see these seven angels again: Rev 15:6–8; 16:1; 17:1; 21:9.<sup>7</sup>

*Re 15:6–8 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, dressed in clean bright linen, wearing wide golden belts around their chests. <sup>15:7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, <sup>15:8</sup> and the temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and from his power. Thus no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues from the seven angels were completed.*

*Re 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple declaring to the seven angels: "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls containing God's wrath."*

*Re 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke to me. "Come," he said, "I will show you the condemnation and punishment of the great prostitute who sits on many waters..."*

*Re 21:9 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven final plagues came and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb!"*

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<sup>6</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 15:1.

<sup>7</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- p. Dr. Mulholland: *John closes the unit begun in 11:19 by employing much of the same imagery and terms in the conclusion as in the introduction. He saw a sign (sēmeion [<sup>TG</sup>4592, <sup>ZG</sup>4956]) just as in 12:1. Then in 15:5, John sees the Temple in heaven thrown wide open, just as in 11:19. At the beginning of the seventh seal (8:1–2), John sees the angels with seven trumpets (the next major unit) introduced before the details of the seventh seal are given. Here he sees the angels with seven bowls (the next major unit) introduced before the climax of this unit.*<sup>8</sup>
- q. In verse 2 we see the sea of glass mixed with fire...
- r. Then he sees those people who were victorious over the antichrist holding harps.
- s. It seems like these are people victorious during the tribulation. If this group is not saints martyred during the tribulation, then we may be in this group (that is what Jack Graham believes.).
- t. Henry Morris believes these are the victors who are likely martyred during the second half, last 3.5 years, of the great tribulation with the absolute rule of the beast (antichrist).
- u. Most of these will be martyred and then resurrected and raptured to join the saints of the earlier ages.
- v. Verse 2 specifically says that these people did NOT worship the beast and his image and the number of his name. We talked about that with Revelation 13. Revelation 13:14 mentioned the worship of the image of the beast. Revelation 13:17 mentioned the number of his name.
- w. These people are standing on the sea of glass and holding harps of God. ESV Study Bible: *The sea of glass is the transparent pavement surrounding God's throne (cf. 4:6; Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22).*
- x. Revelation 4:6 had this sea of glass, but now it is mixed with fire.
- y. In Revelation 5:8 we see the beasts with harps and incense and the incense in that section is the prayers of the saints.

Dr Mulholland gives more insight:

***what seemed to be a glass sea.*** This is identical in Greek to the phrase in 4:6 (see note), suggesting this is the same “sea”—a symbol of the rebellious realm.

***mixed with fire.*** Between 4:6 and this point, John has seen the judgment of God; now the holiness (fire) of God has entered into the rebellious realm (sea).

***the people who had been victorious.*** The Greek has a present participle that should be translated, “the people who are conquering,” thereby denoting a present and ongoing activity. This is the same use of “conquering” noted in the letters to the seven churches in which those who “are conquering” (present participle) are promised certain rewards (see 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

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<sup>TG</sup> Tyndale-Strong’s Greek number

<sup>ZG</sup> Zondervan Greek number

<sup>8</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 538–539.

**statue.** Gr., *eikōn* [<sup>TG</sup>1504, <sup>ZG</sup>1635], which means “image” (see note on 13:14).

**harps that God had given them.** This may give perspective to the earlier portion of the vision where, with the 144,000 accompanying the Lamb on Mount Zion, John hears a sound like “many harpists playing together” (14:2). The same term for “harp” is used of the instruments the 24 elders hold (5:8). Specifically, John writes of the cithara (*kithara* [<sup>TG</sup>2788, <sup>ZG</sup>3067]), which is “an elaborate lyre with eleven or twelve strings of equal length strung over a wooden sound box and fastened to tuning pegs on a crossbar, plucked with either the left or the right hand. It was used independently or with other instruments and also to accompany voices in singing” (IDB 2.526). The harp was used in general contexts of praise and worship, and in the LXX *kithara* translates the Hebrew terms *nebel* [<sup>TH</sup>5035A, <sup>ZH</sup>5575] and *kinnor* [<sup>TH</sup>2788, <sup>ZH</sup>3067]; cf. Pss 33:2 [32:2, LXX]; 57:8 [56:9, LXX]; 71:22 [70:22, LXX]; 81:2 [80:3, LXX]. Since John used this image in association with the redeemed who are imaged as priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6), the main source for the image is the Levitical priesthood who used harps (among other instruments) to lead in the worship of God (1 Chr 15:16, 20; 16:5).<sup>9</sup>

II. In verses 2b-4 we see what John hears described.

<sup>3</sup> *And they \*sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,*

*“Great and marvelous are Your works,*

*O Lord God, the Almighty;*

*Righteous and true are Your ways,*

*King of the nations!*

<sup>4</sup> *“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?*

*For You alone are holy;*

*For all the nations will come and worship before You,*

*For Your righteous acts have been revealed.”*

- a. John hears the singers which he saw in the previous verse.
- b. The ESV Study Bible: *The harps of God and the song of the Lamb suggest to some that this choir is the same as the 144,000 (the redeemed people of God) who appeared with the Lamb before God’s throne (7:9–12; 14:1–3). Others see them as those converted and*

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IDB *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols., Buttrick) [1962]

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

LXX Septuagint

<sup>9</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 539.

perhaps martyred during the great tribulation. They conquered the beast by holding fast to their faith even when threatened with death (12:11). **The sea of glass is the transparent pavement surrounding God's throne (cf. 4:6; Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22).**

- c. These singers are standing on the sea of glass mixed with fire.
- d. This is a very interesting image.
- e. They are singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.
- f. The song of Moses is in Exodus 15.

IVP BBC NT: *The "great and wonderful" (TEV) works refer to the plagues (15:1; cf. Ex 15:11). The "song of Moses" could refer to Deuteronomy 32 (especially to the part where God avenges the blood of his servants—32:34–43), which was used alongside psalms in Jewish worship. But in this context Moses' song almost surely refers to his song of triumph and praise after his people came safely across the sea, where their enemies were drowned (Ex 15:1–18). "Song of the lamb" recalls redemption from the final plague (Rev 5:6).*

*The language here recalls Psalm 86:9–10; the Old Testament often proclaimed the hope of the remnant of the nations turning to God. "King of the ages" (NIV) or "of the world" was a common Jewish title for God. Greco-Roman rhetoricians praised gods who were universally recognized, but as Judaism also emphasized, God would be universally and solely worshiped in the final day of judgment (cf. Zech 14:9).<sup>10</sup>*

- g. Moses is called the bond servant of God which is like a willing slave of God.
- h. We see songs of the Lamb in Rev 5:9f, 12f.
- i. We see songs similar to verse 3 in Deut 32:3f; Ps 111:2; 139:14.<sup>11</sup>
- j. Verse 3: The Lord is called "almighty."
- k. Righteous and true are the Lord's ways.
- l. The Lord is the King of the nations.
- m. This is so worshipful.
- n. Verse 4:
- o. Who will not fear the Lord? We all should fear the Lord.
- p. Who will not glorify His name?
- q. The Lord alone is holy.
- r. All the nations will come and worship Him.
- s. His righteous acts "have been," past tense, revealed.
- t. Verse 4 has quotes from: Ps 86:9; Is 66:23.
- u. The NET Bible shares: *Jeremiah 10:7 probably stands behind the idea of fearing God, and Psalm 86:9–10 stands behind the ideas of glorifying God, his uniqueness, and the nations coming to worship him. Many other OT passages also speak about the*

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TEV Today's English Version

NIV New International Version

<sup>10</sup> Craig S. Keener, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#) (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Re 15:3–4.

<sup>11</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

nations “coming to his temple” to worship (Isa 2:2–3, 49:22–23, 66:23–24; Micah 4:2; Zech 8:20–22). See G. K. Beale, *Revelation [NIGTC]*, 796–97.<sup>12</sup>

Moody Bible Commentary:

*Many would die for refusing to take the mark of the beast. By such faithfulness, they would glorify God and be victorious (v. 2). **The sea of glass depicts the holiness and splendor of God.** The beast, his image, and the number of his name, are all included to emphatically demonstrate the victory of the saints. The martyrs sang the song of Moses (v. 3; Ex 15:1-18), which the Israelites sang after they were delivered from Egypt and passed through the Red Sea. It is composed from various lines of the Psalms and Prophets, extolling God for His attributes. John continues to develop his overcomer (victor) theme here. He wants his readers to be very clear that to persevere is to win. If they should die for resisting Domitian, they would join the throng singing the victory song. Believers’ perspectives on this present life should be molded by their anticipation of a future with the Lord.*<sup>13</sup>

Dr. Mulholland concludes with an interesting perspective:

*This is precisely what John saw in his image of the faithful citizens of New Jerusalem (“all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name,” 15:2) standing upon the “glass sea mixed with fire” (15:2), **which represents fallen Babylon—the realm of rebellion against God.** As seen in the seven churches, it is difficult for the citizens of New Jerusalem not to succumb to the culture of fallen Babylon. Sardis (3:1–6) and Laodicea (3:14–22) had almost totally accommodated themselves to their fallen Babylon world. Pergamum (2:12–17) and Thyatira (2:18–29) were trying to live dual citizenships, faithful to both New Jerusalem and fallen Babylon. Ephesus, while not accommodating at all to fallen Babylon, had lost the love that would have enabled it to be a vital witness to New Jerusalem in its fallen Babylon world.*

*The church today is all too often characterized by its accommodations to the values, perspectives, worldview, and lifestyle of its fallen Babylon world than by its faithful and vital witness to a mode of being in which cleansing, healing, liberation, transformation, and true human wholeness are found. The church more often swims in the sea mingled with fire than dances upon it in exuberant life with God.*<sup>14</sup>

III. In verses 5-8 we see the second section on what John sees.

<sup>5</sup>After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, <sup>6</sup>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. <sup>7</sup>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. <sup>8</sup>And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and

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NIGTC *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (a commentary series)

<sup>12</sup> Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Re 15:4.

<sup>13</sup> *The Moody Bible Commentary* (Kindle Location 83144). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>14</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation,”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 542.

from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

- a. ESV Study Bible: *Seven angels emerge from the opened ... sanctuary (cf. [11:19](#)), the inner chamber, of the tent of witness in heaven (cf. [Heb. 8:2–5; 9:11–12](#)) to execute God’s final sequence of judgments upon a defiant world.*
- b. The temple of the tabernacle of testimony is opened (verse 5).

Re 11:19 *Then the temple of God in heaven was opened and the ark of his covenant was visible within his temple. And there were flashes of lightning, roaring, crashes of thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.*

Ex 38:21 *This is the inventory of the tabernacle, the tabernacle of the testimony, which was counted by the order of Moses, being the work of the Levites under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest.*

Nu 1:50 *But appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of the testimony, over all its furnishings and over everything in it. They must carry the tabernacle and all its furnishings; and they must attend to it and camp around it.*

Heb 8:5 *The place where they serve is a sketch and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he says, “**See that you make everything according to the design shown to you on the mountain.**”*

Re 13:6 *So the beast opened his mouth to blaspheme against God—to blaspheme both his name and his dwelling place, that is, those who dwell in heaven.*

- c. Seven angels who have the seven plagues come out (verse 6).
  - i. These seven angels go back to verse 1 and will show up again in the following chapters (16:1; 17:1 and 21:9).
  - ii. These seven angels have the final seven plagues.
  - iii. These seven angels come out of the temple.
  - iv. They are clothed in linen, clean and bright. This seems to show purity.
  - v. They have golden belts or sashes.
  - vi. NET Bible: *Or “wide golden sashes,” but these would not be diagonal, as some modern sashes are, but horizontal. The Greek term can refer to a wide band of cloth or leather worn on the outside of one’s clothing (L&N 6.178).*<sup>15</sup>
  - vii. The golden sashes resemble the Son of Man in Revelation 1:13 and Daniel 10:5.
- d. In verse 7 one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels golden bowls or vials. These are the wrath of God.
- e. Dr. Constable: *One of the living creatures ([4:6](#)) gave each angel a bowl full of God’s wrath. It is interesting that God described the prayers of the saints as being held in bowls in [5:8](#). These prayers thus connect with the outpouring of these judgments in a suggestive cause and effect relationship. **The two sets of bowls in chapters five and here are different, however, and they contain different things. The priests in Israel’s earthly temple also used bowls in their worship** ([1 Kings. 7:50](#); [2 Kings](#)*

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<sup>15</sup> Biblical Studies Press, [The NET Bible First Edition Notes](#) (Biblical Studies Press, 2006), Re 15:6.

[12:13](#); [25:15](#)). The reference to the living God “who lives forever and ever” adds more solemnity to an already solemn scene (cf. [10:6](#); [Deut. 32:40](#); [Heb. 10:31](#)).<sup>16</sup>

- f. Notice how God is always described as living forever and ever.
- g. Revelation 4:6 mentions the 4 living creatures as well as the sea of glass. But now the sea of glass is different. So, it is a similar scene, but different.
- h. As states earlier: In Revelation 5:8 we see the beasts with harps and incense and the incense in that section is the prayers of the saints.
- i. The temple is filled with smoke.
- j. There is a lot of cross reference: Ex 19:18; 40:34f; Lev 16:2; 1 Kin 8:10f; 2 Chr 5:13f; Is 6:4.<sup>17</sup>
- k. The smoke is from the glory of God and from His power. This could be the Shekinah Glory.
- l. He sees the assignment of the seven angels to pour out judgment.
- m. No one can enter the temple until the seven plagues are finished.
- n. *ESV Study Bible: As when the tabernacle ([Ex. 40:34–35](#)) and temple ([1 Kings 8:10–11](#)) were consecrated, God’s holy glory is so intense that no one could enter the sanctuary. In this case, they couldn’t enter until the seven plagues ... were finished (cf. “finished,” [Rev. 15:1](#)). The seven bowls ([16:1–21](#)) complete God’s judgment and mark the end of history, as confirmed by the severity of the judgments.*

Dr Mulholland:

Throughout the Old Testament, God’s holiness is depicted as a fire that consumes all that is unholy. When Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered unholy fire before the Lord, the fire of God’s holiness consumed them ([Lev 10:1–2](#)). Isaiah spoke of how God (the “Light of Israel”) will become a fire, and Israel’s Holy One a flame that will devour the thorns and briars (the unholiness of Israel; [Isa 10:17](#)); and the sinners in Israel are afraid, and the godless tremble, for “who can live with this devouring fire?... Who can survive this all-consuming fire?” ([Isa 33:14](#)). In Zechariah the holiness of God is a wall of fire around Jerusalem ([Zech 2:5](#)), and for Malachi God’s holiness is like a refiner’s fire ([Mal 3:2](#)). This understanding is the basis for the many references that associate God’s wrath with fire ([Num 11:1](#); [Pss 78:21](#); [79:5](#); [Isa 30:27](#); [Jer 4:4](#); [15:14](#); [Ezek 21:31](#); [Nah 1:6](#); [Zeph 3:8](#)).

John saw that “no one could enter the Temple until the seven angels had completed pouring out the seven plagues” ([15:8](#)). Nothing can come into the presence of the holy God until all its unholiness has been purged by the refining fire of God’s holiness. To the unholy, this purging fire of holiness seems to be “wrath.” This experience of the holiness of God was described by Isaiah. When he had his experience of God in the Temple in Jerusalem ([Isa 6:1–8](#)) and the Temple was filled with smoke, Isaiah was immediately aware of his terrible unholiness in the presence of the holiness of God. His unholiness was then purged by the fire from the altar.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 15:7.

<sup>17</sup> [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

<sup>1</sup> M. Robert Mulholland Jr., [“Revelation.”](#) in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 545.

Dr. Rydelnic shares:

# Is Covid-19 a Sign of the Apocalypse?

By [Dr. Michael Rydelnic](#) April 4, 2020 [28 Comments](#)



*Is the Covid-19 virus a sign of the Apocalypse? Has the Tribulation before the return of Jesus begun? There has been a lot of talk lately that the Covid-19 pandemic proves we are in the last days; that this is the apocalypse. One scripture used to demonstrate this is Luke 21:11: “There will be violent earthquakes, and famines and **plagues** in various places, and there will be terrifying sights and great signs from heaven.” The prediction of “plagues in various places” is taken as proof that we’re in the time of the end. Yet, as serious as this pandemic is, for several reasons, it clearly isn’t the “Day of the Lord.”*

*First of all, none of the corollary events connected to the tribulation period have taken place. These are the earthquakes, famines, and terrifying signs in the heavens mentioned in Luke 21. In Revelation 6:12-14, there is a description of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal judgment which will take place in the first half of the 7 year tribulation. It says: “A violent earthquake occurred; the sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair; the entire moon became like blood; the stars of heaven fell to the earth as a fig tree drops its unripe figs when shaken by a high wind; the sky separated like a scroll being rolled up; and every mountain and island was moved from its place.” Plagues will be part of the Day of the Lord—but so will other terrifying events, none of which have occurred yet. And while there is a pandemic now—there have been other terrible outbreaks in the past, some that were even more serious than this one. For example, there was the black plague of the Middle Ages in which 25 million people died, about 40% of Europe’s population. As bad as that was, it was not the tribulation period predicted in Scripture. A plague alone is not the sign of the Day of the Lord. Second, the man of lawlessness has not yet been revealed. In the first century, there were false teachers spreading the idea that the tribulation had already begun. In 2 Thessalonians 2:3, Paul responded by pointing out that it could not be so because the man of lawlessness had not yet been revealed. Paul was*

*speaking of a coming world dictator, the future false Messiah, the ruler the Scriptures also call the Anti-Christ. In every generation, people speculate as to who this ruler will be, but like Paul, I can categorically state, he has not yet been revealed. Therefore, we are not yet in the Tribulation period.*

*Third, Israel has not signed a covenant with this future false Messiah. Daniel 9:27 indicates that the future 7 year tribulation (the 70th Week) will only begin when this future false Messiah makes a treaty or covenant with the leadership of Israel. Perhaps this will be a 7 year treaty guaranteeing peace and security to Israel. Whatever it is, it has not yet been signed, so we are not yet in the tribulation.*

*But even if we are not in the Day of the Lord, what can we learn about the end times from this? First, this pandemic shows how a crisis like this can cause people to turn to a dictator, like the Anti-Christ. An example of this is in Hungary, where in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, that nation's parliament has handed their leader, Viktor Orban, absolute dictatorial power to cope with it. When the world is in crisis, it's evident that people will turn to a dictator to solve their problems. That is how Adolf Hitler obtained absolute dictatorial powers. And that is how, the future false Messiah will become a world dictator.*

*Second, this pandemic shows how quickly God can indeed bring about the end-time events described in Scripture. Some skeptics have doubted whether God could actually bring about the events described in the book of Revelation in just 7 years. The Covid-19 pandemic shows that the Lord would only need about 7 weeks to bring the world to its knees. In this way, the pandemic is just a sign that God can very well bring about the end very quickly.*

*Even though we are not in the Tribulation, it's not surprising that we are facing this frightening situation. Yeshua said, "In this world, you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). Nevertheless, He told us not to fear because He has conquered the world. He is the Sovereign of the universe and nothing can befall us apart from His loving hand. He can and will bring us through this crisis or bring us home to His loving arms. No matter what, although it is entirely natural to experience stress and fear, we can take comfort in knowing that when we believe in Yeshua, the Lord will deliver us from the wrath to come (1Thess 1:10).*

*UPDATE: A number of people have written, wondering if I believe the body of Messiah will be caught up before the Tribulation begins. Yes, absolutely I do, and even alluded to that in the last sentence of the above blog post. In 1 Thess 5:3 it says that the Day of the Lord will NOT overtake believers like a thief. Moreover, 1 Thess 5:9 assures us that "God did not appoint us for wrath but to obtain deliverance through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah!" Then, 1 Thess 5:10 declares that we are to encourage one another with the promise that followers of Yeshua will be removed before God's wrath falls on the earth. I did not explicitly mention that the rapture had not yet taken place as an evidence that we're not in the Tribulation because it would not convince those who believe that we will go through the tribulation. It's the same reason Paul did not say that the Great Snatch (my name for the Rapture) had not yet taken place as proof that they were not in the Tribulation yet because that would not convince people who thought it had already begun (2 Thess 2:3-4).<sup>18</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> <https://www.michaelrydelnik.org/is-covid-19-a-sign-of-the-apocalypse/>