

Bible Studies

A magazine for the exploration of the word of God

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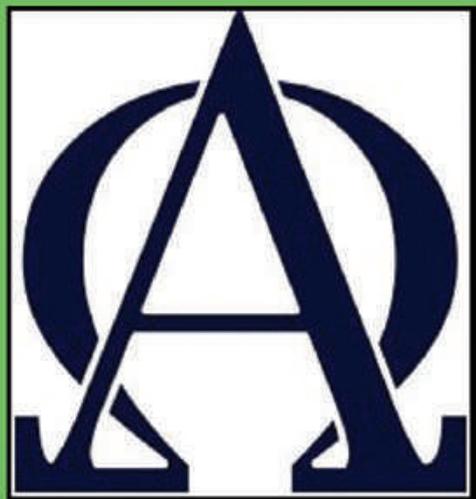
APRIL

Revelation ~ Victory Book Chapters 12-22

Introducing
The new song of Revelation 14:3

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Seven angels, seven plagues
and the song of victory (Rev. 15)

Feature
Solomon's Temple—Part 4



Revelation 22:13

THE NEW SONG OF REVELATION 14:3

As in Chapter 15 we consider the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb, inevitably we connect back to the singers of Chapter 14. The following is suggested in a subject that has left us with divided views over years, focusing on John's awareness of both heavenly scenes and earthly ones in the same passages.

Is there really a problem about the Lord taking time during the setting up of His kingdom on earth with choice servants who abstained from marriage in dedication to the Lord's service, and were distinctive in their purity; the Son standing with them in survey of the divinely chosen centre of worship for Israel?

This could be seen by John in his vision from 14:1-13, in the same way as in 6:1-17 he had been aware of the summoning of the riders and horses as also of their deeds, visible and felt on earth. He has also been aware of heaven's view of the two Beasts in Chapter 13, yet along with this, he sees what they visibly do or cause on earth. In this way, it might well be that in Chapter 14, John hears the heavenly accompaniment and, I suggest, singers in heaven of the song, that is also offered to God on the throne in the presence of those around it—though the occasion or time for this is not stated.

M.A.

From Study Groups . . .

SEVEN ANGELS, SEVEN PLAGUES, AND THE SONG OF VICTORY (Revelation 15)

From Aberdeen: Revelation 15 confronts us with the reality of the wrath of God. In the matter of our sins being dealt with at Calvary we know that Christ's propitiatory sacrifice involved the wrath of God being poured out on the sinless One who bore our sins (1 John 2:2 NASB) [Comment 1].

The seven plagues, however, associated with the wrath of God signal the end of the kingdom of the Beast in which blasphemy has poisoned the world's attitude towards God. So those seven bowls of God's wrath are reserved for a blasphemously unrepentant world.

In Egypt God had shown His righteousness and wrath against hard-hearted Pharaoh. In a day to come God will again show that He is not mocked because in righteousness He will show His power when He sends the seven angels with seven

plagues to pour out from the seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. The coming Beast, who will have the audacity to claim deity for himself, will in the end face the wrath of God together with all who side with his unrighteous kingdom and who oppose the almighty Creator. There will be a day of reckoning for all who have suppressed the truth in unrighteousness. (See Romans 1:18 and compare with Revelation 16:10.)

James Johnson

From Aberkenfig: Josephus writes that when the Romans ransacked Jerusalem in AD 70 blood ran so high that it extinguished the fire in the houses. Chapter 14 ends with blood flowing out of the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles (300km.), albeit John is possibly using hyperbole here (cp. Is. 63 :1-3) [Comment 2]. Nevertheless, God is speaking today in grace to the world, and we witness that man is just not listening, even rebelling. Soon He will speak in wrath, and for those rebelling it will be too late. We have the example of Noah warning mankind of coming judgement. God spoke and it happened. 'Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain ... and every living thing ... will I destroy from the face of the earth' (Gen. 7:4 RV), 'and the Lord shut him in' (v.16, and see 23).

Having seen and heard the singers of 14:1-3, John observes the angels with their messages. It is another sign—a glorious company of martyrs that have 'come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and from the number of his name' (15:2) are now standing on the sea of glass; but there is more. This sea is 'mingled with fire'. Great and marvellous! To us humans this is a scientific impossibility—normally water would extinguish fire—yet it reminds of how it will be (Rev. 20:14), when 'death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire.' Whether it is a lake as we recognise it, or sea of glass mingled with fire, we don't know, but it makes us tremble [Comment 3]. Truly it is divine wrath. It ties in with Isaiah 63:1-3 and Joel 3. God is displaying mercy now, but judgement awaits those who disobey.

The Songs Pharaoh must have thought he had all he required with the Israelites as slaves, but as Isaiah 26:9 says, 'for when Thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.' Despite the plagues in Egypt he hardened his heart; the resultant punishment was severe. Moses led the Israelites in that song of victory. Was the song of Moses the exact words recorded at the Red Sea (Ex.15 and see Deut. 32:1-43)? What were the words of the song of the Lamb (apart from Revelation 15:3-4)? Were they both the same? [Comment 4; also cp. Cromer para. 1—*Eds.*] We are not told, but those that sang were praising God for who He is and what He has done. The similarities of the two songs are interesting. They are:

Moses—at the Red Sea, triumph over Egypt, how God brought the Israelites out; it was the first recorded song in Scripture.

The Lamb—at the crystal sea, triumph over the Tribulation for those not taking the mark of the Beast, how God brings His people in; the last recorded song in Scripture.

Both songs deal with the same three themes: the banishment of a foe, the expectation of the redeemed, and the exaltation of the Lord.

The angels and their actions that John saw are a prelude to the bowl judgements detailed in Chapter 16. They were clothed with 'precious stone' (RV) or linen pure and bright, with golden girdles about their breasts. Most scholars translate either the Greek *lithon* as 'stone-coloured' or *linon* as 'linen'; a similar thought is expressed in Revelation 19:7-8 regarding the Bride of the Lamb making herself ready, 'the fine linen' being 'the righteous acts of the saints' [Comment 5]. Whichever is correct they were dazzling. It reminds us of the priestly garments, for their service is a divine ministry. When the Tabernacle and indeed the Temple were dedicated these earthly buildings were filled with God's glory (Ex. 40:34-35; 2 Chr. 7: 1-4). John describes the scene of the heavenly Temple where it is filled with smoke (see also Is. 6:4 and Ezek. 10:4). The smoke would be evidence of God's glory and power. Truly great and marvellous! *Bill Paterson*

From Buckhaven: John saw a sign in heaven, 'great and marvellous' (15:1 RV—the only occasion such language is used of a sign). This brings before us the last plagues which will 'complete' (NIV) or bring to an end (*teleo*) the judgements of God (v.1). John sees a multitude who have 'come victorious, from the beast and from his image' (v.2 RV). Like Israel of old they are seen standing: a redeemed, separate, victorious people by the sea and they are given harps (harps related to worship) from God to accompany their song. Their song is not about self but about the mighty works of God (Ps. 92:5), who is called 'Lord God Almighty', the Righteous One; all His ways are just, and to Him is given the title 'King of the ages' (v.3).

We have a multitude of millions beside the crystal sea. In full voice and with musical harmony they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. They celebrate the two greatest deliverances both national and universal that were wrought for mankind. The lesser triumph of Exodus at the crossing of the Red Sea foreshadowed the greater victory accomplished through God and the Lamb over all the powers of evil. What we see foreshadowed in Exodus leads to the substance in Revelation. 'Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?' (15:4). On other occasions when these words occur, they magnify the majesty, power and glory of the incomparable God.

In verse 5 'the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven' is opened up for the outflow of God's final judgements which come from the throne. Seven angels emerge, each with a golden bowl (*phiale*) (a shallow dish) [Comment 6].

They are clothed in white apparel, like those who appeared on resurrection morn, signifying purity and holiness. Their golden girdles speak of service. They received the bowls full of wrath from one of the living creatures associated with the throne of God. These judgements come with the full sanction of God. The temple was filled with smoke so that none could enter, signifying the unapproachable glory and majesty of God. Smoke and thunderings were seen at Sinai and a similar manifestation was seen at the dedication of Solomon's temple, when the priests could not enter because of the divine presence.

There is a completeness to God's purpose and plan for mankind. When the purposes of God unfold, none can stay His hand. This is the day of which the prophet speaks: 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth' (Is. 24:21).
Martin Notman

From Cromer: *Songs of deliverance* There is a striking parallel between Moses's song of deliverance in Exodus 15 and the song of Moses and the Lamb in Revelation 15; both refer to the successful exertion of the power of God, and both extol His greatness. The people of Israel and the 'Israel of God' (Gal. 6:16) were to know severe persecution in their time, but both would rejoice at the 'righteous acts' that redeemed them, and express their gratitude in jubilant song. We do not see two separate songs in Revelation 15, but rather a single song which embodies the culmination of the purpose of God in succeeding eras.

The cloud that filled the temple Why did the cloud (or smoke) fill the temple? Was its purpose to exalt or to obscure? Verse 8 seems to indicate that the smoke came from the glory of God—it was a sign of His presence. When Moses received the Law at Sinai, 'Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the Lord had descended on it in fire' (Ex. 19:18 ESV). The presence of the Lord in this case was associated with God's wrath, and it was not until the bowls of God's wrath had been poured out that the sign of God's power could leave the sanctuary and others could enter.
Peter Hickling

From Halifax: *Seven angels* 'Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and marvellous' (Rev. 15:1—Moffat, 1934). John sees a scene astonishing to the mind—seven angels, 'having the seven last plagues' (KJV). Seven in number, these angels are distinct from those to whom were given seven trumpets, who are called 'the seven angels which stood before God' (8:2); note the definite article. The angels of Revelation 15 are seen by John leaving the opened temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven, 'having the seven plagues' (v.6). 'What a strange sight meets the gaze of the Seer!' writes Walter Scott, 'Not the priests ministering in the holy place ... but angels the ministers of judgement' (*Exposition of the Revelation*, p.309). Having 'the seven plagues' the angels received seven

golden vials, or bowls, from one of the four 'living creatures' (15:7 RV)—bowls that were filled with God's wrath. How different from the golden bowls full of incense, the prayers of the saints (5:8)!

A glassy sea John also observes a sea mingled with fire and the glorious martyrs who had conquered the Beast and its image (15:2). Some have thought that the sea here answers to the molten sea or great brazen laver before the mercy seat (see Jamieson, Fausset and Brown), whereas John Miller links it with the sea of Chapter 4, saying, 'This sea, which was like crystal before, is now mingled with fire' (*Notes on the New Testament Scriptures*, p.687). However, the crystal-like sea before the throne of the Eternal One (4:6), intimates a fixed state appropriate to the holiness of the throne. The clear, pellucid sea, which appeared to be composed of glass, was mingled with fire (15:2)—perhaps emitting fiery red coruscations. The victors stood by this sea and sang the song of Moses the servant of God (see Ex. 15:1-19) and of the Lamb. 'Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name?' they sang (Rev. 15:4). This throws out a universal interrogation, and a threefold repeating of the conjunction 'for' gives three reasons grounded upon the very character of God Himself: (a) for only He is holy; (b) for the nations shall worship Him; and (c) for His righteous acts have been revealed. *Robert J. Butler*

From Mount Forest: The breadth of Revelation 15:1 is amazing: in its context the wrath of God reaches its end. If the seventh bowl includes the wrath inflicted on Satan and his followers, this would presumably require the conclusion of judgements contemplated even up to the end of Chapter 20, with effects beginning in time and extending into eternity (21:8; 22:15 expressing the ongoing nature of past judgements). The seven plagues involving the seven bowls of God's wrath may be understood as occurring in the context of the third woe of the seventh trumpet (11:14-15), which itself (with all the other trumpet events) is captured within the seventh seal of the scroll (8:1-2), though there is debate about overlaps and timing of the events in these visions [Comment 7].

In Scripture seven may depict perfection, and perfection completeness, and we remember Deuteronomy 32:4. When it says, in Revelation 15:1 'the wrath of God is completed' (NIV), it does not mean God's attributes will change; God's settled disposition against sin is an aspect of His eternal being, but is not exhibited in the absence of sin. In the new heaven and new earth, wherein righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21), the problem of sinning has been resolved. When the last seal has been broken, and its judgements completed (right down to the end of the seventh plague), the extent of the scroll's full contents may be revealed. It is delightful to ponder that the content of the scroll itself (rather than the meaning of its external seals) may convey the outworking of divine purposes of glory and blessing after the wrath of God is completed, as envisaged in Revelation 5:9-14.

How fitting then for John to have wept at the lack of anyone to open the scroll (Rev. 5:4)!

Revelation 15:2 describes a victorious chorus, singing in anticipation of the desired results of the Lamb cleansing His threshing floor (Luke 3:17; John 1:29). In Revelation 5:8 it is the beings around the throne who play on harps, but in 14:2 the voice sounds like harpists playing; we have concluded that sound arises in the context of singing by 144,000 in heavenly Zion, and they are people who have risen to heaven after faithful service on earth. Now in 15:2 those who sing are again seen as conquerors on earth [see *Introducing*]. After the weeping, while awaiting the satisfaction of the anger of God and retribution against His enemies, will come the joy of victory! Psalm 30:5 is an echo of this. Their victory is not necessarily that they themselves put down their enemies, but they relied on their Lord and did not give in to the enemy's demands concerning worship of the Beast, his image and taking the number of his name.

It is worthy of note that the angels commissioned to give effect to God's judgment are attired in similar fashion to the Righteous One who walks among the lampstands (Rev. 1:13), reminding us of 1 Peter 4:17. How fitting that access to the sanctuary awaits the outworking of divine justice, but the tabernacle is next seen in the glorious context of Revelation 21:3!

Geoff Hydon

From Ravulapalem: *Parallels between deliverances* A remarkable panorama that comes into John's view in Revelation 15 is 'as it were a glassy sea mingled with fire; and them that come victorious from the beast, and from his image, and the number of his name, standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God' (v.2 RV). These victors sing the song of Moses, which is similar to the one that Moses sang in like circumstances in Exodus 15 after the Israelites had witnessed the ten plagues in Egypt and the destruction of Pharaoh's armies in the Red Sea. Moses led them in such triumphant praise to God, proclaiming that the Lord will rule as king to time indefinite, or for ever (Ex. 15:18). The singers in John's vision, also proclaiming the seven last plagues, sang 'to the King of eternity' (1 Tim. 1:17 AMPC). This is the song not only of Moses but also of 'the Lamb'. Moses prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like him. This proved to be the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Moses was the servant of God, whereas Jesus was the Son of God (Deut. 18:15-19; Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 3:5-6).

1. In Exodus 7-12 and Revelation 16, the plagues show similarities.
2. The theme of divine deliverance occurs in Exodus 15 and Revelation 15.
3. The two gatherings sang by the side of a sea.
4. The pillar of fire passes through the sea in Exodus, whereas the fire is in the glassy sea in Revelation.

On both occasions God leads His people out triumphantly. In the first exodus, Moses is the visible leader who leads Israel through to victory. In Revelation 15 the Lamb leads the saints to victory. Both the crises were of such proportions that destruction seemed imminent. The enemy seemed to have God's people nearly subject to him, but God acted decisively on behalf of His people. There is a beautiful harmonious complement: the great deliverance under Moses forms the type of the greater deliverance by the Lamb. Whilst in the first the controversy was with Pharaoh, the second exodus occurs in the setting of the great 'controversy'. Since our God is just and loyal His promises are certain of fulfilment. Surely then with these loyal singers, with the Lamb and with Moses, we could wish to sing the words of the song, 'Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name?' (v. 4 NLT)

S.J.M. Edward

From Surulere: *Lessons from the smoke and cloud* The saying that familiarity breeds contempt is often true of some believers who are prone to dealing with God in a flippant manner. It is reflective of the audacious words of one of the dying thieves on the cross: "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us." The more perceptive and contrite criminal's words resonate with us: 'But the other, answering rebuked him saying, "Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?"' (Luke 23:39-40 NKJV).

The fear of God is an important lesson to glean from the cloud and smoke in the Old Testament and in the latter events of the Revelation. God is the One: 'who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see' (1 Tim. 6:16). The fact of His gracious condescension to dignify the Tabernacle in the wilderness and the Temple in their settled life, should never detract from His awesomeness.

Moses had had the extraordinary experience of speaking to God face to face as a man speaks to his friend (Ex. 33:11). He requested to be shown the glory of God, a request which the Lord turned down, for no man can see His face and live (Ex. 33:18-23). He had also the unique experience of his face reflecting the glory of God as he spoke with Him (Ex. 34:29-35). The familiar, however, soon became the formidable, for when God's presence in the cloud no longer stood at the entrance to the Tent of meeting but covered it and the glory of God filled the Tabernacle, Moses could not enter (Ex. 40:34-35.)

It was a similar spectacle in the reign of Solomon during the return of the ark to the most holy place within the temple: 'And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house. Then Solomon spoke: 'The LORD said He would dwell in

the dark cloud. I have surely built You an exalted house, a place for You to dwell in forever' (1 Kin. 8:10-12).

That house which Solomon presumed would be a dwelling place for God to rest forever (which incidentally he spent fewer years building than his own personal residence—1 Kin. 6:38; 7:1), would be abandoned, and in the words of the Lord Jesus left to them desolate. The tabernacle and temple were but empty structures, without the presence of the Lord to ennoble and glorify them. Herein is the lesson of the cloud. In the time of the Revelation also none would be able to enter this temple because of the smoke from the glory of God and from His power, until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. As always, whether on earth or in heaven, we are reminded of the awesomeness and sovereignty of God and that we can only approach Him on His own terms and at His behest.

Frederick F. Ntido

From Victoria B.C.: *Revelation 15 and the deliverance of Israel in Exodus 15.* Both the people leaving Egypt and those who will know victory over the Beast and his image have to deal with persecution and oppression. Both encounter a sea, one being the Red Sea and the other a sea of glass mingled with fire. Both groups are found on the shore and praise God and glorify Him and His attributes. It is God who delivers His people in wisdom and power, and the enemies of God have no power or right to follow and subdue these people of God. The group in Revelation have an additional reason to celebrate. They also sing the song of the Lamb, speaking of the Lord Jesus who has gained us the victory. Two groups separated by centuries of time, yet united in extolling the virtues of a holy God and His salvation.

The smoke filling the temple (15:8) We then looked at what we understand to be the cloud of the glory of God filling His temple. In Exodus 40:34-38, and in 1 Kings 8:11, the glory ('Shekinah' glory) of the Lord filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple with His presence. One can find no reference to the Shekinah associated with the rebuilt temple when a remnant returned from Babylon, nor referenced regarding Herod's temple, nor is it associated with the one built during the Tribulation. We do see the cloud of glory on the mount of transfiguration in Matthew 17 strongly associated with the Lord Jesus. We also see this glorious cloud in the temple that Jesus will build during the start of His reign in the millennial age in Zechariah 6:13 and Ezekiel 44:4. This cloud is the very real presence of God which displaced the priests so that they could not minister when He came to the tabernacle and the temple. He will do this again in the future on His return [Comment 8].

The appearance of the angels in bright white with golden sash tells us whose servants they are. Like the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration they glow in

their purity as servants of the most High God [Comment 9]. They also wear the golden sash like our Lord and Saviour in Revelation 1 when He showed Himself to John. These sashes speak of the glory, richness and holy character of the God they serve, and in turn His Son, the Lord Jesus, who is pure, holy, spotless, and full of all riches, wisdom, honour and strength. His servants, the angels, should be holy too.

Rodger Lefevre; Micah Lefevre

Our regular contributor, John Peddie, when sending his article, was in respite, away from computer, books and Syllabus because of C-19 restrictions. We include it here, being mainly on further aspects of Chapter 11 as in December 2020.

From Greenock: Who will be the other witness with Elijah? Enoch and Moses have a strong claim to be Elijah's companions. Enoch was translated to heaven and did not see death, as was the case with Elijah, who was taken to heaven in a chariot. Enoch was certainly a prophet, noting Revelation 11:10. He prophesied, 'See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of His holy ones' (Jude v.14 NIV).

If Moses is one of the two witnesses, he will see more of the land of promise to which he travelled throughout the desert for forty years. He will not enjoy the experience nor will he be impressed by the once beautiful Promised Land, nor by the descendants of their forefathers who gave him such a hard time in the wilderness. These same successors in the Tribulation will worship the Antichrist (the Beast) or any other god, but God.

Moses heard the victory song when he and the people of Israel crossed the Red Sea. He will hear many victory songs of praise to the God of Israel and to the Lord Jesus when He comes with all His saints. What desolations will Yeshua ha-Massiach find when He comes to reign—which may suggest that there will be a time gap between the Tribulation and the full productivity of the Millennial kingdom.

The Lord, from whom all blessings flow, would rather bless His creatures than judge them. A holy God, however, can neither countenance sin nor allow sin to enter into heaven; so there must come a time when sin, which was totally dealt with at the cross, will be completely eradicated from the earth. We are living in the time that will lead to the Tribulation. The Bridegroom is waiting His Father's command to claim His bride. 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.'

John Peddie

COMMENTS

1. (**Aberdeen**): It is helpful to avoid these verses being misunderstood to support the idea that the Lord's sacrifice on Calvary ultimately covers the sins of all humankind whether in life they accept the gospel or not. Accordingly it is worth noting that 1 John 2:2 in the Greek reads, literally, 'not concerning ours only, but also concerning whole [of] the world'—so the words 'the sins of' do not appear at that point in the verse, as is shown in RV. (NASB inserts '*those of*.) Hence it has been taught that Christ was Himself *propitiation* on the cross for the sins of the children of God, i.e., believers, but also was a sufficient *sacrifice* for all humankind, though only those who believe in this life receive the benefit. Making provision for salvation for the whole world is distinct from being a propitiation, i.e. achieving the favour of God for believers. (Cp. Rom. 3:24-25, 8:33-34; *B.S.* 2014, June, pp.81-83 and *Needed Truth*, 1964, p.50.)

2. (**Aberkenfig**): We note that Josephus may have embellished the Romans' record, perhaps to gain Jewish readers, or to win favour with the Roman commander. But it may be wiser to avoid building a view that John's descriptions were either drawn from or influenced by Jewish apocalyptic literature, or limited by imagery from the Old Testament prophets. He has shown us already that his description and style is highly individual, though he does at times use expressions that would resonate with Jewish Christians (see *B.S.* 2020, July, p.100, 'Introducing'.) If John uses hyperbole in 14:20, it's a remarkably specific figure.

M.A.

3. (**Aberkenfig**): Notwithstanding the fact that the beast and the false prophet will be 'tormented in the presence of the Lamb.' (14:10), I suggest that the differences between the glassy sea and the Lake of Fire are significant enough to justify the conclusion that they are distinct from each other. The predominant characteristic of the Lake of Fire is its intense, fiery heat—it burns with fire and brimstone/sulphur; whereas the predominant characteristic of 'the glassy sea' is its scintillating beauty. The location of the glassy sea is in heaven and is inseparably linked with the throne of God. However, the proximity of the Lake of Fire to 'the holy angels and the Lamb' (v10) suggests a locus independent of either the present earth or the new one. In the absence of further scriptural detail, I think this is about as much as we can say about it.

J.J.

4. (**Aberkenfig**): It would seem more likely the song of Exodus 15:1-18, in its entirety, with such positive notes of the Lord's mighty deliverance of Israel from Egypt's expectation of bringing God's nation back into servitude, was sung rather than the refrain of Deuteronomy 32:1-43, where the latter dwells to some extent on the failures of the chosen people (see vv. 15-29).

The song of the Lamb would also possibly include not only Revelation 15:3-4 as you suggest, but also the wordage of chapter 5:9-10,12. R.B.F.

5. (Aberkenfig): *Angels in linen or stone-colour?* (Rev. 15:6) The doubt arises because two early manuscripts have *lithōn* = 'stone'. This invites connection with Ezekiel 28:13 (in the Greek version), suggesting precious stones adorning the garments—but this is not used in Scripture of any angel other than Satan, so why of these seven? The sense 'stone-coloured' leaves us conjecturing cream with gold bands. Dark hues of stone might seem fitting, but *linon* ('linen') appears in some authoritative MSS. and variant form *linoun* in the earliest papyrus for Revelation (3rd century), so the UBS text chooses *linon* and rates it high ('B') in reliability. Most versions thus translate 'linen'. Compare Buckhaven paper, para. 3, and Mount Forest, last paragraph.

The bride's garments of fine linen (Rev. 19:7-8) are metaphorical expressions of uprightness and fairness in the service of saints on earth, but note that the seven angels are delivering, not determining righteous judgement.

6. (Buckhaven): *The bowls* Buckhaven friends' eloquence here is most fitting, for it seems to me a point at which we move from the literal to the symbolic, and to accepting that conditions in heavenly spheres are not fully revealed to us as yet. Even if the harps were not at this point played, the human thoughts we might have of managing a golden harp while holding and then pouring out a shallow bowl must retreat, for our attention is to be on the signalling of fearful judgement.

7. (Mount Forest): This helpful overview uses *three senses of 'judgement'*. I suggest:

(1) 'punishment' or 'enactment of penalty' is clearly seen in the general disasters of the first four trumpets, though they are limited in geographical reach on earth and in the visible heaven. Similarly the fifth and sixth trumpets signal general punishments: though growing in intensity from afflicting to killing, they still affect limited proportions. The sixth trumpet's effects fall upon the dragon, the Beast, the system, and the Beast, the Antichrist, and the false prophet but as others remark, these are chief perpetrators of evil; and their final destinies come later.

(2) The dispensing of *justice* and (3) pronouncement of *sentence* we see in 20:4 and 20:12-13. Hence (2) and

(3) involve further description of punishment in 21:8 and 22:15.

8. (Victoria B.C.): *The smoke and the glory* On this interesting matter, we note that Exodus 40 and 1 Kings 8 record the occasions when God first made evident to the priests, and doubtless those people who were closely watching, His

acceptance of the work just completed. Thus (1) this does not necessarily imply that thereafter God was not present when the pillar of cloud surely came to rest above the newly erected Tabernacle at each resting stage in the wilderness journey; nor can we definitely infer that while the priesthood were faithful to His instructions concerning Temple service God did not find rest above the ark behind the veil. (2) There may be another reason for no mention of the glory returning to the temple built by the Remnant, noting the people separating themselves to seek the Lord in Ezra 6:21, and His law in Nehemiah 8-10. "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house," says the LORD Almighty' (Haggai 2:9 NIV). This, I think, was His view of the Remnant temple, whatever the opinion of men about the 'day of small things'. *M.A.*

9. (Victoria B.C.): His shining on the holy mount was of course of His essential being: theirs here was of their clothing. While in some versions the same word 'white' is used in the transfiguration account in Matthew 17:2 and the description of the angels' clothing in Revelation 15:6 and also words denoting shining or glowing are used in both, the original words are different. That which is attributed to Christ in Matthew 17 is *leukos* and that attributed to the angels' clothing in Revelation 15 is *lampros*, the first denoting the glory and purity and light of the Christ's essential being radiating in His body and clothing, the second denoting a vessel such as a lamp or torch, which is a light holder but has not intrinsic light of its own. *P.D.*

Feature

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Central placing of the ark of the covenant

The next duty Solomon had to fulfil was the bringing up of the ark of the covenant of the Lord to Jerusalem where the elders of Israel and the heads of the tribal families were assembled. The burning desire of David, as he commanded the princes of Israel in an earlier time, was to restore the ark to its rightful place, with the holy vessels, in the inner sanctuary of God's dwelling (1 Chr. 22:17). This was now taking place under Solomon's edict. It was carried by the priests and Levites, along with the Tent of Meeting and the other items stored there, and placed in the oracle, the most holy part of the temple, under the wings of the cherubim. Inside the ark were the two stone tablets inserted by Moses at Horeb, and inscribed in God's own handwriting were the ten commandments verifying His covenant with His people. When the priests emerged from the holy place in the temple, they

were unable to carry out any more duties as the glory of God filled the whole house of the Lord (Ex. 34:27-28; 1 Kin. 8:11).

The ark, of course, speaks of the Lord Jesus in all that He means to the other two members of the trinity, Father and Spirit—see mention of all three divine personalities in Ephesians 3:14, 16-17, 19 RV, along with heavenly and earthly families of angels and humans respectively in verse 15, culminating in the exalted phrase ‘fulness of God’. In Paul’s letter to the church of God in Colossae, some 80 miles east of Ephesus, he tells us ‘In Him (i.e., in Christ) all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell’ (Col. 1:19).

The Lord Jesus, as we know, is head of the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18,24); chief corner stone of the temple of the Lord, already referred to in Ephesians 2:20-21; and also shown as such in the corresponding terminology of 1 Peter 2:5-6 as chief corner stone of the spiritual house or house of God.

He is also spoken of as ‘Son over God’s house’ (Heb. 3:6)—a glorious title attributable to the filial care He exhibits and the gentle authority He exercises over those who subscribe to His teaching as to how God’s will for service that is pleasing to Him should be given prior place in their lives, according to His word. He is the Apostle and High Priest whom we gladly own, who came to and for us from His Father’s side in sinless humanity and who has gone in on our behalf representatively to His Father’s presence, knowing our weaknesses and failures (Heb. 3:1; 2:17; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

The part played by David the king

Solomon gladly acknowledged the leading role taken by his father David in deciding how fitting it would be for the Lord his God to have a magnificent dwelling-place on earth where His people could meet with Him and serve Him. In some of David’s early psalms he wrote of his appreciation of God’s mercies, all of which would be in the forefront of his mind as he made his way with godly fear and reverential spirit to behold the beauty of the Lord and worship Him in His house, His holy temple, where God would pay attention to the words of his mouth. In that place of sanctity, everything spoke of glory (Ps. 5:7; 18:6; 27:4; 29:9). His heart’s desire was acknowledged and commended by the Lord but he was denied the privilege and honour of being the constructor, due to the fact that he was a man of war who had shed blood.

Several times over, Solomon refers to his father as God’s servant who received the promises of God throughout his life, and the same would apply to his progeny, providing they walked before God in humility and faithfulness.

What feeling David expressed before his people and to those of other countries who dwelt in Israel's land and had come to appreciate that this nation of Israel was like no other! They were a people professing their trust in, and bearing testimony to, the God of heaven and earth. A house for God meant everything to David. He insisted that it had to be exceedingly magnificent, of fame and glory throughout all lands, and he himself would do all he could to ensure this would take place. As a result, the divine record tells us he prepared abundantly, providing materials of gold, silver, brass, iron and stone in great quantities before his life ended, and instructing Solomon, with the Lord's people Israel, to adhere to the law given to Moses, the servant of the Lord (1 Chr. 22:5, 13-14). More than that, David also entrusted to his son the blueprint of the designs and measurements of the ancillary buildings of the house including the vestibule, upper rooms and inner chambers. Additionally, he set out the pattern of construction for the courts and treasuries, and the divisions of priests and Levites, and all the work of the service to be carried out in the Lord's temple. Then to cap everything, all that he had prepared so carefully for this project with every sinew of his being over many years of self-sacrifice, he gave with a willing mind and a perfect heart. This included all his personal treasure and riches, gladly given for the earthly dwelling-place of his God which he described as 'the holy house'. His exemplary attitude and commitment had such an impact upon the princes of the tribes and leaders of the fathers' houses, and also the people, that they followed suit in their sacrificial giving (1 Chr. 28:11-13, 19, 21; 29:1-3, 6-9).

The Lord's love for His house

The Lord appeared a second time to Solomon, the first time being at Gibeon in a night dream, the principal 'high place' for the offering of sacrifices prior to a material house for worship and praise being built for God. Now, the Lord spoke directly to the king of the pleasure He found in what had been constructed for His name; here His eyes would be focused and His heart would be moved continually. However, there was an overriding factor, and that was the necessity of Solomon's conduct being worthy of this place for God, by following and carrying out divine commands. Otherwise, the Lord was prepared to forsake His temple, knowing that the name and reputation of His people would be brought into disrepute among the nations as a result (1 Kin. 3:5, 7-9).

Further on, Solomon, recalling his father's solemn entreaty, pleaded for God's eyes not only to be upon himself as king night and day, but also this house he had built; a place where confession of sin could be made and God's forgiveness and mercy shown and known. If adverse circumstances befell the nation such as famine, plague, or enemy encroachment, or should backsliding and departure from the Lord occur, then if there was a return of heart to the Lord, His mercy and forgiveness would be sought and obtained. Why? Because they were a special

people to Him whom He had taken from among all peoples of the earth to be His very own. From their testimony of their Creator and Saviour, other folk of different countries would come to 'know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other.' That very day Solomon offered before the Lord, as peace sacrifices, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep (1 Kin. 8:29, 60).

Solomon's change of heart

Solomon's downfall in later life was his love of women which surpassed his love for the Lord. He married women of foreign nations which were idolatrous and anything but friendly towards Israel. He had 700 wives, princesses and 300 concubines. They turned away his heart to their idols. As a result, he incurred the Lord's wrath and his kingdom was doomed (1 Kin. 11:1-12; Neh. 13:26). Enemies multiplied. His reign in Jerusalem was cut short, although it lasted 40 years (1 Kin. 11:42). Later on, after many years, the Babylonian army led by Nebuzaradan looted then burned the house of the Lord, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem. They took a sizeable proportion of the inhabitants of the land of Judah into captivity, some of whom, especially those who held official positions, were put to death. Moreover, wholesale destruction of brass fixtures and fittings took place, while all the beautiful vessels and ornaments of the temple were either shattered to pieces or carried away to Babylon (2 Kin. 25:8-21; Jer. 52:17-20).

How different was the Lord Jesus in His attitude to the place where God had ordained worship and service to be given! John the beloved disciple of Christ, in his gospel account, records the way in which the Lord dealt with those who were simply regarding the temple of their day as a place for engaging in profitable commercial transactions, announcing clearly to the traders that His Father's house was never to be envisaged purely as a 'business hub'. This caused John and his fellow-disciples to remember what had been prophetically written of Jesus by David 'The zeal of thine house shall eat Me up' (John 2:17).

The service of song in the house of the Lord

This had been arranged by David when the ark of God had at last been brought into its rightful place. The three conductors of the music were Heman, the Kohathite, his brother Asaph, and Jeduthun (aka Ethan), a Merarite. Asaph was the overall leader of praise. The choir was composed of many of their relatives and priests and Levites. When the temple building for God was finished, with the ark in its appointed setting in the oracle, innumerable sheep and oxen were offered in sacrifice, then there followed a fanfare of trumpets and the sounding of cymbals, psalteries and harps accompanying the voices of the singers. It must have been a glorious scene to behold, but of greater value and importance was the sense of unity that prevailed as musical notes and human voices sounded as one, praising

the Lord in saying, 'For He is good: for His mercy *endureth* for ever'. No wonder the glory of the Lord filled this amazing place (1 Chr. 6: 31-48; 2 Chr. 5:12-14).

Seeing the face and hearing the human voice of those who love Him is something that delights the heart of God, whether spoken or sung for the right reason, in the right way, at the right time. The same can be said of angelic voices (cp. S. of S. 2:14; Luke 2:13-14; Rev. 5:9 *et al.*). What must it have meant to the Lord Jesus leading His disciples in song at the conclusion of the upper room institution of the remembrance of Himself before making their way to the mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane? How much more pleasurable to the Father is the voice of the Son declaring the Father's name in His presence and singing the Father's praise among the heavenly congregation (Heb. 2:12)! How enjoyable it is for us to sing the Lord's songs in a world that is estranged to Him, due to the fact that we have been set free from sin and Satan; no longer in chains of captivity as Judah found herself in Babylonian exile (Ps. 137:4). The book of the Psalms is replete with verses of encouragement to sing praises to God at all times. We are to sing heartily with our spirits and voices, appreciating the words we are articulating (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Just mouthing words without trying to vocalise the music is a disservice to the Lord. At the present time, our world is infected by the Covid-19 virus, which has brought about government guidelines in many countries forbidding the singing of hymns in churches. Perhaps, temporarily, in only publicly reciting the words of worship hymns, we might even better appreciate the impact of thoughts, and make more sensitive the feelings, behind the words that so many Christian hymnwriters have put to verse for our spiritual benefit.

Solomon's act of homage and honour to God

The king stood, facing the congregation of Israel, on a bronze platform specially prepared for the event, then knelt down on his knees in the presence of all the assembly of Israel. He spread out his hands and spoke to the Lord of the grace and glory that belonged to the Lord God of Israel alone, and the value of all that happened that day. He pleaded for mercy, forgiveness, and help when prayer ascended from an individual, or the people collectively, or even the stranger belonging to another faraway nation, who recognised the value of the house that had been built in honour to Him. As soon as the king ended his petition, fire descended from heaven consuming the burnt offering and sacrifices, and the glory of the Lord filled the temple entirely, eliciting from all the people the same words as before: 'For He is good: for His mercy *endureth* for ever' (2 Chr. 6:13-33; 7:1-3).

The Lord later appeared to Solomon during the night affirming His approval of all that had been said and done and asserting that His house was to be a house of sacrifice. He would be ready to hear, forgive, and heal His people when things

went wrong as long as they came in confession to Him, with humility and contrition. What remarkable words proceed from Him, 'For I have chosen and hallowed this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually' (2 Chr. 7:16). Warnings of the consequences of departure from Him and His statutes and commandments followed.

The visit of royalty in the coming of the Queen of Sheba, caused no small stir in Jerusalem. It was not in any sense just to see what all the fuss was about in this world-renowned monarch's kingdom. She was moved in her spirit and prepared to divulge to Solomon all that was in her heart. The wisdom of Solomon so impressed this sovereign as did the magnificent temple he had built. The demeanour of his courtiers and the reverential attitude of heart the king displayed as he made his way into the temple, simply took her breath away (2 Chr. 9:3-4).

Words of the Lord Jesus concerning Solomon and the temple

The setting in which the Lord takes time to say something about Solomon the king and the glory associated with his name is unusual. He has spoken about the wealth and riches of this world being fleeting and temporary as opposed to the treasures laid up in heaven from a life of faith and trust in God that is removed from worry and cares. He then draws upon nature's beauty and the superior attraction of the lilies of the field to the display of all that Solomon possessed: they are dependent entirely upon their Creator for life (Mat. 6:19-29).

In Matthew 12 the Lord draws upon two instances of permissible sabbath-breaking in answer to the Pharisees' criticism of the disciples who, making their way back to base on the sabbath day, having been unable to obtain food nearby, found themselves trudging through some cornfields and began plucking ears of corn to appease their appetite. Citing the example of David, Solomon's father, and his men, because of their hunger, entering into the house of God and partaking of the shewbread that legitimately, was only to be eaten by the priests, He defended their action. Similarly, in the days of the temple, by reason of some necessity, priests had on occasions to do some things that had been forbidden on the sabbath, but were not held guilty. The Lord Jesus then referred indirectly to His own person and presence on earth far exceeding the importance and grandeur of the temple, 'One greater than the temple is here' (v.6; cp. Luke 11:31). He gladly bore witness to the fact of Solomon's reign being characterised by opulence and magnificence, yet its outward beauty soon faded even before the king's demise. Likewise, Solomon's renowned wisdom did not last his lifetime; many mistakes and faults marked his years of reign. *R.B. Fullarton (To be continued)*

He who testifies to these things says,
"Surely I am coming soon."
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Revelation 22:20 ESV