

The Synopsis

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1847

1 THE REVELATION

1.1 Chapter 15

Chapter 15 is a new vision. It unrolls before the prophet another scene, the last plagues or judgments of God, and specially that of Babylon, before Christ comes. The main object of the vision was the seven angels, having the seven last plagues; but, as ever, the saints who have to do with this scene are seen in security before the judgments begin. They have been purified, but have come through the fire of tribulation too. They stand on a sea mingled with fire. They have belonged to the time when the beast and his image were in power, but they had got the victory over it. They seemed perhaps to have succumbed-it was real victory.

Their song is very peculiar. The song of Moses is triumph over the power of evil by God's judgments. The song of the Lamb is the exaltation of the rejected Messiah, of the suffering One, like whom they had suffered; for it is the slain remnant amidst unfaithful and apostate Israel whom we find here. The song celebrates God and the Lamb, but by victorious sufferers who belong to heaven. What they celebrate are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai (the God of the Old Testament), but who now has manifested Himself in judgment, known by His works that are public for the people. He shewed His ways unto Moses, His works unto the children of Israel. His works are celebrated now. They are the works of Jehovah Elohim Shaddai, the Judge of all the earth. But His ways are celebrated too. There was intelligence of them, as far at least as righteous judgment went. These ways in judgment were just and true. Israel would understand deliverance, and how it came; but Moses knew God's ways. But this is all. It is not merely celebration of qualities and attributes, as the angels do, nor the full knowledge of God's work in salvation by the blood of the Lamb. It is not the heart going up in the sense of its own relationship, but a celebration of the glory of the Lord, who would now be worshipped by the nations, for His judgments were manifested. It was intelligence when judgments were manifested, not when all was yet to be learned within the veil.

This celebration of what was just bursting forth being made, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened, not merely the temple with the ark of the covenant seen. That secured the result for faith, when

evil was raging in power on earth; the ark of God's covenant secured Israel. It was a testimony opened out, not a covenant which secured in the hour of evil, but a testimony which made good what the ark of the covenant secured; for the temple was opened, and the messengers of judgment came forth-God's judgment for the restoration and blessing of Israel, by the judgment of the Gentiles and all who corrupted the earth. Cleanness in God's sight, and divine righteousness, characterised and animated this judgment-clean linen pure and white, and golden girdles: I apprehend the former, in answer to corruption in what should have had this-Babylon (compare chap. 19: 8). That is, it was a judgment which required it, and was according to it, and also to divine righteousness. It is not brass burning in the fire-simply execution of judgment in dealing with men, though that took place-but God making good His own nature and character against corruption, the essential character of the eternal God, which the assembly ought to have displayed; whereas Babylon was entirely the contrary, and the beast too. The seven angels judge all according to these characters of God, because it was really the avenging of what God was, as fully revealed to the assembly; but the white linen refers, I doubt not, specially to Babylon, though the men with the mark of the beast would come under the judgment. One of the four living creatures gives the vials; for it is the judicial power of God in creation, not yet the Lamb. God's glory in judgment filled the temple; and no man could have to say to Him in worship, or approaching Him, while these plagues were executing. It was the full display of God in judgment.

The first four plagues have the same objects as the judgments of the first four trumpets-the whole circle of symbolic nature, but here directly as regards men-earth, sea, rivers, and sun; the ordered prophetic sphere of God's dealings, the masses of peoples as such viewed as unorganised, the moral principles which give an impulse to their movements, and sovereign authority. But it is not a third here (that is, the Roman earth) but in general.