

## 19 REV

This is Friday, the 23rd of December, 2005. We continue tonight our study in the book of Revelation. We will just have a single lesson this evening in sort of recognition of the holiday and all the attendant things that are going on.

Let's take a moment as we approach our study to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, we are so grateful to live in the age of the soon coming fulfillment of all of the things that we are studying. For hundreds of years, believers have read the books and the prophecies and the words of truth contained in Scripture and have looked forward to the culmination of all things and the return of the Lord Jesus.

And we are closer than anyone has ever been to that great fulfillment. We recognize our place in history. We know that the time is short and we pray that as we study these things, we will not only enhance our familiarity with the events and the elements of your character and your glory that are reflected in them, but we will also see the interpretation and application that can motivate and guide us in the days that remain to us in our lives.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen. We have come to chapter 15 and 16 in the book of Revelation. We're roughly two thirds of the way through the book.

And if you will remember the great broad outline of the book, we are between the second and third great set of sevens that are popularly known in the book of Revelation, which are the seals, the trumpets and the bowls. We've talked about the seals, we've talked about the trumpets and we are about to talk about the bowls. I've given you two handouts, which will soon be in the handouts folder on the FTP site under Revelation.

If you'll take a look at the chart that says structure of the book of Revelation, I take no credit for this. This is actually something from a website somewhere, but it's not anything unique. Many commentators, many observers, many interpreters of Revelation have observed this structure, but this is a nice summary of it.

You'll notice that if you count the rows here, there are seven great rows and Revelation is certainly a book of sevens, a book of fulfillment, a book of completion. The first seven that you see there are the seven letters to the churches, which we have studied in great detail. Then the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and then the place we find ourselves, the seven visions of warfare in chapters 12 through 14.

Then the seven final plagues in chapter 15 and 16. And you'll notice if you look across that row, you have the earth plague, the sea plague, the river plague, the sun plague, the sea plague, the flood plague, then the throne of the beast, the demonic army, and the start of judgment and a great hailstorm. This is what we're going to be looking at this evening.

And then ahead of us, we find the seven visions of victory in chapters 17 through 19, the great prostitute, the fall of Babylon, the throng in heaven, the appearance of Christ with his cloud of saints, the great final battle, and then visions of the end of the age and the new creation in the last three chapters of the book. This is the chaining of Satan and his casting into the bottomless pit. For a thousand years, he is then released.

You have the Gog Magog rebellion, and then his final judgment in the lake of fire. Then the great white throne, the new heaven and new earth, the vision of the bride, the city and the river of life, and then an epilogue of exhortations. So I think this is a fair representation, not only of what we have seen so far in the book, but what we're going to see.

Now, if we just stop at that point and say, what is the main significance of understanding these structural elements of the book of Revelation? I have a couple for you. First of all, if you look at the secular world, and if you look at the uninformed world of believers, this book is often dismissed as something of a delirious rant. It's incoherent.

It's just vision after vision that could mean anything. A lot of people think that Revelation has no place in Scripture at all. And people who think that way, generally not only think about the book of Revelation, but many other books in the same way.

They will say that Paul didn't write all of his letters, perhaps none of them. Jesus didn't say all of his sayings, perhaps none of them. The books of the Old Testament are late.

They are not what they purport to be. Daniel didn't write Daniel. Somebody wrote it later, et cetera.

And we think, well, that's out there. I don't have to worry about it. We do need to worry about it because we need to recognize that those criticisms have been made.

And if we believe otherwise, we need to know why. I don't believe, and I'm sure you all don't believe in a bury your head in the sand faith. I'm just gonna believe what I believe and my intellect will not engage.

That's a dangerous thing because if you happen to choose something to believe that is not correct, the corrective mechanism that God has given us, which is our thinking process, will never engage. And you can see a lot of believers, a lot of quote unquote fundamentalists who believe certain things, people who believe in the King James Bible as the only inspired English, people who believe in water baptism as a do or die sort of a thing, et cetera. And they are impervious to instruction.

They're impervious to correction. And the word of God is profitable for those things. So when we study the word of God and we come to conclusions about it, we should not only understand and put our faith in those conclusions, but we should have a good supporting foundation of why.

And I think you all agree with me on this. We want to have a thinking faith. So when it comes to the book of Revelation and it comes to the stones that are inevitably cast at it, one of the reasons we don't think that it's an incoherent, chaotic mumbo jumbo, and John found some wildwood weed on the Isle of Patmos and came up with these visions.

One of the reasons is as you examine the book closely, you find that there is a beautiful structure. There is a very coherent plan and each part of the structure has a purpose. And these sevens are not accidental.

This is a very carefully constructed book. And someone who reads it in a cursory fashion with shallow comprehension isn't going to recognize, just as they don't recognize the coherence and the structure and the beauty of the rest of scripture and its integrity, its internal consistency, the beauty of the warp and the woof of the fabric that is the Bible. People who do not have an ear to hear, who have been blinded by the God of this world, cannot see these things.

And in many cases, it's a hopeless task trying to explain it. But you and I can see it and ought to see it and ought to recognize it for what it is. This is the evidence of God's fingerprints on this book.

So, it is no accident that this book is all about sevens, seven letters to seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, these seven visions that we have just finished studying in detail, the woman with the crown of stars, the huge red dragon, the war in heaven, the beast from the sea, the beast from the land, the lamb with 144,000 and the beginning of judgment. And that beginning of judgment, you see just as Noah was placed in the ark and delivered from the great worldwide judgment that took place the first time. So, these 144,000 are going to be put in the ark as it were during the time of final judgment.

And that's what these last two visions have detailed for us in chapter 14. What we have coming up next are these, what are called here the seven final plagues, which are of course the bowl judgments. We've seen that there is a set of three in the seals, trumpets and bowls.

And this book is also a book of threes. You have the father, son and Holy Spirit. You have the unholy Trinity of the beast from the pit, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land.

And we have seen that the perspective shifts, the seals perspective of man, trumpets perspective of angels. And the one we're about to see the bowls is the perspective of God. And of course, God's perspective as he looks on the world and finds that there is no hindering presence, that which hinders has been taken out of the way.

The church is no longer present. The faithful of Israel are no longer present. There is

nothing for God to do but judge the earth.

How long was it from the time the ark door slammed shut until the rain began? Seven days, another perfect seven. And so you have these seven visions of warfare as it were one for each day before the rain begins. So I think this is helpful as a summary as kind of a visualization of the structure of the book.

I think it really helps to see that this is an extremely complex and extremely dense book. And it is no accident. It is no rant.

It is not the raving of some raggedy exiled prophet as so many would have us believe. You all are insulated from a lot of the literature and a lot of the analysis and a lot of the higher criticism that is directed at the Bible in general and some of these books in particular. And when I see it, it just makes me wonder how God can have the patience to not begin this whole cycle at the point that some of these things are expressed.

But it is a thing of beauty. If you'll take a look at your second, as long as we're looking at our handouts, take a look at the second one, which is a suggested practical outline for Revelation. This is attributed to a Catholic priest, Father Just.

And while we can argue with the Catholics about a lot of things, there actually is some pretty good biblical scholarship in the Catholic world. And this is some of it here. I think this is a very fair and accurate outline of the book of Revelation.

And once again, you see the structure. After the prologue and the inaugural vision and commission, you see that the first cycle of visions include the seven seals and the seven trumpets. And then as a second cycle of visions from chapter 12 and following, when you have the intermediate visions that we've just looked at, and then the bowl judgments, and then seven visions of last things.

And I give you this one primarily because it shows the place of visions. Take a look at the first cycle there. After the first six seals, you'll notice it says two interrupting visions.

You have the 144,000 and then countless Gentiles robed in white. Then in the trumpets, you have the first four trumpets, the fifth and sixth trumpet, and then two interrupting visions, the angel with the small scroll, then the temple and the two witnesses. And once again, you can see the symmetry.

There are so many different ways of observing structure and order in the book. And this is another perspective. You'll also notice that when you get down to the seven plagues in chapter 15, the seven angels, the seven bowls, this is chapter 15 and 16, which we are currently looking at.

Then there is an elaboration on the destruction of Babylon in the next two chapters. And you have the prostitute on the scarlet beast, the fall of Babylon and the rejoicing in

heaven. Of course, it's kind of interesting because so many see the whore of Babylon as the Catholic church itself.

And this is a Catholic priest making this outline. And he very clearly identifies the whore on the scarlet beast as Rome here, which is a little bit surprising. I would be interested in seeing the expanded version of interpretation here, but we don't have time for that right now.

So in the seven visions of last things in chapter 19 through 22, once again, you find clear structure, clear sequence in the book. So I just give you these as kind of showing us where we are in the forest and what we have covered, what we're about to cover, and that we are not in sort of a, some people look at the book of Proverbs and say, well, this is just kind of a ragtag collection. This was just thrown together willy-nilly and sometimes it flows and sometimes it doesn't.

There's structure and order in the book of Proverbs as well. That's not apparent to the casual observer. Same thing in the book of Ecclesiastes, which we have studied verse by verse.

You remember that that book has been so misunderstood and so misinterpreted because people have failed to observe the structure and the theme. Okay, well, that brings us back now to our detailed study, picking up this evening in right at the end of chapter 14, where the great winepress of the wrath of God was trampled outside the city. Blood came out of the winepress up to the horse's bridles for 1,600 furlongs, 180 mile radius.

This brings us to chapter 15. I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.

They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the lamb. Well, the vision we have here is, or partakes of or shares elements of previous visions going all the way back to Moses on Mount Sinai, coming through Ezekiel and Daniel and now all the way to the last great prophet. What is this common element, common thread that we've seen all the way through? Did you spot it? What is it that surrounds the throne of God? It's a sea, but it's a sea of glass.

There is something of a, it's not exactly an oxymoron, but there is a juxtaposition of ideas there that's not normal. What's one thing about the sea? If you walk to the shore and look out at the sea, what do you find? It is not like glass. What does the sea represent throughout scripture? Chaotic forces of evil, yet around God's throne, there is a sea, but it is glass.

There's not a ripple, there's not a wave, there's not a molecule out of place. What's different in this description of the sea, the glassy sea that surrounds God's throne that we haven't seen in any of the preceding instances? Moses at Sinai with the 70 elders, Ezekiel, Daniel, what's different here? A sea of glass mingled with fire. That element, now we've seen fire up around God's throne amongst the cherubim and so on, but have we ever seen the sea of glass contain fire before? This, it's completely unrelated, but it reminds me of, you know, the Japanese are noted for their elegant simplicity, their poetry, haiku, their art, where with just a few brushstrokes, you look at it and pretty soon you can see an entire scene that seems to have a lot of detail.

And that is also reflected in their flag. What is the flag of Japan? It's a round red circle on a white field. It's about as simple as you can get.

What does the Japanese battle flag look like? It's the very same thing, but there are these rays coming out from the red sun, extending to the edges of the white field. And it's as though the sun has gone nova. The sun isn't just sitting there serenely, the sun is now projecting rays out.

I think it's a great flag for what they were wanting to express. You know, you think about World War II and the sun is on the move there. Well, I get the same impression looking at the glassy sea in each of these visions.

And here, the glassy sea, it is though the fire that surrounds God's throne has suddenly expanded through this sea. God has established his throne upon the sea. You remember, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

If you've ever heard that song, George Beverly Shea has a great rendition of it. I would sing it for you, but I won't. And it repeats, and established it, and established it upon the flood.

He's established his throne upon the sea, upon the flood. And what does that mean? The chaotic forces have not disappeared, they're there, but in the presence of God, they are absolutely unable to be chaotic. They are unable to do what the sea does.

The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God for the wicked. But when you have the sea in the presence of God, it's just like glass.

What is the interpretation and application? You wouldn't think I could do that with just the first verse, would you? First two verses. But think about it. We live in a fallen world.

We are surrounded by evil. We embody, to a certain extent, some evil. We're conceived in iniquity and born in sin.

To the extent that we cultivate the presence of God, to the extent that our soul is the

temple of God, containing the throne of God, and the presence of God, the promise of Jesus, the one who has my words and keeps them, loves me, I and my father will come and make our home. What is the presence of God going to do to the evil that surrounds us? Gonna flatten it out. It's still there, hasn't disappeared, but its effects, its ability to foam and rage is gonna be just about like the Sea of Galilee a few seconds after Jesus said, "'Peace, be still.'" Flatten right out.

Now, compare this to the vision of God's throne at the end of this book, which you're familiar with. What's different? What's missing around the throne of God in the kingdom of the Father, the new heavens and the new earth? There is no more sea. Every other vision of God, where we see him in the heavenly realm, this glassy sea has been pictured, and the elders are there, and the throngs are there, and the 4,000 are there, but in the kingdom of the Father, no more sea.

Why? Lake of Fire judgment is complete. All of those elements no longer exist. And this symbolic representation of God's dominance over and complete control of evil is no longer necessary.

It's been handled. It's been judged, and that's over with. Well, this sea of glass mingled with fire, what is fire the picture of? You know, how can you mingle water and fire, the glassy sea and fire? You would think, well, you know, you think oil and water don't mix.

Fire and water certainly don't mix. And you would think, what's going to win if you have fire and you have water? I mean, is it the fireman or is it the fire that typically prevails? Well, when God sends out his fire, it is the sea that is going to disappear. And the elements melt with what? He doesn't say he drowns the elements.

He melts the elements with a fervent heat. And you see, this is the beginning of the end, when this fire expands from the throne of God from beyond the purview of the cherubim and permeates this glassy sea. This symbolically is saying the judgment of God is about to do away with the sea.

And that's why you're not going to have it the next time we view the throne of God in the kingdom of the father. So the sea of glass is mingled with fire. And notice those who have the victory over the beast, the victory over his image, the victory over his mark, the victory over the number of his name are doing what? They stand on the sea of glass.

This is no idle vision, is it? When you are standing on something, what does that mean? You have conquered it. You know, in the ancient world, they used to put their foot on the neck. They'd bring in the king and lay him down and put their foot on his neck.

And the crowd would cheer and they would wave and get the slave behind you saying, you know, sick transit, Gloria Mundi and all that. Well, this is not the Gloria Mundi. This is the Gloria Deo.

And this one isn't going to transit anywhere. This is permanent. And there's no angel whispering in God's ear.

Well, you know, the glory of this world fades. The glory of God does not fade. And that's why it is such a great thing that we are able to partake and to become possessors of the glory of God.

It is something that fadeth not away. So these who have the victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name. That's comprehensive.

Four different elements of the beast. What's the number four represent on earth? Comprehensiveness. Four points of the compass.

Four spatial dimensions, so to speak. You know, scientifically, we think of three spatial dimensions. But when Paul talks and he says, the length and depth and breadth and height, you know, the depth and breadth, that's what you see in front of you.

The height and depth, that's what's above you and what's below you. And those are considered the four spatial dimensions for people in the ancient world. And so four is the number of that which is comprehensive.

And this is a comprehensive total victory. These 144,000 who are the overcomers of the tribulation, representing the overcomers of the entire Old Testament age. They are symbolic.

They are real, but they represent something. They connote something. They stand on the sea of glass.

They have nothing to fear from the fire, do they? Fire is going to judge the sea. But these are those who are victors. And they stand on top of it.

They are untouched by this judgment. And they have harps of God. This is where people get the idea that you go to heaven and play a harp.

It's a complete mangling of the distinction between Israel and the church, between the future for the body and bride of Christ and the future for the redeemed of Israel. Angels are not pictured as singing. Christmas carols notwithstanding.

This, however, is music in heaven. They have harps. First thing you think of when you think of harps is you think of the sweet psalmist of Israel.

You think of David who played the harp, who composed the Psalter, which are the words to the songs that he played on that stringed instrument. And so these people you mentally come to associate with David. And you know that they are going to do what David did.

What did David do with the harp? What was the call to Israel over and over again in the Psalms? Sing his praises. Play upon the harp. And the flute and the psaltery.

Make music as an expression of praise and appreciation and worship to God. This is Israel's unique calling is to express in a musical fashion. They had musicians in the priesthood that were tasked with providing the music.

And music is a great part of worship. And you see it here. They have harps.

They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb. What was the song of Moses? You go back to Exodus chapter 15. We have done the book of Exodus verse by verse.

You remember when we got to chapter 15, we looked at this song. This song is going to be sung by the 144,000 standing before the throne. Why was this song composed the first time? What had just happened? Well, you remember the first 10 chapters of Exodus.

And they get across the Red Sea. The Lord saved Israel. Look at chapter 14 verse 30.

So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians. And Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt.

So the people feared the Lord and believed the Lord and his servant Moses. Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord. And these 144,000 are going to know all the words in Hebrew.

And they're going to sing them in Hebrew as they accompany themselves on harps. I have some albums by the 101 strings. I have some albums by a group.

It's long gone now, but it used to be called 50 Guitars. And if you hear this many stringed instruments playing at once, it makes a sound that the individual instruments can't make. It's sort of like the difference between someone singing a great vocal solo and hearing the vocal majority, where you've got over 100 all singing a great solo together.

And the impact of those voices, we've all been there and felt that wave of sonic power hit us. Well, 144,000 playing harps and singing this song is going to be beyond description. In the heavenly realm, you don't have the problems.

Those of us that have been in parades know that if you've got someone keeping the beat, you've got a drum, you've got the drum and bugle folks playing, the speed of sound becomes an issue in a long column. And if you look at it from a helicopter, you can see the wave of left feet hitting the deck on the beat rippling back. You can actually see the speed of sound because each of these people has his left foot hit the deck when he hears the beat.

And you can watch the ripple in a long parade go back because sound is slow. Well, just think about the physical logistics of 144,000 people all singing a song at the same time. Even at a large concert, the people close to the bandstand sing along with the artist sooner than the people in the back.

And it winds up being a big muddle if you're standing away from the whole thing. It just sounds like a cacophony. That's not going to happen in heaven because you're not limited by the speed of sound.

You're in an environment where it's not an issue. And so this is going to be a beautiful, it's going to sound better than the best digital recording carefully mic'd, sound muffled and all the rest of it mixed. It won't hold a candle to what this is going to sound like.

You and I are going to have the privilege of hearing this concert live and in person. And it will be a thrilling, soul-stirring event. What will be particularly nice, you know when people go to the opera, and it's all in German or whatever, to know the story and to know what's being said.

Then you can sit back and appreciate the music and the vocal performances rather than peering up there trying to read the subtitles or following along in your program, trying to figure out what's Grendel saying now and which part of the story am I in. Well, to know the song of Moses is going to be a great advantage for us. Look at what it says.

I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously. The horse and its rider he has thrown where? Into the sea. They're standing on the sea.

Where is the opposition? Where is that which tried to kill them and tried to impose the mark and tried to inflict the power of the beast in his image and all the rest of it? It's under their feet. And when they sing this song and they say the horse and his rider, what did we see in the first four seals? This song is going to be so meaningful when they sing it. They have seen the horse and his rider.

They have seen the raging and foaming of the sea. They have seen the beast that came up out of the sea. And they're standing on the sea of glass mingled with fire because the judgment of God has already permeated the sea.

And a thousand years hence, the sea is going to be done away with altogether. In the millennial kingdom, when Jesus rules with a rod of iron and there's perfect justice, you still have the terrors amongst the wheat. You still have the sea, but the sea is glassy around the throne of God.

This is our heritage. We have a preview of the millennial kingdom in our souls. And the forces of darkness and the presence of evil is not going to go away, but it can be subdued and it can be a glassy sea upon which we stand when we prevail by faith as these 144,000 do.

The Lord is my strength and my song. He has become my deliverance, my salvation. He is my God and I will praise him.

My Father's God, I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war. Of course, all of the gentle Jesus people can't figure this out.

The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he has cast into the sea.

His chosen captains are drowned in the Red Sea. The depths have covered them. They sank to the bottom like a stone.

I'm sure these people are holy enough that they don't gloat, but I think there's certainly great satisfaction in that which has plagued and afflicted and oppressed, murdered and created carnage and driven people into the hills who survived. To see it sink to the bottom like a stone is going to be very gratifying. There's just no getting around it.

Your right hand, O Lord, has become glorious in power. Your right hand, O Lord, has dashed the enemy in pieces. What's at the right hand of the Lord? It's future when Moses writes this song, but what does David know? Sit thou at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet, a place upon which to stand your feet.

So this is predictive in a way, isn't it? It is the Lord's right hand. The right hand is the place of his power. The Lord Jesus Christ is the means by which all of this subduing takes place.

You sent forth your wrath. It consumed them like stubble. How do you consume stubble? What's the one way you consume stubble? Fire.

Fire is the one way you deal with stubble. With the blast of your nostrils, the water were gathered together. The floods stood upright like a heap.

The depths congealed in the heart of the sea. The enemy said, I will pursue. I will overtake.

I will divide the spoil. My desire shall be satisfied on them. I will draw my sword.

My hand shall destroy them. You blew with your wind. Remember the angels standing at the four corners? The sea covered them.

They sank like lead in the mighty waters. Evil is vanquished by its own power. The armies seeking to persecute the people of God are vanquished by the very waters that represent their evil.

Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand. The earth swallowed them.

You in your mercy have led forth the people whom you have redeemed.

You have guided them in your strength to your holy habitation. Where are these 144,000 singing? They have been guided to God's holy habitation, haven't they? They're standing before his throne. The people will hear and be afraid.

Sorrow will take hold of the inhabitants of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be dismayed. The mighty men of Moab, trembling, will take hold of them.

All the inhabitants of Canaan will melt away. Fear and dread will fall on them. By the greatness of your arm, they will be as still as a stone.

Till your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, whom you have purchased, you will bring them in and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which you have made for your own dwelling, the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. Now think about this. When Moses wrote his song, they had not been to Zion.

They hadn't gone into the land. They hadn't crossed the Jordan. David had not yet chosen the place based on God's choice of where his habitation would be.

They hadn't revisited the mountain where Abram took his son Isaac. And yet he says here, you will bring them and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance. In the place, O Lord, which you have made for your own dwelling.

And this is a prophetic look at Mount Zion, a prophetic look at where the temple will one day and yet again be built. The sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established. We've just been studying the whole pattern of that millennial temple in Ezekiel.

The Lord shall reign forever and ever. So this is the first song that they sing here in chapter 15. Then they sing the song of the Lamb.

What is the song of the Lamb? Well, it's not in Exodus. It's right here before us. Great and marvelous are your works, Lord God Almighty.

Just and true are your ways, O King of the Holy Ones. Now who's singing this song? The 144,000 who are of what large group? Israel. The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of Israel.

O King of the saints, who shall not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. Remember when the guy came up to Jesus during his earthly ministry and said, Good teacher. And Jesus said, Why do you call me good? There is none good but God.

And I'm sure there was a sparkle in his eye when he looked back at the guy because it is as much as saying, So are you recognizing the deity of the person to whom you speak? You know, there is none good but God. Well, here they say, You alone are holy. All nations shall come and worship before you.

For your judgments have been manifested. And this is like a new verse. I remember occasionally someone who, a performing artist has a song that was popular in the 60s or the 70s or whatever.

And then they're performing it and it's like a golden oldie and everybody's singing along and all that. And one of the things that is really thrilling to the fans of such a group is if they update or add a verse. Paul Simon did this with The Boxer.

And one of his early big songs with Art Garfunkel. And if you play that on the old album or off of Greatest Hits or whatever, it sounds a certain way. Well, then when they did it in concert in the 80s and following, Paul Simon wrote a new verse for that song.

If you listen to the Eagles doing Hotel California, and then when you come to the Hell Freezes Over Tour in 95, they did a completely different thing. They put a different prelude on that song. And it's very thrilling.

Well, this is the Song of Moses. And now the Song of Moses, which has been looked at and rehearsed by Israel for hundreds of years, now has a new verse. This is the closing verse of the song.

The Song of the Lamb. All nations shall come and worship before you, for your judgments have been manifested. After these things I looked and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.

You can't get any more Israel than this. The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. And out of the temple came the seven angels, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands.

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. Now, we've talked about this a little bit. In terms of the clothing, in terms of the girding with golden bands, we've talked about the issuing forth from the temple.

These are high-ranking angels. If they are coming forth from the temple, they are the equivalent of priestly angels, aren't they? There are untold legions of angels in heaven, but you don't see very many angels who have the privilege of entering the heavenly temple. This is a priestly privilege.

And these angels come forth from the temple, so they are high-ranking. And the bowls that they are given are handed to them by whom? One of the four living creatures, one of those cherubs, one of the cherubim surrounding the throne of God. Why? Why is this the source of the bowls? These four living creatures, the four cherubim are guardians of the holiness of God and they also walk among the stones of fire.

Remember that coal that was plucked forth and applied to the lips of the prophet so that

he could speak? Or fire was taken from the midst of the cherubim and taken down as an act of judgment on Judah. Remember that? Well, these bowls come from that same source. They are bowls of judgment and they come from the righteousness, the holiness of God.

Seven golden bowls, elements of the temple, the whole Belshazzar story that we studied out long ago, all of the vessels in the temple were made of gold, the important ones, and these are as well. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Once again, this is that radiating glory of God in judgment.

And the angels cannot come back, reenter the temple until this great judgment is complete. Well, this gives us a detailed look at the 15th chapter of Revelation. We've seen it in context and when we return next week as our New Year's study, we'll begin looking as each of these bowls are poured forth, the bowls of the wrath of God in the earth.

But two days before Christmas is no time to be looking at the wrath of God, much better to look at it on the cusp of the new year. So we'll close at this point in a word of prayer. Father, thank you for revealing to us the certitude and the firm fulfillment that will take place of the prophecies and the covenant promises of your word.

We know that he who endures to the end will be delivered and in seeing this deliverance and prospect, we know that our deliverance is equally sure and it only remains to us to be prepared to grow in grace and knowledge and to make the best use we can of the time that remains to us in this short life. We pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will remind us of our place in your plan, our opportunities, our potential because of the Lord Jesus Christ as we celebrate his birth in this holiday season. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.