

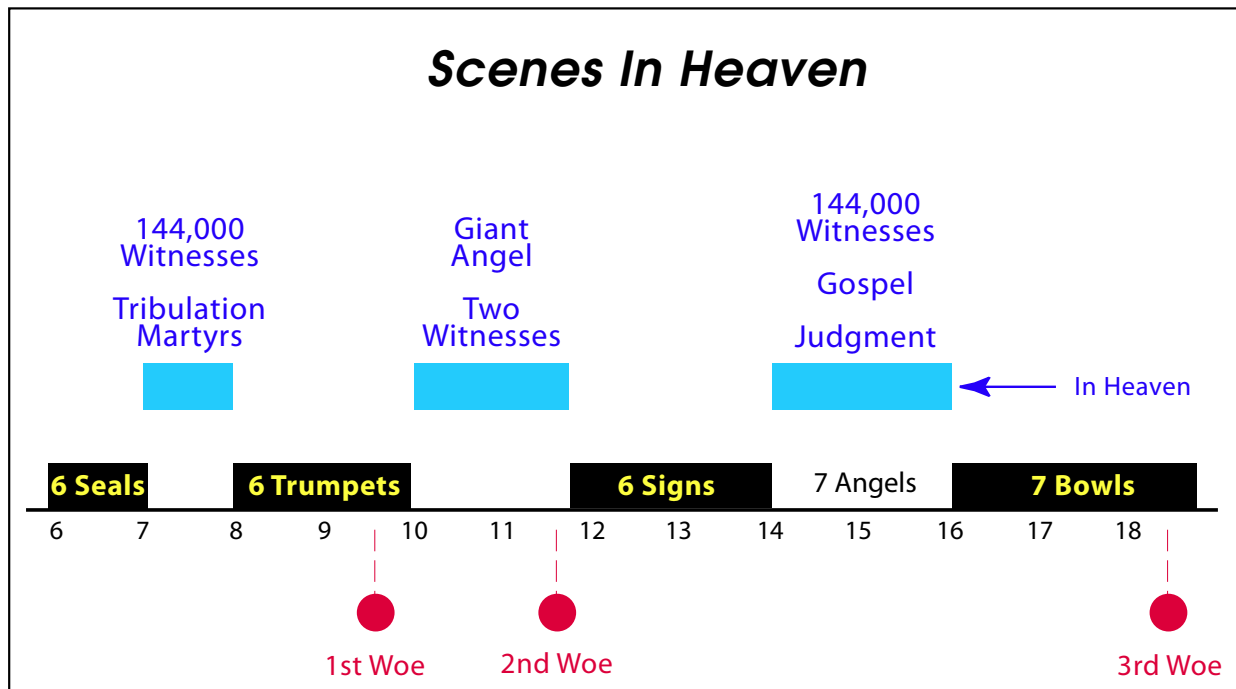
Smoke of His Glory

Recently we have had a very great fire in our nearby forest. It raged on for weeks burning trees, plants, and grasses. It has killed many animals and caused many people to flee for their lives. At the top of one 7,000 foot (2.135 Km) mountain, homes and part of a small town (250 buildings) were destroyed. We now know that the fire was started by some human who probably did not realize the fire would last for weeks and destroy thousands of trees. In the valley below, there is a city. The people have been watching great clouds of smoke pour up into the sky. The sky has been dark at times and the smelled smoke has been bad. Fire and smoke are usually signs of trouble and danger. It is something that humans and wildlife both fear. When fire comes, we know it is time to flee. As we come to this study we will see that the final events of God's judgment have arrived. Seven angels will be carrying God's final plagues of destruction. When we read the passage, we will see rejoicing in heaven, and the smoke of God's glory. This time smoke is good! The end is closer.

THE SEVEN PLAGUES. Revelation 15 describes the last scene in heaven before the final great war of the tribulation which is called Armageddon. The seventh and last sign are seven angels who will have seven plagues.

And 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. (NASB) Rev. 15:1

The apostle tells us that the events he saw occurred in heaven and not on earth. He saw some very wonderful angels who are going to bring terror upon the world, a terror as dreadful as a great forest fire with black smoke. They are bringing the last of the terrors. These angelic messengers of destruction are not dark and sinister. They are holy angels who will be given the honor of bringing to an end the terror and darkness of sin.



VICTORIOUS SINGERS. Next the apostle sees the men and women who had refused to worship the Antichrist (the beast) and would not accept the mark of 666.

And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. (NASB) Rev. 15:2

These men and women were standing on the sea of glass and they are ready to sing.

pening around the world. But God is true. He knows the difference between sin and holiness. When God comes for judgment, the world will know why and they will be powerless to stop Him! Praise the Lord.

HAVING A GREAT TIME. The party is on. The saints who died because they refused to bow to the Antichrist and take his number are celebrating and rejoicing. Did you notice their repeated statements that God is holy and righteous? They will do this because they will have experienced the world's evil.

Today the forces of evil are slowly sweeping over our world.



Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and True are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations.

Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name?

For Thou alone art holy;

For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THEE,

For Thy righteous acts have been revealed." (NASB) Rev. 15:3-4

And they sang the song of Moses the bond-servant of God and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE THEE, for Thy righteous acts have been revealed." (NASB) Rev. 15:3-4

What a wonderful song of praise to both our Father and to Jesus Christ. They describe God as being holy, all powerful, and true. Yet men and women will reject God because they like their sin. They prefer evil and wickedness. That is hap-

pening around the world. But God is true. He knows the difference between sin and holiness. When God comes for judgment, the world will know why and they will be powerless to stop Him! Praise the Lord.

Then the temple which is in heaven will open and seven angels who had the seven plagues will appear.

After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened . . . (NASB) Rev. 15:5



THE TEMPLE AND TABERNACLE. The tabernacle of the testimony refers to the tabernacle that the Israelites made in the wilderness at Moses' direction. Both Moses (Exodus 38:21) and Stephen in his sermon (Acts 7:44) refer to the tabernacle in the wilderness as the tabernacle of testimony.

Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen. (NASB) Acts. 7:44

The wilderness tabernacle was made according to one which exists in heaven. This is a surprising statement. Just think - there is a tabernacle in heaven! That is the statement of Moses, Stephen, and the author of the book of Hebrews (Heb. 8:2, 5). The earthly tabernacle was a copy of a heavenly one.

And in the same way he sprinkled both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with the blood . . . Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (NASB) Heb. 9:21-23

The temple of the tabernacle of testimony refers to the holy of holies. The Holy of Holies was considered the place of testimony. The veil into the Holy of Holies was called the veil of testimony (Lev. 24:3) and the ark of the covenant inside the Holy of Holies was called the ark of testimony (Ex. 31:7). The Holy of Holies was a testimony about God. It spoke of God. So references to the testimony point us to the place God met with us.

TEMPLE IN REVELATION. The earthly tabernacle and

the temple which existed in Jerusalem were copies of the heavenly one. There has always been a tabernacle, sometimes called a temple, in heaven. Revelation has already told us that the saints who lived during the time of the great tribulation will be with God and serve Him day and night in His temple. Also, in Revelation 14:15, 17 the Apostle John saw angels coming out of the temple in heaven. There is a temple in heaven today.

When the tribulation is over, God will create a temple on the earth during the 1,000 year kingdom. That is the message of Ezekiel 40-44. The kingdom will be an earthly one with sacrifices. The millennial sacrifices and the sacrifices required by Moses are the same. There will be no difference because the sacrifices will be a memorial or a testimony to celebrate Jesus' death. Today Christians take the Lord's Supper

tells us that there will not be a physical temple in the new heaven because God and the Lamb will be the temple. There has always been and will always be a temple, either a physical one or God Himself.

THE SEVEN ANGELS. Revelation 15:6 tells us that seven angels, who will be dressed in clean, bright clothes with a belts of gold, will come out of the temple,

... and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their breasts with golden girdles. (NASB) Rev. 15:6

These angels will be given seven bowls by one of the four living creatures we saw before the throne in Rev. 4: 6, 8.



or communion as a reminder of Jesus' death and return to life. Jesus has already died, but we "do this in remembrance of Me." (1 Cor. 11:24). The millennial sacrifices will do the same thing.

Is there a temple in the eternal heaven? Revelation 21:22

And 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. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven



angels were finished. (NASB) Rev. 15:7-8

These bowls will be filled with the wrath of God. The bowls were a sign to the seven angels that it was time to pour their plagues on the world. We will find out what the seven plagues are in the next chapter. The end has come and the worst suffering the world has ever experienced is coming.

CONCLUSION. When the seven angels received their bowls, the temple of the Lord was filled with the smoke of His glory. Smoke symbolizes the glory of God. When Moses met God on Mount Sinai, there was smoke and fire while they were together.

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire . . . (NASB) Ex. 19:18

Smoke was also present during the times of worship called sacrifices. The smoke of the sacrifices was a pleasing aroma to God according to Lev. 3:16 and 4:31. We also discover in Isaiah 6:3-4 that while the seraphim are singing holy, holy, holy, God's temple was filled with smoke.

I seriously doubt that it is eye annoying smoke, because the smoke is associated with God's glory. There is something mysterious and wonderful about God which we do not understand. His glory is awesome, unusual, mysterious and captivating. The Apostle John saw the smoke from His glory. Please Lord show us more of your glory!