

Revelation Chapter 15

In previous chapters we have witnessed the Seven (7) Seal and Seven (7) Trumpet Judgments. Each one seemingly more severe than preceding one's but as we come to Chapter 15 we see the last series of judgments leading up to Armageddon. Chapters 15 and 16 flow together.

John's Vision (1-2)

¹And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last **plagues**; for in them is **filled up the wrath of God**. ²And I saw as it were **a sea of glass mingled with fire**: and **them that had gotten the victory over the beast**, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

What did John see?

- An awesome sight in heaven
- Seven (7) angels
- Seven (7) plagues
- Filled with the wrath of God
- A sea of glass mixed with fire.
- Saints who had overcome the Beast

“This is the third heavenly sign that John had seen in Revelation.” (MacArthur, Rev. 12-22, p. 123).

“**Plague**, literally means a blow or wound...: (ibid). These last judgments are not diseases but rather, deadly blows intended to kill.

“**Filled up the wrath of God**” = The wrath of God is finished.

It is important to note that word “last” has two significant meanings:

1. Last in the sense of a final series of judgments, and,
2. Last in the sense of chronology.

“**Wrath**” (Thumos, Grk.) It describes a passionate outburst of God's anger or rage against sin. All sin will be judged. Cf. Zeph. 3:8.

“**a sea of glass mingled with fire.**” John does not say that he saw a sea of glass mixed with fire but it looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire. It would appear that John is seeing into the throne room of God due to the brilliance of the floor. Fire frequently represents judgment.

In Revelation fire and sea are always images respectively of judgment and evil and never connote the saints' trials or baptism. Rather the picture of v 2 shows that the sea has become the place where the Lamb has judged the beast.¹

“Them that had gotten the victory over the beast...”

Who are these? It would appear to be those believers who died during the Tribulation period, as noted by the phrase: “over the beast.” But one might ask: How were they victorious since they were killed? Because of their unwavering faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and their refusal to compromise.

“The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb” (vv. 3-4)

³And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints. ⁴Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee*; for thy judgments are made manifest.

What is the song of Moses? A song of victory and deliverance from the Egyptian army and bondage. See [**Exodus 15:1-18**](#)

What is the song of the Lamb? It is a song of triumph and deliverance from the penalty of sin and eternal death. It is a song of praise to Jesus Christ for His great mercy. It contains themes of: God's faithfulness, Deliverance and Judgment.

[**Read Rev. 5:8-14.**](#)

“for all nations shall come and worship before thee...” This is in reference to the Millennial reign of Christ. So, MacArthur, p. 131.

God's Purposes Vv. 5-8

⁵And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

“And after that I looked, and, behold” This introduces a new vision as always. Note John's attention is drawn away from the saints to a new vision.

“The temple...in heaven was opened.” This speaks of God's presence.

¹ Beale, G. K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999. Print. New International Greek Testament Commentary.

⁶And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

The Angels Function: Having the seven plagues (judgments)

The Angels Apparel: Pure and White linen. (Purity and holiness)

Breasts girded with golden girdles. (golden sashes representing their majestic appearance).

⁷And **one of the four beasts** gave unto the seven angels **seven golden vials** full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever.

“**one of the four beasts**” Most likely cherubim. **One of the highest ranking orders of angels.**

“**seven golden vials**” = *Phialas* (Grk.) = *shallow bowls or saucers*. MacArthur states: “The imagery is not that of a stream being poured gradually out of a pitcher, but of the whole contents of the shallow saucers being hurled down in an instant flood of judgment.” (p. 132-133)

One can easily go to the Old Testament and find that saucers or bowls were used as part of the temple furnishings. See I Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 12:13; 25:15; I Chronicles 28:17.

MacArthur makes a good point when he states: “Those who refuse to drink the cup of salvation will be drowned in the judgments poured from the bowls of wrath.” (ibid)

⁸And **the temple was filled with smoke** from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. 2

“**the temple was filled with smoke...**” Cf. Exod. 19:16-18 where God’s majesty is represented by the smoke. Cf. Exod. 40:34-35; I Kings 8:10-11; Isa. 6:1-4, where God’s presence is symbolized. But here it the smoke would appear to represent God’s judgment.

God’s purposes is to bring final and swift judgment upon all sin. Those who refuse to drink at the fountain of forgiveness will drink from the fountain of God’s wrath.

Chapter 16

We have come to the Grand Finale of God's Just wrath. The bowls of wrath will occur in quick fire succession now. It is near the end of the Tribulation era and with the ending of the seventh bowl judgment, God's wrath will be completely exhausted as indicated in Verse 18 "It is done."

Unlike the preceding judgments of the Seals and Trumpets, the judgment will be comprehensive and unlimited in nature. The previous judgments had been limited in their scope of damage, but the bowl judgments will encompass a full and complete end of God's wrath upon the Beast and sinful humanity.

Note that each judgment effects a different sphere of humanities existence, e.g., the earth, the sun, the oceans and fresh water. It also effects the domain of the evil one.

¹And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

God's judgment will begin with nature. The planet will be effected which will in turn effect humanity. The "great voice" is undoubtedly that of God.

²And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image.

Remember the sense here of pouring **is not** of a slow pour but rather of a quick and forceful flinging of God's wrath.

The result was that of loathsome and grievous sores upon people. One immediately thinks of the plagues of Egypt. Boils was sent upon the Egyptian people. This was the sixth (6th) plague. Exodus 9:11.

Note that this plague effected only "the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image."

³And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea.

The second judgment effected the oceans of the earth. Thus not only would the food source be effected, but man's livelihood. This corresponds to the plague found in Exodus 7:17-22.

John Phillips observed:

The heaving billows become one vast stench of crimson putrefaction, rolling in from the deep toward the coastlines of the world, heaving themselves upon the reefs and rocks, breaking with a vile stench upon the shores. The retreating waves of blood litter the sand with the rotting carcasses of its dead. The globe is girdled by death. From time to time . . . a phenomenon known as "the red tide" occurs. The red tides kill millions of fish and poison those who eat contaminated shellfish.³

⁴And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

The devastation of all marine life being destroyed and ocean water being turned into blood will be catastrophic but the next plague effects fresh water. The Third angel poured out his bowl of judgment upon the fresh water sources of the earth. All water sources were effected globally.

The devastation of this judgment is unimaginable. All fresh water would be undrinkable and thus death would result for multitudes.

⁵And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. ⁷And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

"And I heard the angel of the waters say." This angel announces that God's wrath is just. No one can accuse God of being unfair. With a twist of irony almost, those who have helped slaughter Christians are being repaid with blood to drink.

"And I heard another out of the altar say." It would appear that the altar is speaking but obviously this is symbolic. Is it the saints underneath the altar who asked earlier "How long" or is it another angel?

³ John Phillips, *Exploring Revelation: An Expository Commentary*. (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 190.

⁸And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. ⁹And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

Note here that the effect upon the sun is not to diminish its light giving ability, as was true in one of the earlier judgments, but rather to intensify the suns burning rays.

Jesus spoke about “signs in the sun” in Luke 21:25ff:

And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

Some interesting insights regarding the sun from Phillips:

The sun, in its normal state, pours out a continuous stream of high energy particles that race toward the earth at a peak speed of 3 million miles an hour. The earth is surrounded by a field of radiation, the magnetosphere, which protects it from full exposure to this deadly assault. The solar radiation that penetrates the magnetosphere is trapped in turn by the Van Allen belts. Should anything happen to the magnetosphere, the earth would be bombarded by these highly dangerous particles.⁴

Note also that men “blasphemed the name of God...and repented not.”

¹⁰And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, ¹¹And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

The Fifth angel will pour his bowl of God’s wrath upon the seat of the beast, i.e., the very heart of the Anti-Christ’s power and center of operation.

Phillips noted:

Men will writhe in that horrible darkness, gnawing their tongues for the pains of the terrible sores that have erupted upon their bodies, caused perhaps by the radiation from outer space. The crescendo of hurt brings a crescendo of hate, and in a thousand tongues and dialects, men lift up their voices to heaven in one long shrieking blasphemy and curse. The Beast, the wonderful Beast they have exalted and extolled, will be powerless to help.⁵

⁴ Ibid., 192.

⁵ Ibid., 194.

Swindoll noted:

When John witnessed the fifth angel pour out his bowl on the “throne” of the Beast, two results followed: a shroud of darkness descended on the Beast’s entire kingdom, and the people were consumed by excruciating pain (16:10). The term “throne” in the Bible isn’t concerned with furniture but with the seat of a ruler’s authority.⁶

Thus the Anti-Christ’s reign and kingdom will experience the direct assault of God’s just judgment. The effect will be unimaginable darkness and pain.

The Battle of Armageddon

¹²And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. ¹³And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. ¹⁵Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. ¹⁶And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

John provides more details about the imminent Battle of Armageddon in verses 12 through 16. The actual battle will not occur until chapter 19, but the stage is set for the impending War of all wars, i.e., Armageddon. In the Hebrew it is *Har Megedon*.

The drying up of the Great Euphrates river is indeed quite an event within itself since it is 1,800 miles in length and measures from its most narrow width of only 9 feet across to an astounding 3,600 feet across. The Euphrates ranges from 10 to 30 feet in depth and has impeded armies for centuries.

“The way of the kings of the east...” What nations are East of Israel? China, Russia, Iran, Iraq, and a host of smaller nations. The Battle will involve all the armies of the world marching against Israel, but in reality they will be engaging in the “battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

Note that the frog like creatures are not frogs but “like frogs” and they come out of the “mouth of the dragon, the beast and the false prophet.” John tells us that they are demonic spirits. These demons will deceive world leaders through their “miracles.”

Notice that it is the demonic spirits that deceive the kings of the earth, but God will use the deception of the demons to accomplish His just plans. God has nothing to do with evil, but He remains sovereign and His will, will be accomplished

⁶ Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll’s New Testament Insights: Insights on Revelation*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 220.

Jesus cautions his followers to be prepared and to remain faithful because he will come “as a thief.” Christ’s coming will be sudden and swift.

John Waalvoord argued:

Satan, knowing that the second coming of Christ is near, will gather the military might of the world into the Holy Land to resist the coming of the Son of Man who will return to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). Though the nations may be deceived in entering into the war in hope of gaining world political power, the satanic purpose is to combat the armies from heaven (introduced in 19) at the second coming of Christ.⁷

¹⁷And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done. ¹⁸And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great. ¹⁹And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. ²⁰And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air. It is important to remember that Satan is referred to as the “Prince of the power of the air.” In the New Testament, thus this very well may be an allusion to his domain being judged.

“It is done.” Compare this to Jesus’ cry on the Cross. Just as Jesus completed the work of Redemption on the cross, so to, the wrath of God will be completely exhausted.

Swindoll observed:

The verb translated “done” stresses the present effect of a past event, indicating that the judgment of God has already occurred, and we are at the end of history . . . in other words, this cataclysmic end of the world and the evil that corrupted it was ordained long ago, predicted many times throughout history, and with the pouring of the seventh bowl, will be accomplished.⁸

Note the effect upon the earth. “There was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth...” This last judgment will have cataclysmic effects upon the earth beyond measure or previous experience.

⁷ John F. Waalvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 968.

⁸ Swindoll, *Swindoll’s New Testament Insights*, 223-224.

“And every island fled away and the mountains were not found.” This refers to the topographical changes that will occur on the planet. Islands will disappear and the mountains will be leveled.

“Hail stones” will fall upon the earth weighing approx. 100 pounds each. The damage and destruction that such a hail stone would create requires no comment.

Still man will not repent but rather curse God.

Respectfully,

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The Seven Bowl Judgments

1. First Angel = Poured his bowl of God's wrath upon the earth resulting in Grievous sores upon all who have the mark of the Beast and or who worship his image. V. 2
2. Second Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath upon the sea resulting in all oceanic life being destroyed. The waters were turned to blood. V. 3.
3. Third Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath upon all fresh waters and rivers. The waters were turned to blood. V. 4
4. Fourth Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath the sun and the sun scorched the earth. V. 8
5. The Fifth Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath upon the Beasts headquarters and all those there were effected with great suffering. V. 10
6. The Sixth Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath upon the Euphrates River so that it was completely dried up. Thus preparing the way for the armies to march forward to the Battle of Armegeddon. V. 12
7. Seventh Angel = Poured his bowl of wrath into the air resulting in the world's greatest earthquake in the history of humanity.