

REVELATION

Seeing, Knowing and Serving Jesus Christ
Today at the Edge of History

Chapters 15:1-16:21

Text: Revelation 15:1-16:21 - It Is Done! The Seven Bowls of Wrath

Seven Angels With Seven Plagues

15 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God ³ and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb:

“Great and marvelous are
your deeds, Lord God
Almighty.

Just and true are your
ways, King of the ages.

⁴ Who will not fear you,
O Lord, and bring
glory to your name?

For you alone are holy.

All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts
have been revealed.”

⁵ After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. ⁶ Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. ⁷ Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. ⁸ And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.



Rev. McKendree Robbins Long: *Vision from the Book of Revelation* (1966)

The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath

16 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth.”

² The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

³ The second angel poured out his bowl on the

sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.

⁴ The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

“You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you

have so judged; ⁶ for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.”

⁷ And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. ⁹ They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. ¹³ Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵ "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

¹⁶ Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

¹⁷ The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. ¹⁹ The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. ²¹ From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Read & Reflect - 15:1-16:21

First Reading/First Impression: Which of the following do you see as the *worst* reaction a person could have to this section? I'm sick of hearing this stuff. Wake me when it's over. God help us! God help them! God help me!
 Yeah! You tell 'em John! All those wicked people are going down! John must have been one strange dude.
 Where does God get off judging people like that? If all this stuff is true, I'd rather not know about it!

Second Reading/The Main Point:

What is the most important thing we learn about God's wrath in these chapters?

Search

15:1-4 - Along with the 7 angels whom do we see in this scene? Where are they? How safe are they?

What are the people doing? To whom? About whom?

15:5-8 - What is opened this time?

What must happen before the temple is "opened" for people again?

STUDY GUIDE FOR SEEKERS AND FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CHRIST

16:1-14 - Where is the **first** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom?

Where is the **second** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom?

Where is the **third** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom?

Where is the **fourth** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom?

Where is the **fifth** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom? What do people do?
What do they refuse to do?

Where is the **sixth** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom?

16:15-16 - Who speaks before the last bowl is poured out? What does He say? How do His opponents respond?

16:17-21 - Where is the **seventh** "bowl of wrath" poured? What happens? To whom? How do people respond?

Apply

If someone asked you if these scenes are real, what would you tell them? If they asked how they could be sure they'd end up in the heavenly worship scene and not on the receiving end of one of the bowls, what would you say?

Make your own praise chorus by rewriting the text of the "Song of Moses & of the Lamb" (15:3-4) in your own words.



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Summary... God's Final Judgment does come. It is real. It is just. It is right. And it is full of mercy. The One who judges is the One who

takes the judgment upon Himself for those who repent. So, though there is no refuge *from* the Judge, there is refuge *in* the Judge! If we run *from* The Holy One, we will experience well-deserved judgment. If we run *to* The Holy One, we will experience undeserved grace.

15:1-4 - **"wrath"**... see message **Wrath Rewritten** (from Pastor Jay)... **"completed"**... the same root word as when Jesus said from the cross *"It is finished"* (Jn.19:30 - written by the same Apostle!). With these events, God's warnings to those who will not repent end and the Final Judgment occurs... **"sea of glass"**... symbol of chaos, now utterly calmed... **"mixed with fire"** (see also 16:8)... symbol of judgment (dross is burned up, precious metals are purified--see Psalm 66:10; Isaiah 48:10; Daniel 12:10; Malachi 3:1-5; I Peter 1:7; Rev. 3:18)... **"victorious... song of Moses"**... Before John sees the horror of Final Wrath he sees God's people safe and secure and worshipping like Israel did after their Exodus (escape from slavery and journey to the Promised Land)! It is worth noting that the song is entirely God-directed and God-centered: There is no mention of any part the people have played...

15:5-8 - **"tabernacle of the Testimony"**... where God dwelt and His people met with Him during Israel's desert wandering. This ancient "tent of meeting" (Exodus 38:21; 33:7) contained the two tablets of God's Law given to Moses (testifying to moral demands of His Holy Law--thus the



El Greco: *St. John* (ca.1600)

name... **"opened"**... As we have previously noted, this is a key word that marks major sections of this book... **"shining linen"**... indicates purity... **"golden sashes"**... symbolic of royal, priestly function... **"smoke"**... symbol of God's power and glory (as when the Temple was built and the Ark of the Covenant was brought into it, see 1 Kings 8)...

"no one could enter the temple until..."... the final wrath of God is part of His work to save people and bring them into His holy presence.

16:1-21 - Note: the description of the pouring out of the 7 bowls parallels the blowing of the 7 trumpets (see chart).

Some see the seals, trumpets and bowls revealing the same series of events from three different perspectives (that of the suffering Church, the rebellious Earth, and the Throne of God, respectively).

1st Bowl (16:2): recipients of the wrath are those with **"the mark of the beast"** - They are "owned" by him and exhibit his character... they also **"worship his image."**

2nd Bowl (16:3): reminiscent of the plagues of Egypt with water **"turned to blood."**

3rd Bowl (16:4-7): Two good reasons why God's wrath is just are given: 1. It is the **"Holy One"** (whose decisions are by definition right and true) who judges, and 2. The punishment is deserved and fitting. Those who have **"shed the blood"** of God's people now drink what they have shed.

4th Bowl (16:8-9): **cursed the name of God... refused to repent"**... the real issue is here revealed: People will not bow to the Living God Almighty who

made them and in whose Spirit there is life eternal. They will not come into the arms of the Heavenly Father who redeems in Jesus the Son.

5th Bowl (16:10-11): **"cursed the God of heaven... refused to repent"**... the refrain is repeated, this time using

Parallels:

Trumpets (Rev. 8-9) **Bowls** (16)

#1 earth	earth
#2 sea	sea
#3 rivers	rivers
#4 sun	sun
#5 pit of evil	seat of evil
#6 Euphrates	Euphrates

Progression: Seals (6:8) = 1/4

Trumpets (8:7-8; 9:15, 18) = 1/3

[Thunder Peals (10:4) = 1/2 ?]

Bowls (15:1; 16:17) = 1/1!

a name for God that comes from Daniel 2:44 (where He establishes His everlasting kingdom that ends all others)...

6th Bowl (16:12-14): **"Euphrates... kings from the East"**...

There was great fear in Rome that the Parthians from the East would cross the Euphrates and invade their empire...

"frogs"... coming from each of the members of the Evil Trinity" (note that the 2nd beast is identified as the **"false prophet"**). These seem to represent engines of propaganda used to get people to band together against the coming Kingdom of God...

Interlude(?) (16:15-16): A word of encouragement from Jesus (He is coming! And when least expected)... a 3rd "Beatitude" (see also 1:3 & 14:13) that points back to the letter to Laodicea and the "white clothes" of righteousness... And a gathering of kings at **"Armageddon"**... probably "the Mountain of Megiddo" a geographically strategic place that is the traditional site of the world's final battle... Note that there is no fighting here now, and when the battle does happen (see 19:11-21) Jesus rides out with His sword of truth and the war is over immediately, and it is only by His "sword" that the "kings of the earth" are destroyed... (That Jesus gets involved in some great military conflict in the end times may be a serious and destructive misunderstanding).

7th Bowl (16:17-21): **"Out of the temple... It is done!... fury of His wrath"**... With "wrath" and "completed" in 15:1 these words form a bracket around these chapters.