

**Revelation 15 Introduction**

- Before the Seven Seals were opened John saw the scene in heaven in Chapters 4 & 5.
- Before the Seven Trumpets sounded John again saw the scene in heaven. See 8:1-6.
  
- We are about to witness the pouring out of the Seven Bowls, the final set of judgments.
- In 6:10, the martyred saints asked "How long?" before God would avenge their blood.
- In today's chapters the final answer to their question is given.
  
- John sees "another sign in heaven."
- In his vision, he views two important groups:
  1. The seven angels, having the seven last plagues coming out of the temple in heaven.
  2. The victorious tribulation saints singing. These saints are also in heaven.

**Revelation 15**

- 15:1 seven angels
- In these seven last plagues the wrath of God is complete. The judgments of the Tribulation will be finished.
  
- 15:2 a sea of glass
- Before the Tabernacle and Temple were the bronze laver and molten sea. These corresponded to the sea of glass or "crystal sea" (NLT) in heaven.
  
- This sea first appeared in 4:6, but there it was not "mingled with fire" as here.
- As Robert L. Thomas states,
- *"This sea of glass is an emblem of the splendor and majesty of God on His throne that set Him apart from all His creation, a separation stemming from His purity and absolute holiness, which He shares with no one else."*
  
- Those who have the victory
  - These Tribulation Saints were most likely murdered – or "martyred" for their faith.
  - From earth's perspective they were fanatics who lost their lives.
  - In heaven they stand singing victoriously.
  - They are victorious because they refused to worship the Beast or take his mark – even at the cost of their lives.
  
- 15:3-4 the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb
  - The children of Israel sang a similar song of victory when they left the bondage of Egypt and the kingdom of Pharaoh was defeated. (Exodus 15)
  - These saints will escape the world while the Lord destroys the kingdom of a ruler more powerful and more wicked than Pharaoh.
  
- 15:5-7 out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues
  - The angels exit the temple and receive the seven bowls full of the wrath of God.
  - No one is able to enter the Temple until the judgments are complete.
  - God hides Himself during this time of wrath.

- 15:8 John Wesley commented,
- *“The cloud of glory was the visible manifestation of God's presence in the tabernacle and temple. It was a sign of protection at erecting the tabernacle and at the dedication of the temple. But in the judgment of Korah the glory of the Lord appeared, when he and his companions were swallowed up by the earth.*
- *“So proper is the emblem of smoke from the glory of God, or from the cloud of glory, to express the execution of judgment, as well as to be a sign of favour. Both proceed from the power of God, and in both he is glorified.”*

#### **Take Away Point: Trying God’s Patience**

- There comes time in God’s perfect holiness, wisdom and patience that He finally says He’s had enough.
- During this final outpouring of His wrath, no one may enter His presence.
- This halting of all access to Himself was foreshadowed in the ministry of Jeremiah.
- God commanded the prophet to cease praying for the people of Judah.
- Their wickedness, stubbornness, idolatry and blasphemy had gone far enough.
- Judgment was now the certain outcome as God finally decided to destroy their nation, send a remnant into exile, and start over.
- See Jeremiah 7:16-17, 11:14, 14:11-12

#### **Revelation 16 Introduction**

- During the Tribulation many will decisively reject God’s love.
- By this time people will have rejected Christ as preached by the church, and ignored the messages of the 144,000 Jews, the two witnesses in Jerusalem, and several angels.
- With forgiveness repeatedly and stubbornly refused, judgment is now the only alternative that God has available.
- As we examine the Bowl Judgments, some interesting comparisons can be made:
  - They will be something like the Trumpet Judgments only more severe.
  - They are also strangely similar to the plagues that came upon Egypt in Exodus.
- These plagues ought to be taken at face value or according to the plain reading in their fulfillment.
- We will not assign to them any overriding symbolic qualities.
- An Old Bible commentator named William R. Newell described their interpretation like this:
- *“These seven bowl-judgments are literal! There is no other reasonable interpretation possible. Shall we believe that the ten plagues upon Egypt were actually as described in Exodus, and dare to turn away these “seven last plagues” of The Revelation from their evident open significance?”*
- He continued,
- *“Four of the ten Egyptian plagues are here repeated: boils, blood, darkness, and hail. What kind of interpretation is it that believes the one and denies the other! There the visitation was in a single land: here, in all the earth.”*
- Nor are these random, irrational acts of violence by a God fallen into a rage.
- They are deliberately chosen by a sovereign Creator who is in complete control.
- Antichrist and those who worship him will be powerless against the wrath of the Almighty.

## Revelation 16

- 16:1-2 The First Bowl: Foul Sores
  - In the second half of the Tribulation people will begin worshipping the Beast – Antichrist – and will take his mark.
  - God will make a distinction between those who worship the Beast and those who do not.
  - Only those who receive the mark will receive the sore – perhaps a result of the mark itself.
  - Sore = helkos, as in Exodus 9:9-11 (LXX)
  
- 16:3 The Second Bowl: The Sea Becomes Blood
  - In Egypt the Nile became blood.
  - At the Second Trumpet one third of the Sea turned to blood (Rev. 8:8)
  - Now all of it becomes blood.
  - Sea life is completely wiped out.
  - Can you imagine the smell?
  
- 16:4-7 The Third Bowl: Rivers and Springs Become Blood
  - The emphasis in the angel's response is on God's perfect justice.
  - Justice so just is rarely, if ever, seen.
  - Multitudes of "bloodthirsty" people are now given blood to drink.
  
- 16:8-9 The Fourth Bowl: Scorching Heat of the Sun
  - See Malachi 4:1.
  - Talk about climate change!
  - How does the Christ-rejecting world respond?
  - Not with repentance, but by blaspheming God's name. See also v.11 & v.21.
  
  - The Beast is characterized by blasphemy (13:1, 5:-6; 17:3), but here the blasphemy comes from humanity in general.
  - They are taking on the character of the god they have chosen to serve.
  
- 16:10-11 The Fifth Bowl: Darkness
  - The darkness is directed specifically at the kingdom of the Beast and he is powerless to stop it.
  - It offers no relief from the heat, but is itself another form of judgment.
  - Darkness only makes the pain of the sunburns and sores seem all the more intense.
  
  - People use their tongues for blasphemy and gnaw them as a result of their pain.
  - Gnawed is literally "kept on chewing."
  - See also Amos 5:18, Zephaniah 1:15.

### Take Away Point: Light vs. Darkness

- Consider the point Jesus made to Nicodemus in John 3:19-21.
- People love the darkness, so darkness becomes part of the process.
- They are only getting what they truly desire in full force.
- Listen to what John wrote in 1 John 1:5-7.

- 16:12-16            The Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dries Up
  - The 1700-mile-long Euphrates is one of the most mentioned rivers in the Bible.
  - It has been at the center of human history since Eden. (Genesis 2:14)
  - It was the border of the land promised to Abraham. (Genesis 15:18)
  
  - It once served as the Eastern boundary of the Roman Empire.
  - It runs from Turkey, through Syria and the center of Iraq, so it has remained a focus of worldwide attention.
  
  - Now it will dry up to allow armies from the east to move toward Israel on dry land.
  - These armies, along with other armies of the world, will be drawn to Armageddon by deceiving demonic spirits.
  - There are numerous dams in both Turkey and Syria that could play a part in this event – which, of course, did not exist in John’s day.
  
- 16:17-21            The Seventh Bowl: The Final Bowl of Judgment
  - These will all come at the very end:
    1. Earthquake
    2. The Great City (Jerusalem) Divided
    3. Cities of the Nations Fall
    4. Great Babylon Falls
    5. Giant Hail
  
  - The Earthquake will be the worst the world has ever seen (v.18).
  - (Think about that – the worst ever.)
  - The cities of the nations will fall.
  - None will remain standing by the end of the Tribulation or at the start of the Millennium.
  
  - Babylon will be the Beast’s headquarters and, therefore, the political and economic capital of the world.
  - The details of its fall are given to us in Revelation 18.
  
  - Regarding the hail, it is interesting that the punishment in the Old Testament for blasphemy was stoning.
  - See Leviticus 24:16
  - See again Revelation 16:9, 11 & 21.
  
- Chuck Smith had this to say.
- *“Throughout these judgments it is asserted that God’s judgments are righteous. Similarly, we also see throughout the passage the consistency of man’s rebellion as “they blasphemed” and “did not repent.”*
- *God’s judgment is righteous because man’s stubbornness is so unyielding.*
- *“God has done everything He can to save mankind. Jesus died for the people. And yet, even when they experience the results of their sin, some of them just won’t repent. Nothing God does can bring them to repentance, so they must be destroyed. There is no other righteous thing God can do.*

**Take Away Point: Repentance**

- A persistent pattern during this time of judgment is that people refuse to repent.
- They blaspheme God rather than turn from their sins.
- Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, the pattern was exactly the same. Therefore, judgment followed.
- See 2 Chronicles 36:14-16.

**Revelation 15 & 16: Conclusions**

- This brings to fulfillment the end-times judgments upon the earth.
  - Chapters 17 & 18 will give us more detail regarding the judgment upon two Babylons.
  - Chapter 19 shows us Christ at His Second Coming.
  - Chapters 20 – 22 tell us what comes after that.

**Our Take Away Points once again:**

- Trying God's Patience: Without question God is merciful, patient and kind. Nonetheless, do we really dare test His limits?
- Light vs. Darkness: God's enemies love darkness and hate light. Learn to love the light. Consider Psalm 119:105.
- Repentance: Lack of repentance brings judgment. Turning from sin brings refreshing, renewal and increasing intimacy with God.