

The Bowl Judgments

 Revelation 15-16

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With the counterfeit Trinity taking over the world's government, religion and economy, we saw last time that the lives of the 144,000 will come into jeopardy in the early second half of the 70th week. They won't worship the image of the beast that is set up in the temple in Jerusalem and so they won't receive the mark of the beast. They will be killed either by the image of the beast or the beast himself. But Rev 14:1-5 views them as victorious in heaven, singing a new song commemorating their great deliverance from the vicious policies of the beast into the heavenly Mt Zion with the Lamb. With their ministry of the gospel now complete, 14:6-7 teaches that the ministry of the gospel will now be given to an angel. This angel will fly above the earth and proclaim the gospel to every person on earth. His purpose is to reach those who have not decided whether to worship the image of the beast and take his mark. They are told to fear God and to give Him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come." These judgments refer to the bowls in chapter 16 because the end of verse 7 describes the judgment on the things he made, the heaven and the earth and the sea and springs of waters, the very things that are judged in the bowls. There is only one way to avoid those judgments, fear God, not the anti-Christ, give glory to God, not the anti-Christ, and worship God, not the anti-Christ. Then in 14:8 another angel will fly in the atmosphere above the earth. His message will be that Babylon, the center of the world's future religion and economy, is fallen. The people who have not worshipped the beast and taken his mark are being warned that the center of the beast's kingdom is going to destruction, so they need to reject that system. Doing so will be difficult because they will not be able to buy and sell, they won't be able to easily acquire food and water, so they will have to form an underground system with other believers. But this is far more tolerable than worshiping the beast and taking his mark because of the announcement of a third angel in 14:9-11. This angel will fly in the atmosphere with the warning that anyone who worships the beast and takes his mark will drink of the wrath of God, and will be tormented in the lake of fire forever. Both temporal judgment and eternal judgment will be suffered for all who worship the beast and take his mark. Therefore, it is absolutely incumbent on those in the 70th week to refuse to worship and take the mark, no matter what. This will be difficult to do, but 14:12-13 pronounces a special blessing on those who refuse and are executed "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on" "Yes," says the Spirit, "so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them." It will be an honor to die for the Savior during that time, and when they are martyred they will enter into

rest from their toils under the anti-Christ's horrific policies, and they will be rewarded for their good deeds. Finally, chapter 14:14-20 ends with a preview of the temporal judgment of God during the bowls and especially Armageddon, upon Gentiles and Jews who disregard the three angel's warnings and worship the beast and take his mark. In 14:14-16 the Son of Man is seen sitting on a white cloud, ready to return to earth and reap the harvest of Gentiles who take the mark during the bowls and especially Armageddon. In 14:17-20 an angel puts in his sickle to reap the harvest of Jews who take the mark during the bowls and especially Armageddon. They will be crushed outside the city of Jerusalem as grapes in a wine press so that the whole land of Israel, even from Dan to Beersheba, a distance of 200 miles, will be covered in blood. That is a preview of the second half of the 70th week, which is the bowl judgments, and it is a bitter thing to stomach, but it is the warnings of God and the judgment upon those who do not heed the warnings, in preparation for the kingdom to come.

Today we come to Revelation 15 and I just want to point out a few things in this chapter and press on to Revelation 16, the bowl judgments themselves. So let's read chapter 15 and I'll make a few comments along the way. This is a heavenly scene and it's the preparations in heaven for the final wrath of God in the bowls. "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, *which are* the last." The seven angels have the seven plagues, which are the seven bowls, and these are "the last," that is, the last judgments in the sequence of the wrath of God. The bowls alone are not the wrath of God, but the whole sequence is the seals and trumpets and then the bowls. The bowls are the last, John says, "because in them the wrath of God is finished." The word "finished" is from *τελεω* which means goal or aim, in them is met the goal or aim of God, which is to establish the kingdom on earth. Verse 2, "And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God." These are martyrs under the beast during the second half because they refused to worship him and take his mark, but they are standing victorious in heaven. Verse 3, "And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "**Great** and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!" He is already being praised as the King of the nations because He is making His power and glory known, though the kingdom has yet to be established. Verse 4, "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For all the nations will come and worship before You, For Your righteous acts have been revealed." You see that the kingdom is on the verge of breaking into history and when the kingdom is come those who remain from the nations, which will be the believers, will come up to Jerusalem to worship Him. Verse 5, "After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, ⁶and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean *and* bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes." So here they come, ready to receive the seven bowls, also called plagues, to remind us of the Exodus plagues. Verse 7, "Then 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. ⁸And 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.”

Let's introduce the bowls as we come to Revelation 16. First, recall that the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments are telescopic; that is to say, you have seal one, two, three, four, five, six, and then the seventh seal is the seven trumpets; then you have trumpet one, two, three, four, five, six and then the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls, so that all the seals, trumpets and bowls are a single unit of judgments which is stated in 15:1 to be the wrath of God and the seven bowls are therefore the last of the wrath of God. The wrath has a telescopic nature to its unfolding.

Second, recall that the seventh trumpet is all seven bowls. Turn back to 11:15 because this is where we saw the seventh trumpet blown. What's interesting is nothing happened on earth when the seventh trumpet was blown. What did happen was something in heaven. 11:15 says, "loud voices in heaven said, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders said in v 17, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because you have taken Your great power and have begun to reign." Both announcements in heaven relate to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth at the seventh trumpet. But how can it be said that the kingdom of God is established at the seventh trumpet when the kingdom does not begin until Rev 20, after the bowls? Answer, the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls. And the seventh trumpet is not over until all seven bowls are poured out. And when that happens Christ will return in His kingdom upon the earth.

Third, there is a pattern to the bowl judgments, just as there was a pattern to the seals and trumpets. The pattern is the first four are distinct from the last three. Take the seals; the first four seals are well-known for this, being known as the four horsemen of the apocalypse. You can see from that that the first four seals are distinct from the last three. The same was true with the trumpets. The first four trumpets were indirect judgments on man, because they were judgments on creation, upon which man depends for survival, but the last three were direct judgments on man. The same pattern is found here with the bowls. The first four bowls are indirect judgments on man, because they are judgments on creation, upon which man depends for survival, whereas the last three are direct judgments on man. So there is a pattern to the seals, trumpets and bowls, and it is the first four are distinct from the last three.

Fourth, the bowls are different from the seals and trumpets in that they overlap, whereas the seals and trumpets did not overlap, one came and it went before another came, but with the bowls they overlap, one bowl comes and it doesn't go away before another one comes, and they just keep piling up on one another so that there are multiple judgments all going on at the same time, and it gets really bad. This is an indication that the birth pangs of the Messiah are almost at an end and the Messiah is about to come.

Fifth, as for the timing, the bowls all occur in the second half of the 70th week. I would say they begin sometime after the midpoint. I think there is some time for the beast and the false prophet to implement the economic and religious policies and get people to come and stand before the image of the beast and worship and take the mark or reject and be killed. And during this time you have the three angels making their announcements to everyone on earth. The bowls begin after that period of time, whatever it might be, maybe months, maybe a year or more. And the importance of this is to see that by this time everyone has decided whose side they are on, except a group around Jerusalem in Judea, which Zechariah 12 says God will pour His Spirit out near the end of the 70th week because it's at that time that they will recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and they will be the ones who call on the name of the Lord to be saved from the anti-Christ in the closing days of Armageddon. But other than them, before the bowls are poured out, everyone has made their final choice and they are either on the side of the anti-Christ or the side of Christ.

Let's look at Rev 16:1. John says, **Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."** Note that the **wrath is the wrath of God**, but that Rev 14:14-16 showed that it would be poured out through the Son who had the sickle, but now we see that it will be administered by **seven angels**. In 16:2 then, we see the first angel. **So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth.** Now this one is interesting because look at who it is poured out on. It was poured out **on the earth**, or technically, into the earth, and yet look at its effects, **and it became a loathsome and malignant sores on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.** See, worship of the beast and the mark of the beast are tied to one another. The only way to get the mark is to worship the beast. Then you can buy and sell, you can venture into that social activity, but if you do you are the object that suffers under the first bowl. No one without the mark will get these **sores**, only those who have the mark. So it's a selective judgment. And that's why I said it's very important to recognize that by this time everyone has made their decision either for the anti-Christ or for Christ, except that group in Judea that are still trying to make up their mind and Zechariah 12-14 talks about them. But notice the selective judgment. The sores come upon those with the mark who worship his image. Remember in the Exodus plagues how the early plagues were indiscriminate, they just fell on all Egypt, but then the note is made at the fourth plague, the plague of flies, that swarms of flies would come upon the Egyptians but not on the people of Israel living in the land of Goshen. They were set apart. It was a selective judgment. Revelation follows the exact same pattern. The seals and trumpets are not selective judgments, believers and unbelievers fall under them, except for the 144,000 who are protected by a seal from the trumpets, but here we have a very strict line of discrimination. The bowl is poured out on the earth and the effects only fall on those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image in the temple. And these **sores** are said to be **loathsome and malignant**. The words are *κακος* and *πονηρος*, and they sometimes mean bad and evil. They're bad and evil sores all over them. And notice, if you will, in verse 11, under the fifth bowl, that they still have the sores. "and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores." Same Greek word. And that's what I meant by saying the bowl judgments overlap. It's not

one bowl and then it's over and another bowl comes. It's one bowl after another with the previous bowl judgments continuing, so that they are piling up one upon another in the greatest horror the world has ever seen. I don't know exactly when the bowls begin, maybe two or possibly three years before the Second Coming when they all come to an end, but once these sores begin to come upon those who have the mark, they continue to have them for the duration of the bowl judgments.

In 16:3 we see the second bowl. The first was upon the earth, **the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.** What's interesting is that the **blood is like that of a dead man**, which is a congealed, gel-like substance. So the **sea** will become congealed bloody substance. But it seems problematic, because if that happened and **every living thing in the sea died**, then there would be no sea life during the millennial kingdom, unless Jesus re-created them, which no text indicates. So my explanation is that we are to understand that this will be the parts of the sea that are tied to the beast's kingdom, just like the prior judgment. I can't be any more specific than to say that these judgments are selective. So wherever believers have access to the sea to fish out of them food for life, they will have access to clean waters where sea-life are thriving, but everywhere those who have the mark try to access, the sea-life is all dead. How this will happen I don't know, but explain how it happened at the Exodus, because it happened there too, and I believe God is up to the task. Another interesting observation, is that to be able to buy and sell food you have to have the mark of the beast, right? But here those with the mark are being cut off from food from the sea, whereas those without the mark will still have access. I think it's interesting what God is doing and it will become more clear what God is doing momentarily and we'll bring it up again.

So we've had the first on the earth, caused sores, we've had the second on the seas, it congealed the sea into blood and killed all the sea life, and remember, these are building one upon another so that they are both in effect now, sores and no sea life for those who have the mark. In 16:4 we come to the third bowl. **Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water; and they became blood.** Not like **blood** of a dead man, but **blood**. So the fresh waters are made undrinkable, for who? For those who have the mark and only those who have the mark. Again, I don't know how God can do this, but I believe He is up to the task. For Him it is a very little thing to do this and He did it before with several of the plagues in Egypt. And so now add to the sores and the dead sea life, no fresh water for those with the mark. Things are getting difficult for those who take the mark, and certainly many of them are dying.

In 16:5 and 6 John heard an angel agreeing with the judgment. **And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."** The angel pronounces this judgment to be based on the righteousness of God, the one who is Holy. And not only is the judgment righteous, but it's also fair, **they poured out the blood of saints and prophets** so God gave them **blood to drink**. That is what they **deserve**. This is the easiest place to see that the kinds of judgments

God is issuing are *lex talionis* judgments. *Lex talionis* is known in the ancient world as “the law of retaliation.” This law was stated under the Mosaic Law as “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life.” It means a judgement of like kind in return. In each of these judgments, what God is doing is sending those with the mark a message. You poured out the blood of My people, so if you like blood so much, here, you can drink it. This is what they deserve.

In 16:7 we hear another verse coming from the altar **saying, Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.**” Whether people agree or not is irrelevant, heaven agrees that the judgments He is making under the bowls are **true and righteous.**

In 16:8 the **fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.** So on top of the earth, the sea and the fresh waters, the judgment now falls on the **sun**. In this judgment the intensity of the **sun** was increased so that it scorched **men with fire**. The temperatures will rise significantly, but only on those who have the mark. Believers will not experience this judgment. These are all selective judgments. Now one thing that’s interesting is that the word translated **fierce heat**, is really “great.” This is interesting because this is the first of eleven uses of the adjective “great” in this chapter. There are more uses of the adjective “great” in this chapter than any other chapter in Revelation. The reason is to impress upon us the greatness of the bowl judgments in comparison to the prior judgments. And here, even though the sun becomes extremely hot, the people with the mark **did not repent so as to give Him glory**. But instead **they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues**. They know who He is and they know that He is causing all this, but they still **do not repent**. The reason is because they have already chosen to worship the beast and to take his mark, and they are totally committed to his lies and the lies of the false prophet. They could believe but they never would believe, because they are totally loyal to the anti-Christ.

In 16:10 we come to the fifth bowl, and here there is a split, because the first four were indirectly upon the kingdom of the beast, as they affected aspects of creation that kingdom’s sustenance depended on, but here they are directly upon the kingdom of the beast. **Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.** The fifth bowl judgment is **darkness**. This is a thick darkness, like the darkness that fell upon Egypt that could be felt. Even a light in that darkness could not be seen because it could not penetrate the darkness. This thick darkness is only upon **the throne of the beast**, that is, **his kingdom**, those over whom he rules, who took the mark and belong to him. Next we can see that the previous bowl judgments are continuing and overlapping because the first bowl was **malignant sores** and those who followed the beast **gnawed their tongues because of the pain, and blasphemed God because of their pains and their sores**. So the bowl judgments are piling

up and it is causing misery on the followers of the beast. These are like the pains of childbirth, just before the child is born. It is very near the King coming in His kingdom, and yet **they did not repent of their deeds**. To **repent** is to have “a change of mind.” They **did not** have a change of mind. It’s not that they could not have a change of mind, but that they would not. They are willfully opposed to **God** and so they blaspheme Him.

In 16:12 we have the sixth bowl, and this is the preparation for the Campaign of Armageddon. **The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east**. The Euphrates has been the river that has divided the East from the West for many millennia. It is a very large and impassable river. Even Saddam Hussein was backed up against the Euphrates by 30 armies and he had nowhere to go. The river that has divided East from West will at this time no longer divide East from West. The reason is because under the sixth bowl **the Euphrates; and its water was dried up**. God has dried up Rivers before for crossing (e.g. the Jordan) or done similar things (e.g. the Red Sea). He will do it again in the future. But this time the purpose of this drying up is not so the people of God can pass, but **so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east**. The **kings from the east** is literally, “kings from the rising of the sun” and translated **east** because the rising of the sun occurs in **the east**. Some debate who the **kings from the east** are. There are over 50 interpretations. Most commonly people interpret them as kings from China or kings from Mesopotamia. It’s enough to say that these armies are from the east of the Euphrates and must cross at this point. The sixth bowl will provide for the drying up of the river so that they can cross.

The cause for their desire to cross is in 16:13, **And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty**. In verse 13 we see that the counterfeit Trinity is the source of a demonic deception that goes out to **the kings of the whole world**. The **demons** that go to them are able to **perform signs**. What these **signs** are is unknown, but they are demonic in origin and they somehow convince the **kings of the whole world, to** travel toward the land of Israel in order **to gather...for the war of the great day of God the Almighty**. The **war of the great day of God, the Almighty**, is what most know as the Battle of Armageddon, because the place they will gather in verse 16 is known in the Hebrew as **Har-Magedon**, or literally, “the hill of Megiddo.” It is a hill because the city was destroyed many times and each time the city was rebuilt upon the ruins of the prior city. Today there are over 22 destruction layers that have been discovered. The reason the city was destroyed so many times was because of the strategic importance of the city. The city guarded the pass through Mt Carmel. Traders had to cross this pass to move north or south down the coastline of the Mediterranean. Therefore, the city was known for levying taxes for those who needed to pass through. Because everyone likes receiving tax money the city was continually in conflict. Today the hill overlooks the Plains of Esdraelon, also known as the Jezreel Valley. This is a very large valley that could easily accommodate the gathering of all the armies of the world. Under the sixth seal these armies will gather and the armies from the

kings of the east will be able to gather with them because the Euphrates River will dry up. There may be battles in this valley, but there will be battles throughout the land of Israel and the last of these battles will be for the city of Jerusalem. Because there are many battles it is not proper to refer to it as the Battle of Armageddon but the Campaign of Armageddon. But verse 14 called it **the war of the great day of God, the Almighty** and so that is the best name. It is **the great day of God** because He will be victorious and He is referred to as **the Almighty** because His power will be made known on that day. The sixth bowl then, prepares the way for the gathering of all the armies of the world for **the war of the great day of God, the Almighty**. The things needed to prepare are the drying up of the Euphrates River for the kings from the east of that river, the counterfeit Trinity sending out demons to perform signs to convince the armies of the world to gather, and the gathering itself in the place called **Har-Magedon**.

The only other point we want to make under the sixth bowl is verse 15. In the NASB this is placed in parentheses because the translators thought this was out of place and therefore a parenthetical comment. However, it's not out of place at all. The verse says, **"Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame."** The words **Behold, I am coming like a thief** refer to Christ's Second Coming. It is placed in the sixth bowl because the gathering of the world's armies at **Har-Magedon** is very near to the Second Coming. And yet His coming will be **like a thief**. The **coming like a thief** simile is rooted in Matt 24:42-44. In that passage, people living in the tribulation are being addressed. They are given an analogy of a thief coming to compare with the Son of Man's coming. Jesus said, "if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into." In other words, if the owner of the house knew exactly what time a thief was coming he could just wake up at that time and stop the thief. But the exact timing of the coming of the Son of Man cannot be known, and therefore the way to be prepared for His coming is to be on the alert all the time. In our passage, even at the sixth bowl, the exact time of His coming is not known. It will be clouded by the things taking place on earth. So there is a blessing pronounced on the one who stays alert and keeps his clothes on. To stay alert is to be ready for His coming. To keep your clothes on is to persist in obedience. The Greek lexicon says of the word **keep**, "to persist in obedience." The one who does stands in contrast to those who are not ready and are walking about naked and ashamed, that is, they are not ready for His coming and they are not persisting in obedience. So a special blessing is pronounced on the believers who are ready and are persisting in obedience until He comes. This is obviously God's will for their life.

Next week we will look at the seventh bowl, but for this week what have we seen? In 15:1 we saw the seven angels who have the seven plagues. In them the wrath of God is finished and the kingdom of God will come. In 15:2 those tribulation saints who were martyred but had victory over the beast are seen singing a song about the millennial reign of the King over all the nations. In 16:1-2 the first bowl is poured out in the earth causing malignant sores to break out on those who worship the beast. These are selective judgments, only upon those

who have taken the mark. And these judgments will continue so that they overlap with the other judgments. In 16:3 the second bowl is poured out into the sea so that it congealed like the blood of a dead man, and everything in that area where the beast's followers accessed died. In 16:4 the third bowl was poured out into the fresh waters so that they turned to blood and those who had the mark had no drinking water. That this is just the water for the followers of the beast turned to blood is the end of verse 6 where the angels say, "You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." Believers don't deserve it, only those who take the mark, so these are all selective judgments. In 16:8 the fourth bowl is poured out in the sin, so that it would scorch those with the mark with intense heat. And even this did not bring them to have a change of mind. In 16:10 the fifth bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast so that those over whom he ruled were in a thick darkness and continued to suffer in pain from the previous bowl judgments. Even now they continue to refuse to change their mind. In 16:12 the sixth bowl is poured out on the Euphrates River so that it dries up, the counterfeit Trinity sends out demonic spirits to perform signs that will cause the kings of the world to gather to Har-Magedon for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. Even though His coming is near, the exact timing will not be known. He will come like a thief, so believers should remain in a state of readiness for His coming and persist in obedience. Those who do will be blessed.