

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 8-25-13 PM NOTES  
"BOWLS OF JUDGMENT"  
REVELATION 15-16  
#24 in Series, "Verse-by-Verse Through Revelation"

**Revelation 6:9b-10 (NKJV)** "9 I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"

**Joel 1:15 (NKJV)** "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty."

**Zephaniah 1:14-18 (NASB)** "14 Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. 15 A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness...18 Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the Lord's wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth."

**Matthew 10:28b (NKJV)** "...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

**Psalms 7:11 (NKJV)** "God is a just judge, and God is angry with the wicked every day."

**Hebrews 10:31 (NKJV)** "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

**Ezekiel 33:11b (NKJV)** "'As I live,' says the Lord God, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.'"

We see two extremes: the largest harvest of souls in the history of Christianity and the hardened and blinded who will not believe even in the midst of His poured out wrath.

I. The Period of Waiting (15:1-4)

"The mills of God's justice grind exceedingly slow, but they grind exceedingly fine."

A. The Scene (15:1-2)

**Revelation 21:1 (NKJV)** "Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea."

B. The Song (15:3-4)

"In Exodus 15 on the further shore of the Red Sea, delivered from the enemies that oppressed them, the children of Israel sang the song of Moses. And on that final shore beyond the fiery sea, there shall gather in immortality and glory, in heavenly salvation, God's tribulation saints. They are singing the songs of infinite and glorious redemption, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of the Lamb is the song of the victory He won for us over sin, death and the grave, like the triumphant song that Moses sang over the destruction of the enemies of Jehovah. It is a strange coincidence that the first recorded song in the Word of God is in chapter 15 of Exodus, the song of Moses, and that the last recorded song in the Bible is in chapter 15 of the Revelation, the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb."  
—Dr. W. A. Criswell

**Revelation 5:9b-10 (NKJV)** "9 ... for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, 10 and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

II. The Wrath of God (15:5-16:21)

A. The Messengers of God's Wrath (15:5-7)

B. The Manifestation of God's Wrath (15:8-16:21)

1. The Preparation (15:8-16:1)
2. The First Bowl of Wrath (16:2)
3. The Second Bowl of Wrath (16:3)
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**Revelation 5:12 (NKJV)** "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!"

5. The Fourth Bowl of Wrath (16:8-9)
6. The Fifth Bowl of Wrath (16:10-11)
7. The Sixth Bowl of Wrath (16:12-16)

The unholy counterfeit Trinity—the dragon (Satan), the beast (the antichrist), and the false prophet.

8. The Seventh Bowl of Wrath (16:17-21)

"These first 5 plagues were God's final invitation to repent. Having ignored the Lord's call, unbelieving, sinful humanity is confirmed in its sin. Mercy did not melt their hearts. Neither did judgment jolt them out of their wicked ways."  
—Danny Aiken

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Revelation 6-19 records the events that take place during a 7 year period preceding the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth. This 7 year period is called "the great tribulation". During these seven years it is likely that more people will be saved than in any other 7 year period in church history. In these chapters, we get a detailed description of the person and activity of an evil coming world ruler called "the beast" and "the antichrist." We also meet his religious associate called "the second beast" and "the false prophet". We see the deception and the final destruction of an evil spiritual, political, and economic system that is led by the antichrist and called "Babylon". Then in chapter 19 we see the glorious return of Christ to the earth and the destruction of His enemies.

Woven through all the events of this seven year period, we see 3 series of judgments. There are the seal judgments (chapter 6), the trumpet judgments (chapters 8-9), and the bowl judgments in today's text in

chapters 15-16. I mentioned earlier about the huge mass of people who will be saved during this tribulation period, but there is something else you need to know: the majority of those saved in this tribulation period will be martyred because they will refuse allegiance to the antichrist by refusing to receive his mark (evidence of swearing allegiance to and the giving of worship to him) on their hand or forehead. We see many of the souls of these martyred believers in **Revelation 6:9b-10 (NKJV)** “<sup>9</sup>I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. <sup>10</sup> And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’” In Revelation 15, 16 the time has come for the wrath of God to be poured out on the evil rulers and those who are loyal to them and worship them. In a sense, what happens in chapters 15-16 of Revelation is God bringing the evil on this earth to a close. After centuries of patient waiting, enduring man’s arrogance, greed, murder, and idolatry, God puts a halt to man’s sin and rebellion.

Everything that happens in the last part of this great tribulation was prophesied in the Old Testament. The prophets referred to it as “the day of the Lord”. There were several preludes to this final day of wrath, but the ultimate fulfillment of the day of the Lord is described here in the latter part of Revelation. Here are a few of the many references in the Old Testament: **Joel 1:15 (NKJV)** “Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord *is* at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty.” **Zephaniah 1:14-15, 18 (NASB)** “<sup>14</sup> Near is the great day of the Lord, near and coming very quickly; listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. <sup>15</sup> A day of wrath is that day, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness... <sup>18</sup> Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them on the day of the LORD'S wrath; and all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy, for He will make a complete end, indeed a terrifying one, of all the inhabitants of the earth.” There are many more references to this coming day of the Lord that is detailed in the book of Revelation. One of the sad and incomprehensible things about this day of God’s judgment is that with all the carnage, destruction and death, sinful men will not repent. People then (but really it is the same way now) will not fear whom they should fear. Jesus exhorted men in **Matthew 10:28b (NKJV)** “...fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” **Psalms 7:11 (NKJV)** says “God *is* a just judge, and God is angry *with the wicked* every day.” We are warned in **Hebrews 10:31 (NKJV)** “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” In today’s text and really through chapter 19, we see just how fearful it is to fall into the hands of the living God. We will also be reminded that individual salvation is not a matter of logic or persuasion on our part; it is a work of God where He opens blind eyes and He draws people to Christ. Apart from that awakening and enlightening and drawing work of God no one would be saved. For those who give their loyalty to the antichrist and receive his mark, their doom is sealed and they stand condemned with no hope for repentance. Their spiritual blindness is permanent and they will not repent.

Before we get into the text, I want to point something out about the character of God. Our God does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked (**Ezekiel 33:11b (NKJV)** “‘As I live,’ says the Lord God, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.’”) Throughout the book of Revelation, we see that as the outpouring of God’s wrath is ramped up and escalated, so are His evangelistic activities. As judgment is being poured out, He calls out 144,000 Jewish evangelists to go throughout the world preaching the Gospel. He even sends an angel to proclaim the everlasting Gospel from the sky! We see two extremes: the largest harvest of souls in the history of Christianity and the hardened and blinded who will not believe even in the midst of His poured out wrath.

Let’s examine the final judgments of God called the bowl judgments.

## I. The Period of Waiting (15:1-4)

God is never in a hurry. The Puritans used to have a saying, “The mills of God’s justice grind exceedingly slow, but they grind exceedingly fine.” God is in no hurry to proceed.

### A. The Scene (15:1-2)

The seven angels have in their hands seven bowls or sensors used to hold burning coals used to burn incense. They are called “plagues”. That speaks of that which wounds or brings calamities. Notice that they are the last plagues because when they have been poured out, the wrath of God on this earth is complete. These bowls of wrath are the “third woe” spoken of back in Revelation 11:14.

What is this sea of glass mingled with fire and who are those standing on it? The sea was not a literal ocean. Notice that it was “something like a sea of glass”. We will see in **Revelation 21:1 (NKJV)** “Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also **there was no more sea.**” What John saw was a transparent crystal platform before God’s throne. In all the glorious light emanating from the throne, the crystal sea was shimmering and glistening like a sea reflecting the sun. The beauty of the sea was mingled with the fire of God’s judgment about to be poured out on the earth. Fire is often associated in the Bible with the outpouring of God’s judgment (Hebrews 10:27; 12:29). It is interesting that both Moses and some with him and Ezekiel had a very similar vision in Exodus 24:10 and Ezekiel 1:22. Those standing on the sea of glass were those saved out of the tribulation period that had refused to worship and give allegiance to the beast by receiving the mark on their hand or forehead. The harps that these tribulation saints are holding speak of the fact that they are worshipping the one on the throne. They are rejoicing because God is about to take vengeance for them against the antichrist who has tortured and killed them on the earth. It is interesting that even though they were killed on earth, they are described as “those who have the victory”. Those in Christ who experience physical death on this earth are the ultimate victors! We often say of Christians, “they lost their battle with heart disease, cancer, etc.” No! They are the victors! Those on the earth who perpetrated the suffering and physical death of God’s people are about to experience the vengeance of Almighty God. In Zechariah 2:8 God describes those who persecute His people as having poked their finger in His eye.

#### B. The Song (15:3-4)

Notice that there are two songs that the saints sing on that crystal sea before the throne of God. Both songs have to do with redemption. Dr. W. A. Criswell describes these two songs that the tribulation saints are singing. “In Exodus 15 on the further shore of the Red Sea, delivered from the enemies that oppressed them, the children of Israel sang the song of Moses. And on that final shore beyond the fiery sea, there shall gather in immortality and glory, in heavenly salvation, God’s tribulation saints. They are singing the songs of infinite and glorious redemption, the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of the Lamb is the song of the victory He won for us over sin, death and the grave, like the triumphant song that Moses sang over the destruction of the enemies of Jehovah. It is a strange coincidence that the first recorded song in the Word of God is in chapter 15 of Exodus, the song of Moses, and that the last recorded song in the Bible is in chapter 15 of the Revelation, the song of Moses, the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.” [Dr. W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, page 172]. The song of Moses was a song of victory and deliverance for the righteous, and at the same time it was a song of judgment and wrath on God’s enemies. These tribulation saints are now in a place of safety and security before the throne of God and echo the same theme as the song of Moses. The song of the Lamb was first heard back in Revelation 5:8-14. It is a song about His worthiness and His victory. **Revelation 5:9b-10 (NKJV)** <sup>9</sup>“...For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, <sup>10</sup>and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth.” The song recorded in verses 3-4 of our text does not match exactly the song of Moses in Exodus 15 or the song of the Lamb in Revelation 5, but the themes and many terms are similar. Probably verse 3 could be interpreted as a song alike in theme and emphasis to the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The theme of the song recorded in our text is the **virtue** of the Lord (**Revelation 15:3b (NKJV)** “Great and marvelous *are* Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true *are* Your ways, O King of the saints!), the **victory** of the Lord (**Revelation 15:4a (NKJV)** “Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For *You* alone *are* holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You...”), and the **vengeance** of the Lord (**Revelation 15:4b (NKJV)** “...For Your judgments have been manifested.”). It is interesting that verses 3, 4 use the pronoun “You” or “Your” 7 times and they all refer to God. It truly is

all about Him! There is a lesson here about worship through singing. Songs about our experience are appropriate, but the greatest worship is in focusing our words and thoughts on Him.

## II. The Wrath of God (15:5-16:21)

It has always been God's plan to judge sinners and destroy sin. In the next portion of Revelation, we see that plan against sin being carried out. The vision is what we call, "the bowl judgments". John sees the angels who will carry out this final judgment coming out of the temple, the Holy of Holies in Heaven. This is the place in Heaven where the manifest presence of God dwells. The emphasis is that the coming judgment is from God Himself and it proceeds out of His dwelling place.

### A. The Messengers of God's Wrath (15:5-7)

These angels are arrayed in garments that speak of holiness. They have come from the manifest presence of God in Heaven's holy of holies. The four living creatures that we met earlier – four high ranking angels – give the seven angels the bowls of wrath to be poured out on the earth.

### B. The Manifestation of God's Wrath (15:8-16:21)

In these verses we read of some horrific things that are going to happen on the earth. Some of these bowl judgments may be symbolic, but the reality of what is symbolized is always worse than the symbol.

#### 1. The Preparation (15:8-16:1)

The smoke symbolized the glory of God. We see that same thing on earth several times in Scripture (Exodus 19:18; 1 Kings 8:10-11). In the seal and trumpet judgments, things proceed slowly, but once the bowl judgments start, they move rapidly. In chapter 16, each judgment is introduced "Then the second angel poured...", "then the third angel poured", etc. But in the Greek, it simply says, "the first", the second", etc. The sense is that these judgments come in rapid succession. This judgment is poured out on a world ruined by man and ruled by Satan. After these judgments, the world will be rescued by God!

#### 2. The First Bowl of Wrath (16:2)

Like some of the plagues of Egypt, this manifestation of the wrath of God came only on certain ones. It came only on those who had proclaimed their allegiance and given worship to the beast, the antichrist. The judgment was sores that came upon those who worshipped and swore allegiance to the beast. They are described as "loathsome and malignant" in the NASB. Though we cannot be certain, it seems that perhaps the sores broke out where they had received the mark of the beast on their body. It may be that the mark itself by God's providential working caused cancer to start and grow.

#### 3. The Second Bowl of Wrath (16:3)

The word "sea" refers to the oceans, the great bodies of water. This is horrible beyond our imagination. The oceans become thick like coagulated blood. There will be a stench beyond description. Some translations say "as blood" (KJV). This may not be literal blood, but it has the same consistency and horrible effects. Think of the repercussions of the fact that every living thing in the oceans die! Think of the pristine beaches and the dead animals washing ashore. The whole ecological balance of the earth will be thrown off. Remember that the oceans occupy 70% of the earth's surface. This could be a natural phenomenon that has happened on a small scale before. It could be what is called "the red tide" that kills sea life and causes severe respiratory irritations to humans along the shore. Think of it: each wave bringing in the stench of death.

#### 4. The Third Bowl of Wrath (16:4-7)

First it was the oceans, but now it is the lakes, the streams, the springs, and all fresh water. Here we see the poetic justice of God. The earth dwellers have shed the blood of God's people, so now they have blood instead of water. Think of all that will happen with riots and widespread panic as water shortages plague the whole earth. The angel summarizes Heaven's view of this situation – "For it is their just due" (verse 6). The angels that looked on Jesus, the Lamb of God and in **Revelation 5:12 (NKJV)** said "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!" Now they look upon the rebellious world who has rejected God's grace, mercy and love and say, "you are worthy of judgment."

#### 5. The Fourth Bowl of Wrath (V8-9)

This will be real global warming. This bowl of wrath unlike the first three is poured out on the sun instead of the earth. There is all sorts of speculation as to how this will happen, but happen it will! It could be something that happens in the magnetosphere that would allow radiation from the sun to bombard the earth. The change may be in the sun itself and the solar flares will be ramped up. We are not sure, but we know that there will be great heat on the earth that will scorch mankind. Instead of repenting, mankind will simply blaspheme God.

#### 6. The Fifth Bowl of Wrath (16:10-11)

This may or may not be a universal plague of darkness. It falls on the antichrist's kingdom, but his kingdom could be seen as a world kingdom. It could be darkness in the area of the old Roman empire since that is the center of his power often called "the revived Roman Empire". It could be literal darkness, or it could be symbolic, perhaps of confusion. There is certainly biblical precedence for God confusing the minds of His enemies. The result is that men refuse to repent and continue to blaspheme God.

#### 7. The Sixth Bowl of Wrath (16:12-16)

Remember that these judgments aren't poured out years apart. While still reeling from one bowl of wrath, another is poured out, and then another. This is a judgment of a different sort. When the sixth angel pours out his bowl of wrath, two things happen. First, the Euphrates River is dried up. The Euphrates is the ancient boundary between east and west. It is about 1800 miles long and between 300 -1200 yards wide. "Dried up" does not necessarily mean all 1800 miles. It is probably referring to where the armies of the east converging on Israel will cross. For the final earthly battle that takes place at Armageddon, all of the armies of the world will be gathered at the plain of Megiddo united around their satanically inspired hatred of Israel. What is it that drives them there? In this bowl of judgment, we see the surprising answer. The second thing that happens as this bowl of wrath is poured out is that three demonic spirits come out of the unholy counterfeit trinity – the dragon (Satan), the beast (the antichrist), and the false prophet. These demonic spirits influence the world's leaders to gather at Armageddon. Satan is drawing them to Armageddon to wipe out the Jewish people, but God is (as He so often does) using Satan's own devices to defeat him.

In verse 15, we see an encouragement interjected by Christ Himself. He tells His people – those saved during the tribulation period, that He hasn't forgotten them. Like a thief comes, Jesus will return quickly and unexpectedly. Unlike a thief, He is not coming to take that which belongs to others, but that which belongs to Him.

#### 8. The Seventh Bowl of Wrath (V17-21)

With this bowl, God's judgment is finished. After the seventh bowl, Christ returns and after wiping out His enemies He sets up His earthly Kingdom. There was a great earthquake that is so massive it affects the whole earth. Jerusalem is split ("great city" is Jerusalem). I think this happens as Christ's feet touch down on the Mount of Olives. There will be 100 pound hailstones (the largest one I can find reference to was about 2 pounds). Christ returns with this final judgment. Chapters 17-18 goes back and gives us some more details about the fall of the Antichrist's religious, economic, and government system (called Babylon), but the seventh bowl judgment ushers in the return of Christ.

### CONCLUSION

One of the things I was impressed with is that the final judgments – the bowl judgments – do not bring repentance. Danny Aiken summarizes what I want to end this message with. "These first 5 plagues were God's final invitation to repent. Having ignored the Lord's call, unbelieving, sinful humanity is confirmed in its sin. Mercy did not melt their hearts. Neither did judgment jolt them out of their wicked ways." [Danny Aiken, Message on Revelation]. Don't turn away from the precious offer to repent tonight.