

**A Journey Into the Heavens**  
**The Seven Bowls of Wrath**  
**March 16, 2016**

An acceleration of our study of the book of Revelation began with our last lesson and will continue to Revelation 19, for reasons already explained. In our previous lesson we studied the seven personalities of the Great Tribulation (chapter 12-14). These chapters are a parenthesis between the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the seven vials (or bowls) of wrath.

Beginning in chapter 15, we find the preparation for the final seven judgments that are a part of the trio of seven judgements recorded in this book. There were seven seals, seven trumpets, and now, seven bowls (vials) of wrath.

**I. The \_\_\_\_\_ (15:1-8)**

With the background of 14:10 where John says those who worship the beast shall drink of the wrath of God, which is poured out with mixture in the cup of his indignation... he now says in 15:1, And I saw... seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

As with the trumpet judgements, angels are used in the execution of the seven bowls of wrath. The stage is being set for the outpouring of these bowls in chapter 16.

In 15:2, John saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire. This is perhaps the sea of glass like unto crystal that is before God's throne (Rev. 4:6). Standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God were the tribulation believers who had refused to worship the antichrist or receive his mark, and...the number of his name (15:2).

Now in heaven they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb (15:3), which ascribes praise to God for His works, and ways, as well as His holiness and the fact all nations shall come and worship before Him (15:3-4).

Revelation 15:5 gives us the exact location of this scene, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony of heaven... As John's vision continues in verse six, seven angels came out of the temple, having seven plagues... and one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever (vs.7).

These angels have the solemn responsibility of pouring out vials full of the wrath of God. The word full indicates the immensity of these final judgements.

After the angels had received their bowls filled with the wrath of God, the temple in heaven 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.

The awesome presence of God in the temple prohibits anyone, even angels, from entering until the vials of wrath are poured out upon the earth.

## **II. The Seven Bowls of \_\_\_\_\_ (16:1-21)**

In the previous judgements (the seals and the trumpets) there was a break, or interlude, between the sixth and seventh judgements, but the seven vials, or bowls, of wrath are poured out without interruption. This seems to indicate they will occur in rapid succession. This is further underlined in 16:1 where a great voice tells the seven angels to pour out the vials of wrath of God upon the earth at what appears to be the same time.

1. The First Bowl (16:2) - When the first angel pours out his bowl of wrath, there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast. The phrase noisome and grievous sore literally means "ugly and painful, or malignant sores." Apparently, these sores are permanent because after the fifth bowl of wrath has been poured out in verse 11, people are still suffering from them. The first bowl is an awesome picture of the entire population of the world suffering from incurable infection. Undoubtedly, the disposition of people will be such that it will be difficult to get along with each other, adding to the miserable conditions on earth.

2. The Second Bowl (16:3) - One-third of the sea life had already been killed at the sounding of the second trumpet (8:9), but now ALL sea life is killed, causing unimaginable stench and pollution.
3. The Third Bowl (16:4-7) - In this judgement the rivers and fountains of water...become blood. So, the earth's fresh water becomes polluted. This is the people's judgement for the bloodshed of the saints and prophets (16:6). Even though most had not participated directly in the act of bloodshed, the people on earth had rejoiced when God's two witnesses were slain by the beast in 11:10. There have been many severe persecutions of God's people throughout history, but none so universal and unmerciful as that conducted by the beast in the Great Tribulation. Therefore, it is particularly fitting that his generation shall be compelled to drink water that is like the blood they so apathetically allowed to be shed.
4. The Fourth Bowl (16:8-9) - In this judgement the sun's heat intensifies so as to scorch men with fire (vs.8). We find here that dramatic changes in the atmosphere and climate will occur during the Great Tribulation. Coupled with the loss of drinking water, this will result in untold suffering and agony.
5. The Fifth Bowl (16:10-11) - This judgement is directed at the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness (vs.10). This is very reminiscent of the fifth trumpet (9:2) and the ninth plague (Exodus 10). The fifth bowl of judgement will have grave psychological effects, for people will gnaw their tongues for pain (16:10), however according to verse 10 they blaspheme God because of their pain, but repented not of their deeds. The psychological pain and physical pain of the sores will undoubtedly produce suffering beyond the power of words to describe.

6. The Sixth Bowl (16:12-16) - The Euphrates River is the water boundary between the Holy Land and Asia to the east. The kings of the east have been identified in scores of ways by various commentators. Though no one knows their precise identity, it is clear they are rulers from the East. Also, it is obvious the drying up of the Euphrates is not necessary for modern armies to invade the Holy Land. Other than for symbolic purposes, which are mysterious at this time, the mentioning of the drying up of the Euphrates, is not significant.

In verse 13 John 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. The purpose of these evil spirits sent out by the unholy trinity is outlined in verse 14.

After interjecting a special word of comfort to the tribulation believers who are still on the earth in verse 15, John returns to describing the events leading to the Battle of Armageddon.

It appears since the enemy knows the Second Coming of Christ is at hand, he will gather the military powers of the world to resist Him. From a human viewpoint it will appear these armies are gathering of their own accord, but it will be satanic powers that draw them together. They are assembled together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (vs. 16). The stage is now set, but the actual battle will not take place until 19:11-21, when Christ returns to earth with the armies of heaven. Before that happens there is a parenthesis in chapters 17-18 describing the fall of Babylon.

7. The Seventh Bowl (16:17-21) - While the demonic spirits are gathering the armies of the world in preparation for Armageddon, there is yet another bowl of wrath to be poured on the earth, and when this happens, there came a great voice of of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying it is done (16:17). This means the trio of judgements is complete, and the time is ready for Christ to return to claim His inheritance.

In the meantime, there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great (vs. 18). This will be the most devastating earthquake the world has ever known. It will be of such intensity the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell... and every island fled away, and the mountains were not found (16:19-20). This could be the fulfillment of the prophecy found in Isaiah 40:4-5.

The awesome scene of incredible horror continues as there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent (16:21). This hail is not necessarily the usual form of hail and ice, for the Greek word translated hail simply means “to let loose” or “to let fall”. It can apply to anything falling from the sky, so this reference may be to the falling rocks or boulders that were the result of the natural disasters in verses 18-20.

Whatever the hail is, each stone will weigh a talent, or about 100 pounds, so every unprotected living thing would be destroyed. This is a possible fulfillment of a prophecy found in Ezekiel 38:22-23.

The hardness of human hearts upon the earth at this time is revealed in Revelation 16:21. Even when the world literally crumbles before their eyes, the lost world simply hardens their heart and curses God for sending His judgement.