

The Book of Revelation
Lesson #15-The Last Seven Plagues-Part I

Introduction: Have seen great detail in regard to the last half of the Tribulation.

- A. 7 seals and 7 trumpets
- B. 2 witnesses who will prophesy for 3-1/2 years
- C. War in heaven that spawns the activity of the unholy trinity (Dragon, Anti-Christ, False Prophet)
- D. Now we turn to the final scenes before the return of Christ to settle the score
- E. 7 bowl or vial judgments

*What Do These Bowls of Wrath Represent?
When Do These Events Occur?*

 **Historicist Approach:**

- In general, the seven bowls of wrath find fulfillment in the judgment upon the papacy (Babylon), beginning with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars and concluding yet in the future.

 **Preterist Approach:**

- The judgments of these bowls are largely against Jerusalem, culminating in its fall in A.D. 70, though the fifth bowl touches the Roman Empire as well—probably referring to the chaotic state of affairs that prevailed after Nero's suicide.
- Alternatively, this section says nothing about the fall of Jerusalem and refers strictly to the judgment of God upon pagan Rome.

 **Futurist Approach:**

- The bowls represent future, global judgments that, in their devastating effect, are unparalleled in history.
- These occur at the very end of the Tribulation period, culminating in WWII, or the Battle of Armageddon.
- This war is the last battle to be fought by mankind, and it will be ended by the personal appearing of Christ as He comes to establish His millennial kingdom.

 **Spiritual Approach:**

- There is a relationship between the bowl judgments and the trumpet judgments. The former may be a recapitulation of the latter.
- The principle distinction between the trumpets and the bowls is that the former are partial in their effects and serve to warn the wicked of their spiritual danger, whereas the latter are complete and represent final judgment upon the unrepentant.
- The same event in history may serve as a trumpet judgment for one person (a mere warning) and as a bowl judgment for another (a final judgment, resulting in death).
- The disasters described recur in history repeatedly.

Chapters 14 and 15 set up these judgments!

I. The Lamb and the Redeemed (14:1-5)

NOTE: Chapter 13 was very somber; Chapter 14 is a look ahead at the joyous victory that will ultimately belong to the believer.

*Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads.
Revelation 14:1 NKJV*

A. 144,000: Mark on their foreheads

1. Scene is in heaven (Mt. Zion; see Hebrews 12:22)
2. Possibly raptured man-child of Chapter 12 (see v. 4—"first fruits")
3. Mark on foreheads

"The destiny of every person is determined by the mark that person bears. When judgment comes there will be no room for ambiguity; people will have, by their mark, declared their master." Robert Mounce

B. Special song:

And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. 3 They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. Revelation 14:2-3 NKJV

NOTE: Redeemed from the earth (v. 3) implies raptured man-child

C. Unusual description (4-fold):

These are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:4-5 NKJV

1. Virgins who have not defiled themselves.

(NOTE: Jesus spoke of Eunuchs; Matthew 19:12; Paul talked about celibacy in 1 Corinthians 7).

- a. Problem would be that it makes sexual intimacy even in marriage, defiling.
- b. Not the lesson of Genesis 2 or Ephesians 5
- c. Virgin is often metaphorical in Scripture:

This is the word which the LORD has spoken concerning him: 'The virgin, the daughter of Zion, Has despised you, laughed you to scorn; The daughter of Jerusalem Has shaken her head behind your back! 2 Kings 19:21 NKJV

How shall I console you? To what shall I liken you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare with you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For your ruin is spread wide as the sea; Who can heal you? Lamentations 2:13 NKJV

The virgin of Israel has fallen; She will rise no more. She lies forsaken on her land; There is no one to raise her up. Amos 5:2 NKJV

For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 2 Corinthians 11:2 NKJV

- d. Picture is the virgin bride of Christ keeping themselves pure for the bridegroom; Jesus Christ; resisted the seduction of the Great Harlot.
2. Follow the lamb where he goes

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. Mark 8:34 NKJV

3. Firstfruits; possibly raptured tribulation saints
4. Beyond the reach of blame; clothed in righteousness and in His presence.

II. Impending Judgment Announced (14:6-13)

3 Announcements

A. The everlasting Gospel

Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth — to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people — 7 saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:6-7 NKJV

NOTE: Everlasting Gospel (not Gospel of redemption in Jesus Christ but a summons to fear, honor and worship the creator, it sets forth the eternal promise of God for people).

1. Has revealed himself in nature so that people are without excuse.

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Romans 19, 20 NKJV

2. Downfall of people begins when they do not glorify him.

Because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Romans 1:21-22 NKJV

3. One last call for civilization to repent and give Him glory.

NOTE: Every knee will bow/every tongue will confess.

B. The downfall of paganism

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8 NKJV

NOTE: The introduction of this symbolic reference without explanation assumes the first readers would understand the allusion.

1. Ancient Metropolitan city of Babylon had become symbolic of the politically and religious capital of the world empire. Renowned for luxury and moral corruption. Great enemy of the people of God.
2. Rome was contemporary Babylon to the early church:

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8 NKJV

And on her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. Revelation 17:5 NKJV

And he cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird! Revelation 18:2-3 NKJV

Standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.' Revelation 18:10 NKJV

Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "Thus with violence the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall not be found anymore. Revelation 18:21 NKJV

The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" Daniel 4:30 NKJV

3. Symbol of spirit of godlessness that prevails in every age and lures people from the creator.
4. Dark counterpart of Jerusalem.
5. Wrath of God is coming; judgment will happen to Babylon.

C. Torment that awaits those who worship the beast:

And another angel followed, saying, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." 9 Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." Revelation 14:8-11 NKJV

1. Experience God's wrath
2. Will experience horrifying torment
3. Punishment of the damned is not a temporary measure (annihilation, or N.T. Wright idea)

Where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.' Mark 9:44 NKJV

(ILL) Rich man and Lazarus

D. John's comment and voice from heaven

Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. 13 Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them." Revelation 14:12-13 NKJV

1. Call to remain faithful
2. Blessing of martyrdom

III. Harvest of the Earth

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and on the cloud sat One like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. 15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Thrust in Your sickle and reap, for the time has come for You to reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So He who sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped. Revelation 14:14-16 NKJV

- A. Picture of Christ (ready to reap the harvest of the earth)
- B. Angel from the temple (presence of God)

NOTE: Judgment of sin is necessary function of righteousness

- C. Eschatological harvest is of both the righteous and the wicked.

Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.""" Matthew 13:30 NKJV

Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Matthew 13:40-42 NKJV

IV. Vintage of the Earth

Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. 18 And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." 19 So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs. Revelation 14:17-20 NKJV

NOTE: Pictures the carnage of the Wrath of God

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. Revelation 19:15-16 NKJV

"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; For the winepress is full, The vats overflow — For their wickedness is great." 14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. Joel 3:12-14 NKJV

Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst. 2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, Making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south. Zechariah 14:1-4 NKJV

1600 furloughs=184 miles (approximate length of Palestine).

V. Preparation for the Bowl Judgments

A. Final plagues:

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. Revelation 15:1 NKJV

B. Interlude of victory:

And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God. 3 They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints! 4 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, For Your judgments have been manifested." Revelation 15:2-4 NKJV

C. Description of the Angels:

After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. 6 And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. Revelation 15:5-7 NKJV

D. Manifestation of God's glory:

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. 8 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed. Revelation 15:7-8 NKJV

The stage is set!

VI. Final Plagues

A. Loathsome sores:

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth." So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. Revelation 16:1-2

(6th Egyptian plague)

B. Sea to blood:

Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died. Revelation 16:3 NKJV

(1st Egyptian plague)

C. Rivers and water to blood:

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." 7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments." Revelation 16:4-7 NKJV

D. Men are scorched:

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. Revelation 16:8-9 NKJV

E. Darkness and Pain:

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. 11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. Revelation 16:10-11 NKJV

F. Euphrates dries up

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame." 16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon. Revelation 16:12-16 NKJV

1. Preparation for war; war of Kings of the East
2. Unholy trinity rallies people to war
3. Christ is coming

G. Earth utterly shaken:

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. Revelation 16:17-21 NKJV

Still no change: Chapters 17 and 18 describe what this final bowl really does.