

REVELATION 15.5-16.21

Act Five: Punishment For the World

(15.5) After this I looked,
and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,
(6) and out of the sanctuary
came the SEVEN ANGELS angels
with the SEVEN PLAGUES, clothed
in pure, bright linen,
with golden sashes around their chests.

The seven angels with the seven plagues introduced in 15.1 are now explained (just as the seven angels with the seven trumpets were introduced in 8.2, but not fully explained until 8.6ff)

in 15.1 the seven plagues are called "the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished."

Q: Are they last because they chronologically follow the seven trumpets?

Q: Are they last because they are the final "seven" of the four sevens: the seals, trumpets, thunders, and now bowls?

they will lead us to a vision of the final judgment

just as the seals and trumpets lead to a vision of final judgment

Johnson appears to think they follow the seven trumpets

Beale suggests they are an intensified recapitulations of the what we were shown by the blowing of the seven trumpets, which are an intensified recapitulation of what we were shown by the opening of the seven seals

I tend to agree with Beale, for reasons I'll show you shortly

*These angels come out of "the sanctuary of the tent of witness"
the same OT language is used to describe the earthly Tabernacle
now this language refers to God's heavenly Temple*

Their garments speak of them as being representative of the Lord (1.13)

They bear "seven plagues" - reminiscent of the Egyptian plagues

Note: this is the fourth "seven" showing us God's judgment of a rebellious world (Lev 26 sets forth four "seven-fold" judgments upon Israel if she breaks covenant with the Lord)

(7) And 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) and the sanctuary was filled with smoke
from the glory of God and
from his power,
and no one could enter the sanctuary
until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.
(16.1) Then I heard a loud voice
from the temple
telling the seven angels,
"Go and pour out on the earth
the SEVEN BOWLS of the wrath of God."

From the four living creatures (who, as we have seen, represent creation) the seven angels are given the “seven bowls”

these bowls are filled to the brim with the eternal God's wrath (Isa 51.17 AND 22-23; Jer 10.25)

perhaps they are given these bowls by the four living creatures because of how God's wrath will be poured out on creation, thus plaguing the peoples of the world

As the bowls are given to the seven angels, the sanctuary is filled with smoke representing the glory and power of God

in the OT when the Tabernacle and Temple were filled with the glory of God, no one could enter the sanctuary

here in Rev 15, no one can enter until the judgment of the seven plagues has finished

Now a loud voice commands them to pour out the bowls of God's wrath upon the earth

Before considering the impact of the first angel pouring out the first bowl, note how the bowls will parallel the trumpets (Beale):

<p>Trumpet one (8.7): Hail and fire, mixed with blood fall <u>on the earth</u>, one third of which is burned up.</p> <p>Trumpet two (8.8-9): A blazing mountain falls into the sea. One third of the sea becomes <u>blood</u>, a third of the <u>sea creatures die</u>, and a third of all ships are destroyed.</p> <p>Trumpet three (8.10-11): A blazing star falls on a third of <u>rivers and springs</u>; their waters are poisoned and many die.</p> <p>Trumpet four (8.12): A third of the <u>sun, moon, and stars</u> are struck, darkening a third of the night and day.</p> <p>Trumpet five (9.1-12): The shaft of the pit is opened. Sun and air are <u>darkened</u> with smoke from which locusts emerge to <u>torment</u> people without the seal of God.</p> <p>Trumpet six (9.13-21): Four angels bound at the <u>Euphrates</u> are released, the four horsemen of Rev 6.1-8), with their cavalry of 200,000,000, which kills a third of humanity</p> <p>Trumpet seven (11.15-19): <u>Loud voices</u> in heaven announce the coming of the Kingdom of God and of Christ. <u>Lightning, thunder, earthquake, and hail</u> occur.</p>	<p>Bowl one (16.2): A bowl is poured out <u>on the earth</u>. Malignant sores come on those who have the mark of the beast and worship his image.</p> <p>Bowl two (16.3): A bowl is poured on the seas, which become <u>blood</u>, and <u>every living thing in them dies</u>.</p> <p>Bowl three (16.4-7): A bowl is poured on <u>rivers and springs</u>, and they become blood..</p> <p>Bowl four (16.8-9): A bowl is poured on the <u>sun</u>, which scorches people with fire.</p> <p>Bowl five (16.10-11): A bowl is poured on the throne of the beast. His kingdom is <u>darkened</u> and people are in <u>anguish</u>.</p> <p>Bowl six (16.12-16): A bowl is poured on the <u>Euphrates</u>, which dries up for kings from the east. Demonic frogs deceive the kings of the world to assemble for battle at Armageddon.</p> <p>Bowl seven (16.17-21): A bowl is poured into the air, and a <u>loud voice</u> from God's throne announces “It is done.” <u>Lightning, thunder, and an unprecedented earthquake</u> occur, and terrible <u>hail</u> falls.</p>
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(2) So THE FIRST ANGEL went
 and poured out his bowl on the earth,
 and harmful and painful sores
 came upon the people who
 bore the mark of the beast and
 worshiped its image.

*The first bowl is poured upon the earth
 It impacts "earth dwellers" - those who bear the mark of the beast (13.16) whom they worship
 similar to the plague upon Egypt in Exodus 9.8-12
 note God's warning to Israel in Deut 28.27, 35
 likewise, the sound of the first trumpet in Rev 8.7 impacts the earth
 remember the consequences of the fifth trumpet in Rev 9.5-6, 10*

(3) THE SECOND ANGEL
 poured out his bowl into the sea,
 and it became like the blood of a corpse,
 and every living thing died that was in the sea.

*The second bowl is poured into the sea
 The sea becomes like the blood of a corpse
 perhaps the consequences of sea battles, which disrupt commerce, and hinder fishermen
 remember, the "sea" often represents the satanic spiritual realm from which opposition to
 God's reign arises in the form of the beast (13.1)
 in Rev 17.1, 15, Babylon, the harlot, will be enthroned on "many waters"
 which represent "peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues"
 remember, in the new heaven and earth there will be no "sea" (21.1)
 note the impact of the second trumpet in Rev 8.8 upon the sea
 similar to the plague upon Egypt in Exodus 7.21
 "Every living thing died that was in the sea"
 indicating a severe impact upon the people economically and physically
 perhaps this is a Hebrew hyperbole that suggests world-wide suffering?*

(4) THE THIRD ANGEL
 poured out his bowl into
 the rivers and
 the springs of water,
 and they became blood.

(5) And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,
 "Just are you, O Holy One,
 who is and
 who was,
 for you brought these judgments.

(6) For they have shed the blood of
 saints and
 prophets,
 and you have given them blood to drink.
 It is what they deserve!"

(7) And I heard the altar saying,
 "Yes, Lord God the Almighty,
 true and
 just are your judgments!"

*The third bowl is poured out on rivers and springs of water
 similar to the plague on Egypt in Exodus 7.20-24 (Ps 78.3, 10-12, 44)
 the partial woe of the third trumpet (Rev 8.10-11) is now extended to peoples throughout
 the entire world*

*Now, instead of drinking water, they drink blood (Isaiah 49.26)
 From the "angel in charge of the waters" comes a word of praise*

*The Holy One
 Who is
 Who was
 and Who now brings His judgment to bear
 He is doing what is just
 He is punishing the persecutors of God's people as they deserve
 for He is the Lord God, the Almighty, Who sovereignly rules over all*

*Then from "the altar" comes another word of praise
 remember it was from beneath the altar that the saints in heaven cried out for God to
 avenge them (6.9-11)*

*now He is doing as they asked
 and what He is doing is just
 for He is the Lord God, the Almighty
 the Sovereign Ruler Who
 not only does what is just
 but is the One Who defines what is just and unjust
 (Beale): "God's sovereign acts of judgement are moral expressions of His just
 Character."*

(8) THE FOURTH ANGEL

*poured out his bowl on the sun,
 and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.*

*(9) They
 were scorched by the fierce heat, and they
 cursed the name of God
 who had power over these plagues.*

*They did not
 repent and
 give him glory.*

*The fourth bowl is poured out on the sun
 now, instead of being darkened, its heat is intensified
 (Beale): "The symbolism of cosmic alteration indicates that people are to be judged
 because they have altered God's moral laws, usually through idolatry."
 remember the fire pouring from the mouth of the two witnesses in 11.5
 note the promise of 7.16*

Those scorched by the sun's heat

*do not repent - do not cry out for mercy and glorify the Lord (note 14.7)
instead, they curse God because of the plagues with which He has inflicted them*

(10) THE FIFTH ANGEL

poured out his bowl on
the throne of the beast,
and its kingdom was plunged into darkness.
People
gnawed their tongues in anguish (11) and
cursed the God of heaven
for their pain and sores.
They did not repent of their deeds.

The fifth bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast

*remember "Satan's throne" in Rev 2.13 - which speaks of the worship of the Caesar
(Johnson): "The world system's center of power, the beast's Oval Office, cannot be
insulated from the wrath of God, who will expose the devil's darkness for all to
see."*

The beast's kingdom is plunged into darkness

*similar to the plague on Egypt in Ex 10.21-23 - an attack upon the god "Ra," of whom the
Pharaoh claimed to be an incarnation
darkness symbolized God's judgment of leaving people "in the dark"
note: John 3.19-20; Eph 5.11-13; Isa 8.20-22; Jer 13.15-16; 2 Peter 2.17; Jude 11-13
(Wilcock): "God is grimly vindicated when godless society, which rose so proudly
against Him and His Church, and claimed to provide a viable alternative, is shown
to be unequal to the task."*

for instead of providing its people with "light"

*it plunges them into the darkness - the darkness they love for their deeds
are evil*

*note what we're told about the New Jerusalem in Rev 21.22-25
the glory of God gives it light
its lamp is the Lamb*

The darkness

*causes the people to gnaw their tongues in anguish
causes people to curse the God of heaven ("God of heaven" - Dan 2.17-19)
causes them to suffer pain and sores
remember the blowing of the fifth trumpet in Rev 9.1-11
9.4-5 - is it the sting of "the scorpion" that causes their pain and sores?
does not cause them to repent*

(12) THE SIXTH ANGEL

poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates,
and its water was dried up,
to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

(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.

- (14) For they are demonic spirits,
 performing signs,
 who go abroad to the kings of the whole world,
 to assemble them for battle
 on the great day of God the Almighty.
- (15) ("Behold, I am coming like a thief!
 Blessed is the one who
 stays awake,
 keeping his garments on,
 that he may not
 go about naked and
 be seen exposed!")
- (16) And they assembled them at the place
 that in Hebrew is called ARMAGEDDON.

*The sixth bowl is poured on "the great river Euphrates
 The Euphrates is the restraining boundary holding back the Lord's impending judgment
 Rev 9.13-16, the sixth trumpet
 The drying up of the Euphrates, allowing it to be crossed, speaks in the OT of judgment
 the Euphrates was "dried up" (diverted) by Cyrus so he could conquer Babylon
 Isa 41.2, 4; 44.27, 28
 the Lord also "dried up" the Euphrates so that Babylon and Assyria could conquer Judah
 Isa 8.7-8
 remember also the "dried up" Red Sea and the Jordan
 to bless His people
 to judge the Egyptian and Canaanites*

*Now the Euphrates is "dried up" so that "kings of the east" (v12) - representing "the kings of the
 whole world" (v 14) - might assemble for battle against the saints
 What John sees are preparations for THE battle (Rev 19.19, 20.8) on the great day of God the
 Almighty
 As the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (the second beast) prepare for their final assault
 upon the saints, from each of their mouths comes a frog - three frogs
 three unclean spirits "like" frogs
 in the OT frogs were considered unclean (frogs on Grand Cayman!)
 similar to the plague on Egypt in Ex 8.2-11
 these unclean spirits deceive the earth-dwellers by their "signs"
 remember Egypt's "magicians" ability to perform magic tricks (Ex 7.8-13)*

*Later in Revelation John will see "twin visions" of this last battle
 19.17-21 - destruction of the beast, the false prophet and their followers
 20.7-10 - destruction of the dragon*

*In Rev 16.15 Jesus pronounces a blessing and a warning
 He is coming
 He is coming like a thief (Luke 12.39-40; Rev 3.3; but note carefully 1 Thess 5.4)
 not to steal, but unexpectedly
 He also pronounces a blessing upon those
 who stay awake (remember His Word to the church in Sardis - Rev 3.2)
 who are clothed and not naked (remember His Word to the church in Laodicea -
 Rev 3.17-18)*

John sees this battle taking place at Armageddon

in Hebrews this refers to "Har-Magedon" - literally, "the mount of Megiddo"

now, while Megiddo was in the OT the site of significant battles - Judges 5.19;

2 Kings 23.29 - Megiddo is a broad plain, not a mountain (Hebrews: "har")

another indication that John is speaking figuratively

furthermore, the "last battle" is pictured in the OT as taking place at Jerusalem

Zech 12.3, 14.2-3

but (M. Kline as cited by Johnson) suggests that "Har-Magedon" in Greek, is an alternative transliteration of the Hebrew expression "Mount of Assembly" (transliterated into English at "Har Mo'ed)

the "kings of the earth" assemble for battle against the saints (the true Jerusalem)

but what they intend will be frustrated by the Lord, Who will utterly defeat them

(Rev 19.19-21; 20.9-10)

as we've noted significant battles were fought in the OT at Megiddo - now "Har-Megiddo" becomes (Beale) "a typological symbol of the last battle against the saints and Christ which occurs throughout the earth"

(in respect for Dr. Beale, please note that he respectfully questions Dr. Kline's arguments concerning the meaning of "Har-Magedon")

(17) THE SEVENTH ANGEL

poured out his bowl into the air,

and a loud voice came

out of the temple,

from the throne, saying,

"It is done!"

(18) And there were
flashes of lightning,

rumblings,

peals of thunder, and

a great earthquake

such as there had never been since man was on the earth,
so great was that earthquake.

(19) The great city

was split into three parts, and

the cities of the nations fell,

and God remembered Babylon the great,

to make her drain the cup

of the wine of the fury

of his wrath.

(20) And every island fled away,

and no mountains were to be found.

(21) And great hailstones,

about one hundred pounds each,

fell from heaven on people;

and they cursed God for the plague of the hail,

because the plague was so severe.

The seventh bowl is poured out on the air (Eph 2.2 - "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now at work in the sons of disobedience")

*A loud voice from the heavenly temple announces, "It is done"
I hear Jesus' cry from the cross, "It is finished"*

note Rev 21.5-6

here we see the Lord "making all things news"

for, He proclaims, "It is done!"

what is done? The Lord's judgment has been completed

And therefore, as we have seen before, John hears and sees "the air" - the supposed domain of Satan - produce flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake greater than any earthquake that has ever shook the earth

we've seen these phenomena before

Rev 4.5, 8.5, 11.19

remember the "great earthquake" depicted in Rev 6.12-17, accompanied by other natural phenomena, which leads the people to ask, "Who can stand?"

Haggai 2.6

Heb 12.26-27

note Dan 12.1, "There shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time. BUT AT THAT TIME your people shall be delivered, everyone whose name shall be found written in the book."

The "great city" is split into three parts

which depicts all the cities of the nations falling

for the "great city" is Babylon

the ancient enemy of God's people

whose judgment is depicted throughout the OT prophets

now depicting all who oppose the Lord and His Church

remember the "great city" is where Jesus was crucified (11.8) - which is likened to Sodom and Egypt

God "remembers"

that Babylon makes the nations drunk with her immorality (14.8, 17.2)

that her cup is filled to overflowing with blood of the saints (17.4, 6)

Babylon's iniquity (18.5)

now God makes her drain dry the cup of "the fury of his wrath" (14.8, 10)

Now in vs 20-21

the entire creation is overthrown (6.14, 20.11)

great hail stones fall upon the people (similar to the Egyptian plague in Ex 9.13ff)

note also Joshua 10.11

remember Rev 11.19, which also depicts the last judgment and speaks of "heavy hail"

in response to all this, the people's hearts, like Pharaoh's, are hardened

instead of repenting

they curse God

(Johnson): "Neither the backwash of sin's bitter aftertaste nor the first fruits of its lethal harvest can soften hearts of stone. Only God's Spirit, applying the gospel of grace, can turn stony hearts into hearts of tender flesh."