

Chapter 15

Before we get into the study, we should note that these 2 chapters really should not have been split, which is why I have combined them here into 1 discussion. These chapters are 1 large section together and I am treating them as such.

Prelude to the Bowl Judgments

15 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.

² 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.

The chapter opens with the conclusion of events on this world. Seven angels are seen standing a last plague each that they are ready to pour on the earth. This is said to be the conclusion of "[the wrath of God](#)", the last word in God's judgement. John sets up the oncoming situation by introducing the use of the word 'wrath' indicating this is the anger of God poured out in these 7 Angels.

But before they could be addressed; or more importantly at the time they are being addressed, John turns and sees the 144,000 standing on a sea of both glass and fire. They are named as the 144,000 and they are given the repetitive moniker that these are they who have achieved "[victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name](#)". To remind us, these are those who were alive at Christ's second coming and were redeemed from living men, so these are the ones that are privileged as sealed with God's name as we discussed in Chapter 7.

John describes these individuals walking around "[a sea of glass mingled with fire](#)" indicating that they are able to see down but are protected. The fact this is coupled with the 7 Angels would indicate these are walking around in Heaven, but the question of the time frame draws us to evaluate how these events are taking place.

The question, often debated, is are the events of Chapter 15 and 16 directly after the 2nd Coming of Jesus – and therefore these 144,000 are living in Heaven, or are they before that and after the Close of Probation? This is an important question for the understanding of the events of the Judgement but also one that does not have a clear answer in the text. Both can be correct textually speaking as God's people are not referenced through this chapter directly after the initial introduction.

The fact that the 144,000 are seen walking around on their own would indicate they are not joined with the unnumbered multitude of those redeemed from the dead.

Therefore, they are not in Heaven when these events are taking place, but are intellectually living as if they are in Heaven. In other words, in thought and deed, these saved are, psychologically, walking with God while still going about their day to day lives on earth. At first, this seems to be an impossibility, but let us consider Jesus own words; "take up (your) cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. ²⁶ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" He is encouraging his people to live as if they are in Heaven. He is certainly not promising perfection, not at all, but he is promising an experience that would be the first step on the rung to living in Heaven truly.

This is what one version of the Judgement story holds. God is saying that those alive in the last days, when he is readying to redeem them, are living as if they are in Heaven, in experience but not in reality. In this version, a large swathe of people who would not be able to take the events of this judgement would fall asleep to become part of the unnumbered multitude, to join them at the Second Coming. That is why they are standing on a see of Glass and Fire. They can see those experiencing Judgment, they experience part of it – and much of its effects – themselves, but they do not receive the full measure of God's wrath in any form. Instead, like someone looking on a child receiving a righteous rebuke, they experience the judgement but do not receive it themselves, and only endure a passing reference to it.

The alternative to this view is that the 144,000 are actually saved and in Heaven, and they are seeing all this from afar. That is a valid view, but the fact that the unnumbered multitude are not there, and that their moniker of victory is repeated would indicate to me that these are those who are demonstrating their victory on the earth. Fortunately, while this is an important question, it has only a small impact on the analysis of Chapter 15 and 16.

A third view is that all these events immediately precede the Close of Probation, these judgements being the last chance to come to God's open and loving arms. This seems a highly logical position and the one that I am moving toward ascribing to. These events allow those who will not be able to take the battle of Armageddon to fall asleep relatively peacefully and arrive in Heaven as part of the unnumbered multitude.

The important thing to remember is that, while the Saints will be affected by some of these events; they will be hungry, thirsty and hot, their faith will not be shaken. They will still hold themselves to God's will and still consider themselves as living in Heaven. They will weep for their experiences, but they will not let the world in.

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."

The song sung by these is as we discussed in Chapter 14. They sing a song that they alone can sing – the redeemed from Earth alone are worthy to sing of their redemption because they alone know what those who experience the Judgement went through. They alone can relate to the experiences that those who are feeling Gods Wrath go through. Angels might experience heat and cold, but they don't feel the negative effects in the same way that we do.

The song these individuals sing has 2 important lines in it. The "[Lord God Almighty](#)" is called the "[King of the saints](#)", which is addressed to him by a group of people that are still alive. In context, this reinforces our comprehension that the saints are those who are alive and not the dead in Christ. By ascribing this title at this time, when those alive are being Judged, clearly connects that Saints are living people and Jesus is their king.

The other pair of lines relate directly to the effect of the Judgement.

"[For all nations shall come and worship before You,](#)
[For Your judgments have been manifested.](#)"

Through seeing God's judgement laid out, the nations are convicted that he is righteous and they worship him over the beast. While this will come too late – as we will see – they will realise that their adultery with Babylon is ungodly and recognise God as their true lord.

⁵ 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. 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. 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.

Again, John says that after he saw the 144,000 sing the song and after they mingled on the sea of glass and fire, the temple of heaven is opened and the 7 Angels come forth to deliver their judgements to the Earth. They are clothed in a similar garb as Jesus is in Chapter 1, indicating that they are operating to his instruction. They wear his colours, so-to-speak, and are doing his bidding.

The importance of them 'coming out of the temple' represents a change in attitude toward the people of God. The temple was always where mercy and justice could be found, but that measure is closed to the people when these Angels leave its holy space. This is an important discussion point for when we look at timelines and the Investigative Judgment in the future. For now, its importance lies in the fact that God is no longer acting in a merciful manner.

Each Angel is given a bowl by 1 of the 4 living creatures. To reinforce their power and authority from Chapter 4, only 1 of these demi-gods is needed to hand the seven last plagues on to the anointing Angel.

Again, as if to reinforce the point, after these Angels departed "(t)he temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter". Access to Heaven is cut off, the ministering Angels cannot offer incense and prayers, the connection portal of Mercy is now shrouded in smoke "from" God's Glory. This is not the incense to shield the priests from God, this is God's power that would annihilate a priest or any prayer from a sinful being, and nothing from the earth can pass its boundaries.

Chapter 15 ends here as Stephen Langton, who split the Bible up into Chapters, wanted to keep the plagues together. For our analysis, however, we will join the chapters together and examine the plagues.

Chapter 16

The Seven Bowls

16 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."

The voice that commands the Judgment to begin comes from within the temple. Its not an Angel, it is the voice of God, for his glory bars all others from entering as stated before.

Whether this is God the Father or Jesus Christ is an academic debate but an interesting one. As stated in the last chapter, the 7 Angels that come forth from the Temple are wearing robes that match the depiction of Jesus in Revelation 1, and we assume they are acting on his orders. However God the Father took on the role of the 'grieved party' when Christ choose to step into the place of fallen humanity. When Jesus chose to step down and take on the role of advocate for Humanity, God the Father took the role in the Godhead who was aggrieved at the betrayal of humanity. This is why we often look on God the Father as Judge and Christ as our advocate.

This is also why God the Father's actions on the cross are an interesting study.

All this is academic. Regardless of if the Judgment here comes from Jesus or from God, it comes from the Temple; it comes from the centre of Judgement where Mercy is no longer an option. Furthermore, this is the wrath of God; this is not just Judgment. This is God pouring his pure anger out in a controlled manner on those who have decided to choose the enemy over their creator.

First Bowl: Loathsome Sores

² 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.

The bowls of judgment are symbolic, the results are literal. Obviously there are no Angels standing in Heaven with liquids to pour onto the Earth. God's anger is not so tangible. But the effects of the plagues are as literal as the plagues of Egypt.

As these go through, you will notice that most of the plagues attack "the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image". They are the target of these plagues and they are the ones that God has reason to pour judgment onto. For the most part, the 144,000 do not receive these plagues; the plagues do not harm those who are sealed with God's seal.

In this case, therefore, the sores that come on them are a literal, painful sore that infects the people who have betrayed God and who have received the mark of the beast.

Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood

³ 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.

Again, this is literal. The sea will turn to blood and the things that live in the sea will die. This means all the fish and creatures that man relies on to eat will be killed, causing a food shortage and huge problems world wide. As Fred said in his notes, imagine the world's great seaports of Sydney, London and New York suddenly having the waters in their harbour turned to blood.

This will obviously affect the Saints who are alive, as their ability to access food and probably other goods will be affected. They, however, will see the Judgment as being in their favour and God will provide.

Furthermore, think about the impact this has on commerce and industry; no water to cool industrial plants, ships would find it hard to move through the sticky liquid.

Third Bowl: The Waters Turn to Blood

⁴ Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

Drinking waters will similarly become contaminated, and the drought will similarly affect God's people. Again, God will provide for his people but those in the 144,000 will see the trial.

In addition, we have to consider the impact on agriculture; you can't water crops with blood easily so food itself will become scarce like drinking water.

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."

The Angel who touches the drinking water of the people is compelled to speak and turns to God, happy that he has just contaminated the world's fresh water supply. He stipulates that the evil of men have shed the saints' bloods and instead given them blood to drink – as it is their due. This emulates the events of Moses in Egypt, and another voice from the Altar in the Temple replied “[true and righteous are Your judgments.](#)” This reply was to contrast against the Angel of waters saying that this is what they deserved.

The importance here is not that these traitors do not deserve to drink blood – they certainly do. Rather that the Judgement of God is poured out without mixture, without mercy or prejudice. Those who claim to have received the Mark of the Beast for convenience or ease are just as guilty as those who received it as part of their wages to wage war against the saints. Those who support evil and say nothing are just as guilty as those who commit the evil acts. This is a basic tenement of even human law.

Fourth Bowl: Men Are Scorched

[⁸ 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.](#)

Once again, the next Angel pours his bowl in such a way that it cannot help but affect both those who have God's mark and the Beast's mark. The heat of the sun is magnified and burns men with fire – global warming multiplied many times.

By this point, the people living on Earth have had enough, and curse God because of the plagues. There is no longer a case for ignorance; they know who is causing this and they blaspheme the God that they should adore.

This is where, if it is the case that the 144,000 are still on Earth, they will feel the heat, recognise judgement being laid down on those with the Mark of the Beast, and accept the warmth of the day as a blessing from God.

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain

[¹⁰ 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.](#)

The 5th – and last literal – bowl is poured out and darkness falls over the face of the earth. So, in addition to sores that are extremely painful, an unbearable heat, no drinking water and the seas literally becoming blood meaning there is no way to cool oneself with a swim, now you can't see your hand before your face. The pain is so severe that the people chew on their tongues for the pain but they are again galvanised against God.

Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dried Up

¹² 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.

"(T)he great river Euphrates" watered Babylon and this is the attack on its power. Now we have a movement to cut that spiritual force out from itself. The water that separated the East and West kingdoms of Daniel's time now dried up and the preparations for the final battle are prepared.

The river is the support for the city of Babylon and this is its death knell. The Dragon has already moved its support over to the Land beast and then to the Image it makes. The earthly and spiritual support for the Roman Church finally falls away and while the city will remain, it no longer has any real support. The Devil has more interesting things on his mind.

John explains that 3 'demons' or 3 angles of the Devil now spring from the dragons mouth to go and start to inspire the armies of the earth to battle God. They are able to perform miraculous things, signs and events that convince people that they have the power to fight and win – and they gather the armies of all nations together at a place called "Armageddon".

But John brings back in Christ's own words, to remind them of his second coming. He will arrive "as a thief", quiet and subtle, not willing to expose himself until the time is

right. Stealthy. This is a further reinforcement that the 144,000 are alive for why else would Jesus have to come to fight a battle he's already won?

When we examine the name of the place that these groups will be brought to - "[Armageddon](#)" – this can start to make sense. The city of Megiddo was an important Canaanite city-state and during the Iron Age, a royal city in the Kingdom of Israel. It was destroyed several times during its history, and its location was finally abandoned in 586 BC. Since then, the town of al-Lajjun grew up near the site, but Tel Megiddo has not been settled since and is today an extremely important archaeological site, teaching much about Bronze and Iron-Age Israel.

The Hebrew word "har mägiddô" (הַר מְגִידוֹ) transliterates to a mountain range or hills near Megiddo. The problem is that there are no mountains or hills near Megiddo, and a translation like "the plain of Megiddo" or "the plain next to the city of Megiddo" does not match the Hebrew or Greek.

So the battle is prepared in a place near a dead city and John is implying that it will happen in hills that don't exist. John almost certainly knew the city had been abandoned almost 700 years before and that it was a barren plane, so he is making a point here.

The battle of Armageddon is not literal. It cannot be. At the very least it's far too small a place for a decent sized battle.

It will be a battle for the hearts and minds of the world; a spiritual battle to either acknowledge or reject God as their saviour and creator. This is the last attack the Devil gets to make with any level of impunity. This is the last challenge that God will tolerate.

Satan's 3 spirits will inspire all the nations to challenge God's people, to challenge those they see as rebels who refuse to receive God's mark or name. They will blame them for every problem and move to destroy them in the great battle of Armageddon. In this way it will have a physical element but it be a battle to decide who is right and who is wrong. Satan's claim against God will be laid down and this is the last chance for him to prove that God is an unjust God.

Seventh Bowl: The Earth Utterly Shaken

¹⁷ 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.

That's it. "*It is done!*" The gloves are off. The games are finished. John echoes Christ's words on the Cross. The duties are completed and the measures of Salvation are now certified. These events look tremendously similar to those at the end of Chapter 11 where there "¹⁹ *...were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.*" John connects these events together to make it clear that the Trumpet has now finished, the announcement of Judgment is done and the books are locked. Probation is closed.

Now the city is fallen. The evil that is the Roman Church splits into 3 parts and the world does not know what to do with itself. How this fits we cannot be sure, but I would say that some kind of major schism arises in the Roman Church that tears it in 3, destroying any chance of it recovering and the world abandons it finally and forever.

But God remembers. God is ready to pour his wrath on her in such a powerful manner that the Mountains and Islands themselves flee before it. In the context of a massive earthquake, such tectonic activity is not outside of the realm of possibility, but seems very unusual. That tectonic activity could, through volcanos and the like, be the cause of such heavy hail – one talent being about 26 Kilos. Volcanic activity easily can have such extreme results as heavy blocks of stone being thrown up and come down with enough force they would crush a man.

John ends this chapter again with his central point. "*Men blasphemed God because of the plague*". In all the opportunity given to them to change and side with him, they are, like Pharaoh in Egypt, galvanised or hardened to hate God because of what the Devil has taught them to believe. They do not see God as the loving creator that he is – that we see him and try and teach them to see – they see him as the evil dictator that demands their submission or blood. They are so far misled by Satan and his forces that they cannot change and refuse to consider any possibility that they are wrong. This is what we are seeing now in our political and pseudo-political discourse; nobody is willing to admit that there might be an alternative viewpoint.