

# Revelation Chapter 15-16

## An Interpretation

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Revision of 11/2017 Printed 1/10/2026

### Introduction:

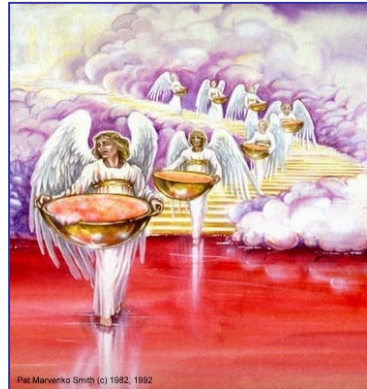
1. In the last chapter, we saw how the beast was conquered and how the Lord was victorious in rewarding the faithful saints and punishing those who worshiped the beast.
2. Now, we turn to some details about how that was to play out. These details of God's victory and the Devil's defeat are covered in chapters 15-19.
3. We are covering two chapters this session because chapter 15 is very short.

### Seven Angels with Final Seven Plagues

(1) Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Verse 1: Another scene appeared to John. There were **seven plagues** that had led to the finish of **the wrath of God** that we had learned about previously. While John is viewing a new scene, it is describing one of the ways that

God won in spite his enemies power and wickedness.



### The Victors With Their Harps

(2) And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

Verse 2: John saw the saints standing on what looked like a **sea of glass**, but the **glass was mixed with fire**. The sea was extremely calm. Some of them were **holding harps**. Maybe all of them.

**(3) And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!"**

Verse 3: **The song of Moses** is described in Exodus 15:1. It is the first recorded **song** in Scripture. It celebrated the escape of the sons of Israel from Egypt through the Red Sea. These saints in Revelation also passed through a great miracle to get where they were now.

They fashioned a song to celebrate their survival, offering praise to the **Lord God** and singing of Him as the **King of the nations**. (And it wasn't Caesar they were extolling.)

Discussion: What is the value of singing songs about the past?

**(4) "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; FOR ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED."**

Verse 4: The saints ask "**Who will not fear** and **glorify your name?**" God **alone** is **holy**. In the end, the whole earth will be obliged to acknowledge God's **righteous** judgments.

### The Temple Was Opened

**(5) After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, (6) and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.**

Verse 5: This was not a picture of what happened in the tabernacle/temple on earth. Instead, this is the reality and what Israel did on earth was pictured after this reality in heaven.

**Johnson:**

The tabernacle of the testimony was the Holy of Holies. Into it none but the High Priest entered, and he only to make intercession for the forgiveness of sins. It is the type of the Holy of Holies above, the mercy seat in the heavens where our High Priest intercedes for us, and where the smoke of the incense of prayer arises to God.

Verse 6: **Seven angels** emerged from the presence of God and each carried trouble for the devil. The seven angels were **clothed** in garments of purity and dignity.

### The Seven Plagues are Completed

(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) And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Verse 8: There is no chance that prayer can change the outcome of God's plan; no room for repentance. The time of God's grace is over. At times, God will respond to the prayers of his saints, but not this time. The place is filled with smoke and no one can get in. The plan of God for punishment for wickedness cannot be altered

Discussion: Is prayer always considered by God?

## Chapter 16:

### God' First Bowl of Wrath

(1) Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

Verse 1: As in the past, John did not see the speaker, but **heard** the **voice** and it was **loud**. The speaker spoke of the **seven bowls of the wrath of God**. God was shaping the punishments that were to be poured out one at a time. These were His judgments on Satan and Satan's forces.

The speaker may have been God Himself.

(2) So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

Verse 2: The **first bowl** was **poured** out upon **the earth**. Very grievous sores came on those who **worshiped the beast** and his **image**. There will be an extreme time of sickness if we take this literally. The disease will be incurable, resistant to medicines. It appears that God's people are exempt just as Israel was exempt from most of the plagues of Egypt.

### God's Second Bowl of Wrath

(3) The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

Verse 3: We took the **earth** in verse 2 literally. If we take sea as literal, we must look for something that took place on water. The blood was not the warm flowing blood of life but the dark blood of death. Something would cause the death of sea life. The **sea** is a major source of food for mankind.

## God's Third Bowl of Wrath

**(4) Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.**

Verse 4: Attention is now drawn to the inland water systems. They, too, became blood. The river systems and springs that provide abundant fresh water become systems of death.

**(5) And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; (6) for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."**

Verses 5-6: Angels in verse three and verse four both presided over water, but the second angel in verse three seems better qualified for the job. **The angel** speaks praise to the **Holy One** because of His **judgment**. Corrupt forces poured out the blood God's people and now they will get a taste for themselves.

**(7) And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."**

Verse 7: A voice came from the altar confirming that God was absolutely right in **judging** these who had rejected His truth and persecuted His people. Now for more of God's wrath:

## God's Fourth Bowl of Wrath

**(8) The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.**

### Hinds:

In a dream Joseph saw the sun, moon, and stars bowing to him. This was explained to mean his father, mother, and

brethren. (Gen. 37:9, 10.) As a symbol the sun represents a leader or prominent man. The simple and natural meaning of the fourth plague is that a great leader with irresistible power would bring great distress and suffering to men that might be likened to the burning rays of a scorching sun. The facts naturally indicate that he would be a military leader, and the sufferings would come through war.

**(9) Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.**

#### **Hinds:**

. . . it would be impossible to learn how much suffering and bloodshed occurred in these wars. The natural effect that these calamities would have upon wicked men would be to cause them to blaspheme God for allowing such misfortunes to fall upon them. They would charge that he alone had power to bring them. If they admitted that God had power to bring the plagues, and they were suffering from them, that should have produced repentance, but it did not. This shows that those with the mark of the beast were too fully steeped in false teaching to yield; so they repented not.

### **God's Fifth Bowl of Wrath**

**(10) Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, (11) and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.**

Verse 10-11: This **bowl** of misery went right to the very **throne of the beast**, and **darkened** it. Something happened to Rome, **the throne of the beast**. It wasn't destroyed, but enormous power was lost. This could match the rise of the Protestant Movement.

**Discussion:** What countries were affected by the rise of Protestantism?

## God's Sixth Bowl of Wrath

**(12) The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.**

Verse 12: The fall of the Babylonia in the days of the Prophet Daniel was by the **drying up of the waters** of the literal **Euphrates** River. One writer says,

"Cyrus turned the river, which ran through the city, unto new channels, dried up the old bed, then marched in this bed under the walls where they crossed the river on arches, and took the city."

Now, what does this mean here? If Babylon stands for the kingdom of the dragon, Satan, then Babylon becomes vulnerable to being invaded for kings from the east. **Drying up** points to a process over time.

**Hinds** considers two possibilities, then says:

In either case any weakening of enemies of the truth will lend it strength and lead to final victory. This is a general fact regardless of any special views of the details here mentioned. That we are now in the general trend of events leading to the "war of the great day of God" is evident from this paragraph, but how long will it be till that day arrives must be left to the infinite wisdom and power of God.

**(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 spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.**

Verses 13-14: **Unclean spirits** appear from three sources: the **dragon**, the **beast** and the **false prophet**. Their power extends to the **kings of the world**. They intend to battle **God Almighty**.

## Hinds:

If the "false prophet" may refer to Mahomet and the system of Mahometanism, then the "beast" in this text would apply to the apostate church. Whatever may be the correct application of the three destructive forces, we are safe in saying that idolatry, corrupt political powers, and false religions in the name of Christ will be the combined forces Satan will use in his last effort to destroy Christianity. Coming from the mouths of the three indicates that these evil forces will be exercised through the teaching of false doctrines.

**(15) ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")**

Verse 15: The Lord has said earlier that he would come as a thief in Revelation 3:13:

**Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.**

The  **blessing**  is to that believer that keeps his  **clothes**  on, preparing for the Lord's return. He is constantly prepared for the public. It was a  **shame**  to not be fully dressed.

**Discussion**: How must believers behave in order to be ready for the Lord's return?

**(16) And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.**

Verse 16: The battlefield of Har-Magedon (Armagedon) was a decisive battle ground in Israel's history. Deborah and Barak defeated Sisera and his enormous and well-equipped army there (Judges 5:19). It represented success for God's people. Being such a noted place, it represents Satan's final defeat. While the war itself is not spelled out, Satan's defeat is clearly implied.

## God's Seventh Bowl of Wrath

(17) Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."

### Hinds:

This voice which John heard coming out of the temple and from the throne shows that it was God announcing the time of the end. It was so certain to occur that it was announced as if already done.

(18) And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

### Hinds:

Such a commotion of natural elements would fittingly indicate the end of the material world, and symbolize the destruction of that part of the religious world under the control of Satan. The end of the world could hardly be described in more forceful words. The scene will be one to strike terror to all wicked hearts.

(19) The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Verse 19: **The great city** must refer to **Babylon** of verse 12. God was remembering to punish her terrible misdeeds.

Most commentators who follow the historicists view relate **Babylon** to the Roman Catholic Church. While **Babylon** includes the Catholic Church, it is an even greater force. It is the combined forces of world rule that turns down the truths of God and will not allow Him to rule.

(20) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (21) And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

**Hinds:**

The wailing and the blaspheming of the wicked at the judgment will do no good; it will be too late to reform and serve God. This chapter gives this summary statement of a succession of judgments upon wickedness in general, and the apostate papal church in particular. The false religions have been weakened by the earlier plagues, but the final overthrow, briefly depicted in the paragraph, will occur at the coming of the Lord. That which has been but barely hinted at here will be more fully described in the following chapters.

**Discussion:** Are there indications that wicked governing systems are beginning to crumble?