

Session 12 The Forerunner Message in Revelation 15-16

I. FOURTH CHRONOLOGICAL SECTION: 7 BOWLS OF WRATH (REV. 15:1-16:21)

- A. The fourth chronological section of the book of Revelation highlights the 7 bowl judgments that Jesus will release on the Antichrist's empire (Rev. 15-16). The bowl judgments occur immediately after the seventh trumpet sounds to initiate Jesus' second-coming procession and the rapture.

¹⁵The seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord...He shall reign forever..." (Rev. 11:15)

- B. John described 10 things as "great"—a great sign (15:1), great works (15:3), great heat (16:9), the great river Euphrates (16:12), the great day of God (16:14), the great earthquake (16:18), the great city (Jerusalem, 16:19), great Babylon (16:19), and great hail (16:21) as a great plague (16:21).

- C. **Outline of Revelation 15** (introducing the fourth chronological section)

15:1-4 End-time believers will be victorious over the Antichrist

15:5-8 Seven angels receive the bowls of wrath

- D. **Outline of Revelation 16** (the fourth chronological section)

16:1-2 First Bowl: loathsome sores to Antichrist worshippers

16:3 Second Bowl: destroying the sea with blood

16:4-7 Third Bowl: poisoning all the earth's fresh water

16:8-9 Fourth Bowl: scorching heat and fire from the sun

16:10-11 Fifth Bowl: darkness on the Antichrist's global empire

16:12-16 Sixth Bowl: demons lure the nations to Armageddon

16:17-21 Seventh Bowl: great earthquake and large hail stones.

II. WHY WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE 7 BOWLS OF WRATH

- A. The 10 plagues of Egypt in the days of Moses (Ex. 7-12) are prototypes of the trumpet and bowl judgments (Rev. 8-9 and 16). The saints will sing the song of Moses (15:3). The "***Moses drama***" will be walked out globally. The prophets spoke of the miracles done in Egypt occurring in the end times (Mic. 7:15; cf. Isa. 10:22-25; 11:12-16; 30:30; Jer. 16:14-15; 23:7-8; Ezek. 38:22; Joel 2:30).

- B. God directed Moses to tell Pharaoh of God's judgments *before* they were released (Ex. 7:20; 9:8-10; 10:3-6). The Lord's messengers will announce the trumpet and bowl judgments *before* they occur. It will be challenging to prophesy the bowl judgments knowing it will anger national leaders.

³So Moses and Aaron came in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, '...If you refuse to let My people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your territory...' (Ex. 10:3)

- C. The end-time Church will be strengthened by understanding prophetic revelation which will include some information about when and where various judgments will be poured out.

- D. The seventh trumpet initiates Jesus' second-coming procession which will occur in 3 stages and include many events occurring over a 30-day period which is seen by comparing the 1,260 days (3½ year) in 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5 and Daniel 7:25; 9:27; 12:7 with the 1,290 days of Daniel 12:11.

Stage #1: Jesus' procession *across the sky*: to rapture the Church (Mt. 24:30-31; Rev. 1:7)

Stage #2: Jesus' procession *on the land*: traveling through Jordan to Israel (Isa. 63; Hab. 3)

Stage #3: Jesus' procession *into Jerusalem*: from the Mount of Olives followed by His coronation

- E. I see the bowls being released by Jesus as He marches through Edom (modern-day Jordan) on His way to make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (19:15-21; cf. Isa. 63:1-6), to fight the final battle of the Armageddon Campaign, and to rescue the unsaved remnant of Israel.

- F. Habakkuk prophesied that the Messiah would march through the land in great power releasing God's judgments on the land that are similar to bowl judgments and the 10 plagues of Egypt.

³God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran [near modern day Jordan]. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise...⁴He had rays flashing from His hand, and there His power was hidden. ⁵Before Him went pestilence, and fever followed at His feet...⁶The mountains were scattered [earthquakes]...¹¹The sun and moon stood still...¹²You [Jesus] marched through the land in indignation; You trampled the nations in anger. (Hab. 3:3-12)

1. ***Pestilence and fever:*** Jesus will release pestilence and fever as He marches through the land to Jerusalem (Hab. 3:5). These will likely be connected to the bowl judgments such as the loathsome sores (16:2), rivers being turned to blood (16:5), excruciating pain (16:10), etc.
2. ***Mountains were scattered:*** This is connected to the earthquake in the seventh bowl (16:18).

- G. After the rapture, the saints will always be with Jesus (1 Thes. 4:17). However, they may not all be "on the ground" marching with Him to Jerusalem. They may be in close proximity to Him in what I refer to as a "grand amphitheater" in the sky, being able to see Him destroy the Antichrist, etc.

¹⁴...God will bring with Him those who sleep [died physically] in Jesus...¹⁶The dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive...shall be caught up [raptured] together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thes. 4:14-17)

¹⁴And the armies in heaven...followed Him on white horses. (Rev. 19:14)

III. END-TIME BELIEVERS WILL BE VICTORIOUS OVER THE ANTICHRIST (REV. 15:1-4)

- A. John described a heavenly scene in two visions: a vision of the victorious end-time saints praising God for His judgments (15:2-4) and a vision of 7 angels receiving the bowl judgments (15:5-8).

²I saw...a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast [Antichrist] ...standing on the sea of glass...³They sing the song of Moses...and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works...just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints ...⁴All nations shall...worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested." (Rev. 15:2-4)

- B. ***Sea of glass:*** The sea of glass is before God's throne (4:6; cf. Ex. 24:10; Ezek. 1:22). The people standing on this sea are probably the martyrs from the Tribulation (6:9-11; 7:14).

- C. **Song of Moses and the Lamb:** The song of Moses is a song of victory (Ex. 15; Deut. 32), and the song of the Lamb would magnify Jesus and His work of redemption and victory.
- D. **Just and true are Your ways:** God’s judgments are just and true to His character and promises.
- E. **All nations shall worship:** The fruit of God’s judgments is that all the nations will worship Jesus (Ps. 66:1-7; 72:1-4; 86:8-12; 102:13-22; Isa. 2:3; 49:22-23; 60:14; 66:23-24; Zeph. 2:11).

IV. SEVEN ANGELS RECEIVED THE BOWLS OF WRATH (REV. 15:5-8)

- A. The temple opened in heaven, and 7 angels received 7 bowls of wrath (15:5-8).
*⁵After these things...the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.
⁶And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues...⁷Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God...
(Rev. 15:5-7)*
- B. **Temple of the tabernacle:** John combines the words *tabernacle* and *temple*, declaring that they were opened in heaven. The tabernacle in Moses’ day was replaced by the temple in Solomon’s day. The “testimony” refers to the Ten Commandments, which testify against sin.
- C. **Was opened:** Chronologically, the last event in the storyline is the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the heavenly temple being opened (11:15-19). The temple being opened indicates that it is time for the 7 angels to exit from God’s court to pour out the bowls that they had received.
- D. **Seven bowls full of wrath:** God’s wrath will be released in full strength in order to confront and remove the sin in the nations that will come to fullness in the end times (14:18; cf. Dan. 8:23). John and Isaiah prophesied concerning the cup of God’s wrath (14:8, 10; cf. Isa. 51:17, 22).

V. FIRST BOWL: LOATHSOME SORES TO ANTICHRIST WORSHIPPERS (REV. 16:1-2)

- A. The 7 angels will be commissioned in the heavenly temple to pour out the bowls of wrath (16:1).
¹I 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.”²The first went and poured out his bowl...and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast [Antichrist]. (Rev. 16:1-2)
- B. **First bowl (sores):** Sores will cause great suffering for those who worship the Antichrist (16:2). These sores will be *foul*, meaning revolting or horrid and having a terrible odor as when meat is rotten or putrid. They will be *loathsome*; that is, so painful that men will loathe them. Only the Antichrist worshippers will receive these sores.
 1. Moses warned that the Lord would judge the rebellious with severe boils (Deut. 28:35).
The LORD will strike you...with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head. (Deut. 28:35)
 2. The sixth plague of Egypt was sores or boils (Ex. 9:8-11).
 3. Satan used boils to strike God’s servant Job. God will use boils on Satan’s kingdom (Job 2:7).

VI. SECOND BOWL: DESTROYING THE SEA WITH BLOOD (REV. 16:3)

- A. **Second bowl (food supply):** The sea will become blood, killing all the sea life (16:3). This will be a *complete* destruction of marine life, not limited to 1/3 destruction as in the second trumpet (8:8-9).
³Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; every living creature in the sea died. (Rev. 16:3)
- B. The sea will become like the congealed, thickened blood of a dead man, with an unimaginable stench. Some believe this refers to the Mediterranean Sea only, similarly to the sea in Daniel 7:2.
- C. The sea, like the Euphrates, is literal in Revelation (5:13; 7:1, 2, 3; 8:8, 9; 10:2, 5, 6, 8; 12:12; 14:7; 16:3; 18:17, 19, 21; 20:8, 13; 21:1) unless it indicates that it is not (13:1; 17:1, 7-9, 15). Those who see the sea as symbolic of the nations must explain how all the creatures “in the nations” die (16:3).

VII. THIRD BOWL: POISONING ALL THE EARTH’S FRESH WATER (REV. 16:4-7)

- A. **Third bowl (water supply):** The earth’s fresh water will be poisoned with blood (16:4-7). God’s judgments will affect the drinking water to repay those who were complicit in killing the saints. The third trumpet (8:10) is similar to the third bowl in that it defiles the drinking water.
⁴The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵I heard the angel of the waters saying: “You are righteous, O Lord...because You have judged these things. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.” ⁷I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.” (Rev. 16:4-7)
- B. **Became blood:** One cannot interpret the blood of the saints as literal but then the blood of the rivers as symbolic. Blood is literal in every instance throughout Revelation (1:5; 5:9; 6:10, 12; 7:14; 8:7, 8; 11:6; 12:11; 14:20; 16:3, 4, 6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:2, 13).
- C. **For they shed the blood of the saints:** The reason for this judgment is given clearly—that God will answer blood with blood (16:6). God makes them drink the very thing they thirsted for—blood.
- D. **True and righteous are Your judgments:** Angels declare that God’s judgments are true and righteous (15:3-4; 16:5-7; 19:2). They are not too severe. God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone’s free will.
- E. **The angel of the waters:** There is an angel with power over waters (ocean, rivers, streams). Various angels have different assignments in God’s world. Revelation speaks of angels over winds (7:1), the angel over the bottomless pit (9:11), the angel over fire (14:18), and the angel over water (16:5).
- F. The first plague on Egypt struck the Nile, killing the fish and polluting the water (Ex. 7:19-21).
- G. I believe that there will be occasions when water will flow miraculously for God’s people, similarly to how water flowed from a rock in the days of Moses (Ex. 17:6). The Scripture prophesies the miracle of water flowing in the desert and on mountains tops in the end times (Isa. 30:23-25; 35:1-2; 41:16-20; 43:19-20; 51:3; Jer. 31:9; Joel 2:23).

VIII. FOURTH BOWL: SCORCHING HEAT AND FIRE FROM THE SUN (REV. 16:8-9)

- A. **Fourth bowl (torment):** The sun will produce scorching heat and fire (16:8-9). This intensification of the heat of the sun will be a supernatural act of God, not merely a natural one.

⁸*The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. ⁹And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed [God]... (Rev. 16:8-9)*

- B. **They blasphemed God:** As God's judgments increase, men's hatred of God will come into the open, and they will refuse to repent (9:21; 16:9, 11, 21). They will accuse God's character rather than taking responsibility for their sin, though they acknowledge God's role and power in this judgment.

IX. FIFTH BOWL: DARKNESS ON THE ANTICHRIST'S GLOBAL EMPIRE (REV. 16:10-11)

- A. **Fifth bowl (darkness):** Darkness will fall on the throne of Antichrist's empire (16:10-11). The Antichrist's throne is his seat of government—including the geographic place where his government convenes. His throne had seemed invincible (13:4), but here it is shown to be helpless.

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

- B. Isaiah prophesied that deep darkness would cover the earth (Isa. 60:2). The fourth trumpet will affect 1/3 of the light (8:12). The ninth plague of Egypt caused darkness for 3 days (Ex. 10:21-23).

²*For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. (Isa. 60:2)*

- C. **The pain:** This darkness will have demonic element to it—causing pain (16:10). The pain associated with this darkness will be in addition to the pain caused by the sores or boils (16:2).

X. SIXTH BOWL: DEMONS LURE THE NATIONS TO ARMAGEDDON (REV. 16:12-16)

- A. **Sixth bowl (global guilt):** Demons will lure the nations to gather to fight Jesus, resulting in the nations being guilty of blaspheming God and attacking Jesus and Jerusalem (16:12-16).

¹²*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], out of the mouth of the beast [Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴They are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth...to gather them to the Battle of that great day of God Almighty... ¹⁶They gathered them together to...Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-16)*

- B. The nations will gather together to fight Jesus as He marches toward Jerusalem, not merely to fight Israel's small and poorly armed army. They will not feel threatened by the Israeli army.

¹⁹*I saw the beast [Antichrist], the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him [Jesus]...and against His army. (Rev. 19:19)*

¹⁴*These [the 10 kings] will make war with the Lamb...for He is...King of kings. (Rev. 17:14)*

- C. In my opinion, the kings of the nations will see the sign of the Son of Man in the sky (Mt. 24:30), but will wrongly interpret it as a demonic sign of a false messiah coming to disrupt their kingdoms. I imagine that these kings will have urgency to gather to war against Jesus after viewing His sign in the sky, seeing it as an open challenge to the Antichrist's armies. The Antichrist will convince them that defeating Jesus is necessary and doable. They will join their efforts to fight a common enemy.
- ³⁰The sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven...all the tribes of the earth will mourn... they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds...with power and great glory. (Mt. 24:30)*
- D. In my opinion, they will view Jesus as we view the Antichrist: as having supernatural power but as one who will be defeated. The Antichrist will convince them Jesus is a counterfeit angel of light.
- ¹⁴For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. (2 Cor. 11:14)*
- E. **Kings of the east:** The kings of the East will be a block of Asian nations who had, until now, resisted the Antichrist's enticements to join his evil coalition in the years before Jesus' coming. Antichrist will urge them to hurry since Jesus will be marching up through the land to Jerusalem.
- F. **Euphrates River:** The drying up the Euphrates River may be interpreted by the kings of the east as a miracle done by the hands of the Antichrist that emboldens them to join him in attacking Jerusalem. Earthquakes may have destroyed many bridges and military routes. The Euphrates will have been turned to blood. There is no way that the kings of the east could get to Jerusalem without crossing it.
- G. **Armageddon:** The nations will gather in northern Israel as a military staging area. The final battle of the Armageddon Campaign is at Jerusalem (Joel 3:1-2, 9-17; Zech. 12:1-8; 14:1-3, 12; Zeph. 3:8).

XI. SEVENTH BOWL: GREAT EARTHQUAKE AND LARGE HAIL STONES (REV. 16:17-21)

- A. **Seventh bowl (annihilation):** This bowl will involve releasing the most severe earthquake in history, followed by 100-pound hailstones (16:17-21).
- ¹⁷Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice... from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸...there was a great earthquake...as had not occurred since men were on the earth. ¹⁹Now the great city [Jerusalem] 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...His wrath. ²⁰Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent [100 pounds]. Men blasphemed God... (Rev. 16:17-21)*
- B. **The great city was divided:** There are two great cities in Revelation— Jerusalem and Babylon. Both Jerusalem (11:8) and Babylon (14:8; 17:18) are called the "great city." The reference to Babylon also in the text makes it clear that it is distinct from the other great city mentioned—Jerusalem.
- C. **Great hail:** Some translate the weight of a talent as 100 pounds (NIV, ESV, NAS). Moses' Law required idol worshippers to be stoned to death (Deut. 17:2-5; Lev. 24:16). Jesus stoned them.
- D. The events that will follow the seventh bowl are described in 19:11-21— Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a white horse with His armies to destroy Antichrist and his armies (19:11-21).