

God's Revelation of the Future

Community Baptist Church
Lesson 5

Adult Bible Fellowship
Spring, 2024

The Bowl Judgments

These bowl judgments flow out of the sounding of the seventh trumpet (8:15).

The account of these judgments is recorded in 15:1-16:21.

There is a great deal of parallelism between the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments. However, just as the trumpet judgments were more severe than the seal judgments, so too these bowl judgments appear to be more severe than the preceding trumpet judgments.

Timewise, it appears we are nearing the end of the 70th Week.

Background – 15:1-16:1

- 15:1 – Here we first see the seven angels with the seven plagues.
 - These plagues represent God's wrath being poured out on mankind. "With them the wrath of God is finished."
- 15:2-4 – John describes singing by those who have died up to this point in the Tribulation.
 - They sing "the song of Moses," perhaps from Exodus 15:1-18. It is a song of deliverance and God's triumph.
 - They sing "the song of the Lamb" which extols God because his ways are "just and true."
- 15:5-8 – We see the opening of the temple from whence come "the seven angels with the seven plagues." (Cf. the opening in 11:19 after the 7th trumpet.)
 - To these angels a "living creature" (cf. 4:6-8) gives "golden bowls full of the wrath of God."
- 16:1 – A voice from the temple commands the angels to "go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." (Cf. 16:17)
 - These bowls of wrath are directed toward various elements of nature. They are devastating to the earth and to those who live on it.
 - The first four and the seventh appear to have global impact (versus the one-thirds of the first four trumpet judgments).

1st Bowl – 16:2

- This bowl is poured out "on the [land]."
 - The result is that "harmful and painful sores came upon the people."
 - Some suggest these are ulcerous in nature. Cf. the Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:8-12), the man Job (Job 2:7-8), or Lazarus the beggar (Luke 17:20-21).
 - But it only affected those "who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image." (Cf. 13:1-10, 12, 16-17)

2nd Bowl – 16:3

- This bowl is poured out "into the sea."
 - The result is that "it became like the blood of a corpse."
 - What this means is not clear. Perhaps it is like a "red tide" or perhaps the seas will "congeal," like the blood of a corpse.
 - Furthermore, "every living thing died that was in the sea."
 - Literally, "every living soul died," here referring to the creatures in the sea. (Cf. Genesis 1:20)
 - These results are similar to the 2nd trumpet (8:8) and the plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-24).

3rd Bowl – 16:4-7

- This bowl is poured out "into the rivers and the springs of water."
 - The result is that "they became blood."
 - The 2nd bowl's affect was on salty water. This bowl affects fresh water supplies, even to the source of these supplies, the springs.
 - Recall what the Egyptians did to survive. Cf. Exodus 7:24.
 - The "angel in charge of the waters" speaks. What God has done in this judgment is perfectly just. "It is what they deserve!"
 - A group around "the altar" add its endorsement. "True and just are your judgments!"

4th Bowl – 16:8-9

- This bowl is poured out “on the sun.”
 - The result is that the sun is “allowed to scorch people with fire.”
 - Earlier judgments involved our perception of the sun. This judgment directly involves the sun.
 - This may involve the sun burning hotter or emitting greater radiation.
 - Thus, “They were scorched by the fierce heat.”
 - But those scorched “did not repent and give him glory.”
 - We saw the same attitude under the 6th trumpet.

5th Bowl – 16:10-11

- This bowl is poured out “on the throne of the beast.”
 - The reference to “the throne of the beast” may be to the place where his throne resides, his capital city.
 - The result is the beast’s kingdom is blanketed in darkness, perhaps like that in a cave. Cf. the 9th plague in Egypt where it was “a darkness to be felt.” (Exodus 10:21-23).
 - Thus, those enveloped in the darkness “gnawed their tongues in anguish” and cursed God “for their pain and sores.”
 - And again, as seen earlier, those afflicted “did not repent of their deeds.”

6th Bowl – 16:12-16

- This bowl is poured out “on the great river Euphrates.”
 - As a result, “its water was dried up.”
 - The purpose for this is “to prepare the way for the kings from the east.” Something will take place later with reference to these kings.
 - At the same time John sees “unclean spirits” coming from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.
 - The dragon is Satan (cf. 12:9).
 - The beast is the 1st beast of chapter 13 (13:1-10).
 - The false prophet is the 2nd beast of chapter 13 (13:11-18).
 - The “unclean spirits” are “demonic spirits.”
 - These spirits “go abroad to the kings of the whole world” and perform “signs.”

- Their objective is “to assemble them,” i.e., their armies, “for battle on the great day of God Almighty.”
- This place “is called Armageddon.”
- Parenthetically, John records a statement from the Lamb, the soon to be returning Christ.
 - His coming will be unexpected, like that of a thief.
 - Those who are ready for his coming are blessed and need not be concerned when he returns. (Cf. the parable of the ten virgins, Matthew 25:1-13.)

7th Bowl – 16:17-21

- This bowl is poured out “into the air.”
 - In heaven, from the temple John hears it said, “It is done!”
 - This marks a major point in God’s program, just as occurred at the time when Jesus said, “It is finished.”
 - On earth, there is thunder and lightning and “a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth.” It is worldwide.
 - “The great city,” Jerusalem, was split. (Cf. 11:8)
 - “The cities of the nations fell”
 - There is a special remembrance of “Babylon the great,” perhaps as a final judgment.
 - “Every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.” (Cf. Isaiah 40:4)
 - “Great hailstones” fell on people, who yet again cursed God.

Note: All references are to the book of Revelation unless otherwise specified.