

## **Lesson Eighteen**

### **Seven Bowls of God's Wrath (15:1-16:7)**

The seven bowl judgments in large measure are an intensification of the plagues during the trumpet judgments.

#### **Angelic Preparation (15:1-8)**

15:1. John sees the final plagues that God pours out on evil mankind. These judgments occur during the Great Tribulation just prior to Christ's Second coming.

15:2. The "sea of glass" is best understood in the same manner as found in 4:6. At the time of judgment the multitude of overcomers (cp. 14:1-5) stands in the presence of God. Even though falling in martyrdom to the beast, they stand victorious through eternity. They have harps in hand as they prepare to worship and sing of a song of triumph.

15:3-4. The song of deliverance and triumph is both a song of Moses and of the Lamb. Both Moses and Jesus are deliverers. The song magnifies the God who brings righteousness and triumph over the evil world. When the beast and his alliance of nations seek sovereignty on earth, the saints declare God worthiness as sovereign.

15:5. Both references to the earthly place of God's inhabitation are identified in the phrase, "the temple of

the tabernacle.” John clearly states this vision as occurring in heaven.

15:6. The seven angels are uncharacteristically described in some detail. Most likely John is attempting to describe the majestic nature of the vision.

15:7. The four living creatures serve God Almighty before His throne (cp.4:6). The bowl is simply a shallow dish or saucer. Perhaps the prayers of the saints find their answer in the outpouring of God’s judgments on the beast and his followers (5:8).

15:8. It was common in the OT for God to be witnessed amidst smoke (Ex.40:36; I Kings 8:10; Isa.6:4; Eze.44:4). God cannot be seen by man in all His glory. The smoke partly conceals His glory and creates the atmosphere of divine presence. The heavenly temple is not to be entered into until the final judgments and the End.

### **Bowl One: Boils on Unrepentant Humanity (16:1-2)**

There is a stark intensification in the bowl judgments over the trumpet judgments. The first four trumpet judgments fall on nature where all seven bowl judgments fall on man. The final judgments of God on earth are necessary to end evil on earth and to provide mankind every opportunity to repent.

The plague of boils or sores is similar to that found in Egypt (Ex.9:10-11). Ulcerous sores fall on those who receive the mark of the beast.

- Trumpet 1: 1/3 of the earth's greenery is damaged by hail, rain and fire
- Bowl 1: unrepentant humans are afflicted with ulcerous sores

### **Bowl Two: The Bloody Sea (16:3)**

This plague is similar to that of the first plague in Egypt, where the Nile became like blood (Ex.7:17-21). This is much more intense as all sea waters become like blood. Here, everything in the sea dies.

- Trumpet 2: 1/3 of the sea becomes blood and 1/3 of sea creatures perish
- Bowl 2: all the sea becomes blood and all sea life perishes

### **Bowl Three: The Bloody Fresh Water (16:4-7)**

In trumpet judgments three bitterness polluted 1/3 of all sources of fresh water. In the third bowl judgment, all fresh water becomes poisonous or polluted. No sources of fresh water is worthy of consumption. It is not uncommon to associate angels with certain natural elements (cp. 7:1; 14:18). Here an angel is associated with water. The angel of water announces the justice of God in sending judgment on earth's wicked. The

earth's wicked have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and it is just for them to "drink" their blood. Verse seven describes "the altar" speaking. This apocalyptic imagery defends the plagues as justice coming from the holy altar of God.

- Trumpet 3: 1/3 of the fresh water becomes bitter
- Bowl 3: all fresh water becomes bitter