

Session 10 Seven Bowls of Wrath (Rev. 15-16)

*For *additional study material pertaining to this session, see mikebickle.org*

I. INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN BOWLS OF WRATH (REV. 15:1-16:21)

- A. The fourth chronological section of the book of Revelation describes the seven bowl judgment events that Jesus will release upon the Antichrist's empire. I see the events in this section as occurring right after the sounding of the seventh trumpet, when an announcement in heaven declares that the Lord is taking over and replacing all the governments on earth (Rev. 11:15).

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

- B. Paul prophesied that the rapture would occur at the last trumpet (1 Cor. 15:51-52). The seven trumpets in the book of Revelation are the *only* numbered trumpets in the Bible (Rev. 8-9). I believe that Paul's "last trumpet" is the seventh trumpet mentioned in Revelation 10:7 and 11:15, since the seventh trumpet is the "last" trumpet mentioned in Revelation and in the Bible.

⁵¹***Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—***⁵²***in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed [the rapture].*** (1 Cor. 15:51-52)

1. If the rapture does not occur *at* the seventh trumpet, then it must occur sometime *after* it, in order to occur at the "last" trumpet.
2. The last trumpet, by definition, cannot be *before* the seventh trumpet (or any other trumpet), as it is the *very last* trumpet to sound in this age.

- C. Jesus called His people "to see" the abomination of desolation and then pointed to the prophecies of Daniel to understand it (Mt. 24:15). It is the only political event that Jesus identified to let His people know that the Tribulation has started (Mt. 24:21). The abomination occurs when the Antichrist puts an image of himself in the temple (called the image of the beast) and then forces people to worship it (2 Thes. 2:4; Rev. 13:14-18). (I assume that the activities constituting the abomination of desolation will be referred to by the Antichrist in positive and flattering language).

¹⁵***“When you see the ‘abomination of desolation,’ spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place” (whoever reads, let him understand),*** ¹⁶***“then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains...”*** ²¹***then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been.”*** (Mt. 24:15-21)

1. Daniel prophesied that the abomination of desolation would last for *1,290 days* (43 months). The Antichrist's activity will continue 43 months from the beginning of the "abomination" to the time when the Antichrist is killed.

¹¹***From the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days*** [1,290 days]. (Dan. 12:11)

2. *For more on the abomination of desolation see page 5ff in the *additional materials* online.

- D. Daniel emphasized a *1,290-day* (43-month) period that begins on the day the abomination is set up; however, John only addressed a *1,260-day* (42-month) period that begins at the same time. Notice that John's 1,260 days (42 months) are 30 days *short* of Daniel's time period (Dan. 12:11). John highlighted three activities that would continue for exactly 1,260 days (42 months).
1. **Provision:** God will supernaturally *provide* for Israel for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 12:6, 14).
 2. **Prophecy:** The two witnesses will *prophesy* for exactly 1,260 days (Rev. 11:3).
 3. **Persecution:** The Antichrist will *persecute* the saints (Dan. 7:25; Rev. 13:5-7) and oppress Jerusalem (Rev. 11:2; cf. Dan. 12:7) for exactly 1,260 days.
- E. The Antichrist will persecute the saints for 42 months, but he will function for 43 months—his activities will *continue for an additional 30 days* after Israel's *provision* in the wilderness, the *prophesying* of the two witnesses, and the *persecution* of the saints and Jerusalem all end.
- F. In other words, after the 1,260 days (42 months, or 3½ years) of the abomination of desolation, I believe that the seventh trumpet will sound, the Church will be raptured (Rev. 11:15), and the Antichrist's *unchallenged* domination of Jerusalem will come to an end. His focus will then change in a dramatic way during the final 30 days (the 43rd month); He will stop persecuting Israel and the Church to rally the nations to make war against Jesus (Rev. 17:14; 19:11, 19).
- G. In my opinion, Jesus will pour out the bowls of wrath on the Antichrist in the 43rd month (Rev. 16).
- H. There will be three types of people on earth when Jesus appears in the sky:
1. The **redeemed** will be raptured during Jesus' worldwide procession across the sky.
 2. The **reprobate**, who took the mark of the Beast, will be killed (some executed).
 3. The **resisters** are the unsaved survivors of the Great Tribulation, who will refuse to worship the Antichrist, even though they are not saved. Scripture refers to them as *those left* or *those who remain* (Isa. 4:3; 10:20; 11:11; 49:6; 65:8; 66:19; Jer. 31:2; Ezek. 20:38-42; 36:36; Dan. 12:1; Amos 9:9-10; Joel 2:32; Zech. 12:14; 13:8; 14:16). They will have an opportunity to be saved after Jesus returns to earth, and will populate the millennial earth.

II. JESUS' ROYAL PROCESSION: THREE STAGES

- A. At the seventh trumpet, I believe that Jesus will rapture the Church and make His royal procession across the earth. In my opinion, His coming with all the saints involves *a royal procession* that has three stages, which will include many events occurring over a 30-day period.
- 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*, marching through Edom (Jordan) to Israel (Isa. 63)
- Stage 3:** Jesus' procession *into Jerusalem* (from the Mount of Olives?), followed by His coronation
- B. **Stage 1:** Every person will see Jesus' royal procession *across the sky* (Rev. 1:7) just before He raptures the Church (Mt. 24:30-31). With trumpets, His kingship will be announced over each nation. His coming to gather His elect will not be a secret coming, but one that is seen by everyone.
- ⁷***Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. (Rev. 1:7)***

²⁹*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened...* ³⁰*Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.* ³¹*And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather [rapture] together His elect [saints] from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. (Mt. 24:30-31)*

1. **The sign:** In my opinion, the sign of the Son of Man may be related to His royal procession around the whole earth. Jesus will come with all the angels and saints from heaven (Mt. 25:31; 1 Thes. 3:13) as He travels on clouds in the Father's glory (Mt. 16:27), with great power (Mk. 13:26), and flaming fire (2 Thes. 1:8). He will descend with a great shout, the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God as He raises the dead (1 Thes. 4:14-16).
 2. **Mourn:** Every unbeliever will see Him clearly enough to have a deep emotional response, described as mourning. Jesus will travel close enough to the earth and slowly enough across the face of the earth for *every unbeliever* to see Him clearly enough to understand what is happening, so that they mourn over having not received Him before this time.
- C. **Stage 2:** Jesus' royal procession will travel through Edom (modern-day Jordan) *on the land* on His way to Jerusalem with great victory over the armies of the Antichrist (Isa. 63:1-6; cf. Ps. 45:3-5; 110:5-6; Hab. 3:12; Rev. 19:19). In my opinion, Jesus will march to Jerusalem as the "greater Moses" as He releases the bowl judgments on the Antichrist—an "end-time Pharaoh." Jesus will liberate Jerusalem and kill the Antichrist's armies, ending the abomination of desolation.
- ¹*Who is this who comes from Edom [modern Jordan], with dyed garments from Bozrah [ancient capital of Edom], this One [Jesus] who is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength?—"I [Jesus] who speak in righteousness, mighty to save."* ²*Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress?* ³*"I have trodden the winepress... and trampled them in My fury; their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.* ⁴*For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come."* (Isa. 63:1-4)
- D. **Stage 3:** Jesus' triumphal entry *into Jerusalem* from the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4) will be received by the leaders of Jerusalem, followed by His coronation as King (Ps. 24:7-10; Mt. 23:39).
- ³⁹*"You shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* (Mt. 23:39)
- ⁷*Lift up your heads, O you gates! And be lifted up, you everlasting doors! The King of glory shall come in.* ⁸*Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty...mighty in battle. (Ps. 24:7-8)*
- E. Jesus will show Himself as the "greater Moses" when He releases judgment on the Antichrist, an "end-time Pharaoh," and frees the captives of Israel from prison camps (Isa. 11:11-12, 16; 27:13; Hos. 11:11; Zech. 10:10-11). Jesus will show Himself as the "greater Joshua" when He leads the liberated ones to the Promised Land, and as the "greater David" when He wins back Jerusalem and establishes His throne and temple there! He will be seen as the "greater Elijah" when He confronts the Antichrist, cleanses Israel and the earth of idolatry, and turns Israel and the nations to God.

III. THE HEAVENLY CONTEXT OF THE RELEASE OF THE BOWLS OF WRATH (REV. 15)

- A. John saw end-time believers, victorious over the Antichrist, standing on the sea of glass in heaven singing about the greatness of the Lord (Rev. 15:1-4). This may describe the martyred saints in heaven singing at the time when they join the Lord as He raptures the Church during the days of the sounding of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 10:7; 11:15).

¹I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous: angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. ²I saw something like 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, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints...⁴For all nations shall...worship before You, for Your judgments have been manifested.” (Rev. 15:1-4)

- B. The temple opened in heaven, and seven angels received seven bowls of wrath (Rev. 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, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. ⁷Then 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. ⁸The 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. (Rev. 15:5-8)

IV. THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD’S WRATH (REV. 16): THE FIRST FIVE BOWLS

- A. The seven angels will be commissioned in the heavenly temple to pour out the bowls of wrath.

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.” (Rev. 16:1)

- B. **First bowl (sores):** Sores will cause great suffering for those who worship the Antichrist (Rev. 16:2).

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. 16:2)

- C. **Second bowl (food supply):** The sea will become blood, killing all the sea life (Rev. 16:3). This will be a *complete* destruction of marine life, not just 1/3 destruction as in the second trumpet. The sea will become like the congealed blood of a dead man, with an unimaginable stench. Some believe this refers to the Mediterranean Sea only, since that is the context of Daniel 7.

³Then 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. (Rev. 16:3)

- D. **Third bowl (water supply):** The earth’s fresh water will be poisoned with blood (Rev. 16:4-7). The third trumpet (Rev. 8:10) is similar to the third bowl in that it defiles the drinking water. The first plague on Egypt struck the Nile with a similar impact to this (Ex. 7:19-21).

⁴Then the 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 [heavenly

intercession] saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.” (Rev. 16:4-7)

- E. **Fourth bowl (torment):** The sun will produce scorching heat (Rev. 16:8-9). I see this intensification of the heat of the sun as a supernatural act of God, not merely a natural one. The fourth trumpet will affect the sun in the opposite way, making it less intense.

⁸The 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 the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory. (Rev. 16:8-9)

- F. **Fifth bowl (darkness):** Darkness will fall on the Antichrist’s global empire (Rev. 16:10-11). This darkness will probably have a supernatural, demonic element to it. The ninth plague of Egypt caused darkness for three days (Ex. 10:21-23).

¹⁰The 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. ¹¹They blasphemed God...because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. (Rev. 16:10-11)

- G. The Antichrist’s worshipers will not repent, but will blaspheme God (Rev. 16:9, 11, 21), showing their deep hatred of Him. As God’s judgments increase, the hatred and blasphemy of the wicked will come fully into the open.

V. SIXTH BOWL: DEMONS LURE THE NATIONS TO ARMAGEDDON

- A. **Sixth bowl (global guilt):** Demons will lure the nations to gather to fight Jesus (Rev. 16:12-16).

¹²The 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. It is very surprising to me that the nations will come to fight Jesus as He marches toward Jerusalem, but they are surely not gathering from around the world to fight Israel’s small, poorly armed army.

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

¹⁹I 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)

- 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 seeing His sign in the sky, and that the Antichrist will convince them that defeating Jesus is necessary and doable.

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 the Antichrist's final 30 days, he will use his greatest miracles to win the kings who had been resisting him. Why would the Antichrist mobilize the nations to come to Israel for military reasons? Why would the kings of the east deploy hundreds of thousands of soldiers (costing untold billions of dollars) to fight a weak Israeli army in Jerusalem?
- E. The Pharisees accused Jesus of doing miracles by Satan's power (Mt. 12:24). Jesus taught that to attribute the power of the Spirit to Satan is to blaspheme against the Spirit. The only people who do this are those who are hardened to such a degree that they will not repent. Blasphemy against the Spirit is full and final rejection of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Those who do this are reprobate, having a heart that is permanently hardened, with no inclination to repent.

³²*“Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.” (Mt. 12:32)*

- F. I see the sixth bowl as global blasphemy against the Spirit as the nations receive “*the lie*” (2 Thes. 2:10). This “lie” will most likely include acknowledging Jesus' power as being demonic.

⁹*The coming of the lawless one [Antichrist]...with all power, signs, and lying wonders,¹⁰ and with all unrighteous deception...because they did not receive the love of the truth...¹¹For this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie. (2 Thes. 2:9-11)*

VI. SEVENTH BOWL: EARTHQUAKES AND HAILSTONES

- A. *Seventh bowl (annihilation)*: This bowl will involve releasing the most severe earthquake in history, followed by 100-lb. hailstones (Rev. 16:17-21)

¹⁷*...poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice... from the throne, saying, “It is done!”*

¹⁸*...there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and 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 the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.²⁰Then 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 [100 pounds]. Men blasphemed God... (Rev. 16:17-21)*

- B. This last earthquake will cause islands to flee (sink in the ocean) and the mountains to fall (Rev. 16:20). The seventh bowl may be further described in Isaiah 24.
- C. Hailstones weighing 100 pounds (a talent) fall on the people seeking safety from earthquakes. The law of Moses required the stoning to death of idol worshipers (Deut. 17:2-5; cf. Lev. 24:16). Since the Antichrist's worship movement is idolatrous, Jesus Himself will stone them to death from heaven. A 100-pound hailstone hits the ground with the equivalent force of two tons. Hail was released in the first trumpet (Rev. 8:7) and the seventh plague on Egypt with Moses (Ex. 9:23-24).
- ²²*I will bring him [Antichrist] to judgment...I will rain down on...his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. (Ezek. 38:22)*
- D. The next event after the seven bowls is Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Rev. 19:11-21).

¹¹*Behold, a white horse. He [Jesus] who sat on him...judges and makes war...¹³He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood...¹⁹I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him...²⁰Then the beast was captured, and...cast alive into the lake of fire...²¹The rest were killed with the sword... (Rev. 19:11-21)*

VII. QUESTIONS FOR SMALL-GROUP DISCUSSION (E.G., FCF FRIENDSHIP GROUPS)

1. Identify one point that inspired or challenged you. Why? What will you do differently to apply it?
2. Identify one point that you want to impart to a younger believer. Why? How will you approach this?
3. Identify one point that you would like to gain more understanding of. How will you seek to gain it?