

**Second Baptist Church of Doylestown**  
**Bible Study Notes**  
**8-1-18**

**Revelation 15**

Revelation 13 ends with the dragon and the beast making war against the Church and its members. Revelation 14 is an interlude to strengthen Christians and help them endure the persecutions they would face; it ends with the terrifying description of the final judgment of the wicked. John now resumes his chorological account of the events he saw. Revelation chapter 15 contains a vision of seven angels having seven plagues, to punish the wicked. In this vision his focus narrows. He does not see how these plagues impact the earth (as he did in chapter eight) nor how they impact mankind (as was the case in chapter nine); rather he sees the impact of the plagues on the wicked. God is a god of mercy and he is patient and long-suffering in allowing his children to repent; however, starting with chapter fifteen we see that mercy cannot rob justice as the judgments of God are pronounced upon mankind, so that all are delivered or condemned according to God's justice.

**Seven Angels With Seven Plagues - Verses 1-5**

**<sup>1</sup>I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues—last, because with them God's wrath is completed. <sup>2</sup> And I saw what looked like a sea of glass glowing with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and its image and over the number of its name. They held harps given them by God <sup>3</sup> and sang the song of God's servant Moses and of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the nations. <sup>4</sup> Who will not fear you, Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."<sup>5</sup> After this I looked, and I saw in heaven the temple—that is, the tabernacle of the covenant law—and it was opened. <sup>6</sup> Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. <sup>7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. <sup>8</sup> And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.**

**15:1** The seven last plagues are also called the seven bowl judgments. They actually begin in chapter 16. Unlike the previous plagues, these are universal, and they will culminate in the abolition of all evil ("with them God's wrath is completed") and the end of the world.

**15:3-4** The song of Moses celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 15). The song of the Lamb celebrates the ultimate deliverance of God's people from the power of Satan.

**15:5-8** This imagery brings us back to the time of the Exodus in the wilderness when the ark of the covenant (the symbol of God's presence among his people) resided in the tabernacle. The angels' garments are reminiscent of the high priest's clothing, showing that they are free from corruption, immorality, and injustice. The smoke that fills the temple is the manifestation of God's glory and power. There is no escape from this judgment.

**15:8** John saw the temple filled with the glory and power of God. The key to God's eternal glory and power is his holiness (4:8). God's glory is not only his strength but also his perfect moral character. God will never do anything that is not morally perfect. This reassures us that we can trust him, yet it places a demand on us. Our desire to be holy (dedicated to God and morally pure) is our only suitable response. Our eternal reign with Christ won't begin until all evil is destroyed by his judgment. We must wait for his timetable to be revealed.

## Revelation 16

Revelation chapter 16 provides greater detail about the plagues (representing the judgment of God) that will be visited on the inhabitants of the earth. Chapter fifteen begins with a vision of the righteous in heaven and then proceeds to introduce the plagues. John reversed the order of these events to reassure the saints that the truly righteous (as opposed to those who feign righteousness) need not fear the coming plagues.

### The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath - Verses 1-14

<sup>1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth." <sup>2</sup> The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. <sup>3</sup> The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died. <sup>4</sup> The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup> Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; <sup>6</sup> for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." <sup>7</sup> And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments." <sup>8</sup> The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch

people with fire. <sup>9</sup> They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. <sup>10</sup> The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony <sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. <sup>12</sup> The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. <sup>13</sup> Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

**16:1** The bowl judgments are God's final and complete judgments on the earth. The end has come. There are many similarities between the bowl judgments and the trumpet judgments (8:6-11:19), but there are three main differences: (1) These judgments are complete whereas the trumpet judgments are partial; (2) the trumpet judgments still give unbelievers the opportunity to repent, but the bowl judgments do not; and (3) people are indirectly affected by several of the trumpet judgments but directly attacked by all the bowl judgments.

**16:6** The angel acclaimed God for his justice in dealing with those who had killed the martyrs. God's wrath may be hard for us to accept. In a moral universe, however, God must ultimately oppose and destroy evil. Those who join the revolt against God suffer with their leaders. We must avoid the misconception that God must be fair and kind in his dealings with humanity. This view of justice is merely a projection of a human idea. People who believe this notion appeal to tolerance and forgiveness and assume that God must play by our rules. In reality, God sets his own standard of justice. He uses his power according to his own moral perfection. Thus, whatever he chooses or decrees is fair, even if we don't understand it or like it. Those who rebel and reject God are not rejecting a "lifestyle option"; they are rejecting truth and justice itself.

**16:7** The significance of the altar itself responding is that everyone and everything will be praising God, acknowledging his righteousness and perfect justice.

**16:9** We know that the people realize that these judgments come from God because they curse him for sending them. But they still refuse to recognize God's authority and repent of their sins. Christians should not be surprised at the hostility and hardness of heart of unbelievers. Even when the power of God is fully and completely revealed, many will still refuse to repent. Don't wait until "just the right time" before turning to God. Do it now while you still have the chance. If you continually ignore God's warnings, you will eventually be unable to hear him at all.

**16:12** The Euphrates River was a natural protective boundary against the empires to the east (Babylon, Assyria, Persia). If it dried up, nothing could hold back invading armies. The "kings from the East" symbolize unhindered judgment.

**16:13-14** These demonic spirits performing miraculous signs, who come out of the mouths of the unholy trinity, unite the rulers of the world for battle against God. The imagery of the demons coming out of the mouths of the three evil rulers signifies the verbal enticements and propaganda that will draw many people to their evil cause.

### **The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath - Verses 15-21**

<sup>15</sup> "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed." <sup>16</sup> Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. <sup>17</sup> The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup> Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. <sup>19</sup> The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup> Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. <sup>21</sup> From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

**16:15** Christ will return unexpectedly (1 Thessalonians 5:1-6), so we must be ready when he returns. We can prepare ourselves by standing firm in temptation and by being committed to God's moral standards. In what ways does your life show either your readiness or your lack of preparation for Christ's return?

**16:16** This battlefield called Armageddon is near the city of Megiddo (southeast of the modern port of Haifa), which guarded a large plain in northern Israel.

It is a strategic location near a prominent international highway leading north from Egypt through Israel, along the coast, and on to Babylon. Megiddo overlooked the entire plain southward toward Galilee and westward toward the mountains of Gilboa.

**16:16** Sinful people will unite to fight against God in a final display of rebellion. Many are already united against Christ and his people—those who stand for truth, peace, justice, and morality. Your personal battle with evil foreshadows the great battle pictured here, where God will meet evil and destroy it once and for all. Be strong and courageous as you battle against sin and evil: You are fighting on the winning side.