

Week 10

The final Assault

Bowl Judgments

Rev. 15-16

Introduction

The final judgment of the world begins. It commences with the outpoured vials and culminates in the great battle on the central plain of Israel just south of Mount Carmel. Within these chapters are some of the most cryptic statements and obtuse identities. This week we will attempt to clarify some of these.

Prior to that Judgment, God completes his work of salvation in the victorious ones delivered from the beast.

They stand beside the sea – They have been **removed** from the world, its violence and judgment.

They are victorious – They did not yield to the world's system and its mold but were instead **martyred**.

They hold harps – At **peace** with God, they now are free to praise Him. This is where we get the common idea that angels play harps and that our obligation in heaven is to play the harp. We need to put into perspective that angels are **not** people nor do humans become angels. Angels are heavenly messengers of God. That these martyrs are seen here playing the harp does not reflect the only thing these saints will do in heaven.

They sing the “Song of Moses” – Psalm 91 is often known as the song of Moses and is a song of God's deliverance and redemption. In this, John points to the **finality** of God's redemption in taking ALL of the saints out of the earth before its final judgment which is comparable to the expression of God's wrath on Egypt, only exponentially multiplied. They also sing this “new song” called the “Song of the Lamb” which points to the purpose of redemption – to praise God's holiness and glory in all of the world.

Then God Judges...

Revelation 15:5-8 (NIV)

⁵ After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. ⁶ 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. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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.

The significance of this judgment is...

The tabernacle is where God dwells with man. – The previous judgments were based on God's revelation through His **presence** in nature and his proclamation through **people**, but here we have judgment based upon the Revelation of God's ongoing **relationship** with those people. The tabernacle

is the statement of God's presence among his people as demonstrated in the call for the offering to build it

Exodus 25:8 (NIV)

⁸ *"Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them.*

God's plan for the tabernacle

Exodus 33:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ *If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people."* ¹⁴ *The LORD replied, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

In God's inhabiting the Tabernacle

Exodus 40:34-35 (NIV)

³⁴ *Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.* ³⁵ *Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.*

Again, in the dedication of the Temple in Solomon's day

2 Chronicles 5:13-14 (NIV)

¹³ *The trumpeters and singers joined in unison, as with one voice, to give praise and thanks to the LORD. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, they raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang: "He is good; his love endures forever." Then the temple of the LORD was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the temple of God.*

In every one of these instances God's relationship with men is seen in the cloud and the tabernacle. It is the demonstration and offer of that relationship that motivates this last set of judgments.

The Bowl Judgments

Judgment 1 – Sores – The sores are described as ugly and painful, the opposite of what the world cherishes for the world loves **beauty** and **ease**. The victims are universal for they come to all of those with the mark of the beast who have worshipped him despite God's call to worship only Him.

Judgment 2 – Death of the Oceans – Just as the Nile in the days of Pharaoh so God destroys the oceans by turning them to blood so that everything in them dies. Keep in mind that a third of the oceans have already been destroyed so this is a final blow. Blood is thick. Blocking light and removing oxygen from the marine life. Additionally, blood putrefies quickly and causes a stench that would be absolutely horrendous. The graphic image here is of the death of the earth.

Judgment 3 – Death of Fresh Water – The universal putrefaction of all water supplies signals the death of human life. Water is more necessary than food to sustain life. The disruption of the water supply means that normal **evaporation** ends and so will rain. The lack of moisture in the air and the shielding of clouds will lead to heat and unrelenting sun (see plague number 4).

Summarizing these plagues, the angel says:

Revelation 16:5-7 (NIV)

⁵ Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: “You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; ⁶ for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.” ⁷ And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

These people offered to all of mankind the opportunity to enjoy a relationship with God yet the peoples of the world – past, present, and future – have responded to that message with derision and death. Truly, God is just.

Judgment 4 – Unbearable sun – With the end of evaporative cooling the world is not only superheated but the affects of the sun are multiplied supernaturally. More significant is the **response** of the world to this judgment.

Revelation 16:9 (NIV)

⁹ 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. (italics added)

They recognize the source of the judgment, but refuse to surrender to glorify God. Compare that with Philippians 2:10 where we are told that every tongue will call Christ Lord.

Judgment 5 – Utter Darkness – God gives mankind what they most wanted; shade. So much shade that the darkness is palpable and fearsome. Now men love darkness when it covers their evil deeds and some foolishly assert that

they look forward to the darkness of Hell where they think they will continue to enjoy their friendships. This darkness is similar to man's future experience in the depths of Hell where the darkness will **prevent** their deeds, **isolate** them from others and drive them to the fearful depths of **themselves**. Cut off from all sensory knowledge other than the pain of their sores and incredible thirst, people gnaw their tongues for diversion and sensory experience while refusing to repent.

Some years ago the Soviets developed an unusually nasty form of punishment in which the tortured were floated in a tank of water and restricted from all sensory experience. The results were so permanently devastating that the KGB stopped using the tactic. How much worse will this judgment of God crush the spirits of the world.

Judgment 6 – Military Mobilization – The drying of the Euphrates River to speed a ground assault on Israel from eastern Kings signals the beginning of the end. That evil spirits, in the form of **frogs** reminiscent of another plague on Egypt, motivate other Kings to join in the melee signal the size of the battle to take place. The focus of this conflict appears to be the remnant of Israel from Mathew 24 and Daniel's prophecy.

The terrific nature of the imminent conflict is seen in the interjected verse of assurance to the church in Rev. 15:16

Revelation 16:15 (NIV)

¹⁵ *“Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.”*

Armageddon is a broad plain south of Mount Carmel in Israel. The plain has been a common place for armed conflict because of its location and tactical appeal. Assyria, for example, defeated the Egyptians at Megiddo to solidify their empire in 750BC.

Judgment 7 – The coming of the Lord – Marked by geological and astronomical signs including earthquakes that level cities and move entire islands and meteorological events like 100 pound hailstones, the proclamation, “It is Done” begins the destruction of evil and the return of Christ to judge. Significantly, as the return begins the world continues to shake its fist at God and curse Him for His judgment.