

God's Planned Future

(8) Bowl Judgements – Armageddon

John begins Revelation chapter 15 by saying in verse 1, *then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.*

But, before John explains the pouring out of these 7 final judgements in chapter 16, he enlightens about an activity in heaven during this time of God's wrath upon the earth.

Again, John's attention is taken by this large *sea of glass mingled with fire* in verse 2, which is the same sea spoken of in chapter 4:6. This crystal-like sea lays before God's throne where there is continual worship. However, this time, John can't help but notice a specific group of people *standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands* (Rev 15:2b). John tells us precisely who these people are, they are *those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name* (15:2a).

John spoke of these people in Revelation 6:9, *when he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of*

those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne. Again, John tells of these people in chapter 14:13, *blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.* “Blessed indeed,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them!”

These people put faith in Jesus Christ following the rapture of the church and have been executed under the authority of antichrist during the tribulation.

Upon arriving in heaven, *they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brothers should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been* (Rev 6:11).

These martyred Christians, both Jew and Gentile, rise from the earth to heaven during the 7 years of tribulation to join the worship of God while God's wrath is poured out upon the earth. Here, we see God's great mercy during the tribulation. God has sovereignly predetermined *the number of their fellow servants* who will be saved throughout the entire 7 year tribulation. And the salvation of sinners will continue right to the end, when Jesus returns in chapter 19, when that number will *be complete*. The reality though, is that most who put faith in Christ during the tribulation will be killed for their faith.

In Revelation 20:4 John provides more information of these martyred believers. John says, *...also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands...*

Antichrist will globally legalise the death penalty for all Christians during the tribulation. To save money and to conserve military resources, antichrist will authorise beheading as the preferred method of execution.

Ironically, the torment antichrist hopes to inflict on believers through beheading will only serve to release them from the torment of this world. Beheaded saints will immediately appear in heaven with great reward waiting for them. John tells of the wonderful scene in heaven, where these martyred saints *sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,*

“Great and amazing are your deeds,

O Lord God the Almighty!

Just and true are your ways,

O King of the nations!

Who will not fear, O Lord,

*and glorify your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come and worship you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed”*
(Rev 15:3-4).

These precious, redeemed people, rescued out of the very wrath of God, will sing these words with a purity of worship and unique insights of the glory of God with fresh and vibrant passion. Heaven will echo the rejoicing wonders of God's mercy triumphing over judgement (Jas 2:13).

While jubilant worship is resounding in heaven *out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. And 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* (Rev 15:6-7). Judgement must continue until it is complete.

What a fearful sight, as *one of the four living creatures* hands out to each of these 7 angels a bowl containing the final and full manifestation of God's wrath to be poured out upon the world. It's not surprising that John observed that *the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God*

and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished (Rev 15:8). God is unapproachable for this final rapid-fire sequence. Divine determination will see that His wrath is completed. There will be no short cuts, no half measures, and no negotiations. The end is near, all heaven knows it, yet the rebellious world continues in their defiant warring against God and His people.

Revelation 16:1, *then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.*

John again picks up the Revelation timeline from the 7th trumpet of chapter 11:15. When trumpet 7 sounds, the 7 bowls of God's wrath open. With the ongoing effects of the previous seal and trumpet judgements, it's difficult to imagine the horrors seizing the remaining world population. As this is nearing the end of the 7 years of tribulation, these bowls open quickly, dumping God's final wrath upon the rebellious world with accumulative effects.

Bowl 1: Rev 16:2 - angel number 1 pours out his bowl, and painful malignant sores of an ulcer type break out on every person who has the mark of the beast (666). Not one

person on the planet who worships antichrist will escape these terrible festering and incurable sores. These sores will most likely infect the blood system causing debilitating physical and mental health problems.

Bowl 2: Rev 16:3 - angel number 2 pours out his bowl, and the entire sea turns to blood with every living thing in it dying. Every remaining life form that exists in the oceans around the world dies. It's hard to imagine the incalculable number of decomposing creatures throughout the world's oceans. The waters will thicken into a coagulation of rotting flesh as bacteria breeds diseases while the air will become nauseating to breath.

The remaining food supply that survived the second trumpet judgement upon the sea will abruptly die. Many of the shipping ways will be severely cluttered with rotting bodies, unable to be navigated. Desalination plants which many countries depend upon for converting salt water to fresh water for drinking, will be incapacitated and rendered useless. Oceanic hydro electricity generation plants will not be able to operate in the thick sludge which will no longer flow in normal tidal currents. Similarly, industry's sea water

cooling systems will no longer work, bringing factories to a standstill.

Bowl 3: Rev 16:4 - angel number 3 pours out his bowl, and all remaining freshwater from rivers and springs turn to blood. This removes all natural sources of fresh drinking water. No freshwater irrigation for crops will exit. Many humans and animals will die of thirst and malnutrition.

Bowl 4: Rev 16:8 - angel number 4 pours out his bowl upon the sun which produces such intense heat upon the earth that it scorches people and there is no relief. Instead of the sun sustaining life on earth, it becomes a killer. Solar flares, which will be totally outside of man's control, will burn people's skin severely from only minimal exposure to sunlight. Remember, these people will already be suffering from pussy sores and dehydration. What little remains of public medical services will be overwhelmed by burn casualties.

Because of increased atmospheric temperatures, the polar ice caps, global ice glaciers, and the worldwide ice and snow will melt. Sea levels will rise, not because of the polar ice melting, but because of the glacier and snow melting. The

result will be massive flooding with enormous volumes of water rushing over sun parched land. Landslides will be common. Low lying islands will be submersed. Damage to natural resources and property, not to mention the loss of life through drowning, will be catastrophic.

Bowl 5: Rev 16:10 - angel number 5 *poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness.*

The 5th angel releases a bowl of darkness that effects the physical, political, and religious aspects of antichrist's kingdom. With light now darkened, the result will be anarchy throughout his earthly kingdom. The angel does not only darken the atmospheric light through this bowl, but the throne of antichrist.

Therefore, the darkening effects of this judgement flows down from the beast throughout his entire kingdom. Due to diminished visibility and mental alertness, accidents of all kinds will greatly increase. Antichrist's people are covered in festering sores, they are hungry and thirsty, they are demoralised, yet they are driven by blind hatred of God. Errors from minor to major will be commonplace. As a result of the increased suffering from anarchy, *people*

gnawed (chewed) *their tongues in anguish* due to the accumulative physical, mental, and spiritual suffering experienced.

Yet, in spite of the extremity of suffering, people *cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores* because they understand this is the judgement of Almighty God. Not surprising then, burning with blind hatred towards God, *they did not repent of their deeds*.

Bowl 6: Rev 16:12 - angel number 6 pours out his bowl *on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east*.

With the river *Euphrates* being the longest river of the middle-east, it is significant because it divides nations. When it dries up, it not only leaves the land more parched from the lack of irrigation, but it leaves vast areas of rotting river creatures and vegetation. With *Euphrates* gone, this creates a dry pathway for a large eastern military force to transport themselves in a direct line towards Jerusalem.

At present, the largest and most powerful nation to the east is China and her neighbouring nations. However, the

world's political system and the division of nations will look very different by the time bowl number 6 arrives. Having the great river *Euphrates* gone will be necessary for the eastern armies to reach their ultimate destination of Armageddon for the final battle of mankind.

John continues to explain in Revelation 16:13-14, *I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon* (Satan) *and out of the mouth of the beast* (antichrist) *and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.* ¹⁴ *For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.*

Here, John sees the unholy satanic trinity unleash 3 powerful froglike demons who frantically rush out on a final worldwide mission of deception. Focusing their deceptive powers, they perform miraculous signs before the leaders of the nations, they stop at nothing to seduce the shattered nations into united military submission. From the ashes of the eastern nations a diseased and bedraggled army, reinforced by *the kings of the whole world* (Rev 16:14) including the northern allies, arrive *at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon* (Rev 16:16) *for battle on the*

great day of God the Almighty (Rev 16:14). Revelation 17:12-14 tells us that this confederation will consist of 10 nations united in war against the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and Israel (cf. Joel 3:2, 9-13). This will be the battle of *Gog and Magog* described in Ezekiel 38-39. *Gog* is the name of the ruler who is over the northern federation of nations called *Magog*. Presently, we know the northern nations as the Russian federation of nations. But, as with China, the names and identities of these may change during the tribulation.

Armageddon, Megiddo (Jezreel Valley or Har-Magedon), depending on the translation, is a place rich in battle history for Israel (Judges 5:19; 2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:22). Located in the Northern District of Israel, about 100Km north of Jerusalem, it is a large plain with an inland valley that was called the Valley of Megiddo in ancient times.

The broken down armies of the world, covered in sores and severely sunburnt, set themselves up ready for battle. Much of their technology and artillery has been destroyed already by the previous judgements of God. However, they are determined to fight, but they must wait because the one they have come to war against (The Lamb, Jesus Christ) has not arrived yet.

Meanwhile, other smaller, localised battles will happen, attacking Jerusalem as antichrist tries to destroy everything associated with Israel (Zec 14:1-3). His effort will fail for two reasons. **First**, God has been hiding and protecting a 1/3 remnant of Israel in the wilderness (Zec 13:8-9; Rev 12:6-16). **Second**, when Christ arrives on the scene, He will conquer all armies in one final, brief, and victorious battle where there will be no actual fighting.

So, while the world waits at Armageddon, the 7th angel pours out bowl judgement number 7 into the air.

Bowl 7:

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!"

Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city (Jerusalem) 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. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky

huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible (Rev 16:17-21).

This 7th and final bowl judgement is by far the worst and most concentrated judgement this world has experienced in its entire history. With the completion of bowl 7 judgement, *the wrath of God is finished* (Rev 15:1). Immediately following the outpouring of bowl 7, Jesus Christ returns to wrap it all up with sovereign justice and Kingship.

The catastrophic events of this bowl are breathtaking:

- ~ *Flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder*
- ~ *A severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth*
- ~ *The great city (Jerusalem) splits into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed*
- ~ *Every island fled away*
- ~ *The mountains could not be found*
- ~ *From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds (45Kg) each fell upon men*

This final storm exceeds all other forces of nature. The atmosphere unleashes every kind of disaster possible. The

planet convulses with earthquakes so severe that mountains collapse, and islands, which are underwater mountains, also collapse and disappear from the oceans. The planet's tectonic plates move as never before to completely change the surface of the earth.

The ground beneath the great city, which according to Revelation 11:8 is Jerusalem, where Jesus was crucified, opens to divide the city into three. All other cities around the world collapse into piles of rubble. Jerusalem is the ONLY city left standing on what will be a raised area of land. The surface of the earth is restructured from being mountainous to being a gentle and undulating landscape.

John MacArthur adds...

The Mount of Olives will split in two, and a new valley running east and west will be created (Zech. 14:4). A spring of water will flow year-round from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean and Dead Seas (Zech. 14:8), causing the desert to blossom like a rose (cf. Isa. 35:1). Jerusalem will be elevated, and the surrounding region flattened into a plain (Zech. 14:10). Thus, the purpose of the earthquake as it relates to Jerusalem is not to judge the city, but to enhance it (John MacArthur Revelation Commentary, Rev 16:19).

The remaining people marked with antichrist's 666 will suffer horrendous injuries from huge hailstones targeting them. As seen repeatedly throughout the tribulation, antichrist's beaten followers *curse God*.

Again, John pauses the chronological flow of Revelation narrative to add more information about what has been happening leading up to the final Armageddon event. This is Interlude # 4, which shall be covered in more detail in another lesson.

But for now, we move to Revelation 19, where John steps back into the chronological time-line of Revelation. The pouring out of the seventh bowl in Revelation 16:17-21, is followed immediately by the Lord Jesus Christ returning to earth (Rev 19:11) to end the tribulation. Christ deals with the shaken, angry armies waiting for Him at Armageddon (Rev 16:16). He destroys the enemies surrounding Jerusalem. And He brings all remaining, living people into the sheep and goat judgement.

The Day King Jesus Returns

The scene is set. Antichrist's largest army is waiting to do war at Armageddon. Jerusalem is surrounded by smaller

armies determined to destroy it once and for all. The remaining people marked with 666, including all those in the armies, are covered in sores, sunburnt, hungry, and thirsty, yet driven by fierce demonic hatred of Christ.

The 1/3 remnant of Israel remains safe in hiding. The 144,000 Jewish witnesses also remain safe and untouched by antichrist. There will also be some believers in Jesus who have not been martyred. Likewise, there will most likely be a tiny number of politically motivated nonbelievers who have been resisting antichrist and have not taken the mark of the beast for personal reasons only.

Antichrist (the beast), has gathered with a 10 nation army from around the world, waiting for battle with their enemy. The kings of 10 nations, unitedly transfer *their power and authority to the beast* (Rev 17:13-14, 17) for the purpose of antichrist commanding the world's united resources for making war against the Lamb of God. **But they shall fail.**

While antichrist is negotiating his political and military strategy for the battle of Armageddon, John sees *an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, "Come, gather for the*

great supper of God” (Rev 19:17. cf. Mt 24:28; Lk 17:37).

The angel invites the birds for what is about to require a massive clean-up job before the battle even takes place. Ezekiel spoke of the birds in preparation for this day also, *‘speak to the birds of every sort and to all beasts of the field: ‘Assemble and come, gather from all around to the sacrificial feast that I am preparing for you... you shall eat flesh and drink blood...* (Eze 39:17-20. Cf. Mat 24:27-28; Luk 17:37).

The world is momentarily on standstill, waiting for Christ.

Then it happens!

John reports, *I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war* (Rev 19:11). As John watches, a portal between heaven and earth opens, but this time it's not for John to see into heaven as before, but to let Jesus out of heaven. This is the glorious appearing Jesus' foretold in Matthew 24:27; *as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.*

As Jesus launches out of heaven, catapulting into earth's atmosphere riding His victor's white horse, *His eyes are like a flame of fire* (Rev 19:12). His glorious brilliance is awe inspiring, lighting up the darkened skies from bowl 5 (Rev 16:10). From east to west, around the entire world, Christ's glory will illuminate the skies. His entrance marks the initiation of fulfilling Daniel 7:13-14, *...behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man... to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him... and his kingdom ...shall not be destroyed.*

Similarly, Job foresaw Israel's redeemer physically return to earth; *"at the last he will stand upon the earth"* (Job 19:25). The writer of Hebrews explains how from the time that Jesus sat down at the right hand of His Father in Heaven, He has been *"waiting ...until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet"* (Hebrews 10:13). The prophet Malachi warned; *"who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears?"* (Malachi 3:2).

The *King of kings and Lord of lords* (Rev 19:16b) has arrived, coming to *tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty* (Rev 19:15). His appearing shall be as

described in Matthew 24:30, *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.*

Jesus enters as the rider of the white horse, called faithful and true, wearing on His head many diadems, which are badges or crowns of sovereign rulership (Rev 19:11-12). He arrives with the intent *to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron...* (Rev 19:15). The Rider has only one weapon, which *from his mouth comes a sharp sword.* Christ's powerful spoken word is the only weapon needed to conquer His enemies.

John sees that Christ *is clothed in a robe dipped in blood* (Rev 19:13). The question arises; why is the rider's robe blood red before the battle begins? Because, this is not His first battle, but it will be His last! Shortly, the blood stains shall increase as He treads *the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty* (Rev 19:15). The rider on His white horse is an unstoppable movement of God's justice.

John also sees in Revelation 19:14, that *the armies of heaven ...were following him on white horses.*

Who are the armies of heaven? John speaks of them in the plural, meaning there are more than one group of members in Christ's accompanying armies. Revelation 19:14, *and the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses.*

- **Christ's Bride**, Rev 19:7-8, *His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure.*
- **Angels**, Mt 25:31, *when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.*

It needs be noted, that none in the armies of heaven carry weapons, that's because Jesus Christ is the weapon. Christ alone is sufficient to conquer and establish His earthly Kingdom.

Entering the war zone, Christ uses the lethal Sword of His mouth, His spoken word, speaking destruction upon those gathered at Armageddon to make war against Him.

Revelation 19:15, *from his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations... He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty.*

The imagery of God's wrath comes from the ancient practice of stomping on grapes to extract the juice for making wine. As they stomped on the grapes the juice would splatter onto their cloths. In Isaiah 63:1-3 and Joel 3:12-14, the same imagery is used to warn of God working out His judgement upon God haters. It's used here by John to describe Christ stomping out God's wrath against a world of God haters. But this time, Christ delivers the wrath verbally upon their enemies, bringing instant mass death. The immediate slaughter of millions is a bloody event. His enemies do not simply collapse dead. When Christ administers His vengeance, it results in a vast area of human carnage that produces a blood bath upon the earth. Interlude # 1 of Revelation 14:20 visualises *the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia* (approx. 300Km). The physical devastation caused by Christ on His enemies at Armageddon and the armies surrounding Jerusalem produces such an enormous volume of blood that the earth will not be able to immediately soak it in.

The prophet Zechariah foresaw this day of the Lord. *The Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that Day his feet shall stand on*

the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall Be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God Will come, and all the holy ones with him (Zec 14:3-5). And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their Tongues will rot in their mouths (Zec 14:12).

This will not involve atomic warfare. Rather, this is the power of the Lord Jesus Christ speaking judgment on His enemies. Not one of His enemies will escape. The scene of divine justice is grotesque, it is swift, it is unrelenting, and it is inescapable.

With such horrendous devastation over such a large geographical area, the divinely appointed birds swoop in to begin the clean-up job. As we shall learn in the next lesson, the job is too big for the birds.

In the execution of Christ's justice upon the armies who came against Him, *the beast* (antichrist) *was captured, and with it the false prophet* (the 2nd beast) *who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulphur* (Rev 19:20). **Resistance is futile!**

Revelation 20:1-3 concludes this eventful day. *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended.*

Immediately following this comes the sheep and goat judgement that Christ explained in Matthew 25:31-46. *When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from*

the goats (Mat 25:31-32). We shall consider this in lesson 10 of this series.