

The Great Tribulation

A Survey of the Last 3½ Years
Revelation 15 & 16 – July 11, 2021

Our world is careening at hyper speed to a day of global economics and governance. Nor should we be surprised by this. Seventy years ago, James Warburg made this statement to our Senate Foreign Relations Committee on February 17th, 1950.

“We shall have world government whether or not you like it, by conquest or consent.”

On May 18, 1972 -- Roy M. Ash then director of the Office of Management and Budget speaking of the coming of world government declared that:

"Within two decades the institutional framework for a world economic community will be in place...[and] aspects of individual sovereignty will be given over to a supranational authority."

To decades later, in June 1991 at the Bilderberger Meeting, Baden, Germany Kissinger said,

“It would have been impossible for us to develop our plan for the world **if we had been subjected to the lights of publicity during those years.** But, the world is now more sophisticated and prepared to march towards a world government. The supranational sovereignty of an intellectual elite and world bankers is surely preferable to the national auto determination practiced in past centuries.”

So, the plan for globalism . . . that which we see unfolding before us . . . has been at work for decades.

In fact, shortly after Kissinger addressed the Bilderberger Meeting, Bill Clinton in his 1998 state of the union address said,

“Rarely have Americans lived through so much change, in so many ways, in so short a time. **Quietly, but with gathering force, the ground has shifted beneath our feet as we have moved into an Information Age, a global economy, a truly new world.**”

Today the last stage of this plan is underway. That is the part spoken of by Roy M. Ash in 1972, then director of the Office of Management and Budget when he said, *“Within two decades the institutional framework for a world economic community will be in place...”* the second part of his statement

[and] “Aspects of individual sovereignty will be given over to a supernational authority” is taking place in our day.

There are two types of global rule coming. One by God and the other by man.

1) The One by God:

One day the world will be ruled by one King, the King the Lord Jesus. He will rule on earth for a thousand-years. It will be a global rule done in righteousness and justice. (We will talk about this millennial kingdom when we get to Revelation chapter 20.)

2) The One by Man:

This is the global governance we are careening towards today. It will not be like the one established by God. It will be a world led by men in rebellion against God.

Do we not see the embers of this coming rebellion today? Next week when we get to Revelation 17. There we will see actual examples of this unholy rebellion springing up around the world.

In the context of Revelation 15 and 16 we find a man centered world government has reached its apex in the middle of the tribulation period. This global empire is in full drive.

2 Thessalonians 2:3 speaks of this coming period and calls it the **apostasia**, “apostasy” or “the rebellion” or as our bible translates the word as the “falling away” from God.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come **a falling away first (*the apostasy*)**, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.”

So, when we read Revelation 15 and 16, we find God’s final judgment is described against rebellious men. This judgment does not come without warning. Let me list these warnings lest we forget.

Warning #1: Scriptures foretells of this period. It will come. It is clearly portrayed in both the Old and New Testaments. It is not God's will that any perish.

Warning #2: God had John specifically pen the book of Revelation detailing how everything is going to unfold. **All who have a Bible have been warned.**

It is like what Israel often does before bombing a civilian target where the terrorists are hiding. They will send ahead a missile with low yield explosives. When the missile it hits the target, its low yield explosion is called "the knock". It is a warning to civilians to flee, for within 15 minutes that building will be leveled. Get out!

Warning #3: During the Tribulation God will send **144,000 witnesses** to go through-out the world warning and pointing people to turn to Christ.

Warning #4: God again sends **two-witnesses** who will go head-to-head against the Antichrist. The world is privy of these men and their pronouncements.

Warnings #5-7: God will finally then send **three angels** who will warn men not to take the mark of the beast. The whole world will see and hear these warnings.

THE TIME FRAME OF THIS FINAL JUDGMENT.

There are several views. Some see these seven bowl judgments unfold in rapid succession at the end of the very end of the tribulation period. Their reasoning for this has to do with the total destruction caused by these plagues.

The second view spreads them out over the last three and one-half years. This is the view I hold. I base this on the assumption that it will take time for the Euphrates River to dry up (at least one year of no rain with extreme heat) and then more time to amass the armies of the world to gather the Lord and finally it will take some time to mark all the followers of the Antichrist and more time for them to be afflicted with sores.)

As we enter Chapter 15, we find the staging for this final assault coming together.

"And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God" – Rev. 15:1.

And in Rev. 16:1 we find these same angels going forth.

“And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” – Rev. 16:1.

Chapter 15 calls this a sign. There are three signs mentioned in the book of Revelation.

1. The woman, Israel [12:1]
2. The great red dragon, Satan [12:3]
3. The third sign is the gathering of the seven angels [15:1].

These are signs for the world to take notice. When you see Israel fleeing into the wilderness – it is a sign. When you see the rise of the Antichrist – it is a sign. Be assured the next sign is certain. The end is determined and will be the outpouring in these final plagues.

Rev. 15:3-4

“And they sing the **song of Moses** the servant of God, **and the song of the Lamb**, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. ⁴ Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.”

These saints in heaven are singing a song of praise to God. God’s righteous character is the motive behind His wrath in judging sinners. It is God’s holy nature that motivates this song of the redeemed. They express their gratitude in the combination of two songs – the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

Chapter 16

The earth is ripe for judgment. It is overflowing with the wickedness and rebellion of mankind against a holy, righteous God. The time has come for God to execute His fierce wrath upon all those who are sinful and unrepentant. The seven angels, who were given the vials of God’s wrath in chapter 15, are now given their marching orders to release His last seven plagues upon the earth.

The First Bowl Judgment – Grievous Sores [16:1-2]

The seven angels holding the instruments of judgment [15:1] are now given permission to release their seven plagues upon the earth [16:1]. These angels immediately respond to the voice of God coming from the temple. The first angel of the seven angels poured out his vial containing God's wrath upon sinful mankind. Zechariah wrote about a similar plague [Zech. 14:12].

Noisome and grievous sores [v. 2]

This judgment is in the form of physical affliction of unusual severity bringing widespread suffering. **These two words *noisome* and *grievous* when used together depict festering, painful and malignant sores.**

The word for sore *helkos* means ulcer. These loathsome and incurable ulcers [Ex. 9:9-11; Luke 16:21] will bring, unrelieved physical torment upon those who worship the beast.

Beast Worshipers Are Affected [v. 2]

These malignant ulcers fall only on those people who have taken the mark of the beast and those who have worshiped the beast's image. This establishes the bowl judgments in the second 3½ year period of the tribulation. Even though God warned them not to take the mark [14:9-10], many chose to follow the False Prophet's edict [13:6-7].

Their disobedience to God will result in unbearable suffering and torment. Since this bowl judgment is poured out only upon the beast worshipers, the believers are exempt by this plague.

The Second Bowl Judgment – the Seas are Smitten [16:3]

This judgment is similar to the second trumpet judgment because it affects the seas; however, this bowl judgment is universal rather than the limited area affected in the trumpet judgment [8:8-9]. This judgment will be devastating for the seas are important to all life on earth.

A. Sea of Death

This worldwide plague will destroy the seas of the world. The oceans will no longer be fluid but become thick, dark and coagulated like the blood of men. The world's seas will become a stinking cesspool of death as billions

of sea life die. The seas will become toxic and affect the world in numerous ways.

B. Sea of Poison

With the death of billions of fishes, marine mammals and marine reptiles, the sea will become poisoned and contaminated. The dead creatures will float to the top of the ocean. The stench of death and the potential disease of this bowl judgment will send people into distress and confusion. It will affect the world's food chain, water supply, hydrologic cycle and commercial shipping. The oceans around the world will no longer be the life-giving waters they were created to be.

The Third Bowl Judgment – Rivers Smitten [16:4-7]

“And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.”

By the time the third angel pours out his vial, the supply of fresh water will be in short supply. One-third of the fresh water supply was polluted in the third trumpet judgment; however, this judgment will be a staggering blow as the remainder of the earth's fresh water supply will be turned to blood, which will breed disease and pestilence.

According to verse six, people may be able to drink this water through some type of purification process, but it, no doubt, will be bitter and repulsive. This judgment upon the rivers and fountains of the water will make human survival much more difficult since water is basic to human existence. There will be no water to drink nor water to clean the oozing ulcers caused by the first bowl judgment.

A. The Angel of the Water [16:5-6]

“And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. ⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.”

This particular angel has been assigned by God over the waters of the earth. This angel now speaks in defense of God for the justification of this bowl judgment upon mankind. No doubt there will be a great outcry against the eternal God when they are forced to drink this putrid water in order for them to survive. Ungodly men have murdered God's saints and

prophets throughout the centuries; however, the bloodletting during the tribulation period on God's people will be without precedent in history. Therefore, the angel declares that God is righteous in His judgment because He is holy.

B. A Voice from the Altar [v. 7]

⁷ And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments."

Not only does the angel of the water bear witness to God's righteous judgment of turning the waters into blood but now John hears another voice from the altar proclaim the same thing. This may be the voice of another angel coming out of the altar.

The Fourth Bowl Judgment [16:8-9]

The fourth angel pours his judgment upon the sun instead of the earth. Since the day of creation, the sun has served the earth and mankind well. This judgment will cause the sun to become a deadly killer.

A. The Sun – A Deadly Killer [v. 8]

Even though a third of the sun was darkened in the fourth trumpet [8:12], the remainder of the sun will increase in its intensity and will scorch unrepentant men and women with unbearably, fierce heat that will feel like fire [Mal. 4:1; Isa. 24:6].

With the cumulative effects of the bowl judgments putrid, ulcerous sores, lack of water for drinking and bathing and now excruciating, scorching heat men will *not* repent but will blaspheme God.

B. The Melting of the Polar Ice Caps

From the intense heat of the sun, the great ice sheets on Greenland and the continent of Antarctica will melt. It is estimated there is enough ice stored in these great storehouses to raise the sea levels about 200 feet. The resulting rise in the water levels will bring widespread flooding, causing the polluted waters of the dead seas to flood inland. Widespread damage and loss of life will ensue. Transportation on the seas will become virtually impossible [Job 38:22,23; Amos 9:5-6].

C. Blasphemies of God [v. 9]

God's judgments are designed to bring sinners to repentance [Rom. 2:2-5]. However, in these judgments, men only hardened their hearts and now begin to curse God. Even in the face of God's power and righteousness, men refuse to turn to Him. Instead of driving them to their knees, their rebellion and hostility only increase, even though they recognize these plagues come from the God whom they reject. This is the first of three occasions in this chapter when people blaspheme God [16:9, 11, 21].

The Fifth Bowl Judgment – Darkness [vs. 10-11]

A. Directed at the Beast

The fifth angel pours out his vial upon the throne of the beast and his subjects. Bible scholars are not in complete agreement as the extent of the meaning of the seat of the beast. Some believe it is the actual throne [headquarters], others believe it's the capital city of Babylon while others believe it's his entire kingdom.

This thick darkness will render the beast and his subjects powerless in the face of God for even Satan and his evil duo will not be able to bring light to Antichrist's kingdom. This plague again will not touch the believers. Therefore, it is evident that God is sovereign, and *all* are subject to His power.

B. Brings Torment & Blasphemy

This darkness will bring with it unbearable pain and torment. The wicked are stated to gnaw their tongues for pain which describes their severe agony; the torment of their festering sores, along with bitter water, burning heat and now heavy darkness will cause them to gnash their teeth and gnaw their tongues. Their torment is so great, yet their blasphemy of God continues.

The Sixth Bowl Judgment – Euphrates River Dries Up [16:12-18]

The sixth angel will pour his vial on the great river Euphrates, the most significant river in the Middle East. Along with the Tigris River, the Euphrates is the lifeblood of the Fertile Crescent in that area of the world. This supernatural event will remove the barrier that has kept the Asiatic powers from invading Israel to challenge the authority of the beast.

A. The Euphrates Dries Up [v. 12]

The source of the Euphrates is located in the snow fields and ice caps high on the slopes of Mt. Ararat. In the fourth bowl judgment, the blazing heat of the sun will melt the ice sheets, causing massive flooding and damage to land, crops, bridges, etc.

B. Armageddon Campaign

The drying up of the Euphrates will bring the kings of the east and their armies east to Armageddon in Israel. The evaporation of the water of this great river will enable them to cross the riverbed on dry land. What will draw the armies of the world to cross west over the Euphrates?

Antichrist's world empire begins to disintegrate, and the armies of the east will cross the Euphrates in their march to Israel [Dan. 11:40-45].

This unrest among the nations [16:13-14] are part of God's plan to bring the armies of the east, along with the beast's armies, into Armageddon where they will be destroyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ [19:11-21]. They are brought to judgment for their persecution of Israel [Joel 3:2] and because of their sinfulness and godlessness [Rev. 16:9].

C. Unclean Spirits Appear [vs. 13-14, 16]

John's attention is now directed from the Euphrates River back to the city of Babylon. Whatever the human reasons are for the invading army of the east, the primary reason for their advance to Armageddon is satanically inspired.

John sees three unclean spirits [demons] coming out of the mouths of the unholy trinity. Frogs are unclean slimy and cold-blooded just like these demons who go forth to seduce the kings of the world to fight against God and His army [1 Kings 22:19-22].

These demons will not only persuade men to fight against God but will do miraculous signs to convince men to battle with the Almighty God in the place called Armageddon [Joel 3:11-17]. Even though these evil spirits bring the kings of the earth to Israel, they are doing God's will for all things are subject to God's sovereignty.

C. God's Challenge to His Saints [v. 15]

Once again God encourages His saints who are still living in the closing days of the tribulation to be faithful to the end. With the final battle of Armageddon looming on the horizon, the Lord gives the third of seven beatitudes He tells His saints to be watchful and alert.

Just as a thief comes quickly and unexpectedly so will the Son of God [Rev. 22:20]. But unlike a thief, He will not come to steal but to take back what is rightfully His [Rev. 3:3; Matt. 24:42-44; 1 Thess. 5:2]. Be ready as a soldier B awake and with your clothes on so you will be prepared for combat. Those who will have the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness [Isa. 61:10; and who have accepted Jesus Christ [Rom. 13:14] will have no shame when Christ appears [1 John 2:28].

The Seventh Bowl Judgment [vs. 17-21]

The seventh angel pours out his vial and this plague affects the air. This is the last and greatest of the seven bowl judgments. The death blow will be the most complete and devastating catastrophe to ever hit the earth. As the angel empties his vial, the voice of the Most High God declares "It is done" for in this judgement the wrath of God is finished [15:1]. It is the final plague of God preceding the second coming of Christ. This will bring doom to unrepentant sinners.

A. Voices, Lightnings & Thunders [v. 18]

Like the seventh seal [8:5] and the seventh trumpet [11:19], the seventh bowl [16:18] is introduced with the imagery of a fierce thunderstorm voices, thunders and lightnings followed by an earthquake. However, the magnitude of this earthquake will be greater than any other earthquake to ever hit the earth.

B. A Great Earthquake [v. 18]

The earth convulses as the time of the Gentiles come to an end. This earthquake is the most powerful and most deadly quake to ever strike the earth for this earthquake will literally shake the globe [Haggai 2:6; Heb. 12:25-29].

This global earthquake will be so severe that it will drastically change the topography of the earth. Every city of the world [except for the eternal city

Jerusalem] will be destroyed, leaving the monuments of men in shambles. The fierceness of God's wrath will cause the islands and mountains to disappear [v. 20]. Great loss of life will ensue.

1. The Great City will be split [v.19a]

This great city will be split into three parts causing great physical changes, but the text doesn't say that the city is completely destroyed.

Although there is some debate whether this city is Jerusalem or Babylon, many scholars believe this city is Jerusalem because

- (1) it is called the great city in Rev. 11:8; 21:10
- (2) distinction is made between Jerusalem and the cities of the nations
- (3) there will be great physical changes to Jerusalem [Zech. 14:4-10]; and Jerusalem is distinguished from Babylon [16:20].

2. Great Babylon [v. 19b]

The fate of Babylon is much different than that of Jerusalem. Babylon will fall like the other nations of the world. However, Babylon is the special object of God's wrath because of her wickedness and because she led many into spiritual adultery. She must now drink of the wrath of God [Rev. 14:18-20] and will be violently destroyed from the face of the earth [Rev. 18:21].

C. Huge Hailstones [v.21]

Those who may have been fortunate to escape the destructive earthquake will face another catastrophe huge hailstones [boulders] weighing 100 pounds each. This is unprecedented in history for the heaviest hailstones recorded to date are approximately two pounds each.

The unusual weight of these hailstones will cause great devastation by crushing humanity and everything else left standing after the earthquake. The seventh bowl judgment is a clear demonstration of God's power and sovereignty, yet men will become so hardened in their sin and so totally committed to Antichrist and his anti-God system that they blaspheme God once again.

There is no repentance, there is no remorse, there is no sacrifice, for their souls are sold out to Satan condemning them now and for all eternity. This is the last time in Scripture that men blaspheme the name of God.

Conclusion:

The Day of the Lord is quickly approaching and there will be no turning back when judgment comes. God is a holy God; therefore, He must judge unrepentant mankind for their sin.

In that day, the unredeemed will not be able to escape His wrath [Isa. 43:13] unless they avail themselves of the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The pain and suffering of that day will be unbearable. Even in the face of overwhelming evidence of God's power and sovereignty, their perverse hearts only become more hardened as they are brought to the bar of justice before Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In that day, they will truly understand that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. God's loving grace will end and His fierce wrath will begin. The writer of Hebrews warns the unsaved, "Today if you hear His voice, do no harden your hearts" [Heb. 4:7] for today is the day of salvation [2 Cor. 6:2].