

Seven Angels – Seven Plagues – Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath Revelation 15-16

MPS God’s judgment displays His perfect justice to call all people to trust His perfect love in Jesus Christ.

OBJ Every person should trust in Jesus because there are only two responses to God’s judgment.

INTRO Today’s passage brings us to the end of God’s judgment. There will be one more week of considering the final judgment in detail, but today we catch a snapshot of it. When the Seventh Trumpet sounds there is no woe nor plague that occurred. Instead, we see a hymn of thanksgiving and celebration of victory.[11:15-19] Then, the wars of heaven are shown where Satan is introduced.[12] Beast 1 and 2, the false christ and false prophet, are introduced to demand worship, deceive people, and persecute the redeemed.[13] Then, a declaration of the victory of the redeemed.[14] The third woe we read in 11:14 is the seven bowls, the end of God’s wrath. Here is where the story resumes today.

God’s judgment displays His perfect justice to call all people to trust His perfect love in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 15:1-8

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.

²And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³And they 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!

⁴Who 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.”

⁵After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. ⁷And 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, ⁸and 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.

Revelation 15 is a preparation for the final judgment.¹ John sees another sign in heaven, seven angels with seven plagues. He sees a vision of Heaven’s throne room with all who had conquered the beast standing in it. They were holding harps and getting ready to sing. Their song is of Moses and of the Lamb. **But do not miss this: the great tribulation is at its peak, the darkest hour of all human history, and all of Heaven is preparing to sing.**

Their song declares the great and mighty power of God, that God is just and true in all his way, King of the nations! Then it declares by a powerful question, “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name?” **By such power displayed who would possibly not worship you?** Three qualities of God’s character are set forth in response to His worthiness for all to worship and glorify Him; He alone is holy, all nations will come and worship Him, and His righteous deeds have been revealed. “The song is not one of spiritual redemption but one of acclamation to the mighty works of God.”² The One of whom they sing is like no other. He is drawing people from every nation, tribe, language, and people to worship at His Throne. **God has displayed His righteous deeds for all to see and know that He is God! Their song is an appeal for all to trust and follow God.**

¹ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2014), 208. Duvall writes, “Revelation 15 introduces the bowl judgments of chapter 16, the third and final series of seven judgments (seals in 6:1–8:1, trumpets in 8:2–9:21; 11:14–19).”

² George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 205.



John sees the sanctuary of the tent of witness in Heaven. This reference draws again from the Exodus as the Tabernacle would be known by this title.³ The witness was to testify to God's holiness and righteousness, and justice in the world. From the sanctuary came seven angels with seven plagues. Their attire emphasizes the righteousness of the throne they represent. One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels bowls full of God's wrath. "The bowls are said to be "golden" only in 5:8, where they carry the prayers of the saints, and here in 15:7, suggesting a strong connection between God's justice and the prayers of his people (also 8:3-5)."⁴ These were libation bowls which carry the wine of God's wrath produced from the harvest of the earth (Rev 14). "Seven" represents the completion and full pouring out of wrath. *All of heaven is filled with smoke from God's glory and awaits the plagues to be finished.*

Revelation 15 gives insight into Heaven to see how God and the saints are preparing for the end. We get to see not only the end but the preparation for it as well. *And what do we see taking place in heaven to prepare for what will transpire on earth?* They are preparing to sing praise and thanksgiving to God! *How could all of Heaven be preparing to sing at such a dark moment in history?* Revelation 15 affords the opportunity to respond. We have answered this question regarding judgment and the plagues over the last few chapters but I will summarize it here with one scholar's statement: "The manifestation of God's justice saves his people and wins him praise."⁵ Just as the saints in heaven pray for God to vindicate His name (Rev 6), so all God's people take comfort in knowing that He will perfectly judge all unrighteousness. *God's justice displayed in saving His people on the cross of Jesus Christ is an invitation for all who will hear and believe to be saved from judgment by His perfect love.*

OBJ Here we see the first of only two responses to God's judgment.

Response #1: Christ-followers cultivate a heart to trust God's justice because we have been redeemed by His love.

We recognize the One who is speaking from the beginning, who's revelation is given to us. (Rev 1:2-3 The Lamb who is worthy, who activates the worship of all of heaven because He was slain and ransomed people for God, and who opens the seals to judge all earth-dwellers who have rejected God's love. (Rev 4-5) We rest in God's perfect justice because we've been redeemed by His perfect love. *We confess God's perfect love displayed on the cross is the execution of His perfect justice; to deny His justice is to reject His love.*

We heed His call to cultivate our heart to trust in His love. We cultivate a heart to trust in God when we hear His Word call us to believe in Him as it tells of His mighty deeds and displays them in glorious splendor. We cultivate a heart to trust in God when we hear the testimony of the saints that He is worthy of all glory and praise, and their prayers for the vindication of God's holy Name! We cultivate a heart to trust in God when we heed His call for faith as the source of our strength to endure persecution. We cultivate a heart to trust in God as we learn to love not our own life to daily follow Jesus as a living sacrifice. We cultivate a heart to trust God as we take comfort in the security of our salvation in Jesus and courage by His strength to bear a faithful witness for His Name. *We cultivate a heart to trust God when we believe in Jesus Christ to repent of our sin and obey His command.* *Have you believed in God's mighty work of justice and love on the cross of Jesus Christ?*

TRANS "Chapter 15 depicts for us the buildup to the outpouring of God's wrath in chapter 16. The mounting tension in chapter 15 increases the magnitude of the display of God's wrath in chapter 16."⁶

Revelation 16:1-21

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."

³ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 207. Ladd notes, "This verse blends two historical references: the tent of witness in the wilderness, and the temple which was later constructed in Jerusalem. The tabernacle in the wilderness was called "the tabernacle of the testimony" (Exod. 38:21; Num. 10:11; 17:7; Acts 7:44). This became the pattern for the temple when it was constructed in Jerusalem, and this temple in turn was used as the pattern for the dwelling of God in heaven."

⁴ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series, 211.

⁵ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 308.

⁶ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), 302.



²So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

³The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

⁴The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,

“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.

⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!”

⁷And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”

⁸The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

¹⁰The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

¹²The 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. ¹³And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. ¹⁴For 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. ¹⁵ (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) ¹⁶And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

¹⁷The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. ¹⁹The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. ²¹And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

A loud voice from the temple tells the angels to go pour out the wrath of God on the earth. The first angel pours out his bowl and harmful and painful sores appear on the people who bore the mark of the beast. The second angel pours out his bowl into the sea. It became like the blood of a corpse and every living thing in the sea died. The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs of water and they became blood. After the third bowl of wrath another angel cries out to the Lord. This angel declares that God is Just and Holy in giving to those who shed the blood of saints and prophets what they deserve. Heaven responds with a chorus of agreement that the Lord God Almighty is true and just!

The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and people were scorched with fire. In response, people acknowledged God was the one who had power over the plagues, but they willfully hardened themselves and cursed His name.⁷ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues and again cursed God for their pain but did not repent. When the sixth angel poured out his bowl, the river Euphrates dried up to prepare for the kings from the East. The enemies of God’s people are released and the people are fully exposed. John saw coming from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. These are demonic spirits who perform signs and go about to assemble kings of the earth for battle against God. John describes “the demonic inspiration of the foes of God in the last great battle.” Ladd continues, “this is no mere military

⁷ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 211–212. Ladd notes, “It is important to note that the text states that the afflicted men recognized that this was a work of God; but so hard and recalcitrant are their hearts because of the choice they have made to follow the beast that, instead of being brought to their knees in humble confession of their dependence on God, they curse his name and stubbornly refuse to repent and give him glory.”



or political movement but the manifestation in eschatological history of the age-long struggle between God and Satan.”⁸ And they are assembled in the place called Armageddon. [Satan exercises every influence fathomable to summon every power imaginable to fight against God, but God will not be moved.](#)

John's next sentence jolts a bit: ¹⁵ (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”) John inserts a parenthesis to remind the reader of the “central spiritual message.”⁹ “The war of the united kings under the leadership of the beast is not the ultimate reality; the ultimate reality is the fact of the Lord’s return. This is the event which is the focus of the expectation of the saints.”¹⁰ John interrupts this fear factor episode to insert a true focus perspective. We know the Lord will come like a thief in the night because He said He would. (1 Thes 5:2,4) Christ-followers guard our hearts to not “live in fear and anxiety” from the kings of the world summoned by Satan himself, nor do we “live asleep” to look at this life and claim “peace and security”.¹¹ John strikes the chord of the heart to focus on “spiritual diligence”¹², to live with urgency and priority about the ultimate reality of Jesus’ return, to seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness above our comforts, pleasures, and yes, even our security. [Christ-followers ‘live ready’ at all times for His return at any moment because Jesus said to live this way. \(Matt 24:43-44\)](#)

The seventh angel pours out his bowl and a loud voice from the temple declares, “It is done.” [17] “What is announced in the seventh bowl plague is described in detail in the two following chapters. These plagues are God’s answer to Satan’s last and greatest effort to frustrate the divine rule.”¹³ A great display of phenomena manifest the divine power and glory of God in this last judgment. Then John records an ominous statement, “*God remembered Babylon*” [18], that reminds us that God does not forget His people, and does not allow evil to go unpunished, but He remembers. Babylon is destroyed is being made to drain the cup of God’s wrath so that there is a complete collapse of human civilization.¹⁴ And one last time, as great hailstones fall from heaven in judgment, people curse God. [God warns people through His judgements, and gives every opportunity to repent, but they only curse Him.](#)

I want to note three important aspects of judgment from this last scene. First, God’s judgment accelerates and intensifies as it advances so that the end arrives more suddenly than expected. Second, there is completeness in this last series of bowl judgments where every living thing dies. Third, through it all God calls His people to stay focused on what is really important; “Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.” [13:10], “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints,” [14:12]; that Christ-followers endure through it all to live ready for His return. [Through it all, God speaks to Christ-followers like a loving Father to give comfort and courage, that provides security and strength in trusting Him.](#)

TRANS The question posed in Revelation 15 is worth consideration again because we have seen over the last ten chapters that there are people who refuse to glorify God’s Name: [“Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your Name?”](#)

Scholar James Hamilton notes, “What is shocking about this chapter is the way unrepentant humanity reacts to the wrath of God. Rather than recognizing that the rebellion is doomed and surrendering to the Almighty, they are enraged by the claims the Almighty makes upon them and gather for what they must know is a futile war against him.”¹⁵ J. Scott Duvall echoes the

⁸ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 213.

⁹ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series, 217.

¹⁰ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 214–215.

Ladd continues, “This verse is an interruption in the context of the passage to give the church its proper perspective.”

¹¹ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 215. This is summarized from Ladd’s words, “Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:43–44). The whole emphasis is upon the unexpectedness of the Lord’s return, and in light of the uncertainty of the times, believers must never relax and sleep but must always be awake. To be asleep means to say, “There is peace and security” (1 Thess. 5:3), i.e., to lose sight of the ultimate issues of life and to assume that security is to be found on the human level instead of in terms of one’s relationship to Christ.”

¹² George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 216.

¹³ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 209.

¹⁴ George Eldon Ladd, [A Commentary on the Revelation of John](#), 218. Ladd states, “The result of this theophany is the complete collapse of the godless human civilization.”

¹⁵ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, 313.



same with, “In spite of the judgments, they refuse to change their thinking or alter their lifestyles. They never accept responsibility for their own sinfulness but curse or blaspheme God instead. In spite of the severe suffering, symbolized by the gnawing of their tongues (v.10), there is no hint of humility, much less repentance or submission in worship.”¹⁶

OBJ Here we see the second of only two responses to God’s judgment.

Response #2: The heart that hardens toward God’s call to trust and repent rejects Jesus all the way to eternal damnation.

Consider the progression of a hardening heart to the invitation of God. In the seven seal judgments, they look to the earth and plea to die by natural calamity.[6:16] Later in the seven trumpet judgments they seek death to escape their torment, but death flees from them.[9:6] By the end of the seven trumpet judgments, the rest of mankind who were not killed by the plagues refused to repent and were hardened toward God.[9:20] Their hearts become so hard that they rejoice in extended, public celebration over the death of the two witnesses.[11:8-10] So that when we come to the bowl judgments their hardness of heart continues to petrify against God so that they curse Him[16:9], curse Him[16:11], curse Him[16:21] repeatedly to the very end. “So God is mercifully judging the world. God is lovingly showing how futile and vain and broken are the false religions and the selfish pursuits and the proud imaginings. It seems that God is going to show the rebels an awesome display of his unconquerable might to offer them a final opportunity to surrender. God is proving to humanity that there are two possibilities: repent of sin and worship God, or persist in rebellion and face unavoidable judgment. These bowls of wrath will prove that false gods cannot deliver from the true God.”¹⁷ **The progression of a hardening heart reveals the true condition of a person’s heart toward God, in judgement¹⁸ ultimately, but also in conviction immediately.**

What I mean to say to each one of us is this: the response of your heart to God’s conviction today foreshadows how you will respond to Him in the day of judgment. **We harden our heart to reject God every time we dismiss, neglect, or ignore His call to believe and repent by looking to other “created things” for help and salvation.**

ILLUS Water both softens or hardens the ground. When it first falls it loosens the ground to be receptive. But one left to dry it hardens even more than before the rain. When the gospel is preached and God’ call for faith and repentance goes forth, it is the rain of His living water poured down upon your heart. Then, when God calls, you are ready to respond. But when you persist to put off until another time, that water that softened at first will only harden in the future.

ILLUS The two doctrinal tenets of Atheism are; 1. God does not exist. 2. I hate him. **Atheism is a hard heart toward God.**

“Today”, Hebrews states, “do not harden your hearts” in rebellion.[Hebrews 3:7-19] Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, repent of your sin, and receive forgiveness and cleansing for your soul. Worship Jesus and walk by the power of His Spirit in you. Read to know His Word and hide it in your heart that you may not sin against Him. Fellowship with His people that they might encourage you to not be hardened in sin but strengthened to endure. **Live ready for the eternal glory of Jesus Christ!**

CLOSE Two Responses : One Reality

Response 1: Have I believed in God’s mighty work of justice and love on the cross of Jesus to repent and follow Him?

Response 2: Am I persisting in resistance to question God’s justice and reject His love for me in Jesus Christ?

One Reality: To deny God’s justice is to reject His love.

God’s judgment displays His perfect justice to call all people to trust His perfect love in Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series, 216.

¹⁷ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, 314.

¹⁸ J. Scott Duvall, [Revelation](#), ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series, 218–219. Duvall states, “How people respond to judgment reveals the condition of their hearts.”



CLOSE “If you understand the severity of the completion of God’s wrath, the gospel will be more precious to you than life. If you understand the severity of God’s wrath, you will look 13:10 in the face: “If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain.”¹⁹

¹⁹ James M. Hamilton Jr., [Preaching the Word: Revelation—The Spirit Speaks to the Churches](#), ed. R. Kent Hughes, 305.

