

## Judgment Day Comes To Planet Earth: Armageddon Has Arrived

### Revelation 15-16

**Introduction:** 1) Throughout the Bible we are warned that Judgment Day is coming. The eschatological Day of the Lord is inevitable. It will happen. Joel 1, Zephaniah 1, Malachi 4, Matthew 24, 1 Thessalonians 5 and 2 Thessalonians 2 are just a sampling. Now, the Day, that Day, has arrived. In Revelation there are 3 series of judgments that are recorded as follows:

<b>Tribulation Judgments in the book Revelation</b>		
<b>“Seal” Series</b> (Revelation 6:1-8:5)	<b>“Trumpet” Series</b> (Revelation 8:6-9:21)	<b>“Bowl” Series</b> (Revelation 16:1-21)
1. Conquest	1. Hail and Fire ( $\frac{1}{3}$ vegetation ruined )	1. Malignant Sores
2. Warfare	2. Meteor Shower ( $\frac{1}{3}$ sea life killed)	2. Poisoned Seas (death of all sea life)
3. Famine and Poverty	3. Water Pollution ( $\frac{1}{3}$ water supply poisoned)	3. Poisoned Fresh Water
4. Death ( $\frac{1}{4}$ population)	4. Darkness	4. Humanity Scorched
5. Martyrdom	5. Demonic Locust Attack	5. Widespread Darkness/ Misery
6. Earthquake	6. Demonic Hordes ( $\frac{1}{3}$ humanity killed)	6. Vast Military Invasion
7. Introduction of “Trumpet” Judgments	7. Introduction of “Bowl” Judgments	7. Most Destructive Earthquake/Hail

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 216

There is a spiraling and intensifying nature to these judgments as the 7 trumpets emerge from the 7<sup>th</sup> seal and the 7 bowls emerge from the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet. In a sense the 7<sup>th</sup> always takes us to the end.

2) A lengthy interlude precedes the final series of judgments (chs. 10-14). Chapter 15 serves as a prelude to the bowl judgments of chapter 16. In what we will see, we learn that there is glory in God's wrath. In fact, we should worship God in His wrath because He is holy, just and righteous in all His ways. Sinners, apart from Christ, will receive "what they deserve" (16:6). No one will call God unfair or unjust at the judgment. The evidence is too great. It is overwhelming. He is the just judge of the universe.

**I. God will make preparation for judgment day            15:1-8**

Chapter 15 is easily structured around the phrase "I saw" (*kai eidon*) in verses 1, 2 and 5. Suffering Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and in every century would be encouraged and given hope to remain faithful by this chapter. God is in control. He hears our cries and He sees our tears and He knows all about our hurting hearts. The Lord God Almighty (15:3; 16:7, 14) is advancing His kingdom. It will be established.

1) God's wrath will be finished            15:1

John sees "another sign in heaven." This looks back and connects to the vision in 12:1. This sign is "great (*mega*) and amazing" as he sees "seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last (*eschatas*)"; plagues (*plegas*) which will finish or complete "the wrath of God." History is at its end and horrible judgments will come. Judgment patterns in history

reach a climax in the Tribulation. That they are called the last plagues sets them apart from the seals and trumpets. There are similarities, to be sure, but there are also differences. Now God's wrath is brought to its appropriate and climatic conclusion (cf. Lev. 26:21). Mounce says, "These are the last of the plagues in that they complete the warnings of God to an impenitent world. All that remains is final judgment itself" (284).

2) The nations will worship 15:2-4

- Before judgments falls, the redeemed appear beside "a sea of glass mingled with fire" (a sign of judgment) to sing a victory song. They have conquered the beast (Antichrist), and now take harps to sing what is called "the song of Moses" (who is called appropriately "the servant of God") and "the song of the Lamb." Those who had no position or standing on earth have one in heaven! The themes of God's redemptive work for the Hebrews now resounds in the redemptive work of the Lamb. Exodus 15:1-8 and Revelation 5:8-14 provide source material for this song of worship.
- The God who is praised is great and amazing in his deeds, in His way and righteous acts. He is the "Lord God the Almighty" and the "King of the nations." This is a God we should "fear" (*phobos*) and

“glorify” (*doxa*). Why? Because “He alone is Holy” (pure, undefiled, separate from His creation). There is no God like our God.

- And who will come and worship this great, amazing, just, true, holy and righteous God? “All the nations will come and worship you” (cf. 5:9; 7:9). Every tribe, tongue, people and nation will gather to sing and worship this awesome God. What a great missionary promise!
- It is important to notice that the saints do not sing of their victory over the beast (v.2). They sing about the sovereignty, glory, justice and righteousness of their Almighty God and King. As all the nations come together to worship, the focus is as it should be: on our God. David Platt well notes, “there is a high view of God in heaven!” If that is true, and it is, then there should be a high view of God on earth. There should be a high view of God in our churches. There should be a high view of God in my life.

3) God’s glory and power will be displayed 15:5-8

- For the third time John sees something. This time it is “the sanctuary of the tent” (or “tabernacle”), another Exodus theme (v. 5). This is the place where God manifest His presence. From here the 7 angels with the 7 plagues emerge. They have the appearance of holy priest with their “pure, bright linen” and “golden sashes”

(v.6). One of the living creatures (angelic beings introduced in chapter 4) gives them 7 bowls full of the wrath of the eternal God (v. 7). Immediately “the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power” (v.8). So great was this display of glory and power that no one could enter the sanctuary until judgment was finished.

- When God made a covenant with Abraham, He passed through the divided pieces of the sacrifice in the smoking furnace and burning lamp (Genesis 15:7). When Moses received God’s law on Mount Sinai, God revealed His holiness with fire and smoke (Exodus 19:18). After Israel placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle, God’s presence was symbolized with smoke and fire (Exodus 40:34-35). In Solomon’s Temple the glory of the Lord filled the holy place in the form of a cloud (1 Kings 8:10-11). This is an ongoing reminder of God’s holiness. God’s glory is always manifest during the time of His judgment. Smoke from God’s glory made entering the Temple impossible until His seething indignation was poured out. What a sign to the ungodly people on the earth who chose to shun the worship of a holy God and to follow the beast.

## II. God will pour out His wrath on judgment day 16:1-21

Human beings should have a high view of God and a humble view of man. Instead we have a low view of God and a high view of ourselves. We have invited justly the wrath of God in our lives and on our world. These last 7 plagues, the bowl judgments, are similar to both the Exodus plagues (Ex. 7-12) and the trumpet judgments (8-9). However, their worldwide scope and intensity are of such a nature that they are said to be things that “had never been since man was on the earth” (v.18). Precursors have appeared throughout history. The final and climatic manifestation is now “poured out” (v. 1), never again to be repeated. Do not miss the fact that all of this is God’s doing. (Mounce is especially helpful in chapter 16. I regularly draw from his comments, 291-305).

### 1) God will send disease 16:1-2

- John hears “a loud voice” (*mega phonē*), a phrase occurring 20 times in Revelation. It is certainly the voice of God. He commands the angels to “Go and pour out” (both imperatives) on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God” (cf. 15:1, 7: 16:19). The fierce anger of God and His righteous judgment is to be poured out in full measure on an unrepentant world, a rebellious world.
- The angel pours out his bowl and harmful and painful sores come up on those who follow and worship the beast (v. 2). This recalls the 6<sup>th</sup>

Egyptian plague (Ex. 9:9-11), and the stories of Job (Job 2:7) and Lazarus (Luke 16:21). Only unbelievers experience this foul and loathsome plague. Zechariah 14:12 teaches, “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.”

2) God will destroy the seas 16:3

The second angel pours his bowl and the sea becomes like the blood of a corpse, of a dead man. There are parallels to the 1<sup>st</sup> Egyptian plague in Exodus 7:19, and the second trumpet of 8:8-9. Every living thing dies in the seas of the earth. The oceans, which occupy 70% of the earth’s surface, becomes a pool of death, a toxic wasteland of water. The term “watery grave” will take on a whole new and tragic meaning.

3) God will pollute the waters 16:4-7

- Blood follows blood. What God did through His angel to the seas He now does to the fresh waters. All turns to blood. This recalls also the 1<sup>st</sup> Egyptian plague, the 3<sup>rd</sup> trumpet (8:10-11) and the drought brought on by the two witnesses (11:7). Water is already scarce. It now becomes even more so.

- Suddenly, the 3<sup>rd</sup> angel breaks into a song that sounds very much like the Song of Moses and the Lamb in 15:3-4. The eternal God (“who is and was”) is just in bringing these judgments because He is the Holy One. The earth-dwellers “shed the blood of the saints and prophets” so He gives them “blood to drink” in return. Indeed He gives them “what they deserve” (v.6). Verse 7 provides a word of confirmation: the judgments of the “Lord God Almighty” are “true and just.” Genesis 18:25 teaches, “Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” Psalm 19:9 says, “The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous.” The Apocalypse is fully in agreement. God is never arbitrary, capricious or vengeful in His judgment. He is always fair, just and true. His is the only bar of perfect justice. There is a logic and rightness in His judgment. We glorify Him in His righteous wrath.

4) God will torment unrepentant sinners 16:8-9

- In contrast to the first 3 bowls which were poured out on the earth, the 4<sup>th</sup> angel pours out his bowl on the sun. People are scorched with fire, “by the fierce heat.” This is in contrast to the 4<sup>th</sup> trumpet (the judgments are not concurrent) which darkened the sun, moon and stars (8:12). MacArthur says, “Searing heat exceeding anything in



human experience will scorch men so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire” (vol. 2, 155).

- The specifics of exactly what will happen is not revealed to us. We need not needlessly speculate. However, the human response is crystal clear: 1) they cursed God and 2) “they did not repent and give him glory.” What an undeniable and sad commentary on the depravity and wickedness of Adam’s sons and daughters. Knowing full well from whom these plagues come and why they come, they do repent. They revile. They do not bless God, the blaspheme God (see also vs. 11, 21). God has been longsuffering and patient with sinful man (2 Peter 3:9). Multiple opportunities have been given for people to repent and run to the redeeming Lamb. Repeatedly and with willful disregard for the grace of God, men and women refuse to repent (cf. 6:16-17; 9:20-21). They refuse to give glory to the only God deserving of glory. They turn away from Him. He rightly brings divine, retributive torment to them.

5) God will destroy the Kingdom of Antichrist 16:10-11

- The 5<sup>th</sup> bowl judgment is reminiscent of the 9<sup>th</sup> Egyptian plague (Ex. 10:21-29). It starts locally but extends worldwide. The throne of the beast, Antichrist, is the object of this judgment. He and his kingdom

are “plunged into darkness.” In what way is his kingdom plunged into darkness? Is it economic? Physical? Political? Spiritual? All of these? We do not know (But see Mark 13:24-27). What we do know once again are the results: 1) “People gnawed their tongues in anguish,” 2) they “cursed (blasphemed) the God of heaven (“the name of God in v. 9) for their pain and sores” (v.2) and 3) “they did not repent of their deeds.”

- The phrase “God of heaven” is from Daniel 2:44. It speaks of the God who sovereignly destroys the false kingdoms of this world and establishes His own rightful kingdom. Daniel 7:13-14 tells us this Kingdom is given to the Son of Man! We know that is Jesus.
- This is the final time we are told that mankind would not repent. The day of grace is at an end. God’s deadline is now past. Neither mercy or judgment changed the heart of sinful humanity. They loved their idols too much. They loved their sin more than the Savior who would have set them free from their bondage and slavery. It is hard not to weep.

6) God will gather His enemies for a final battle 16:12-16

- The 6<sup>th</sup> angel pours his bowl out “on the great river Euphrates,” a river designated this way five times in the Bible (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7;

Josh 1:4; Rev. 9:14; 16:12). It runs 1800 miles from Mt. Ararat to the Persian Gulf and was seen as the eastern boundary of the land God promised to Israel. It continues as the lifeblood of what is called the Fertile Crescent. The river is dried up to prepare for the coming of an army, “the kings of the east” (v.12). Who they are and why they come is not revealed, but there certainly seems to be a relationship to the army from the east when the 6<sup>th</sup> angel blew his trumpet in 9:13-19. Ultimately, they come as God allows and directs.

- Coupled with the coming of these kings are three unclean spirits, demons, who spring from the mouth of the unholy, counterfeit trinity of the dragon, beast, and false prophet (v.13). These demons are said to be like frogs, an unclean animal (Levt. 11:10, 41). Once more they act with spiritual deception via the miraculous. It reminds us that not every miracle is a miracle from God. Their goal is to gather the leaders, “the kings of the whole world to gather for battle on the great day of God the Almighty” (v.14). I believe they think they are gathering to battle earthly powers, perhaps Israel (Ezk. 38-39; Zech. 14), or the people of God as a whole. Actually God is the one who has bought them there to do battle with Him (cf. 19:11-21).

- Almost parenthetically, verse 15 interjects the 3<sup>rd</sup> of 7 beatitudes in Revelation. Christ can come any moment on any day. “Coming like a thief” means many will be caught by surprise, unprepared, not ready. (See 1 Thess. 5:2). Don’t find yourself in that camp. Be alert, “stay awake.” There is a blessing for this group! Have your spiritual clothes on at all times (see 3:18). Don’t allow your spiritual vigilance to flag or wane so that you are found naked or exposed. On this day everything will be made plain. The “deceptive propaganda” of the false trinity will be fully exposed on this day.
- That day, verse 16 tells us, will happen “at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.” Har-Magedon is probably a reference to the hill of Megiddo, “the ancient city lying on the north side of the Carmel ridge...between the coastal plain and the valley of Esdraelon” (Mounce, 301). It is a famous battlefield with many strategic conflicts having occurred there. Armageddon has taken on the idea of the place and time for the war that ends all wars as history draws to a close. I believe history will end in cataclysmic world war. I think Armageddon will serve as the focal point (14:14-20; 16:10, 19:17-21; see Joel 3:2; Zech. 14). Still I am in full agreement with Mounce, “geography is not the major concern. Wherever it takes place,

Armageddon is symbolic of the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by the might and power of God. The great conflict between God and Satan, Christ and Antichrist, good and evil, that lies behind the perplexing course of history will in the end issue in a final struggle in which God will emerge victorious and take with him all who have placed their faith in him. This is Har-Magedon (Mounce, 302).

7) God will conclude His judgment giving sinners what they deserve

16:17-21

- There are similarities between the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet and the 7<sup>th</sup> bowl, even the 7<sup>th</sup> seal, because in a telescopic and spiraling manner each brings history to a close. The 7<sup>th</sup> angel pours out his bowl in the air, the space encompassing the earth. Again a “loud voice” (v. 1) came from “the temple,” even “the throne.” God speaks saying, “It is done.” “It is finished” (15:1). Like the 7<sup>th</sup> seal (8:5) and the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet (11:19), there is lightning, rumblings (sounds or voices) and thunder. There is also an earthquake that is unprecedented in human history (v. 18).
- Verse 19 says “the great city was split into three parts.” Good arguments can be made that this is historical Jerusalem (Zech. 14:8). Context, however, would point to spiritual Babylon, the subject of chapters 17-18. Now, some also would identify the city with Rome,

and also with good reason in light of the 1<sup>st</sup> century historical context and chapter 18. I believe it would certainly include Rome, but it is more. Babylon in Revelation is the city of man that stands in opposition to the city of God, the New Jerusalem (chs. 21-22). Babylon falls completely and all the cities of her world fall with her. God remembers her; she is not forgotten. She will drink in full measure “the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath.” What Jesus drank for His own (Mark 10:38-39), she will be forced to drink herself.

- Verse 20 is a simple statement of cosmic upheaval and eschatological trauma. It recalls the cosmic disturbance of the 6<sup>th</sup> seal in 6:12-14. Here is a snapshot meant to leave a lasting impression of a world now experiencing in totality the fury and wrath of its Creator.
- The cosmic storm of God’s wrath reaches its climax and culmination with great hailstones of 100 pounds falling to earth and on people (v.21). We have seen this before (Josh 10:11; Ezek. 38:18-22). The heaviest hailstone on record was a mere 1.93 pounds! The earth, what little remains, will be plummeted and pulverized. Tragically, but now expected, men curse God for His righteous judgment (v. 9, 11). Beaten, they again blaspheme. Conquered, they curse. One last time

they shake their fist in God's face and curse His Name. Judgment Day has come. The results are certain. The response of humanity is incredible. So great is their hatred for God, they curse His Name with their final, dying breath.

### **Conclusion**

At the cross God demonstrated His wrath and poured it out on His beloved Son. That is great love for sinners on full display. In the Great Tribulation He will pour out His wrath on rebellious and unrepentant sinners who curse His name. There will be no middle ground in that day. There is really no middle ground today.

What will you do?

Believe in Him or blaspheme Him?

Confess Him or curse Him?

Repent or continue to rebel?

The choice is yours. The time to make it is now. Time will soon be gone for all of us. Judgment Day is on its way to planet earth.