

**A Survey of Revelation**  
Week 9: The Bowl Judgments  
Revelation 14:1-16:21

**A Brief Overview of the Book of Revelation**

**A. Introduction to the Book (Revelation 1)**

**B. Letters to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2-3)**

**C. The End of the World As We Know It: God's Judgment Upon the World and Satan (Revelation 4-19:5)**

1. The Vision of Heaven and the "Beginning of the End" (4:1-5:14)
2. The "Seal" Judgments and the Rapture (6:1-8:1)
3. The "Trumpet" Judgments (8:1-11:19)
4. The Conflict with the False Trinity (12:1-13:18)
5. The "Bowl" Judgments (14:1-16:21) } *This week, we are here!*
6. The End of the World (17:1-18:24)

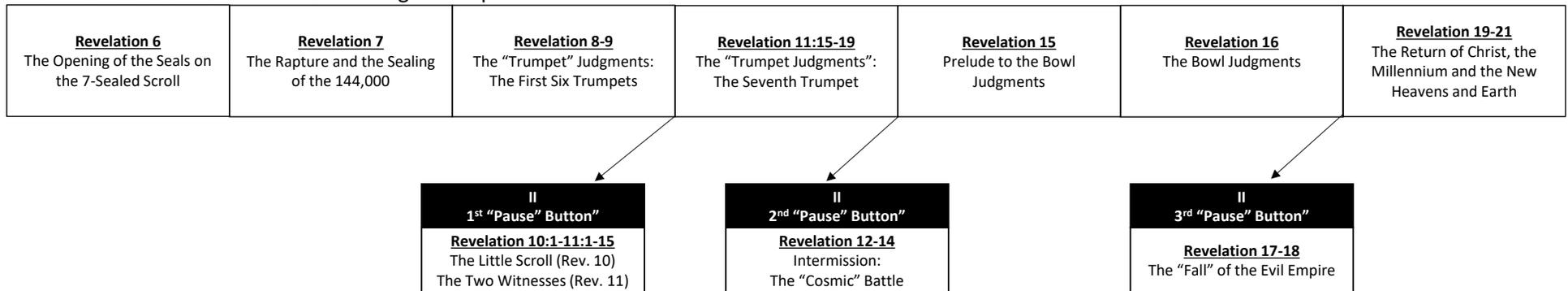
**D. A Whole New World: The Return of Christ and the New Heavens and the New Earth (Revelation 19:6-22:21)**

1. The Return of Christ and the Millennium Kingdom (19:1-20:15)
2. The New Heavens and the New Earth (21:1-22:11)
3. Epilogue to Revelation (22:12-21)

## Introduction to Revelation 14, 15, 16

- The three chapters that we are looking at today in Revelation can be divided into two parts:
  - o **Revelation 14** concludes the “intermission” / “behind the curtain” section of last week. It provides a note of “hope” to the dark place Revelation 13 left us in.
  - o **Revelation 15-16** resumes the main narrative of Revelation and of the end of the world. It picks up events on this earth right at the blowing of the 7<sup>th</sup> trumpet from Revelation 12. It details the final events of the “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord”: the final judgment of God on this earth.
  
- In the context of the rest of the book of Revelation, here’s how these (and the chapters that follow it) fit:

Main Narrative of Revelation: God’s Judgment Upon this Earth ➔



## Revelation 14

### Hope in the Midst of Chaos

#### Introduction

- Revelation 13 ended on a depressing note: at the end of time, the Anti-Christ and his forces will require the world to show allegiance to him, and everyone who refuses to do so will be put to death (Rev. 13:15).
- If John had left this “intermission” there, we may end up with a severely lopsided view of Satan’s power relative to God’s: since the evil of Satan knows practically no limits, what hope is there for God’s people?
- In Revelation 14, John concludes his “intermission” in the book by showing us that God *is* victorious in this great cosmic battle.
- **Thus Revelation 14, in summary fashion, displays God’s decisive victory over Satan and all who serve Satan in the final 3 ½ years of this earth.**
- It may help to think of it this way:

**Revelation 13:** The Final 3 ½ Years from **Satan’s** Perspective

**Revelation 14:** The Final 3 ½ Years from **God’s** Perspective

- Revelation 14 is divided into three visions, each beginning with “I looked” (Rev. 14:1, 6, 14).
- Many of the themes of Revelation 14 are picked up and expanded upon in other places in Revelation.

#### **Vision 1: The 144,000 on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1-5)**

*Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. <sup>2</sup> And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. <sup>3</sup> And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. <sup>4</sup> These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they remained virgins. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. <sup>5</sup> No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless. (Rev. 14:1-5 NIV)*

- As we come out of Revelation 13, we may ask the question, “who can endure the horrific attacks of the anti-Christ?”
- Revelation 14:1-5 reminds us: God knows who are His and has promised to protect them. This is seen in the 144,000: the remnant of Israel that God “sealed” in Revelation 7 when the church was raptured. Not only will these 144,000 make it through the Great Tribulation, they will one day be gathered together in Israel and will even receive a special reward from God: they will learn a “new song” that only they can sing.

- This passage provides more evidence that the 144,000 are the remnant of Israel that God promised to save; Revelation 14:5 is a direct allusion to Zephaniah 3:12-13, where God promises Israel a humble remnant.<sup>1</sup>
- **Thus this vision reminds us that as powerful as the Anti-Christ may appear to be, if God promises to save and protect His own, He will. Satan is no match for God.**

### **Vision 2: Angels of Warning and Repentance (Rev. 14:6-13)**

- Despite the Anti-Christ's seemingly near-universal rule and reign in the final 3 ½ period, John makes it clear that God is still in charge and still full of grace: even as Christians are being killed and silenced, God is able to get His message across to His people through other means—in this case, angels—and God is still giving people an opportunity to repent.
- Three angels give three messages:
  - o One angel gives a clear gospel message, imploring people to honor God—not the Anti-Christ (Rev. 14:7).
  - o One angel tells of the fate of “Babylon”—the final evil empire. Though powerful now, it will meet its end (Rev. 14:8).
  - o A final angel gives a vivid warning of what will happen to those who worship the beast and receive its mark: though their time on earth will be free of difficulty, they will eternally face the judgment of God (Rev. 14:9-10).
- This vision then closes with a call to endurance for God's people (Rev. 14:12-13).

### **Vision 3: God's “Grapes of Wrath” (Rev. 14:14-20)**

- The final vision that John gives is a summary preview of what will happen in Revelation 16, when God's wrath is fully and finally poured out on this earth—the end of the “Day of the Lord.”
- It pictures the judgment of the wicked as a winepress filled with “grapes” (the unsaved) that will be trampled on. The death and destruction will be so great, a river of blood five feet high (as “high as the horses' bridle”) and 180 miles long (1,600 stadia) will result (Rev. 14:20). This may be a reference to the outcome of the battle of Armageddon, discussed in greater detail in Rev. 16:16 and 19:19-21.
- Interestingly, there may be another reference to the “rapture” in this passage: some have suggested that the individual on the “cloud” who “harvests” the earth in Rev. 14:16 refers to Jesus taking his church out before God's wrath is poured out on the earth, a repeat of the scene of Revelation 7.

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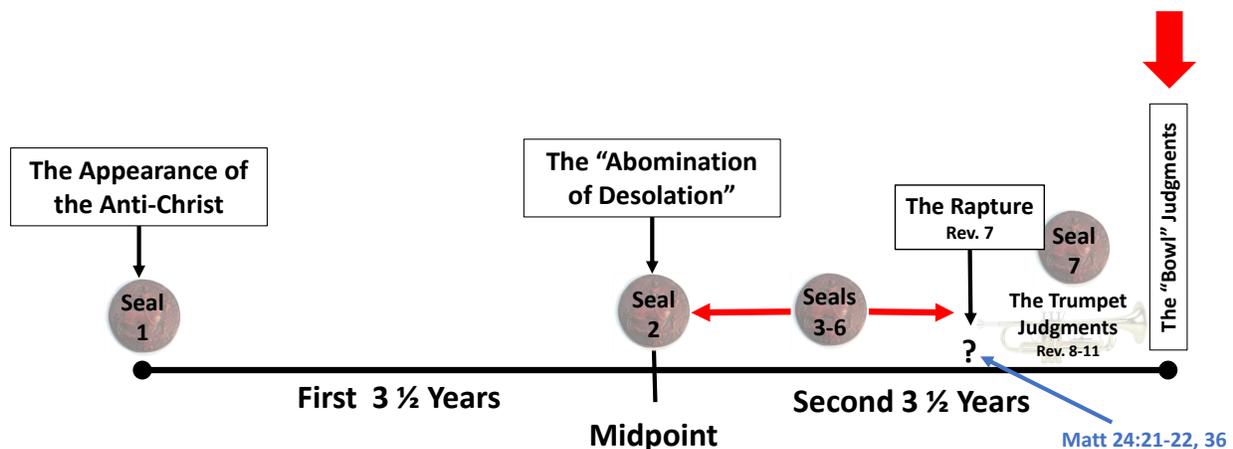
<sup>1</sup> *“But I will leave within you the meek and humble. The remnant of Israel will trust in the name of the LORD. <sup>13</sup> They will do no wrong; they will tell no lies. A deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouths. They will eat and lie down and no one will make them afraid.”* (Zeph. 3:12-13 NIV)

## Revelation 15-16

### The “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord”

#### Introduction

- In a sense, Revelation 15 and 16 are “it.” These are the two chapters that detail the final “day” of God’s wrath and judgment being poured out on this earth. This part of Revelation is commonly referred to as the “bowl judgments,” because the judgments God pours out on this earth are pictured as appearing in “bowls” that God’s angels empty on this earth.
- These “bowl judgments” represent the final of three series of judgments that God pours out on this earth. They clearly follow in sequence from the other two judgments (the “Seal” and “Trumpet” judgments), and in many cases take the previous judgments and intensify them.
- They will take place at the *end* of the final seven years on this earth:



- But before they are poured out on this earth, John gives us a “prelude” with some important information.

#### “Prelude” to the Bowl Judgments: Revelation 15

- Revelation 15 sets the scene for the bowl judgments and gives us two important pieces of information regarding the bowl judgments:
  1. **It reaffirms God’s justice in pouring His judgment out on this earth (Revelation 15:3-4).** This is a “hymn” of praise to God that is an allusion to Exodus 15, when God set the Israelites free from Egypt and enabled them to cross the Red Sea, killing the Egyptians in the process. It affirms the fact that God is holy and righteous in all that He does—even in the destruction of the wicked.

2. **It reveals that there is no more chance for repentance once the “bowl” judgments have begun (Rev. 15:5-8).** Revelation 15 ends with a scene of the “temple” in heaven filling with smoke and the ominous comment that “no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed” (Revelation 15:8). If the temple is closed, this means that access to God is blocked off: from this point forward no one can find forgiveness of sins. Repentance is impossible during the final part of the “Day of the Lord.” God’s judgment is now irreversible.

*“Until the seven plagues are finished, no one is able to enter the temple. Once the time of final judgment has come, none can stay the hand of God. The time for intercession is past. God in his unapproachable majesty and power has declared that the end has come. **No longer does he stand knocking: he enters to act in sovereign judgment.**”*

- Robert Mounce, *Revelation*

### **“The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord”: Revelation 16**

- Revelation 16 contains the “Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath,” alternatively known as the “Seven Plagues.” This is the **final** part of the “Great and Terrible Day of the Lord.”
- A few reflections on these judgments:
  1. **This is the final fulfillment of numerous biblical prophecies.** The idea of God bringing judgment upon his “enemies” stretches back to the Old Testament. 700 years before Christ, Isaiah spoke the following:

*<sup>6</sup> Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the LORD repaying his enemies all they deserve... <sup>15</sup> See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his chariots are like a whirlwind; he will bring down his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. <sup>16</sup> For with fire and with his sword the LORD will execute judgment on all people, and many will be those slain by the LORD... <sup>23</sup> From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,” says the LORD. <sup>24</sup> “And they will go out and look on the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; the worms that eat them will not die, the fire that burns them will not be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind.” (Isaiah 66:6, 15-16, 23-24)*

The image of a “bowl” itself is also likely taken from Isaiah 51:17 which talks about the “cup” (sometimes rendered “bowl”) of “God’s wrath.”

**Note: this is the “cup” that Jesus endured for those who believe in Him on the cross (“may this cup be taken from me” [Matthew 26:39]). That is why believers do not have to experience this judgment!**

- 2. God’s judgment is a direct response to the slaying of Christians.** Why is God so angry? One of the reasons is because the world has killed His servants—you and me—and God is repaying this evil with His judgment.

*<sup>5</sup>Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were;<sup>6</sup> for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." (Rev. 16:5-6 NIV)*

- 3. Evil does attempt a “comeback” in Revelation 16, but is quickly squelched.** Though the battle of “Armageddon” is covered in greater detail later in Revelation 19, there is a hint of it in Revelation 16:

*<sup>12</sup>The 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.<sup>13</sup> Then I saw three impure spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet.<sup>14</sup> They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty....<sup>16</sup> Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. (Rev. 16:12-14, 16 NIV)*

- 4. The destruction of the bowl judgments is full and complete.** Various “Seal” judgments affected a quarter of the earth; various “Trumpet” judgments affected a third of the earth; but the bowl judgments affect everything.

*<sup>17</sup>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!"<sup>18</sup> Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.<sup>19</sup> The great city 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.<sup>20</sup> Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. (Rev. 16:17-20 NIV)*

- For an overview of what happens during each “bowl judgment” see the next two pages.

## The Bowl Judgments

### ① **Bowl 1: Terrible Sores (Rev. 16:2)**

*The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly, festering sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. (Rev. 16:2 NIV)*

- This “bowl” is a specific judgment on those who worshipped the Anti-Christ, and fits the crime: they took the “mark” of the “beast,” now they are “marked” with horrible plagues.
- This is reminiscent of the sixth plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11), when boils broke out on both people and animals.

### ② **Bowl 2: The Sea Turned to Blood (Rev. 16:3)**

*The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead person, and every living thing in the sea died. (Rev. 16:3 NIV)*

- This is an intensification of the second of the “Trumpet Judgments”; that time 1/3 of the sea was turned to blood and 1/3 of the animals of the sea died. This time the entire sea and all its creatures are affected.
- This is reminiscent of the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:14-21).
- Imagine the sight of seeing millions of creatures lying on top of an ocean of “blood.” Nothing like this has ever been seen before—and will ever be seen again.

### ③ **Bowl 3: Inland Waters Turned to Blood (Rev. 16:4)**

*The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. (Rev. 16:4 NIV)*

- This is an intensification of the third of the “Trumpet Judgments.” That time, 1/3 of all drinking water turned to blood; this time *all* drinking water turns to blood.
- This is also reminiscent of the first plague on Egypt (Exodus 7:14-21).
- With no clean water to drink, people will not be able to last long and many will die of thirst during this time.

In between the third and fourth bowl is a hymn from the “angel in charge of the waters” affirming the justice of God’s judgments, which are in direct response to the killing of God’s people (16:5-6). All of heaven then affirms this (16:7). Thus the bowl judgements represent God finally answering the prayers of the martyrs back in Revelation 6:9-11 after the opening of the fifth seal.

④ **Bowl 4: The Sun Scorches People (Rev. 16:8-9)**

<sup>8</sup> *The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire.* <sup>9</sup> *They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him. (Rev. 16:8-9 NIV)*

- This judgment is “global warming” intensified; the sun becomes so hot that it “scorches” people; the word translated “scorch” was used to describe the withering of plants by the intense heat of the sun.
- This is a direct contrast to the promise given the raptured church in Revelation 7; they are told that they will no longer have to face the “scorching” of the sun (Rev. 7:16).
- Note the reaction of people to this: they curse God and do not repent (perhaps God knows that this will happen and this is why repentance is no longer even possible at this time). Note that this illustrates a biblical principle: the people who experience God’s judgment hate Him, and *want* a world without Him. In the end, God will give them what they desire (see the “Great White Throne Judgment” of Rev. 20:11-15).

⑤ **Bowl 5: Darkness (Rev. 16:10-11)**

<sup>10</sup> *The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony<sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done. (Rev. 16:10-11 NIV)*

- The fifth bowl is directed specifically against the Anti-Christ and his kingdom; God makes it so this evil empire is plunged into darkness.
- This is reminiscent of the ninth plague on Egypt and the total darkness that covered Egypt for three days (Exodus 10:21-29). It is also an intensification of the fourth “Trumpet Judgment,” when darkness was experienced for 1/3 of the day and night (Rev. 8:12).
- Once again, people curse God and refuse to repent for what they have done.

⑥ **Bowl 6: Preparation for Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16)**

- When the sixth bowl is poured out, the Euphrates river is dried up so that the enemies of God can gather for “Armageddon” to fight against God and His forces.
- This is followed by the Anti-Christ calling the people of the world to him for this battle (Rev. 16:13-14).
- This battle will be described in greater detail in Revelation 19:11-21.

⑦ **Bowl 7: “It is Finished” (Rev. 16:17-21)**

- The final bowl marks “the end” (v. 17).
- Thus with the pouring out of this bowl, the earth—as we know it—comes to an end. This prepares the way for the millennium and Christ’s 1,000 year reign on this earth.

## Application: The Kindness and Severity of God

- One of the major themes of Revelation can be summed up by Paul's words in Romans 11:22:

*Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. (Rom. 11:22 NAU)*

- God has unbelievable kindness and mercy towards us believers; He treat us not only with mercy (not giving us what we deserve), but grace (giving us what we *don't* deserve).
- But God is also "stern": to those who do not believe in Him, judgment awaits them, and that judgment will be "severe":

*It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:31 NAU)*

- This requires reflection: have we put our faith in Jesus? Are we trusting in Him? God is deliberately delaying the "Great and Terrible Day of the Lord" to give people an opportunity to trust in Him:

*The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9 NIV)*

- But there is coming a day when God will not delay anymore, and at that point repentance will not be possible.

***Have you decided to follow Jesus? Have you put your faith in Him?***

**Do not wait to make that decision. Make it now.**

**Don't forget to email questions!**  
[questions@friends.church](mailto:questions@friends.church)

**Homework for next week: Read Revelation 17-18 at least twice this week.**