

John now sees seven angels with the final series of judgments to be poured out on earth from their seven vials. Rather than repent of their evil deeds when these judgments are poured out, the inhabitants of earth instead blaspheme God for their suffering. It seems to be in our sinful human nature to place the blame for our suffering on someone else instead of on our own sinful choices.

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### Revelation 15

<sup>1</sup> 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.

**“And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous [amazing; beyond comprehension]”** - John sees another “sign” (something symbolically representing things to come) and this one he describes as being “great and marvelous.” The Greek work for “marvelous” means “amazing” and coupled with the word “great” indicates that what John sees is exceedingly amazing. It isn’t the angels themselves that are so amazing but the severity of the plagues/wrath of God that they will be pouring out that fills John with amazement.

**“seven angels having the seven last plagues”** - This seems to be an umbrella statement since these angels are not given the seven plagues until v. 7. He is essentially saying “seven angels who have been given the responsibility of the seven last plagues.”

**“for in them is filled up [to bring to completion; to finish] the wrath of God”** - Once these plagues are poured out, God’s wrath against the Antichrist and his followers will be finished. John is awed and amazed because of the extreme severity of these plagues.

**Verses 2-5:** John sees a group of people described as being victorious over the beast and his ungodly requirements standing on the sea of glass with harps and singing a song praising God for the greatness and justness of His works. These people may be the martyred saints that John saw under the altar when the fifth seal was opened (Rev. 6:9-11) who will see their blood avenged upon the earth by the completion of these final judgments.

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<sup>6</sup> And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. <sup>7</sup> And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

**“And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues”** - The act of coming out of the temple implies that these angels are coming from the presence of God with their instructions and with the authority to pour out the final judgments of God. They do not receive the vials containing the plagues until v. 7.

**“clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles”** - The clothes of the angels speak of their holiness and rank befitting the responsibility that has been given to them to administer the final judgments.

**“And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials [broad shallow bowl] full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever”** - One of the four beasts that John saw in chapter 4 gives each angel a “vial” (the Greek word indicates a broad shallow bowl) containing the wrath of God expressed in a plague. John mentions God’s eternal nature, implying that God is not restrained by the confines of time but can pour out His wrath whenever He deems appropriate. The judgment of the world has been coming for thousands of years and it is now time for it to commence so that Christ can establish His kingdom on earth.

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<sup>8</sup> And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

The temple is filled with the Shekinah glory of God as He expresses His holiness in His final judgments on the sins and rebellion of mankind. The Greek word for “no man” means “no one” indicating that no created being (angel, human or otherwise) was able to approach God while He is pouring out His wrath until these final judgments were completed.

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### Revelation 16

<sup>1</sup> 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.

A voice from the temple, presumably God’s, commands the angels to begin pouring out the vials containing His wrath upon the earth.

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<sup>2</sup> And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

The first angel’s plague inflicts severe sores on the people of the earth. The Greek word for “noisome” means “troublesome; destructive” and the word for “grievous” means “to be full of peril or hardship.” These sores are more than just an annoyance for they will cause great pain and hardship for those afflicted with them. The sores afflict only those who have sworn their allegiance to the beast by taking his mark and worshipping his image. God’s people are apparently protected from this plague.

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<sup>3</sup> And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

Water had already turned to blood on a limited scale previously in Revelation. The second trumpet judgment had already resulted in the third part of the sea becoming blood (Rev. 8:8) and the two witnesses had the ability to turn water sources into blood (Rev. 11:6). However, now the oceans will become vile and putrid when the second plague transforms them into the blood of a dead man. All life in the sea will die and add to the horribleness as all the bodies of salt water on earth are compromised. Weather patterns on the earth will be thrown into chaos without this water to feed the ecological system.

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<sup>4</sup> And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

The second plague was focused on salt water but the third plague targets freshwater sources (including the water table), turning them into blood. All sources of potable water will be gone and life on earth will become very difficult.

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<sup>5</sup> 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. <sup>6</sup> For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

The angel who poured out the third plague makes a comment, proclaiming that God is righteous and just in inflicting this third plague on the earth despite its severity. The angel says that the judgment is appropriate because the inhabitants of the earth deserve to drink blood as a result of the shedding of the blood of God's people. They desired blood and so God has given them blood.

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

John hears another voice coming from the altar declaring its agreement that the judgments of God are just and righteous. When John saw the fifth seal opened he saw the souls of those who had been slain for their faith in Jesus Christ (Rev. 6:9-11). These souls were asking the Lord how long it would be before their blood was avenged on the earth. Perhaps this voice that John hears represents these martyred souls (or perhaps an angel speaking in their behalf) expressing their agreement with God's judgments.

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<sup>8</sup> And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. <sup>9</sup> And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

The fourth vial gives the sun the ability to burn people on the surface of the earth. There are two possibilities here: (1) the light, heat, and radiation emitted by the sun increases in intensity; (2) the earth's natural defenses against solar radiation (the earth's magnetic field and the ozone layer) have been weakened as a consequence of prior judgments. Either possibility (or both) would result in making it dangerous to be outside without proper protection from the sun.

Rather than repent of their sins and give God glory, men instead blaspheme the name of God. The expression "which hath power over these plagues" seems to indicate that men recognize that God is the One responsible for the plagues and they will blame Him for their suffering rather than themselves and their sin.

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<sup>10</sup> And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, <sup>11</sup> And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

The fifth vial causes darkness to come upon the "seat" (throne) of the beast and his "kingdom" (all those who have taken his mark). This plague of darkness reminds us of the ninth plague on Egypt (Ex. 10:21-22) which was a thick darkness which could be felt. The Egyptians were unable to see one another or leave their homes for three days. It's not clear what it will be about the darkness of this plague in v. 10 that would cause them to "gnaw their tongues for pain." Perhaps the darkness causes the pain but the more likely answer is that being forced to sit in darkness these people had nothing to distract them from the pain that they were already experiencing from the previous plagues. As a result of their pain they continued to blaspheme God rather than repent of their sins.

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<sup>12</sup> And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

The judgment from the sixth vial causes the Euphrates river, which is now full of blood, to dry up. This river forms the eastern boundary of the land promised to Israel. This judgment has less of an immediate impact because its purpose is to make it easier for the kings of the east to move their forces to the location of the battle of Armageddon.

**Verses 13-16:** These verses describe how that demonic spirits from the dragon (Satan), the beast and the false prophet will go out and use their influence to convince the kings of the earth to come with their armies to Armageddon. It's amazing to think that Satan would have the deluded idea that human armies could assist him in his rebellion against God and have a chance of overthrowing Him. However, this is all being done to fulfill God's will, so perhaps God is using Satan to accomplish His will.

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<sup>17</sup> And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

When the seventh angel pours his vial into the air, the voice of God coming from the temple of heaven and the throne declares "It is done." This is the final judgment to be poured out on the earth. The following verses (vs. 18-21) describe the effects of the seventh vial which are consistent with predictions of Christ's return. There are voices, thunders and lightening which speak of God's judgment, as well as the largest earthquake known to man which divides "the great city" into three parts. Commentators differ on whether "the great city" is Jerusalem or Babylon, the Antichrist's capital city (whose destruction is described in chapters 17 and 18) since both cities are described as such in Revelation. In addition to the earthquake or perhaps as a result of it, the islands of the sea will move or perhaps even sink. The mountains also will crumble or disappear. Gigantic hailstones will also fall from the sky, weighing a talent each (100 or 200 lbs, depending on whether you're talking about a talent of silver or of gold). This judgment seems to be bringing us right up to the threshold of Christ's appearing, which will be described in chapter 19.