Seven Bowl Judgements and the End of Babylon Part 1

By Charles Feinberg

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This is the sixth tape in the series on The Book of the Revelation. The study is by Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean Emeritus and Professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary.

The 15th and 16th chapters of Revelation Deal with the bowl judgments. These all take place in the last half of the great tribulation period with what is called in prophesy the latter a time of the indignation. From the text the inference seems probable that they will transpire in a very brief period of time. They will be rapid, they will be severe, they will be tremendously devastating. Now Revelation does deal repeatedly with judgment but not solely so not exclusively so for the final prospect, Thank God, is bright. We're going to have a grand finale, a great hallelujah chorus at the end. Now the seven bowls of God's wrath are prepared for in the 15th chapter of the revelation. In the first verse we have the last plays. We have here now another sign. There are two signs up to this portion, one in Chapter 12:1 and 3, the sign of the woman and that of the dragon. Now we've come to the third sign in 15:1 which consists of the seven angels having seven plagues. They are the last play for in them is finished the wrath of God. All of them were seen in heaven. When the Apostle John indicates the finishing of the wrath of God finality is expressed. This means the providential dealings and judgments of God. God comes. Through Christ in personal judgment In Chapter 19. The Wrath of God then is followed by the wrath of the lamb. Chapter 15:1 reads, "And I saw another sign in heaven, great
and marvelous, seven angels having seven plagues”, which are the last, “for in them is filled up the wrath of God”. Now before these angels pour out their wrath. In verses 2, 3, and 4 we have the song of the victors and that's the way this beautiful passage reads. "and I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that come all victorious over the beasts, and over his image and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of gold", harps of God rather, "and they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, 'great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways thou king of saints, the king of the ages. 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 righteous acts have been made manifest." Here's the song of the victors.

Now the difficulty with some students of the Book of Revelation is that whenever they read of redeemed ones, chosen ones, they immediately say they are of the church. They cannot conceive of anybody being redeemed and being outside of the church. Friends, There were many redeemed before the church was begun at Pentecost in Acts 2. And there will also be redeemed ones after the rapture. Redemption is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Neither the son of God nor the Holy Spirit of God goes out of existence. So there will be redemption but these will not be in the specific body of Christ called the church. That was begun on Earth at Pentecost, as we've said, it has its earthly pilgrimage finished at the rapture. This song of the victors does not mean that the church is on Earth. Speaking of those who’ve come out of the Great Tribulation .they've trusted Christ. Notice There was a sea of glass. There was a bronze Laver in the tabernacle of Moses and a bronze sea and the Temple of Solomon. Here it's a sea of glass, that which is unalterable and firm so that they could stand upon it. Now that brazen Laver in the tabernacle had its waters disturbed again and again because the
priests were washing at it. There was defilement to be cleansed from and similarly in the Temple of Solomon. But here it is a sea of glass. Their purity is fixed, it’s unalterable. They stand on the sea and it’s mingled with fire. The trials through which they have come under the beasts have literally been fiery ones. True they’ve come off victorious from the beast, but remember it was mingled with fire.

They stand as worshipers and conquerors over the beast, even though death. You notice they have harps? Harps of God. They're exactly the same company as revelation 14:2, and they're the same company as revelation 7. The harps are supplied by God and they sing the song of Moses of Exodus 15 and the song of the lamb. Both are songs of deliverance. That of Moses was one of physical deliverance. The song of the lamb is one of spiritual deliverance whether in grace or in judgment the works and acts of God are all righteous. They are all just and that's what these extoll, the Greatness and marvel of God's works. They are righteous and true. If you've gotten somewhat weary of the judgments of this book remember we dare not accuse god, he's king of the ages and King of the nations. And here we have the song of the victors, the beautiful song of the victors.

In chapter 15:5-8 We read, "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 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. 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 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”. That’s Revelation 15:5-8. These four verses tell us of the seven angels from the temple. The Temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven is in
view whenever the temple is mentioned, Israel is in view. God will fulfill his covenant promises to them. The Angels are arrayed with purity and righteousness. Now in verses 7 and verse 8 it is a scene of awesome solemnity and gravity. The judgment proceeds from the very presence of God himself. The living creatures are the agents for the performance of the judicial government of God. The smoke is not that of incense but that of fire. The wrath of God is here in all its consuming power. Grace is not in view here for the moment. You remember Hebrews 12:29, "Our God is a consuming fire".

We come now to the 16th of the Revelation, verses 1 and 2, "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. 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", verses 1 and 2. In these first two verses of the sixteenth chapter we have the first bowl judgment. These are Bowls, remember, of God's wrath. A voice comes out of the temple from the holiest place in the universe, the holy of holies. All awaits the bidding of God himself and the time, it's the hour of God. It must all be according to God's time piece. The pouring out speaks of an overflowing measure without stint or reserve. The bowls of the temple were used for purposes of grace for the shed blood and the presentation thereof to God. But now they are seen in use for judgment just as the altar was a provision of grace then, and now it is seen in the book of Revelation in judgment. Why? Because when God's grace is spurned only judgment remains to be endured. Now we turn and find here in verse two that there's a pouring out of the bowl into the earth which became a grievous sore. It reminds us of this of the sixth plague in Egypt. Bad ulcers are going to show outwardly their inward corruption and moral condition. These are meant to be literal. Now if you would take them figuratively or
symbolically remember the actual has to be so much worse. If you say you’re as cold as ice, ice must be colder than you are. These are going to be afflicted just as they were literally afflicted in Egypt. Oh how men will speak again and again to outlast and defy the judgment of God. They cannot. They will not. Friend, lift your heart simply by faith. And the best you know how, take Christ as your personal savior if you have never done so before.

Now in Chapter 16 verse 3, we’re going to read through verse 7, "And the second poured out his vial into the sea". Remember the first one was into the earth now the second bowl by the second angel is poured out into the sea, "and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 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. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgements". The second and third bowls of wrath.

In Chapter 16:3 we have the pouring out of the second bowl. God is sovereign not only on Earth for the first bowl is poured out into the earth, but he's also sovereign in the sea. Those great bodies of water around the world. The second bowl is poured out upon the sea. It reminds us of the first plague of Egypt, Exodus 7:17-25. The water of the Nile was turned into blood, blood which is the life is here made the cause of death. In verses 4-7, we have the third bowl poured out into the rivers and the fountains of waters and it becomes blood. We need to be continually reminded that God is doing all this in truth and in righteousness. We have the Angel of the waters in the 5th verse. Almost every subject in the book of Revelation has its angel. The judgment is over his sphere of rule. But notice he justifies the judgment of God. He says God is
right. His judgment is valid. God is just and righteous when he punishes. He’s just as righteous when he punishes as when he blesses. Even the altar vindicates God's wrath. It's the altar burnt offering. If men would only realize, Beloved, what these judgments involve and they don't even remotely approach in severity the agonies of hell; if people would only realize what these judgments involve, they'd certainly be driven to consider the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ. If unsaved men and women could only see the danger in delay they might yet flee from the wrath to come to the Almighty, blessed savior of men.

Now look at verses 8 and 9, "And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 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." That's the fourth bowl found in verses 8 and 9. The Fourth Angel poured out his bowl where? Upon the sun. It was given of him to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with great heat. They blasphemed the name of God and repented not, all the more. All this bowl, the forth one is poured upon the sun, the source of such blessing and oh what a blessing the sun is, is now made the medium of God's wrath and of his judgment. These features that are so necessary to life upon earth are being turned, friends, into instruments of judgment. When man has not properly evaluated and received with faith these wonderful provisions of God, God turns them into means of judgment. The sun's heat is tremendously intensified but they blaspheme the name of God as they do in verse 11 and as they do in verse 21. These judgments are not remedial. They are not corrective in effect but they show all the more the corruptness of the objects of the wrath, the judgments are punitive, they're punishments. The dwellers on earth are unchangeable. How slow fallen man can be to respond to the mighty arm of God. Men who will not be drawn by God's love, remember it, will not be drawn by his wrath you may be sure.
Verses 10 and 11, "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, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds". In verses 10 and 11, we read of the fifth bowl. This bowl is poured out on the throne of the Beast. Where is that? Rome was the capital of the Roman beast. Its gods unequivocal answer to that insolent question we had in 13:4, "who can make war with a beast?" it's further answered in the nineteenth chapter, verses 19 to 21 when Christ makes war with the beast and completely routs him, the Kingdom of the beast is darkened. That’s an allusion to Egypt again where darkness reigned for three days, Exodus 10 verses 21 to 23. "The disobedient ones gnaw Their Tongues". The only expression of its kind in the Bible. It speaks of the most intense pain and agony, excruciating. But there is no repentance, Rather there's a degradation. In verse 9 the name of God is blasphemed. Here God himself is blasphemed. They grow worse instead of better.

In verse 12, "The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the river Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. And 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; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty". Parenthetically the spirit of Gods says, "Behold”, for the remnant godly ones in Israel at that time, “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame". Now where are these sign working demons, spirits leading the kings of the whole world? “And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon”, Har-Magedon.
In verses 12 to 16, We have presented the sixth bowl, the 6th angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, that's the river Euphrates, the biggest river in that part of the world. The water of this river was dried up so that the way might be made ready for the Kings that come from the Sunrise and that's from the Far East. Now who are these unclean spirits? They're spirits of demons working signs. They are miracle-working demon spirits. They go forth under the kings of the whole world to gather them together unto the war. It's the war of the great day of God the Almighty. As I've said verse 15 is parenthetical, as you'll notice in your Bible it's in parenthesis between the six bowl and the seventh, Just as there was a parenthesis, a breathing spell as it were between the sixth and seventh seal judgments and between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments, so here there is a parenthesis between the sixth and seventh bowl judgments.

In verse twelve we read of those kings from the sun rising. From what area do they come? They come from the east. For instance China, Japan, India, all these have experienced a tremendous awakening in the last quarter of a century we read of the great place that they're going to have in the final conflict. There are demonic visitations on the earth at this time. What the spirits are exactly is not known. We do know that demonic spirits and the scriptures state that they gather the kings of the earth together unto the war of Armageddon. Megiddo is the mountain overlooking the valley Esdraelon. That's the Greek for the Hebrew Jezreel, the valley of Jezreel on the Great Plain of Jezreel of the northern part of Palestine. Napoleon in the last century once said as he viewed Megiddo, he said, "What an excellent place into which all the armies of the world could be maneuvered". He spoke better than he knew. The armies of the nations of the Earth will be maneuvering there in a coming day. Verse fifteen is a word to the remnant In Israel. The Hebrew saints of the time not to be ensnared in the plans of Satan and of his hosts.
And so we read in verse 17-21 to complete chapter 16, "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. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the wright of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Revelation 16, 17th verse through 21, the end of the chapter. The seventh Angel poured out his bowl on the air. There came forth a great voice out of the temple from the throng declaring all was finished. There were lightings, we're told, there were voices, there were thunders and a great earthquake such as had never been on Earth before this. This particular bowl is poured out upon the air which is the domain of Satan. How do we know that? Scripture tells us he's the prince of the power of the air. Notice the accompanying judgments, you cannot tone that down. These terrifying judgments are the reason that this period is called rightly the period of the Great Tribulation. Friend it breaks God's heart to pour out these judgments, you can be sure. But they must be poured out upon a Christ defying, God rejecting, spirit disowning world. What is the great city? Why it's the city, the head of the Roman Empire that is spoken of both politically and socially in verse 21. Every stone of hail, every hailstone, we're told was about the weight of a talent. That's about a hundred pounds. Imagine hail dropping down like that. The damage it would do, not only to property, but to human beings, to individuals. What tremendous damage it could do. But man, he's not learned. He's still perverse. Man is still blasphemous, He blasphemes God because of the plague of the
hail. Here you have a picture then of the destruction of all institutions, religious, moral, spiritual that man has set up apart from God.

The end of the chapter forms the transition from the judgment of God upon Babylon which will be more fully dealt with in the next two chapters, chapters 17 and 18. In this study we'll go through the 19th verse of the 18th chapter. Why need there be any delay in coming to Christ? Why? What better opportunity. Will Christ be more ready now, in a coming time than he is now? No, No. Will his work be more effective? Will it be more powerful later on than now? No it is equally effective in every age, in every day, in every land, with every heart. Friend If you're unsaved this hour, we dare not go on glibly reading these remarkable studies and hearing them. We dare not except we do what we know God wants us to do. And if you're unsaved this hour, decide now. Say, "nothing in my hand I bring, simply to thy cross I cling. Other refuge have I none, hangs my helpless soul on thee."

Now when we concluded the 16th chapter of the book of the revelation, we’ve actually finished the three great series of judgments, the three great cycles of seven judgments, the seven seal judgments, the seven trumpet judgments, and the seven bowl judgment. Now we come to the seventeenth chapter, it’s a pivotal chapter, it’s a significant chapter in this book. We have here the doom of ecclesiastical, or religious Babylon. Chapter 17 and 18 are an elaboration if you will, a commentary, of that preliminary word that we have had in Chapter 16 VERSE 19, "And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.” There you have that statement concerning Babylon. There was a previous one, you'll remember, a word of anticipation, a word of looking ahead, a fore gleam in Revelation 14:8.
Now, what did we say Chapter 17 is dealing with? It deals with the doom of spiritual, or ecclesiastical, or religious Babylon. We're going to read the first six verses, "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgement of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters: With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: and upon her forehead was a name written", notice she is identified, oh tremendously, clearly, detailedly, “Mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of the Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus", Think of it. "When I saw her, I wondered with a great wonder".

We have a number of important things in this chapter. This chapter may be easily divided into three parts, the first one we've read. The first six verses speak of the description of this Babylon how is she to be identified? How is she to be recognized? She's described. You'll notice this description of Babylon is masterful. Every detail is important. We read First of all that the Apostle John is shown the judgment of the great harlot that sits upon many waters. What's the meaning of the many waters? Well they are explained for us in verse 15. They are peoples, multitudes of nations, and tongues. Just as water is shifting and is in a state of flux, unstable. So that's a great picture of the Peoples just as in Psalm 2, raging like the sea. Peoples are likened to the waters of the sea. Multitudes of nations and tongues are spoken of under the figure of the
many waters. So this woman has control over people's nations. Country she sits and rules the nations, how? Religiously just as the beast, the political leader, the head of the revived Roman Empire. The first best of Revelation 13 rules in a political sense.

Now who is this woman? There are four women in the book of Revelation. In the second chapter we saw Jezebel, the corrupt religious system. Then we saw the woman in the twelfth chapter, Israel from whom came Lord Jesus Christ that male child who shall yet rule the nations with a rod of iron. Now in our chapter, the 17th chapter, we have another woman, Babylon, who reminds us of the woman in the second chapter. It's all corrupt. Notice it, a-l-l. It is all corrupt, religious systems rolled together in one huge, massive, hideous, abominable system of religion apart from God namely headed up in the system that we can recognize as papal wrong. But remember it's not just the Roman system, it’s all false systems against God. I'm going to definitely be headed up in this particular mystery. Something kept solid now made known, mystery Babylon. Not a literal Babylon. This is mystical, spiritual, figurative, symbolic Babylon. Literal Babylon was built on the plains of Shinar, not on mountains or on hills as you read in the 17th chapter and the ninth verse. This book of the revelation concerning this Babylon. But just as Jerusalem is called Sodom and Egypt In chapter 11 verse 8, so all corrupt religious systems put together are called Babylon. They are spiritual confusion. They are the opposite of God's orderly system of truth. And the aim of these corrupt religious systems, hear it, is to be in control of the temporal, Political, governmental powers.

[End part 1]