

A Short Paraphrase on the Seven Bowls

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Revelation 15:5 to 16:21

{5} I, John, was taken forward in time to events that will begin just after the seventh trumpet sounds. As I looked up into Heaven, I saw the Temple of God. But this time, I saw something that filled me with awe and foreboding. The people living on Earth during this time saw a marvelous event take place in the heavens. They saw the Heavenly temple opened and the Ark of the Testimony (the ark containing the Ten Commandments) was revealed.

As I pondered this scene, I began to understand that when the temple (where God's Law is kept) was opened for people on Earth to view, it meant that God Himself would display His personal regard for His holy law. This is necessary since billions of people on Earth are ignorant regarding His law and no longer hold it in high esteem. (Romans 8:7)

By this time, everyone had heard about the law of God, but many chose to obey the glorious Antichrist rather than the true God of Heaven. After seeing the Ark of the Covenant displayed in the heavens, the saints trembled at God's sovereign authority and the wicked were filled with terror. Everyone understood that The Almighty was about to execute the sentence on all who had rebelled against His authority and received the mark of the lamb-like beast. In spite of this, the wicked remained defiant in their rebellion.

I was amazed at the blasphemy and boldness of men and women during the Great Tribulation as they trampled on God's Law as though it were nothing. {6} I saw the same seven angels who had previously executed the seven trumpets, now come out of the temple. These seven angels were mighty and highly exalted angels.

They wore clean, shining linen and golden sashes around their chests. These seven angels had been given the responsibility to execute the vengeance of God upon the wicked: the seven *last* plagues. These plagues were not like the seven *first* plagues. The first seven plagues (seven trumpets) were executed with mercy, in an attempt to reveal God's authority and His offer of salvation.

The seven last plagues, however, revealed the full force of God's wrath on people who had willfully rejected His truth and joined the devil's forces, helping to torture and kill millions of God's people.

{7} One of the four living creatures gave a golden bowl to each of the seven angels. Each bowl was full of God's vengeance. All of Heaven's inhabitants watched with solemn interest, for God's wrath had never been revealed in this manner before. {8} Jesus was standing in the Temple's courtroom.

He indicated that it was time for wrath to be inflicted on all people who had willfully received the

mark of the beast. He threw a censer filled with live coals and incense down to mark the end of God's mercy for all inhabitants on Earth. The courtroom filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His glorious power. The glory of God had been unveiled and no one could enter the temple until the seven angels had completed the work associated with the seven plagues.

This brilliant manifestation of God's glory reminded me of the incident at Mount Sinai when Moses asked to see God's glory. God told Moses that no one could look upon God's face and live. So Moses moved behind a cleft in the rock and God protected him from the consuming glory of His splendor.

Now, God was revealing His glory that had been "concealed." Even the angels, who had been summoned to witness Heaven's proceedings, could not remain in His exalted and glorious presence. The people of Earth saw this manifestation of God's glory in Heaven as the sky became violent with lightning, peals of thunder and rumblings.

The devil, his angels, and the people who had received the mark of the beast were paralyzed with fear. When they saw the glory of God flashing through the heavens, the saints knew that His generous and extended offer of salvation had been withdrawn.

{16:1} Then I heard Jesus say to the seven angels, "Go, pour the seven bowls of God's wrath on the Earth." Jesus said to the first angel, "The devil has imposed his mark on everyone except the people who are faithful to me. He has cut off all food supplies from my people and they cannot buy or sell because they refuse to wear his mark.

Go now and curse the ground, poison the produce and let those who wear the mark of the beast eat food that is cursed. The wicked will suffer double in return for the suffering they have brought to my people."

{2} The first angel poured out his bowl of poison on the land. Ugly and exceedingly painful sores broke out on the people who ate the contaminated food. However, the saints did not experience these painful sores for they were being protected by ministering angels.

When the wicked realized the livestock, vegetables and fruit were poisoned, they turned to the sea to find food. Then Jesus said, "The sea will not provide food either. The wicked have shed much innocent blood and why should I allow sea food to sustain them? Give them much blood to eat."

{3} The second angel poured his bowl on the seven oceans and the water turned into a thick blood-like fluid, like that of a dead man. Every living creature in the sea died. The poison in the second angel's bowl killed everything in the ocean and millions of tons of dead fish washed up on the shores.

A terrible stench covered the world and the odor made the wicked people deathly sick. In all of this, the saints were not affected for God continued to provide for them.

The devil recognized the hand of God in these horrible judgments. To keep his subjects from

revolting he claimed that rebels had placed a demonic curse upon him and his people. He assured his wicked followers that these plagues were the result of their curse.

At a great rally, the devil demanded that all who refused his mark should be killed. He cried, "Let their blood fill the oceans." Jesus watched from Heaven and heard the wicked people shout and cheer their approval. Jesus said, "Since they have called for the blood of my people, then let them have blood to drink."

{4} The third angel poured his bowl of poison on the rivers and springs of water, and the poison made these waters, like the oceans, deadly and bloody looking. There was no clean drinking water anywhere. The horrible agony caused by the first three plagues was terrible.

Billions of people went without water and the agony it caused was unbearable to watch. After all this had happened, I was astonished at the response of the people who had the mark of the beast. Even now, they refused to repent. In fact, they were more determined in their rebellion than ever before.

{5} Then the angel with the third bowl said to Jesus: "You are just and fair in these judgments, You who are and who were, the Holy One, because You have judged this way. {6} For the devil's followers have shed the blood of Your saints and *prophets*, and You have given them blood to drink as they deserve."

{7} The mighty angel who served at the altar of incense also responded: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, Your vengeance on the wicked is true, and Your punishments are fair and appropriate."

Angels observe human conduct impartially and when they declared the actions of Jesus to be righteous and fully justified, this impressed me very much. The saints were not affected by the poisoned drinking water. In fact, angels continued to provide food and water to all God's waiting people.

As I watched, wicked people were in great distress. The darkness of the fourth trumpet still lingered over large parts of Earth and scientists asked the devil to make the sun shine again. The devil, masquerading as God, promised to clear the sky so that crops could grow.

So, Jesus commissioned the fourth angel to pour {8} his bowl on the sun and allowed the darkness to go away. The people were pleased at first and they thought the devil, masquerading as God, had blessed them. But then the sun became so hot that it scorched Earth with unbearable heat.

{9} Objects became so hot that people were burned by touching them. The devil's followers had no water to drink and this caused them to suffer even more. In spite of all this, they absolutely refused to repent and worship the only true God. They cursed the saints and the God in Heaven *who had control of these plagues*.

After the fourth angel had poured out the fourth plague, the wicked people of Earth pleaded with

their exalted leader, the devil, to relieve them from their unbearable suffering. They said to the devil, "if you are God as you claim to be, stop these curses.

Ever since you ascended to the throne of Earth, our condition has become worse and worse. Use your great miracle working powers and end our suffering!" These reasonable and logical requests placed the devil in a predicament, especially since he had claimed that he was Almighty God.

The devil did not want the world to know that he could not stop the plagues of the Most High God. So, in an attempt to conceal this, the devil called a meeting of Babylon's leaders. Together, they prepared a plan to stop the plagues.

The *final solution*, the devil suggested, was a universal death decree for all people who refuse to obey him. This, he maintained, would rid the Earth forever of those people who cast *satanic* curses upon the world. "When these people are eliminated," he said, "I will restore the world to a garden like Eden."

The plan was shared with the world leaders and they were summoned to approve the universal death decree that would be enforced on the saints. In response to this worldwide declaration, Jesus authorized the next angel to pour out the poison of the fifth bowl immediately.

{10} The fifth bowl was specifically directed at the administration of the devil and his one-world government. A plague that caused painful blindness immediately darkened the eyes of people who attended the meeting of the administrators for Babylon. Because they had willfully chosen to close their eyes to God's truth, He sent this plague of physical blindness upon them. The darkness was as total as the plague of darkness God sent on ancient Egypt and men gnawed their tongues in agony.

{11} They cursed the God of Heaven because of their pain and sores, but sadly they still refused to repent for what they had done.

This plague stunned the whole world. All who had chosen to follow the devil now began to question the identity of the one who claimed to be God. Why would this being, who claimed to be God, send a curse of painful blindness upon his own leaders? Why would he treat his followers with such contempt unless he *really* was the devil?

God sent this plague specifically to reveal the truth about the identity of the Antichrist. The 144,000, who had been called "false prophets," were now revealed as the true prophets after all. The 144,000 had been right! The devil was the "false prophet."

Unspeakable disappointment, guilt and fear now ran rampant among the people who had chosen to follow the Antichrist! However, no matter how remorseful a person may be, if they refuse to obey God and instead, place their trust in the Father of lies, the devil, the natural consequence will be to experience these types of emotions.

{12} Then, Jesus sent the sixth angel to Earth and he poured his bowl on the great river

Euphrates. (This ancient river, on the northern boundary of Israel, is used symbolically in Revelation to represent overwhelming destruction caused by flooding. See Daniel 9:26)

The parallel can be drawn as the river Euphrates symbolically dries up – the devil loses control over the world that he gained through overwhelming destruction (symbolized as the flooding of the Euphrates during the sixth *trumpet* in Revelation 9:13-21).

The devil is completely unmasked and it is now time for the glorious appearing of the Father and Son. They are the great Kings of Heaven and Earth who come from the East. Note the two-step process God uses. First, Jesus reveals the true identity of the devil during the fifth plague, then He removes the devil's controlling authority in the sixth plague.

The devil's vast empire is crumbling fast. The entire universe can now see that sin is nothing more than defiant rebellion against God's authority. In a desperate and final attempt to save himself, Satan rallies the world around his plan to destroy the saints of God before Jesus arrives to rescue them.

At this hour, when the devil is about to lose his dominion, he organizes his greatest and most impressive effort.

{13} Then, I [John] saw a great wonder. The devil himself announced the soon appearing of Almighty God to the wicked. The devil explained that Jesus was coming to rescue His followers and destroy His enemies. The devil told his followers that the beings who would come in the clouds were the enemies of God!

He said the only hope for mankind was to destroy all the people who refused to obey him (God's people) before Jesus arrives. Also, mankind must be prepared to destroy the Father and Son when they appear in the sky.

To strengthen his argument for rebellion against God, the devil confesses that the plagues were the works of an angry God and now, men must fight against God with all of their weapons of war or they will be destroyed.

Note: Remember, the devil used this argument before. He actually convinced one-third of the angels to fight against Michael and His angels! This time, however, he convinces wicked men, mere mortals, to attempt the same fight.

The devil has mighty angels who serve him, just as God has mighty angels that serve Him. The devil will send his demons throughout the world. Like the millions of frogs that covered all of Egypt in the days of Pharaoh, these evil ambassadors will blanket the *whole world* with the news that mankind must prepare for war against the soon appearing Jesus.

To give people a false hope about their chances of winning the battle, the demons will work many mighty miracles. One of their most powerful and deceptive miracles will be to make dead people *appear* to be alive (apparitions), although they really are not. Just as the 144,000 will invoke the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to perform miracles, the demons will invoke

the name of the dragon, the empire of Babylon, and the name that the devil uses in his disguise as God, to make dead people literally appear as living people.

What a masterful delusion! {14} But I saw that these manifestations were nothing more than demons performing miraculous signs. They went to the ten kings of the world to unite them and ultimately destroy God's saints with a universal death decree.

The stupidity and brutality of the wicked amazed me. They willfully followed the "man of sin," knowing that he was the devil. The devil's mighty, evil angels united the world in a two-part plan. First, the wicked would kill all of God's saints.

Then, they would launch nuclear warheads to destroy Jesus who would soon appear in the sky. However, in all this planning, the wicked only accomplished the will of Almighty God.

It was at that moment when I realized what Jesus had achieved. The purpose of the sixth plague was to assemble all the people who were opposed to Him. By uniting them in the common goal of war, He would come to Earth and confront His enemies.

But what is man or an angel compared with God? Woe to those who try to quarrel with their Maker. When the saints learned about their death decree, they could do nothing but wait for the Lord's deliverance.

{15} Then, Jesus spoke to His anxious saints. In a wonderful voice He said to the people He loved, "Behold, I am coming soon! Do not be discouraged by this death decree because it will not stand. Trust in God. You will be blessed if you stand firm in faith and remain alert. Do not worry, for I will strip my enemies of their useless armor so their nakedness and shame will be exposed."

{16} Meanwhile, the demons of Satan gathered the kings of Earth to a place that is called Armageddon in Hebrew. This place is not a geographical location. The term represents a predicament like that used in an English colloquialism: "A place between the devil and the deep blue sea."

In Hebrew, the word Armageddon combines two words that mean "the mountain of Megiddo." (No literal mountain exists which bears this name. However, there is a plain called Megiddo where King Josiah died. Against God's orders, Josiah foolishly went to Megiddo and died fighting King Neco of Egypt.)

A twofold, figurative meaning exists for the word Armageddon. First, a mountain symbolizes the dwelling place of God and on this summit, the Most High God will reveal Himself, just like He did in the days of Elijah at Mt. Carmel. Second, Megiddo symbolizes death for the people who foolishly fight against God.

The kings of Earth will unite to kill the remnant of God and destroy Jesus when He appears. They will join with the devil and his demons. What other choice do they have? They will quickly try to kill all the people of God and just as they are about to implement the universal death

decree, Jesus will arrest them.

The leaders of the world will be caught *red-handed* as they try to murder the innocent people of Almighty God. God will stop them in their tracks with a powerful manifestation of His glory. The shame of the wicked will be completely revealed.

The wicked were once powerful, but are now powerless; once strong, but are now broken; once believing in the devil, but are now stubborn in their evil. The wicked now view their surroundings and see their world as completely uninhabitable. The ugly tattoo of their leader can be seen on their foreheads and hands, yet they continue to oppose the Eternal God. They have fought in vain. Not only have they refused to receive salvation, they have also refused to comprehend the results of sin and their rebellion against Jesus.

During the remaining days of Earth's history, the wicked will watch the utter collapse of the world's government as they knew it. The leaders of Earth will prove to be just mortal. Their authority and power will be stripped away as Jesus destroys each element of Babylon's government. It will be a pathetic picture. The saints will stand in awe as they watch the whole world reduced to worthless ruins right before their eyes.

{17} Finally, at the appointed time, Jesus commissions the angel with the seventh bowl to announce His appearing. From the temple a loud voice from the throne shouted, "It is finished!" The angels, the elders and the entire universe rejoice with the consummation of the plan of salvation. The consequences of evil have been revealed. No created being will ever question the holiness, authority or love of God again. God's law will be forever recognized as supreme and righteous.

{18} Around the world there are flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake of this magnitude has ever occurred since man lived on Earth.

{19} The great city of Babylon, the throne of the devil and his government, splits into three parts, and cities in all nations collapse. God has remembered every deed of Babylon the Great and she receives a double portion of His wrath, just as she made His saints drink wrath from her cup.

{20} Then, the Father, the Son, and all the glorious angels appear in the sky. This earthquake that accompanies their appearing is so large that every island disappears and mountains crumble.

{21} Huge rocks fall upon the wicked from the Heavens. As Jesus and the Father appear in the clouds, the wicked cry for the rocks to "**Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne [the Father] and from the wrath of the Lamb [the Son]!**" (Revelation 6:16)

They continue to curse God, this time for sending the plague of hailstones, because it is so terrible.

Perhaps the most amazing conclusion drawn from the seven last plagues is that in the end, the

wicked still deny the existence, love, authority, law and power of God. What does this say about the effects of sin on the human mind? However, the story of sin is not over at the Second Coming.

Remember, God will clarify everything to the wicked a thousand years later, right after the second resurrection.

(To study further on this topic, read Study # 2 – "The State of Man" from *The Five Essential Bible Truths* series.)