

## **REVELATION PART SEVEN - Chapters 15, 16, 17 and 18**

### **Chapter 15 – The Seven Angels with Seven Plagues**

In Chapter 14, God sent an angel to preach the eternal Gospel for the last time so that the whole world would hear it; and He sent another angel to warn people that the Babylon that they adore and worship would fall; and a third angel was sent to warn them that all those with the mark of the Antichrist (first beast) would be judged severely for eternity. God had done His job of warning the rebellious people and hence this chapter introduces the last set of the 7 judgments called the 7 Bowls Judgements.

The difference is that, in the past, we saw God's hand against the people, sometimes against a city or against a particular group of people; but here, the judgments would be universal and everyone would be suffering. It was described in the 3 sets of judgments not because it was sequential, but to help us digest the horror of the sufferings that would happen on Earth during that Great Tribulation period. This will better prepare us for the magnitude of the judgments.

We will see 7 angels in this chapter.

1. Revelation 15:1. John saw a sign in heaven: 7 angels having seven last plagues that would complete the wrath of God.
2. Revelation 15:2-4.
  - a) John saw a sea of glass mingled with fire. Fire speaks of judgement. Earlier in Revelation 4:6, John saw a sea of glass that looked like crystal, which signified the peace before God's throne. Note the contrast of peace versus judgement here.
  - b) Then John saw those who had resisted and conquered the Beast (Antichrist) and his mark standing beside the sea of glass singing the Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb. When Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt and when they reached the other side of the Red Sea, they sang a song to thank God for His deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt. This time, those who had escaped Satan's plan to destroy them and escaped the evil world, also sang the same song. Both groups were liberated and they sang this Song of Moses and Song of the Lamb - "Great and Amazing are You, God, and true are Your judgments." It was a song of liberation and of thanksgiving.
3. Revelation 15:5-7. Next, John saw the temple in heaven opened. He saw 7 angels dressed in white linen robes who looked like the high priests described in the Old Testament. One of the living creatures gave each of these 7 angels a bowl each. This was to be the last set of judgements - the 7 Bowls Judgments, which would be further described in Chapter 16.
4. Revelation 15:8. John then saw the entire temple filled with smoke. Smoke speaks of God's glory, just like the pillar of cloud that appeared during the days of Israel's great escape from Egypt in the book of Exodus. No one could enter the temple till the 7 plagues from the 7 Bowls Judgments were over.

## Chapter 16 – The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath

1. Revelation 16:1. It began with a voice that shouted to the 7 angels to pour out the 7 Bowls Judgment of the wrath of God upon the Earth. These were the universal judgments.
2. Revelation 16:2. The first angel poured out the First Bowl on Earth and everybody who had the mark of the first beast (Antichrist) had painful sores and boils on their bodies. This was no longer affecting the Earth alone as in the earlier 7 Trumpets Judgement, but were affecting the bodies of the inhabitants of the Earth directly.
3. Revelation 16:3. The second angel poured out the Second Bowl on the sea and the sea water became like coagulated (semi-clotted) blood. All the sea creatures died. The blood of a dead man who had just died is no longer “watery or flowing”, but clotted. So, the sea water became like “clotting blood” that looked like red jelly blobs.
4. Revelation 16:4-7. The third angel poured out the Third Bowl upon the rivers and the springs of water. The rivers and the springs became blood. This plague was similar to the account in the book of Exodus (in Egypt), but on a massive scale such that everyone had nothing to drink such bloody water since the entire world was affected. The chapter says that this was a just and righteous judgment of God. These were the people who had shed the blood of God’s people by persecuting them, so now God forced them not only to see blood, but to drink blood since they loved bloodshed.
5. Revelation 16:8-9. The Fourth Bowl was poured out on the Sun. It intensified the heat of the Sun and scorched the people. Imagine having boils on your body, and having to drink bloody water, plus the extreme heat burning through you. Such torment was unbelievable, yet instead of pleading for mercy from God, they cursed God and did not repent. They were already on the road of no return. They had hardened their heart such that it was too late to turn back.
6. Revelation 16:10-11. The Fifth Bowl was thrown upon the kingdom of the first beast (Antichrist) and his kingdom became dark. This Antichrist who thought he controlled the current world, could not see anything, and they all gnawed their teeth, cursed God and did not repent.
7. Revelation 16:12. The Sixth Bowl was poured upon the River Euphrates. This brings us back again to where the world began, back to the Garden of Eden which was located in that area. River Euphrates had dried up so that the kings of the east and their armies could cross the river without any problem. The army might probably be from China, which is on the east of River Euphrates.
8. Revelation 16:13-16. Then 3 unclean spirits looking like frogs came out.
  - a) One came out from the mouth of the Dragon, another was from the mouth of the Antichrist, and the third was from the mouth of the False Prophet.
  - b) These were the spirits that would perform miracles to deceive the leaders of the world to make them think that they all needed to unite to fight against God!
  - c) Babylon (a representation of sinful man), who had always wanted to rebel against God but dare not do it openly, now rebelled by worshipping idols,

creating alternatives like Evolution Theory to push God out. They had never dared to say directly that there is no God.

- d) But now, the Antichrist did not only blaspheme God, they used these three frog-like spirits to convince all the leaders of the world that they needed to fight God physically. So, they all gathered to fight at the War of Armageddon. Armageddon in Hebrew means “Ha” = Mountain, “mageddon” = Megido. Hence, it is the Mountain of Megido which has a huge plain next to it that is perfect for battle. Many past battles had been fought on this plain. We will see the actual battle scene of Armageddon later in Revelation. Here, it is only describing the sequence of the events caused by the 7 Bowls.
9. Revelation 16:17-21. Then the Seventh Bowl was poured or thrown into the air.
- a) A loud voice said, “It is done!” Then it ended with lightning, thunder and earthquake, which is similar to the ending described earlier when the 7<sup>th</sup> Seal and 7<sup>th</sup> Trumpet happened. The lightning, thunder and earthquake, signified the end of each of the 3 sets of judgments.
- b) Hence it was not 3 sets of 7 judgements, but all 3 sets would be happening in the same period, but focusing on different aspects as they all end in the same way.
- c) The earthquake described in verse 18 was the greatest earthquake that had ever happened on Earth such that the city of Babylon split into 3 parts and all the rest of the cities in the world collapsed. This may mean that all the gorgeous buildings (equivalents of the Tower of Babel such as Petronas or Shanghai towers, etc.) which are monuments to human power, would all collapse and nothing would be left. Even the islands and the mountains would move, which was already described earlier but being described in greater intensity here. Hailstones (probably boulders of about 50 kg unlike the usual little pebble-like hailstones) would fall on everyone.
10. Imagine the sufferings of these people, having boils, being dehydrated with no drinking water, scorched by intense heat from the Sun, having hailstone falling on them, and the anguish of seeing their cities fall.
11. Revelation 16:15 says, “Behold, I am coming like a thief, blessed is he who stays awake.” God is warning us to be aware that He is coming. If we are awake, He is not a thief but to all who are asleep, all these happenings will be a shock to them. We who read the book of Revelation should be awake and be alert to all these things that will take place.

#### But what is this whole Chapter 16 about?

1. It shows that men would reached a point where they could no longer repent.
2. They know that God is angry but instead of pleading for mercy, they cursed God. They know that they could not do anything else, yet they refused to repent.
3. God is so merciful to have waited for thousands of years for people to repent, warning people through the prophets since the times of the Old Testament, and yet many still ignored the eternal Gospel to fear God who made the universe.

4. Men do not even want to acknowledge God and even claimed that there is no such thing as God. Despite having seen His amazing creation, they do not attribute it to God, but said that the Earth came about through chance. The question then is – ‘Who made the first atom?’ Atom cannot make themselves and multiply. Is this even possible in science? Yet they will never acknowledge that there is an amazing Creator.
5. So, what does God do? If you cannot even acknowledge Him as God, how can He be your God? So, He wipes all these stubborn people out, but His patience is unbelievable.

### Chapter 17 – The Great Prostitute and the Beast

In the previous chapter, we saw God’s universal judgments poured out upon Earth. Revelation 16:19 says that God remembered Babylon the Great, and He poured out His wrath on Babylon. This chapter tells us who this Babylon really is. It has been a mystery so far. Yet Babylon is one of the most frequently mentioned cities in the Bible.

1. Revelation 17:1. An angel came to John and said, “Come and let me show you the great prostitute”. John was shown a woman. Who is this prostitute?
  - a) We will soon see that Babylon is this great prostitute.
  - b) Verse 18 identifies Babylon as a city that controlled everything in the world. It was an economically powerful city. It was not a religious city.
  - c) Economic power is often achieved by military means. The western countries conquered and colonised the various countries. They brought the money out from the colonised countries into their own country. Those who have money control everything. Thus, arise this catchphrase “Money Talks!” which is a term commonly used by people.
2. Revelation 17:2 says the kings of the Earth committed sexual immorality with this woman, Babylon. It means that the god of this world is not the physical idols of religions. Increasingly so in the last days, many are idolising money as their god. The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). People will do anything for money. They will cheat, lie and entertain with prostitutes, etc., for money. People will go to this great city, Babylon, to do anything to make money. Money gives one power. Money controls the world today.
3. Revelation 17:3. John saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast.
  - a) This scarlet beast here is probably the same first beast (i.e. the Antichrist) revealed in Revelation 13:1-8. This scarlet beast also had blasphemous names, 7 heads and 10 horns.
  - b) The woman sat on the beast (Antichrist) and controlled the Antichrist while the Antichrist controlled the federation of kings after his resurrection. So, while Antichrist ruled over the kings, the city of Babylon ruled over Antichrist! Money rules the Antichrist. Money, in fact, controls the kings.
  - c) Revelation 17:4. This great prostitute dressed luxuriously adorning branded stuff. Everyone today is also seeking for branded goods. In the hand of this great prostitute was a golden cup filled with abominations, all kinds of sins,

corruption, sexual immorality, deceit, lies, drugs and whatever is necessary to make money.

- d) Revelation 17:5. On this woman's forehead was written, "Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of Earth's abominations."
  - e) The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. People are willing to sell their purity, their principles, even their mother, children, etc. for money.
4. This prostitute or city was drunk with the blood of martyrs.
- a) Christian principles are always exactly the opposite of this city's principles. The Christian principle is agape love, which is sacrificial giving; while Babylon's principle is the exact opposite i.e. grabbing. "The more you have, the better; and the weaker you are, the more others can and will exploit you." This statement summarises how the economic world works today.
  - b) The Christian principle is, "The more I have, the more I can give to the poor and the needy."

Hence these two groups of people will definitely be at conflict with each other.

5. Revelation 17:7-18. John was baffled and wondered what the meaning of "a woman sitting on the scarlet beast" was.
- a) The angel explained to him that the beast (Antichrist) controlled the kings (which is allowed by God) and that the beast and kings pledged allegiance to the city of Babylon. All the kings surrendered their power to the city because the city gave money to them in return.
  - b) But, like all kings or political leaders, they were all hungry for power. The giving away of the control or pre-eminence to the titans (of money) was only acceptable for a while because not long after, they could not stand it any longer that they did not have the real power and that the real power was in the hands of the city of Babylon.
  - c) God then put it into the minds of these kings to turn against the city itself and utterly destroy the city of Babylon. Thus, the term, "Babylon is fallen" was recorded in Revelation Chapter 18. They made sure that the city could not rule over them. They knew that the strength of their army is the real power and not money itself. They had the army and the might, and hence had the power to take back real power (and control) that belonged to them. Throughout history, money and military might (power) always come together. In olden days, King Nebuchadnezzar had military might and his kingdom (Babylon) became an economic power.
  - d) When the Book of Revelation was written, Rome became the richest city in the world due to its military might. So there have been many such "Babylons" in history.
  - e) The next chapter says that "Babylon is fallen", it means that finally, God will utterly destroy this world system where men want to control the world by money and military might.

In this chapter, we should begin to see the structure of it all.

1. That is always a city that controls the world's money at any point in time. This was Babylon in the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, Rome in Caesar's time, and New York now.
2. There will always be such "Babylons" in the world that control money and power which all the world leaders will bow to.
3. In the very last days, there will be an Antichrist who will control the other kings. Antichrist will think that he controls the kings, but actually the city of Babylon will control him but this will not be for long as God will put it into the Antichrist's mind to make him realise that the real power is not with him; and that he is only a pawn used by the city of Babylon. Eventually the Antichrist and his federation of kings will join forces to utterly destroy the city (Babylon) that controls the money at that time.

### Chapter 18 – The Fall of Babylon

This chapter describes the fall of Babylon.

1. Revelation 18:2. John saw an angel with great authority shouted with a mighty voice, "Babylon is fallen". It described how Babylon was utterly destroyed and all that was left was rubble. Nothing else was left, and nobody would live there. This was similar to the original Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, which today, is nothing more than rubble and a haunt for wild animals. Similarly, nobody lives there now.
2. Revelation 18:4-8. Another angelic voice shouted, "Come out of here, My people, have nothing to do with her!" This warning was given because God was going to utterly destroy this city which lived in luxury and which called herself "a queen and one who will never mourn". Similarly, past big cities e.g. original Babylon, Rome, etc., likewise thought that they were so powerful and great, that they would never fall because the whole world was in their hands.
3. Revelation 18:9-19. Within an hour, the whole Babylon was gone. The kings wept and wailed because they could not believe that all that they had built had collapsed and all their wealth vanished too. The merchants and seafarers also wailed because there would be no more trading when the economy collapsed. This is very much like Covid-19 which can wipe out the world's economy so fast. This picture in Chapter 18 would be many times more severe than the economic collapse caused by Covid-19. When the great prostitute collapsed, the dreams of all the people to build their empires, businesses would collapsed with it in that same moment.

### What is God warning us Christians?

1. That many of us are also involved in building something on this Earth.
2. It all began in Genesis 11:4 when Nimrod wanted to build a name for himself.
3. Many of us want to build a name for ourselves, and it can be in terms of a NGO (i.e. Non-Profit Organisation), religious organisation, etc. and we want it to be the biggest in town (e.g. biggest NGO), biggest mission organisation for our own namesake. There is nothing wrong with building something great for God, but

people always want to tag their names along so that their dynasty and son's names remain.

4. This is the "Babylonian deal" which is also always there in our mind. We want monuments to be built and we try to ensure that there is a successor. Every city tries to build the tallest skyscraper and put a name there. This is all "Babylonian" ideas just like Nimrod's Tower of Babel, Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon and Caesar's Rome.
5. It is the mentality and the mind of sinful man desiring to lift themselves up to be like God so that everyone will look up to them, regard them like bosses in big corporations. This happens also within churches.
6. Everyone wants to build a kingdom but there is only one Kingdom. "Thy Kingdom comes, on Earth as it is in heaven". There is only one Kingdom worthy to be part of, and that is the everlasting Kingdom of God. We as Christians should just focus on playing our part in this eternal Kingdom.

#### Who is this Babylon in the very last days?

1. Just as Antichrist, we should not be speculating who Babylon will be.
2. All we need to know is that there is a world system which we should all come out of. We should not want to be part of this kind of world system. Instead, we should desire to play our part in building God's everlasting Kingdom.
3. It is pointless spending time speculating as some Christians do; speculating that Rome may be the Babylon described here in Chapter 18, because Rome sits on 7 hills, etc. But is Rome really an economic power today? Rome has some power but it is not a mega-power today. If the Lord comes very soon, it could even be New York but why bother? Does it matter knowing whether it is New York or Rome or London?
4. The question is, "Are you part of the Babylonian system where you want to build an empire on Earth and have your hope being fulfilled on Earth, so much so that you are willing to disregard all your Christian principles just for this mighty dollar that translates to fame and power?"

#### So, what is the lesson that God wants us to learn in Revelation Chapter 18?

1. God will ensure that Babylon will be destroyed but it is not God who destroys it. God will simply allow the kings of the Earth to destroy this city by putting it into their mind.
2. Christians should focus mainly on building others up with agape love. God will bless us with true riches when we bless others and build things in the name of God to lay our treasures up in heaven. Let us do all these that others may know Christ and experience this agape love. Let us get out of Babylon and let us focus on things of the Kingdom of God so that we can have true peace, true satisfaction and true riches.
3. Thus, do not lose focus and see only the trees and not the forest (woods), or even worse, see only the leaves, and forgot that the main message of Revelation is not about identifying the 666, the Babylon city, or the Antichrist. Let us ask ourselves this question, "What are you going to do about it?" The reason why John wrote to the Christians in his time was to tell them not to envy these people or be tempted

to have such “power of Rome” or be part of the Babylonian system, because all these will not count eventually, so let us worship only God.