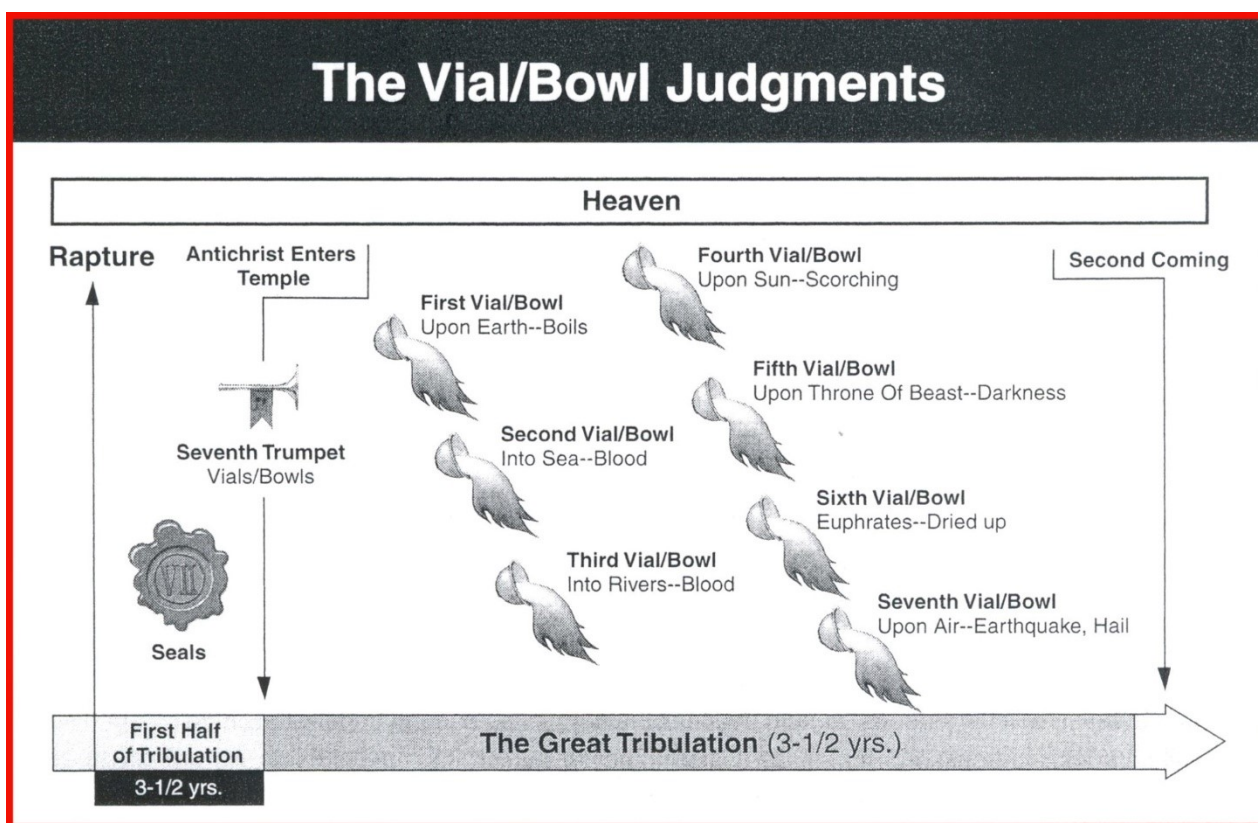


INTRODUCTION:

1. We have been studying the events and the judgments that will take place during the Tribulation period, and we begin studying that portion of Scripture that tells of the last and most significant of the judgments to be poured out.
2. There are three sets of judgments found in Revelation, each of increasing intensity and horror.
3. First, we studied the seven seal judgments and opening. Then, we investigated the seven trumpet judgments. And now, we come to the seven vial judgments or the seven vials (or bowls) of wrath. Look at the diagram below showing the seven vial/bowl judgments in the second half of the Tribulation.



(15.1) 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.

1. When John mentioned that he saw another sign in heaven, he reminded his readers that he had already written concerning two symbols: the woman, Israel, in Revelation 12.1 and the great red dragon of Revelation 12.3.
2. The three visions or signs have to do with God's people, #1, God's enemy, #2, and God's wrath, #3, which we will see in chapters 15 and 16.

3. This last sign is somewhat different than the preceding two, even though John describes it as “another sign” using the Greek word for another of the same kind.
4. This third sign is described as “great and marvelous.” No matter what you are comparing, when you associate anything God’s to anything that has to do with man, God’s will be great and marvelous, even if it is God’s wrath compared to men or even Satan.
5. These seven vials that these angels had, which would resemble our ordinary bowls except for their material, are the kind of vessels commonly used in the Temple worship under the Mosaic Law or the Law of Moses.
6. Under the Law of Moses, as animals were sacrificed in obedience to God’s command, the vials would commonly be filled with the blood of the sacrificed animals so that it could then be taken and sprinkled on the altar as an atonement or covering for sin.
7. At this time, though, the grace of God is not in evidence at all. Instead of shed blood being in the vials, ready to deal with sin graciously, the bowls contain a full measure of God’s wrath, prepared to deal with sin in a punitive way.

(15.2) And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, *and* over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

1. In John’s same vision, he sees this sea of glass mingled with fire. The phrase “**as it were**” lets us know that John uses figurative language and that what he sees is not a literal glass sea. But the fire that he describes speaks of the trials and tribulations those believers will have gone through by then.
2. On the glass, John sees that Tribulation believers experienced great victory during their time on the earth. Now they stand in heaven, having been martyred for the cause of Christ. Though slain, they are victorious nevertheless.
3. And they have harps or lyres. In case you wondered, the only other musical instrument mentioned in Revelation are the trumpets blown by the seven angels in earlier chapters.

(15.3) And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous *are* thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true *are* thy ways, thou King of saints.

1. There are two songs that Moses is recorded to have sung. One is in Exodus chapter 15, and the other begins in Deuteronomy 31. In both pieces, Moses praises God for the physical and spiritual deliverance of His children.
2. Notice these words: “**Just and true *are* thy ways.**” How many people will try to accuse God of being unfair or unjust when He begins to pour out His wrath? Many, I suspect, but without grounds.

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3. Is it not wonderful to note that the personality most associated with the Law, Moses, and the One most related to the grace of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb, are connected to this song? This expresses the complete harmony of the Law and grace in God's plan and economy.

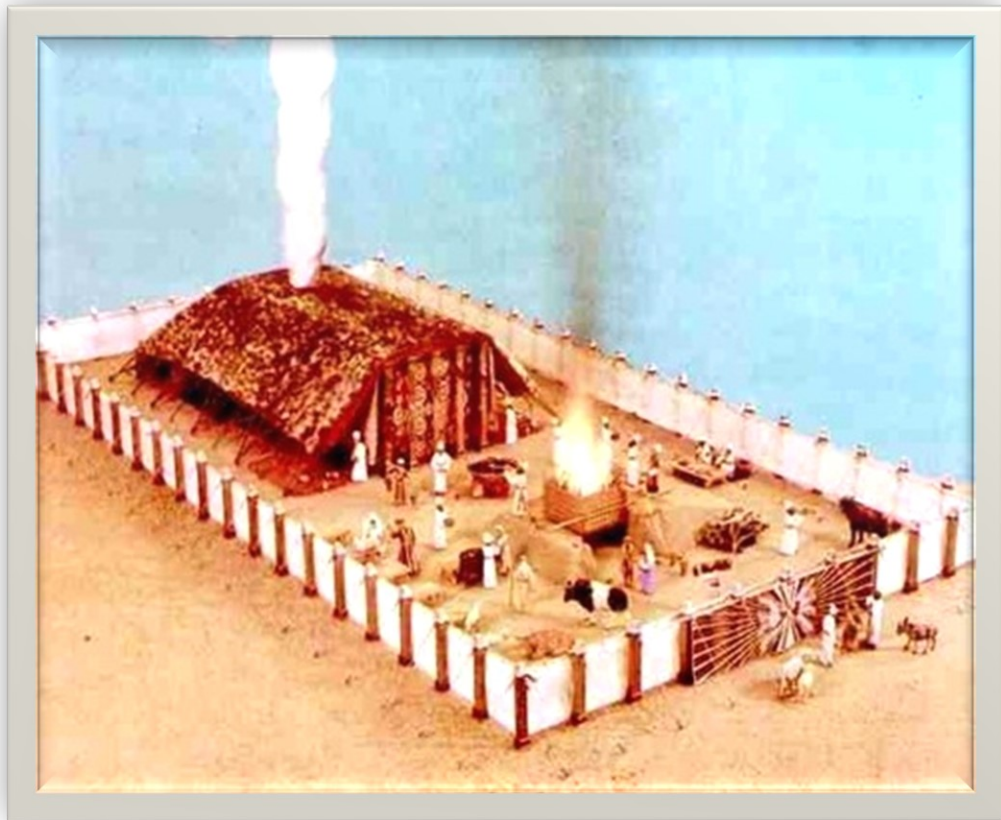
(15.4) Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for *thou* only *art* holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

1. Here, we read about the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies, which look forward to a day when all of the nations and peoples of the world will fear and revere Jehovah.
2. There will come a day when all will bend their knees, bow their heads, and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
3. You can do this now, or you can do this later, but you will do it eventually. Bend your knee, bow your head, confess Jesus to be Lord, and you will be saved. But those who will not do it during this lifetime will do it in the hereafter. Only then will it not result in eternal salvation, but it will occur as the final act of a lost individual before he is cast into the lake of fire forever.

(15.5) And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

1. "Our attention is arrested by the phrase 'I looked, and, behold.' This expression always introduces something dramatically new. As John observes, the Holy of Holies in the heavenly Tabernacle is opened. The expression "the temple" (Gr., *naos*) refers to the inner holy place of the Tabernacle, the design of which God gave to Israel during the wilderness wandering."¹ The opening of the Temple probably means that the veil is parted or the curtain is opened.
2. This is one of the verses of John's Revelation which ought to end any discussion, once and for all, about the existence of a temple in heaven. Specifically, the Tabernacle of the Testimony refers to the holy of holies. This place is now being opened. The picture below is an artist's rendition of the Tabernacle.

¹ John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), page 229.



3. To review, consider Hebrews 8.1-5; 9.1-11:

- 1 Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;
 - 2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.
 - 3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.
 - 4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:
 - 5 Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.
-
- 1 Then verily the first *covenant* had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.
 - 2 For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein *was* the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary.
 - 3 And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all;

- 4 Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;
- 5 And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.
- 6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.
- 7 But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and *for* the errors of the people:
- 8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing:
- 9 Which *was* a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience;
- 10 *Which stood* only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed *on them* until the time of reformation.
- 11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building;

4. From this passage and the book of Exodus, we see that Moses was called to the peak of Mount Sinai after the children of Israel had been delivered from Egyptian slavery. While he was on the mount for forty days and forty nights communing with God, he was instructed to build a tabernacle.
5. These pictures are artists' renditions of what the Tabernacle and the Tabernacle furniture looked like, using the writings of Moses as a guide. Although the priests would enter the holy place daily, the holy of holies, sometimes called the holiest, was only entered once a year on the Day of Atonement.²
6. Please grasp the truth that the Tabernacle Moses constructed served only as an example and a shadow of heavenly things.
7. There is a most holy place in heaven, a sacred shrine that the Tabernacle in the wilderness was only a representation of and will someday be opened.

(15.6) 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.

1. "John does not see the Jewish high priest ministering in the holy of holies, but rather seven angels, or messengers, emerging. And yet they are clothed with the garments of the priest. These angel-priests are about to vindicate the offended holiness and Justice of God. A great sacrifice is about to be offered. The servants of God are going to rid the earth of all that has caused creation to groan. God is now going to fulfill His covenant with Israel. Through His servants, who come out from the place where the Law of

² Exodus 30.10

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God rests, God will demonstrate that all men and nations who defy His law must suffer for their sins. The angels, being seven in number, suggest the completeness or perfection of that judgment they are sent to execute. Their solemn task is to carry out the severest of God's judgments upon this earth."³

2. Do you remember those places in Revelation where we saw the altar of God, where mercy and grace had once come from, and which will be turned into a source from which God's wrath will go forth? In this verse, we see the consummation of God's righteous indignation and hatred of sin. Here God is about to pour out His wrath to the maximum.
3. The only thing that will exceed the fury of these seven vial judgments is when the Lord Jesus, Himself, comes and treads the wine press alone.

(15.7) 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.

1. Apparently, these seven angels came out of the holy of holies already prepared to do the work that God had sent them to do on the earth.
2. But the vials of wrath seem to be their authorization to proceed. "These are shallow saucers, familiar items often associated with various functions of the temple worship (1 Kin. 7:50; 2 Kin. 12:13; 2S:15), such as wine (Amos 6:6) and blood sacrifice (Ex.27:3). Their flat shallowness pictures how the divine judgments will be emptied instantly rather than slowly poured, drowning those who refused to drink the cup of salvation."⁴

(15.8) 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.

1. This is a dreadful verse to read because it shows something never before seen of God. Several times Scripture records that God's glory filled the Tabernacle or the Temple built by Solomon. God's grace was in view whenever that happened as He condescended to dwell among men.
2. But judgment is in view whenever God's glory is accompanied by smoke. God's judgment was in view on Mount Sinai when smoke covered the mountain peak. Judgment was in view when Isaiah saw the LORD high and lifted up, and smoke filled the throne room of God, and Isaiah's commission to preach the coming judgment of God on the nation of Israel followed.⁵

³ Lehman Strauss, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1963), pages 280-281.

⁴ See footnote for Revelation 15.7 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2013.

⁵ Isaiah 6.1-10

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3. We know that judgment is in store When we see the Temple filled with smoke. But the incredible realization here is that the wrath and anger of God are so severe the pent-up reaction to sin is coming out so strongly that no one can enter that place.
4. For the first time in Scripture, God is shown to be so occupied with venting His wrath that no man can enter and approach Him.

CONCLUSION:

1. Reading this chapter makes me thankful that the things that will happen in chapters 15 and 16 will occur over a short period at the end of Daniel's 70th week.
2. Reading this also makes me very grateful that such an outpouring will happen only once throughout human history.
3. Finally, reading this makes me glad that such a response as this is God's strange work and that He desires so much more to be merciful and gracious. Lamentations 3.33 reads, "For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."