

The Revelation of Jesus Christ – 17
Seven Bowls, Armageddon, and the Euphrates
Jerry Cisar — December 10, 2023

Text: Revelation 15-16

Introduction

Richard Bauckham: “John has taken some of his contemporaries’ worst experiences and worst fears of wars and natural disasters, blown them up to apocalyptic proportions, and cast them in biblically allusive terms. The point is not to predict a sequence of events. The point is to evoke and to explore the meaning of the divine judgment which is impending on the sinful world.” (Quoted in Gorman. Reading Revelation Responsibly)

I. The Song of a Victorious Remnant (15:1-4)

- A. This vision begins with the conquerors.
 - i. The Song of Moses
 - ii. A remnant Israel
- B. The emphasis in this song of Moses and the Lamb is on God’s justice (3-4)

II. The Source of the Seven Plagues (15:5-8)

- A. John’s vision draws our attention to some details about that heavenly temple.
 - i. The tabernacle/tent of the *testimony/witness*



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LIVE THE STORY

The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.

Find the fake question among these.

- Prophetic messages in Scripture often served less as predictions and more as warnings. How might that adjust our reading of Revelation?
- Why do you think the Exodus theme is so frequently used throughout *Revelation*? What does it tell us about its purpose?
- Why might John’s vision suddenly draw our attention to “the tabernacle of the testimony/witness”? How is that relevant?
- How might Leviticus 26 help us understand Revelation and its 4 sequences of 7 plague-like disasters?
- Does the story about the impure spirits looking like frogs mean that children should never play with frogs?
- What are some of the ways that we participate in political idolatry today? (There is not enough time to cover them all in one meeting.)
- Why is it important that our theology of how to relate to government be informed by more than Romans 13? Explain.
- How does our Sunday gathering help prepare us for the Day of Judgment? How does it address our idolatrous hearts?
- What are some of God’s gifts you tend to idolize rather than merely use? (Like loving a boat more than the destination?)

- ii. This perfect, heavenly tabernacle contains the eternal law of God which stands as a witness against those
 - who have destroyed the earth (11:18),
 - have shed the blood of God's people and the prophets (16:6),
 - who refuse to glorify God (16:9),
 - who grew excessively rich and did not care for their brother or sister—luxury at the price of love of neighbor (Rev. 18:3).
 - It stands as a witness against those who bought into an economic system that was built on the buying and selling of humans as merely bodies... slaves (Rev. 18:11-13).
- b) The only law necessary to testify against them would be "do unto others as you would have them do to you."

B. Out of this temple come 7 angels with 7 plagues.

- i. Plagues as a response to rebellion (sin).

- ii. Romans 1:24-27

III. The Seven Plagues in Biblical Context

A. Four sequences of seven

- i. Psalm 78 and 105 condense the plagues to seven.

- ii. Why 4 sets of 7?

- a) Leviticus 26

B. How was Leviticus 26 to be read?

C. Specifics of the Plagues

- i. Armageddon (16:12-16):

Michael Gorman: "[Armageddon] is a logical setting for a symbolic battle of cosmic proportions—and nothing more."

- ii. Why is a bowl of wrath poured on the great river Euphrates?

- a) Rome's greatest threat was from the east.

- b) Isaiah 11:15-16

- iii. Who are the kings of the East?

- iv. Impure spirits that look like frogs?

IV. The Seven Plagues Today

- A. How do these plague sequences serve as a warning to us?

- B. Confusing our nation with a sort of new Israel.

Revelation is all about the rescue of that remnant (144,000) from the nations of the world to be His people.