

# The Seventh Bowl

📖 Revelation 16:17-21

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Last time we studied Revelation 15 and 16. This is part of a series called Major Prophetic Passages, and so what we are doing is an overview of most of the key passages. Daniel is the key to prophetic revelation, so we spent a great deal of time in Daniel. He gives us the framework of the times of the Gentiles as constituting four Gentile kingdoms, with the fourth being divided into an ancient and future phase. He also gives us the calendar of Israel as being seventy sevens of years, with the calendar divided between the 69<sup>th</sup> seven and the 70<sup>th</sup> seven. We spent some time in Ezekiel looking at the prophecies of Israel's two regatherings, first in unbelief and second in belief. The first regathering in unbelief is a current prophecy that is in the process of being fulfilled. We also discussed the Battle of Gog and how this is a two-phase battle that begins in the first half of the Tribulation and has effects that continue into the early period of the millennial kingdom. In the NT we spent time in Matthew 24-25, Jesus' most extensive discourse on Bible prophecy, and we found that this discourse fits within the framework of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> seven and describes the conditions during that seven years that will result in the King coming in His kingdom to judge those who survive. Because His coming in His kingdom was postponed due to Israel's rejection, we discussed the new building Christ would construct upon His finished work, the Church and the prophetic themes of the Church which are mainly the downward trend toward apostasy and the apostasy that results from the rapture. The truths about the rapture were detailed in John 14, 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15. We are now concluding our study by spending a significant amount of time in the Revelation, which details the things that will happen after the church in the 70<sup>th</sup> seven. The time period is one of judgment outlined in a telescopic way by the seals and trumpets in the first half and the bowls in the second half. We have come all the way to the bowls.

Last time we looked at Rev 15 which is the preparation in heaven for the bowl judgments. In 15:1 there are seven angels with seven plagues. Plagues is another term referring to the bowls. The term plague is used to refer to literal strikes or blows that God is sending against the beast and his kingdom. The term bowls is used because of the sudden gush that comes when the contents of a bowl are poured out. In these seven bowls the wrath of God is finished because at their conclusion the kingdom of God will come. In 15:2-3 tribulation saints who were martyred but had victory over the beast are seen singing a song about the millennial reign of Christ over all the

nations. They are looking forward to that time that is about to break upon the world. In 15:4 they sing about the nations in the millennium coming up to worship before Him. In 15:5ff the tabernacle in heaven was opened and one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God and the temple in heaven was filled with smoke from the glory of God so that no one could enter until the seven plagues were finished. In 16:1-2 the first bowl is poured out in the earth causing malignant sores to break out on those who worship the beast. This is a selective judgment, as are all the bowls. They will only affect those who worship the beast and have taken his mark. The first one is sores and they will continue through the duration of all the bowl judgments so that they are compounding one upon another, unlike the seals and the trumpets. In 16:3 the second bowl is poured out into the sea so that it congealed like the blood of a dead man, and everything in the seas where the anti-Christ and his followers tried to access, died. Since they cut believers off from food, now God is cutting them off from food from the sea. In 16:4 the third bowl was poured out into the fresh waters so that they turned to blood and those who had the mark had no drinking water. This only occurred for those who followed the beast because the end of verse 6 says, "You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." Tribulation saints don't deserve it, only those who take the mark. So again, we see that these are selective judgments, falling upon those who worship the beast. In 16:8 the fourth bowl is poured out in the sun, so that it would scorch those with the mark with intense heat. And even this did not bring them to have a change of mind. In 16:10 the fifth bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast so that those over whom he ruled were in a thick darkness. Note is made that they continued to suffer under the sores from the first bowl. And yet, even at this time they will continue to refuse to change their mind. It's not that they cannot change their mind, but that they will not. It is a matter of the will. Their will is in opposition to God. In 16:12 the sixth bowl is poured out on the Euphrates River. It dries up and this makes way for the kings of the east. The counterfeit Trinity will send out demonic spirits to perform signs that will cause the kings of the world to gather to Har-Magedon for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. His coming is obviously near, but the exact timing will not be known. 16:15 tells us He will come like a thief and so believers should remain in a state of readiness for His coming and persist in obedience. Those who do will be blessed.

We come today to Rev 16:17, the seventh bowl. **Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done."** Remember, that in 15:1 that the seven bowls are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished." Here with the seventh bowl a voice comes out of the temple saying, **"It is done."** The voice is obviously that of the one within the glory filled heavenly temple, God the Father. And when this bowl was poured out **upon the air**, verse 18 tells us, **And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder;** these remind us of Rev 4:5, John's description of the heavenly throne of God, and these **flashes and lightning and sounds and peals of thunder** are emanating from the throne of God, signifying that the judgment is coming from Him. And next John describes the judgment on earth, saying, **there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.** This is one of several earthquakes in history

since the global flood of Noah. In fact, the largest earthquakes in history occurred during the time of the flood. Since that time there has been a gradual decrease in the quantity and intensity of earthquakes. The reason is because the environment went from one steady state before the flood to a new steady after the flood. Even the records of earthquakes in the 20<sup>th</sup> century held by the National Earthquake Information Center shows a slight overall decrease in earthquake frequency and intensity. The claims of many Bible prophecy teachers that they are actually increasing, is nothing more than an urban myth built on widespread media attention being drawn to earthquakes. Earthquakes will continue to decrease slightly until the time of the Tribulation. The world will literally not know what to do with themselves when the first great shaking comes at the sixth seal (Rev 6:12-17). Another great earthquake will come at the seventh seal (8:5) and another at the midpoint in Jerusalem (11:13). But the greatest earthquake of all time will occur under the seventh bowl. The description in this verse, **such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth**, means it is an unparalleled earthquake in the history of the world. Not even the earthquakes during the global flood of Noah were as great as this earthquake.

The results of the earthquake are in verses 19-20, **The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.** Several effects of the earthquake are worth noting. First, in verse 19, **the great city was split into three parts.** But what is **the great city?** Babylon is referred to as a great city several times in Revelation. However, it is not likely that it is Babylon, because Babylon is referred to by name later in the verse. In Rev 11:8 Jerusalem is referred to as **the great city.** Here **the great city** is given special attention in contrast to **the cities of the nations.** The **cities of the nations fell** but **the great city was split into three parts.** There's a special note about the division of this city. These things indicate **the great city** is Jerusalem. When this severe earthquake occurs the first effect is Jerusalem will be **split into three parts.** Jerusalem experienced an earthquake three and a half days after the midpoint, in 11:13, in connection with the resurrection and ascension of the two witnesses. On that occasion seven thousand were killed and the rest gave glory to God. Here the earthquake will be much greater and cause the city to split into three divisions. The second effect of the great earthquake will be **the cities of the nations fell.** The Greek word translated **nations** is *ethnos* and can be translated "Gentiles," so the **cities of the Gentiles** will fall. This means all the great cities of the world will be turned to rubble by this earthquake; Hong Kong, Dubai, Moscow, London, Paris, Cairo, Rio De Janeiro, Sydney, New York City, Dallas, San Francisco, etc... But it also means all small cities of the Gentiles will fall. They will all be flattened by the greatest earthquake the world has ever seen. You might recall that under the sixth seal there was a great shaking that affected everyone on earth. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, hid themselves under the rocks and cried out against the wrath of God and the Lamb. There was a serious devastation at that time, about 5 years before, but some degree of rebuilding took place. The third effect mentioned is that **Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.** This is a city in addition to Jerusalem that is singled out for special attention under the seventh bowl. It's these two cities that show that the Bible is a tale of two cities. Not only are they both

mentioned in this verse, they are mentioned many times in the next six chapters. The reason these two cities are so prominent is because the post-Flood world began as a struggle between these two cities. The way this developed was, after the flood, God repeated the dominion mandate originally given to Adam. Noah and his family were to have dominion, multiply and scatter. These were the marching orders for the new civilization, just as they were the marching orders for the first civilization began by Adam and Eve. And just as Adam and Eve failed to lead their civilization in obeying God, so the new civilization lead by Noah and his family also failed to lead their civilization in obeying God. Rather than scatter in obedience they gathered in the great plain of Shinar and built the first city, the city of Babel. This city was the epitome of rebellion against God. Because this rebellion would grow and God would be in a position to judge the entire world again, He decided to divide the language so that those in rebellion could not continue in their rebellion but would be forced to scatter on the earth. This is the origin of the nations. In this arrangement there were some who worshipped God, such as Job and Melchizedek, but again men were paganizing. Therefore, God called out Abraham. The location he called him out of was the same area the tower of Babel was built. God promised to bless Abraham with a land, seed and worldwide blessing. On the basis of these promises Abraham moved to Haran and then into the Promised Land. Hebrews tells us that God also promised him a city, a new Jerusalem. Abraham sought for this city but never found it, eventually dying and being buried in the land. When Messiah returns he will be resurrected to inherit the land and the city, just as God promised. But as time passed on, the city of Jerusalem was built and ruled by various non-Jewish kings until the city was conquered by David and his mighty men. They took the ark of the covenant up to Jerusalem and this became the city where God chose to put His name forever. Therefore, the city of Jerusalem is the epitome of the city of God. The story then is that in the era after the flood, there is a struggle between two cities; Babylon is the city of man, it is the root of all arrogance and idolatry, while Jerusalem is the city of God, it is supposed to be the root of all humility and true worship.

Revelation 17-22 shows us how this struggle will be resolved in favor of Jerusalem which will be restored to immense grandeur, while Babylon will be turned to ashes never to rise again. Now, scholars argue that this cannot be literal Babylon because of the simple fact that prophecies concerning Babylon's destruction were fulfilled centuries and centuries ago. And because Rev 17 is so symbolic it must have some other meaning. So, the idealists argue that Babylon signifies the world system opposed to God. Idealists are simply those who are unsure of what the Bible is teaching. All they say they know is that God wins. So the Book of Revelation for them is just a picture of God's timeless defeat of evil. Examples of churches that follow this would be liberal Episcopal churches like the one we have here. The preterists disagree and argue that Babylon is a code name for Jerusalem. They say that this was fulfilled in AD70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Preterism just means past, and they see a past fulfillment of the Book of Revelation. An example would be Journey Church here in town. The historicists disagree with the preterists and the idealists and argue that Babylon is a code name for Rome and that it was fulfilled in AD476 when Rome was destroyed. Historicists believe that the Book of Revelation is fulfilled throughout Church History. An example would be the Seventh Day Adventists here in town. Still others

disagree and argue that there are two Babylon's in the last days, one signifying a religious system in Rev 17 and the other signifying an economic system in Rev 18. This is somewhat better, but it shares one thing in common with the idealists, preterists and historicists; they all reject a literal city of Babylon being rebuilt on the Euphrates River. And yet, what does the Bible teach about Babylon? First of all, the Bible teaches that Babylon began as Babel. Babylon actually comes from the word *Bavil*, which means "gate of God." It is the gate men use to rebel against God. Second, the Bible uses the word Babylon 294 times, second only to Jerusalem which is used 814 times. And of these 294 times every usage except the usages in Rev 14, 16, 17 and 18 are said to refer to the city of Babylon. But here they say they are a code for Jerusalem or Rome or simply a religious system or commercial system. But consistency would argue that if Babylon means Babylon in the prior 280 uses, it means Babylon in the last 14 uses. Third, in Rev 17:18 God says that the woman whom John saw representing Babylon was a "city," not the world system opposed to God, not a religious idea or an economic system, but a city. How clear does the Bible have to be for people to accept that Babylon is a rebuilt city of Babylon? Apparently the Bible must be read through their theological lens so that what they already believed can be confirmed. Fourth, they claim that all the prophecies about Babylon in Isa 13-14, Jer 50-51 and Zech 5:5-11 have been fulfilled and so Babylon can never be built again. But Saddam Hussein began rebuilding it in the 1980's and 1990's. The rebuilding was only halted in 2002. Hussein was a lunatic. He viewed himself as the re-incarnation of Nebuchadnezzar, and he sought to restore the glory of ancient Babylon upon its ruins. At least he knew his history. Babylon used to be the center of the greatest empire on earth. He wanted to restore it to that position on the world stage. Fifth, turn to Isa 13:19 and see if it sounds like this has been fulfilled. Isaiah says, "And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there." The destruction of Babylon will be as Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom and Gomorrah were totally destroyed, no longer a habitable place and never rebuilt. But is that true of Babylon? No. When Alexander the Great defeated Babylon he intended to destroy the great ziggurat and rebuild it with even greater significance. When he died suddenly his four generals fought over the city. Eventually it came under the control of the Parthians and did fade away and remain deserted for several centuries. But eventually Arabs did return and have continued to dwell there with their flocks. As mentioned before, Saddam set out to rebuild it in the 1980's and at one time 250,000 people lived there and during Desert Storm American forces were stationed there at the base in Farsi called Al-Hillah. So has Isa 13:19 been fulfilled to the letter? Or does it require a future rebuilding and fulfillment? Sixth, turn to Jer 51:25. This is another prophecy of Babylon. In verse 25, God says, "Behold, I am against you, O destroying mountain, Who destroys the whole earth," declares the Lord, "And I will stretch out My hand against you, And roll you down from the crags, And I will make you a burnt out mountain. <sup>26</sup>"They will not take from you *even* a stone for a corner Nor a stone for foundations, But you will be desolate forever," declares the Lord." Has this been fulfilled? Saddam Hussein used the same bricks when he was rebuilding Babylon. So can it be said that Jer 51:25-26 have been fulfilled? Lastly, turn to Zech 5:5-11. The important thing about this passage is that this was given through Zechariah, and Zechariah is late in the OT

canon. What he prophecies was shown to him by an angel. Verse 5, "Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, "Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth." <sup>6</sup>I said, "What is it?" And he said, "This is the ephah going forth." An ephah was a unity of measure, usually a basket. "Again he said, "This is their appearance in all the land <sup>7</sup>(and behold, a lead cover was lifted up); and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah." What Zechariah saw was a woman inside a basket. <sup>8</sup>"Then he said, "This is Wickedness!" The woman signifies wickedness. "And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening." The lead weight was put on top of the basket to contain wickedness. Verse 9, "Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens. <sup>10</sup>I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "Where are they taking the ephah?" In other words, where are they taking wickedness. "Then he said to me, "To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar; and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal." Wickedness was seen being taken to the land of Shinar. Well, where is the land of Shinar? It is the land where Babel was built and it is the land where Babylon will be rebuilt. This age begins and ends in the land of Shinar. So Zech 5:5-11 lends further support to the view that in the last days the center of all wickedness will be the city of Babylon.

Now what this all means, in the big picture, is that the center of world power is going to shift. Right now world power is in the West. America is the world's greatest superpower. New York City is the most powerful city in the world. But America is declining, and at some point, world power is going to shift from America and New York to Iraq and Babylon. This city will be rebuilt and become the center of international trade and religion and power. Now when this will happen, we don't know. America could decline before the rapture takes place; it could decline after the rapture takes place. We don't know because America is not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Of course, some say otherwise, but they are allegorically interpreting the text. The Bible never once mentions America. So America will decline and New York City will decline in power and money. We just don't know when, and in its place Iraq and Babylon will rise to power. It's interesting that as we watch the world stage, this is a prophecy that has no present precursors. At this time, we can't see how Babylon could ever be such an important city. It is one of the prophecies that indicates the time is perhaps not as near as we might think. Or it is and the rebuilding and shift in power might take place very rapidly. In any case, prophecy students like to cite all kinds of prophecies being fulfilled to sell books and make themselves rich. Not only do I disagree with them, since there is no modern prophecy I know of that has been completely fulfilled, and there are only a few prophecies that are in the process of being fulfilled, such as the prophecy of the church's apostasy and the regathering of Israel in unbelief, but even those two prophecies are only in the process of being fulfilled. There is no prophecy that has been fulfilled already. What we are seeing is the stage being set for prophecy to be fulfilled. One stage setting event was the establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948. At least Israel was in the land. This is required for the anti-Christ to enter into a peace treaty with a solidified nation of Israel. Another stage setting event was Israel's capture of Jerusalem in the six-day war of 1967. Without that city under

Israeli control, they could never rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. But the events of 1948 and 1967 did not fulfill prophecies, since those events are not prophesied at all. What they did was set the stage for prophecies to be fulfilled in the future. In that respect they are significant. But here is a prophecy of the destruction of Babylon and that requires a rebuilt Babylon at the center of world power, money and influence. And yet the events that have set the stage for this are the discovery of its ruins around 1900, and some work done by Saddam Hussein in the 1980's and 90's. So, it's difficult to see at this time how this prophecy could be fulfilled. The stage isn't set yet. And yet, this is to be. Perhaps the world will want to rebuild it and gobs of money will pour in to rebuild it. Or perhaps the oil reserves in Iraq alone will fund such a project. In any case, if this were to begin it would be a significant stage-setting event. And when it is built world power will shift to Iraq and Babylon and the city will be just as it has always been, the center of all wickedness, and the capital of the anti-Christ's kingdom, the capital of future Rome. So in these final chapters of the Bible, Babylon means what it has always meant, Babylon and Jerusalem means what it has always meant, Jerusalem. And we are being shown the resolution of the ages long struggle between these two cities. Babylon is the center of man's arrogance and rebellion against God, it will go to eternal destruction. Jerusalem is the center of God's purposes and obedience to Him, it will be restored to eternal grandeur.

The world will be warned of Babylon's destruction before it happens. Rev 14:8, the first mention of Babylon in Revelation comes when the second angel flies in the atmosphere over the earth and makes this announcement, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality." This is a warning for people in the second half of the Tribulation to not be a part of this city. It's a very vile city, a very corrupting city. And today in 16:19b we see that as part of the seventh bowl it will go to destruction. "Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath." The destruction of this city will be a prelude to Armageddon. Chapters 17 and 18 are an extensive description of Babylon's destruction. 19:1-4 describes those in heaven praising God for destroying it. So let's look at the rest of 16:20. Remember, these are more results of the great earthquake in addition to the first, the city of Jerusalem being divided into three parts and the second, the cities of the Gentile nations falling and the third, Babylon being remembered by God to give her wrath. The fourth result **And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. Every island** on the planet will disappear. There are over 18,000 islands, and those in the tropical regions are very beautiful. But you better visit them now, because when this earthquake comes, they are all going to vanish beneath the sea, all of them. And further, **the mountains were not found.** You better visit those too, because they are going to be flattened. The earth is going to be renovated at the seventh trumpet. Everything is going to be much flatter. Why? Preparation of earth for the millennial kingdom. The millennial earth is going to have a drastically different topology from the present earth. They're going to have to throw out all the current books about the earth's topography and cartography and write new ones from scratch, because the earth will be so radically different. Turn to Isaiah 40:3. People think this was fulfilled by John the Baptist. This was not fulfilled by John the Baptist. It could have been fulfilled by John the Baptist IF the nation

Israel had repented. But they did not repent. And so Elijah is still to come, and this will be fulfilled by Elijah. "A voice is calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make smooth in the desert a highway for our God." These are earth's preparations for the coming of the great King. The earth has to get cleaned up. Then we read, "Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the rough ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;" That's the remodeling of the earth's surface. It will be very flat after the remodel. And then what? Verse 5, "Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see *it* together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." That's when the King comes in His kingdom. And its preparations are made at the seventh bowl. Turn to Zech 14:10, there is one place that will not be flat. "All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses." We don't have time to go through the millennial Jerusalem in detail. But we know it won't be known as Jerusalem. It will be known as YHWH shammah, meaning YHWH hears. But the city will be raised, like a plateau, above all the earth, and the king will reign. These changes in earth will take place under the seventh bowl by means of a great earthquake.

Now 16:21. **And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.** The hailstones are the size of **a talent** or your Bible says 100 pounds. In John's day the **talent** weighed between 108 and 130 pounds. And these are coming down upon **mankind**. We take it that **mankind** throughout the bowl judgments refers only to the unbelievers only and we get that from verse 2 in this chapter. God is going to use perfect discrimination during the bowl judgments so that not even one of them affects the believers who remain alive at this time on earth. The **hailstones** are huge. The largest recorded hailstone weighed 1.67 pounds and was about 6-7 inches in diameter. What we have here is almost unimaginable.

The response: **mankind blasphemed God**. So, they shook their fists at God in defiance because of the extreme plague He sent upon them. But that's what you get for rejecting grace. Grace always precedes judgment. They rejected grace and now is the time for judgment. So these men's hearts are so hard they won't break no matter what God sends them and God will destroy Babylon and then the world will gather at Armageddon and take their stand against God and His Son (Ps 2:1-3).