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Revelation

2020 - Lesson

15-16

Chapter 15:1-8, 16:1-16

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- We've sorted out the mid point of Tribulation, so now it's time to transition out of this period and move into the final months and weeks of the seven years
 - As we do, let's review quickly where the world stands at this point
 - Satan has resurrected the Antichrist, and is indwelling his body
 - With Satan's power, the Antichrist is ruling the world, being celebrated as the Messiah and Savior
 - Satan has raised up a false prophet to lead the world in a new religion that worships the Antichrist
 - And a supernatural image is installed in the Jewish temple to remind people of the new god of the world
 - The world is called to worship this new god, and all take a mark indicating their willingness to worship him
 - If a person refuses, they cannot buy or sell and once found they are beheaded
 - For the most part, the only ones who resist are those who believe in Jesus and the Jewish people who remain devoted to Yahweh
 - Among these groups, some are in safety in Petra
 - Others are under persecution around the world and especially in Jerusalem
 - And many are martyred and enter Heaven to rest from these trials and await the resurrection
 - Meanwhile, the world enjoys an uneasy peace for the better part of the second half of Tribulation
 - The seal judgments and the trumpet judgments have come and gone during the first 3.5 years
 - The bowl judgments still await, but they do not come right away
- And since the bowl judgements are the next act in this drama, the narrative of the book jumps from the midpoint to a point near the end of the seven years
 - And Chapter 15 transitions us along that path beginning with another sign in Heaven

Rev. 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

- Once again John's attention is directed into the Heavenly realm to witness another great and wondrous sign in Heaven
 - John calls what he sees a sign, a symbol, and in fact all of Chapter 15 is that sign
 - The entire chapter uses a series of symbols to make a point
- The sign begins with the seven angels holding seven bowls
 - John says these bowls are the last, meaning the last of the judgments of Tribulation
 - Moreover, they are the last of God's judgments as required under the Old

Covenant

- Remember, the period of Tribulation is itself a consequence of the terms of the Old Covenant between the Lord and Israel
 - All that’s happening in this seven year period was appointed for Israel in keeping with that covenant
 - As Daniel was told by Gabriel

Dan. 9:24 “Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place.

- Seventy sevens, including the final seven of Tribulation, have been appointed for Israel the angel said
 - And that appointment was for the purpose of addressing the sins of Israel under the Old Covenant
- So God’s obligations to pour out wrath on Israel under the terms of that covenant will be completed by these seven judgments
 - Because these judgments are not directed at the believers, the Lord provides protection for the believing Jews in Botzrah
 - But for the rest of Israel, the pouring out of God’s wrath refines and purifies them

Zech. 13:7 “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the man, My Associate,”
Declares the LORD of hosts.
“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

Zech. 13:8 “It will come about in all the land,”
Declares the LORD,
“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third will be left in it.

Zech. 13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, ‘They are My people,’
And they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”

- God uses the judgments to cut off some in Israel while refining the rest
 - So while many unbelieving Jews will perish others will come to faith through the process

- In short, that’s what we are watching take place in the remainder of Tribulation
- God narrows His focus on the unbelieving Jews while at the same time bringing judgment against the enemy and the unbelieving world
 - He is finally delivering the judgment He has long delayed

Is. 48:8 “You have not heard, you have not known.
Even from long ago your ear has not been open,
Because I knew that you would deal very treacherously;
And you have been called a rebel from birth.

Is. 48:9 “For the sake of My name I delay My wrath,
And for My praise I restrain it for you,
In order not to cut you off.

Is. 48:10 “Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver;
I have tested you in the furnace of affliction.

Is. 48:11 “For My own sake, for My own sake, I will act;
For how can My name be profaned?
And My glory I will not give to another.

Is. 48:12 “Listen to Me, O Jacob, even Israel whom I called;
I am He, I am the first, I am also the last.

- Back to Chapter 15, let’s look at John’s sign:

Rev. 15:2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

Rev. 15:3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying,
“Great and marvelous are Your works,
O Lord God, the Almighty;
Righteous and true are Your ways,
King of the nations!

Rev. 15:4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name?
For You alone are holy;
For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU,
FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”

- The sign has multiple parts, beginning with a glass sea mixed with fire
 - Obviously sea, glass and fire don’t ordinarily mix well
 - We have to appreciate that John is trying to describe a scene without a point of reference
 - So he references elements he knows from earth and combines them in impossible combinations
 - Clearly, he’s seeing something other-worldly

- Standing on this “sea” are those who had been victorious over the beast, which is a reference to those who were martyred in the Tribulation
 - Their death is called a “victory” over the beast and his image and the number of his name
 - Death is a victory because it removes the person from the influence of the beast and brings them to a place of rest
 - Once a saint dies in Tribulation, they pass from the dominion of the enemy to the dominion of the Lord
 - And since they have left the world behind, they are no longer within reach of the enemy who has been cast down
- They overcame the beast and the mark, John says, in the sense that they never gave in to his demands to worship him or take his sign
 - Doing these things would have resulted in them never having opportunity to be with the Lord
 - Because they have died without giving in to the enemy’s demands, they have passed the test and entered Heaven
- And they overcame the mark because they never loved their physical life more than the Lord
 - This is exactly the kind of eternal perspective that all believers are expected to maintain
 - The one who seeks to gain his life will lose it, and the one who loses his life will gain life eternal
- Next, we see these Tribulation saints singing with harps, singing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb
 - These are two different songs in this chapter
 - The song of the Lamb is recorded here in vs.3-4, while the song of Moses references an earlier song from the Old Testament
 - The words of the song of the Lamb are a praise to Jesus specifically
 - It never mentions Jesus by name, but we know it is talking about Jesus because it is called the song of the “Lamb”
 - The singers declares that Jesus is the righteous King of the nations
 - That soon the Lamb will be worshipped by the nations
 - These statements indicate that the Tribulation is coming to an end soon and Jesus’ return is approaching
 - These singers are also singing the song of Moses, of which there are two possible songs in Scripture
 - The first possibility is a song sung by Moses in Deuteronomy 32

**Deut. 32:5 “They have acted corruptly toward Him,
They are not His children, because of their defect;
But are a perverse and crooked generation.**

Deut. 32:6 “Do you thus repay the LORD,

**O foolish and unwise people?
Is not He your Father who has bought you?
He has made you and established you.**

Deut. 32:7 “Remember the days of old,
Consider the years of all generations.
Ask your father, and he will inform you,
Your elders, and they will tell you.

Deut. 32:17 “They sacrificed to demons who were not God,
To gods whom they have not known,
New gods who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.

Deut. 32:18 “You neglected the Rock who begot you,
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

Deut. 32:35 ‘Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their calamity is near,
And the impending things are hastening upon them.’

Deut. 32:36 “For the LORD will vindicate His people,
And will have compassion on His servants,
When He sees that their strength is gone,
And there is none remaining, bond or free.

Deut. 32:37 “And He will say, ‘Where are their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?’

Deut. 32:41 If I sharpen My flashing sword,
And My hand takes hold on justice,
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,
And I will repay those who hate Me.

- As Moses is about to die and the nation enters the Promised Land without him, he warns of days of vengeance when the Lord will deal with their sin
 - In the future, Israel will become faithless, worshipping other gods and overlooking the God, the Rock, Who saved them
 - And as a result, the Lord will bring calamities upon His people and when He sees their strength gone they will be broken
 - He brings them low to break them of their rebellious hearts
 - That song is clearly prophetic and its ultimate fulfillment is found in the events of Tribulation
 - Remember, their relationship was established by covenants
 - One covenant established a relationship without condition, that is the Abrahamic Covenant

- But another covenant, the Mosaic Covenant, came along side the first covenant, and it had conditions
 - Israel's disobedience to that covenant required God pour out His judgment against the nation for their sins according to its terms
 - The period of history when the Lord brings these judgments is called the Age of the Gentiles according to what we learned in Daniel
 - And the Age of the Gentiles culminates with a time of Tribulation
- But there is a second song of Moses in the OT, and it also has relevance for this moment
 - In Exodus 15:1-18 Moses leads the people of Israel in a song of praise after the nation is saved from Pharaoh's army
 - The Lord had just closed the Red Sea over the advancing chariots and drowned the army

Ex. 15:9 “The enemy said, ‘I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; My desire shall be gratified against them; I will draw out my sword, my hand will destroy them.’

Ex. 15:10 “You blew with Your wind, the sea covered them; They sank like lead in the mighty waters.

Ex. 15:11 “Who is like You among the gods, O LORD? Who is like You, majestic in holiness, Awesome in praises, working wonders?

Ex. 15:12 “You stretched out Your right hand, The earth swallowed them.

Ex. 15:13 “In Your lovingkindness You have led the people whom You have redeemed; In Your strength You have guided them to Your holy habitation.

Ex. 15:16 “Terror and dread fall upon them; By the greatness of Your arm they are motionless as stone; Until Your people pass over, O LORD, Until the people pass over whom You have purchased.

Ex. 15:17 “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance, The place, O LORD, which You have made for Your dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands have established.

- This song is also a picture of what will happen in the last days
 - In fact, the entire Exodus experience is a picture of Tribulation
 - Exodus is a story of Israel escaping slavery by fleeing in the desert from a determined enemy
 - Ultimately through miraculous judgments, the Lord brings Israel to Himself to dwell in safety in the Promised Land

- So the heavenly choir sings the song of Moses, which may be elements of both these OT songs, because both are relevant
 - On the one hand, the Lord is fulfilling His promise to bring vengeance and judgment against Israel for their sin
 - And on the other hand, He will rescue His people from the Antichrist in the end
 - The next few chapters of Revelation explain how the Lord does that
- So let's make sense of this scene by understanding how these songs are a "sign"
 - We have a heavenly scene communicate something about what is going to happen at the end of Tribulation through songs
 - The first song is song is about Jesus indicating it's a song by believers sung to believers
 - And that song communicates that Christ's return is imminent and His time of rule is near
 - He alone is righteous and holy in contrast to the blasphemous claims of the enemy on earth
 - This sign from Heaven will give the believer in Tribulation something to cling to as they face terrible persecution while hoping for the end
 - This time will probably feel something like the days of Christians being fed to lions in Rome
 - The enemy's forces will tear families apart, execute children in front of their parents or wives in front of their husbands
 - And they will carry out even greater atrocities than the world has ever known
 - But the believer's confidence lies in knowing that they overcome the enemy through death and Christ will return to reign shortly
- But the song(s) of Moses are a sign to a completely different group in the second half of Tribulation
 - Moses' songs are sung to the Jews of Tribulation, particularly to the orthodox Jew who is yet to believe in Jesus
 - The first part of the song from Deuteronomy reminds God's people that this judgment is a result of the Old Covenant's demands
 - The Lord will take Israel through a time of judgment causing Her to experience great weakness
 - Through the judgments, the nation is atoning for their sin and the Lord is remaining faithful to His promises to bring that judgment
 - So ironically, Moses' song gives Israel hope because it says that these events are not outside God's control
 - God remains in control and is keeping His promises and will bring a good result in the end
 - And for the same reason, the second song of Moses from Exodus reminds these Jews of God's faithfulness in the midst of attack
 - When things looked darkest to Israel, the Lord saved them in the end
 - So Israel can have confidence that the Lord will overthrow those who rise up

against His people

- Later at the end of Tribulation we'll see exactly how the Lord fulfills these promises to Israel in a day of desperation
- So the sign of Chapter 15 is to the two persecuted groups in the second half of Tribulation
 - Believers are told to look forward to the Lord's coming and reigning at the end of the bowl judgments
 - And the orthodox Jews can look forward to the Lord's rescue of His people
 - These messages are an encouragement to those on earth in these days

Rev. 15:5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened,

- The next part of the sign transitions to the temple in Heaven and the tabernacle opening
 - In the heavenly realm stands a tabernacle, similar to the one that Moses was instructed to build for Israel in the Law
 - The writer of Hebrews tells us that the earthly tabernacle the Lord gave to Israel was patterned on the heavenly version

Heb. 9:23 Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Heb. 9:24 For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;

- In the tabernacle on earth resided an ark with a mercy seat, which is the name given to the top or lid of the ark
 - So we assume that in the tabernacle in Heaven there is also a mercy seat
 - And in fact, Ezekiel 28 tells us that Satan was originally the cherub who guarded the mercy seat in heaven
- The Shechinah glory of God dwelled in the earthly tabernacle resting on the top of the mercy seat
 - But at a point in Israel's history, the glory of the Lord left the temple shortly before the Age of the Gentiles began
 - And since that Age began, the glory of the Lord has never returned to Israel
 - It won't return, according to Ezekiel, until the Kingdom begins and a new temple is built
- So now as the Lord prepares to pour out His final wrath upon Israel and the world, He opens the tabernacle in Heaven as a sign
 - The glory of the Lord on the mercy seat becomes visible for a time alluding to the

Lord's impending return to the tabernacle

- Here's what Ezekiel saw of that day to come:

Ezek. 43:5 And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the house.

Ezek. 43:6 Then I heard one speaking to me from the house, while a man was standing beside me.

Ezek. 43:7 He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever. And the house of Israel will not again defile My holy name, neither they nor their kings, by their harlotry and by the corpses of their kings when they die,

Ezek. 43:8 by setting their threshold by My threshold and their door post beside My door post, with only the wall between Me and them. And they have defiled My holy name by their abominations which they have committed. So I have consumed them in My anger.

Ezek. 43:9 "Now let them put away their harlotry and the corpses of their kings far from Me; and I will dwell among them forever.

- So the next part of the sign communicates that the time for the Lord to finish with wrath and return to dwelling with Israel has come
 - And with that angels emerge with the bowls of the final judgment

Rev. 15:6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.

Rev. 15:7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

- The seventh Trumpet judgment is the seven bowl judgments, and now we see those bowls being prepared in Heaven so the final trumpet is about to blow
 - God's wrath is commonly depicted in Scripture as something poured out
 - You can find examples of wrath depicted as something poured out of a cup or drank from a cup
 - And God's wrath or judgment is also said to be stored up or filling up of a cup or other vessel
 - And now we see wrath measured not in cups but in bowls, indicating the greater form of this judgment
 - Israel has stored up wrath for herself and now it will be poured out in full measure
 - As Paul wrote in Romans

Rom. 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are

storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Rom. 2:6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS:

- Then an interesting moment happens in Heaven

Rev. 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

- The temple filled with smoke representing the glory and power of the Lord, and then everyone was barred from entry into the temple
 - Who normally enters into the temple of God? In the case of Israel and the Law, entry was limited to the priests
 - And in the case of the Holies Place which held the mercy seat, only the High Priest could enter
 - So if we assume the Heavenly tabernacle works in similar ways, then we must conclude that no priest is entering the temple
 - What priest lives in Heaven? There is only one: Jesus, our High Priest
 - So the indication is that the Father has barred Jesus from entering the temple until the end of the bowl judgments
 - If Jesus cannot enter the temple, then He cannot go before the Father to make intercession
 - And if He cannot make intercession, then there can be no grace offered
 - This is further indication that there is no new faith possible on earth until the end of the bowl judgments
 - Remember, Chapter 15 is a transition chapter leading us out of the mid-Tribulation point
 - And as such, it tells us how the second half of Tribulation will go
 - The bowl judgments will take place near the end of this time, and until they finish, there is no opportunity for faith on earth
- Now with the end of Chapter 15 we officially leave the middle of the seven years of Tribulation and with Chapter 16 we move to the final weeks
 - As with the middle of Tribulation, the end of the seven years involves a complex set of events that overlap
 - So as we study these chapters, we continue to build our understanding with graphs and diagrams
 - We will lay out the events in sequence and understand the cause and effect of them all
 - Let's start with the first five bowl judgments that kick off this final period of Tribulation

Rev. 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

Rev. 16:2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

Rev. 16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

Rev. 16:4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

Rev. 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

Rev. 16:6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”

Rev. 16:7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

Rev. 16:8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

Rev. 16:9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

Rev. 16:10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

Rev. 16:11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

- The final wrath of God poured out brings a new level of suffering and misery to the earth
 - First, God takes away man’s physical comfort with loathsome sores
 - Loathsome is from a Greek word meaning wretched and malignant (literally the word for evil or wicked)
 - If these sores are vile or wicked, they must disrupt the flesh in unimaginable ways
 - Imagine something like the way Jesus’ body was ripped to shreds by his scourging
 - Secondly, God puts an end to all sea life by making all seas turn to blood
 - Besides an uncountable number of dead and rotting fish, the blood itself would begin to congeal and become putrid
 - This would also shut down the water cycle of the planet stopping all rain
 - And it will also cause an unimaginable environmental disaster and make navigation on the sea impossible
 - This is followed by a third bowl making the fresh water sources also turn to blood
 - The angel explains the blood of these judgments is a repayment for the world

pouring out the blood of the saints

- And therefore, the angel declares that the world deserves to be without water
 - This judgment is one of numerous indications that the bowl judgments occur at the very end of the seven years
 - How long can someone survive without water to drink? Only a few days
 - Perhaps the world will survive on stockpiles of water which could extend survival for a time, but certainly not for years
- Fourthly, the sun suddenly increases in intensity to the point that it burns men
 - Imagine living with evil wretched sores in a world with no rain (because the seas are blood) and no natural sources of fresh water
 - Now add to that a scorching sun that literally expels tongues of fire that scorches the earth and people
 - The heat would also increase the rate of decomposition of the dead animals everywhere making the air wretched
 - Finally, the fifth bowl casts the earth into darkness and the darkness is so intense that it causes unbearable pain
 - How does darkness lead to pain?
 - It's not merely the lack of physical light...it's spiritual darkness
 - Similar to the way the Father withdrew His presence from Jesus while He hung on the cross, the Lord has left the world exposed
 - As God's creation is separated from its Creator, it is left to the mercy of the spiritual forces of darkness
 - So for a time, the world feels the effect of the Lord's wrath by experiencing an absence of His protection
- You may have noticed a familiar pattern in many of these judgments
 - Scorching heat, darkness, no water, no refreshment, at the mercy of the enemy, no relief from physical torment
 - The world is experiencing a preview of Hell, because they are enduring the wrath of God
 - Hell is itself a place that experiences the outpouring of the wrath of God continually
 - So it makes sense that His wrath poured out would be felt in similar ways
 - The world's response to these calamities in v.9 is to continue blaspheming God without repentance
 - An unbeliever's sin nature is eternal and so their rebellion will be eternal unless God changes their nature
 - Therefore, for the same reason an unbeliever's punishment must be eternal too
 - These judgments reinforce the sign of Chapter 15 when they heard the song of Moses
 - In the Exodus, the nation of Egypt held Israel captive so the Lord used

- judgments to free His people
 - Here again, the nation of Israel is captive to an enemy, and the Lord pours out judgment to free His people
 - Specifically, bowls 1, 2, 3, and 5 all have parallels in the Exodus
 - The connection is intentional, because it reminds us that these judgments are ultimately moving His nation to a good outcome
 - In the end, the judgments of Exodus brought Israel freedom and ultimately entrance into the Promised Land
 - Likewise, these judgments are part of the plan to free Israel from slavery to sin and unbelief and into the Kingdom
- So now that we've studied the first five bowls, let's pause to look at how the bowl judgments fit into the overall plan for the end of Tribulation
 - The first five judgments are a systematic delivery of Hell to earth in preparation for the Lord's return
 - We can call these judgments collectively the plagues, in recognition of the way they mirror the Exodus
 - They serve to bring God's wrath to the world, but they are also a preparation and backdrop for the events of Chapters 17 & 18
 - Then we have the final two climatic judgments before the return of Christ
 - The final two judgments may seem insignificant compared to what we've already seen in the first five
 - But they are part of a larger set of events
 - We call this climax the War of Armageddon, and it has multiple stages
 - This war ends the Tribulation and leads to Christ's Second Coming
 - And the first two stages of the war are set in motion by the final two bowl judgments
 - Even just the word "Armageddon" can produce a wide variety of misconceptions and assumptions
 - Many Christians have heard of this war but most have no idea of its timing or purpose, much less its details
 - And like most wars, the actual events of the war are complex and defy a simple explanation
 - Beginning with the fact that the war of Armageddon isn't a single military engagement but rather a series of events over weeks
 - It takes place in a series of locations and involves many different groups and characters
 - As usual, Revelation will give us the broad outline of the events of the war and how they relate to the bowl judgments
 - But crucial aspects of the story lie outside Revelation in other books of the Bible, particularly in the OT prophets
- Even more confusing, descriptions of the war are sprinkled throughout Chapters 16-19

- These chapters bring resolution to a number of loose ends in Revelation and conclusion to major themes of Scripture going back to Genesis
 - In particular, God judges and eliminates the enemy and his most importance influence on humanity: Babylon
 - Babylon is itself a mysterious and complex topic that requires careful explanation
- We'll dissect all this over the coming weeks, but first we need to establish a relationship between the bowls and the events of this war
 - Let's begin where we left off in Revelation 16, at the pouring out of the sixth bowl judgment

Rev. 16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

Rev. 16:13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs;

Rev. 16:14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

Rev. 16:15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)

Rev. 16:16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-magedon.

- As the sixth angel pours out his bowl, we're told that the great river, the Euphrates, is dried up
 - The Euphrates is the major river of Mesopotamia in present-day Iraq that runs near the ancient city of Babylon
 - We know from the earlier bowl judgments that all the rivers of the Earth have been turned to blood
 - So this river had already changed to blood too
 - But blood itself is mostly water, so it's still accurate to say this judgment has “dried up” as a result of this bowl judgment
 - Naturally, we ask how is the drying up of a river (given that it has already turned to blood) considered a judgment?
 - In v.12 we're told the reason: it makes a way possible for the kings of the east
 - The kings is a reference to the Antichrist and the seven kings who serve him in this day
 - We know from Daniel that Tribulation begins with only ten kings in power, which become seven when the Antichrist rises to power
 - So those kings are the same kings described here and the river dries up to

- prepare a way for these seven kings of the earth
 - When v.12 says “prepare a way,” it speaks of making travel or movement possible for the kings
 - Obviously, the Lord is the one carrying out these judgments and is therefore the One preparing their travel
 - But why does the Lord want them to travel and how is that a judgement?
- In vs.13-16 we begin to see how this movement plays a part in God’s judgments
 - The dragon, beast and false prophet see opportunity when the river dries up to enact a plan to oppose God
 - They send unclean spirits as messengers to the kings of the earth
 - An unclean spirit is a demon, and they are described as like frogs, which is an OT symbol for an unclean spirit
 - The demons call the seven kings of the earth to gather their military forces in preparation for a great war against God
 - The gathering place for these forces is a place called by the Hebrew name, Har-Megiddo
 - The word har in Hebrew is hill or mountain and Megiddo is the name of a city in northern Israel in the Jezreel Valley
 - Therefore, the hill of Megiddo is Har-Megiddo in Hebrew
 - And in the transliteration of the Hebrew into English, we arrive at Armageddon
 - This is the location where these kings will gather their armies in preparation for a great war against God
 - That war we’re about to study gets its name from this city and the battle that begins in this area
 - Why does Satan call the kings of the Earth to gather in Har-Megiddo?
 - And why does the Lord use the sixth bowl judgment to make this possible?
- First, remember the incredible destruction brought to earth by the first five bowl judgments
 - Life on earth is now virtually unlivable, and those who have taken the mark of the beast see that their time is short
 - Like Satan when he was cast down, the world as a whole realizes that without water death is right around the corner
 - And they know that God is behind these judgments
 - So Satan, who also knows his time is short, determines he must prepare to destroy Christ at His return
 - So with the influence of the Antichrist and the false prophet, Satan calls the world to fight as one against Christ
 - He probably points to the world’s desperate state and declares this the only hope for survival
 - So with Satan and the world in the same boat, both searching for a way to defeat

God and avoid death, they set about to go to war

- So the call goes out for the Antichrist's forces to gather in northern Israel for a massive attack against the Lord's city
 - So that when the Lord returns to the Mt. of Olives and to the temple, the Antichrist's forces will be waiting to destroy Him
 - Moreover, the enemy will target the remaining hold out of Jews hunkered down in the city
 - And if he can destroy these Jews, he hopes to make Christ's return impossible
- This war unfolds in five stages over the next several chapters, and the first of those stages is the sixth bowl judgment
 - Stage I of the war of Armageddon is the movement of the Antichrist's forces out of his capital city and toward Israel
 - We haven't heard the name of the Antichrist's capital yet, but the drying up of the Euphrates river gives us a clue
 - The city of Babylon lies on the east side of that river, while Israel lies to the west
 - So moving forces toward Israel would require that the river dry up
 - We'll see confirmation that Babylon is his headquarters later in Revelation
 - The river was an obstacle to his movement westward into Jerusalem especially in its bloody state
 - So the Lord dries up the river to make movement possible
 - And the demons respond to the move of God by calling the kings to Har-Megiddo
 - This is a judgment because it sets in motion a war that ultimately brings death to all unbelievers and defeat to Satan and the Antichrist
 - So the world's armies move from Babylon westward until they mass near Har-Megiddo
 - The armies use this area as a staging location in preparation for battle
 - The actual battle will take place in two other locations
 - And apart from those battles, the Lord initiates destruction in still a third location
- Finally, in v.15 the Lord inserts a parenthetical statement to the believer who lives during these difficult final days
 - Earlier in Revelation 3 in His letter to Laodicea, the Lord warned the church to be ready for the Rapture
 - He would come unexpectedly and only the believing would be received into Heaven
 - So Jesus told the unbelieving in the church to be ready since they wouldn't know the hour of His coming
 - You won't have a chance to get right with God at the last minute because you won't see that minute coming

- Likewise, the world will not recognize that Jesus' Second Coming is imminent
 - And so they must know and believe before that day comes
 - It's the same problem but for a different moment
 - And yet the call is the same...believe while today is still called "today"