Session 14 Seventh Bowl: Earthquake, Hail, and the Fall of Babylon (Rev. 16:17-21)

1. introduction: we know the end of the story

17Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” 18…there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. 19Now the great city [Jerusalem] was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. 20Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great. (Rev. 16:17-21)

* 1. It is a great gift of God to show us the end of the story. Jesus wins, saints will be vindicated, and the Antichrist’s empire will be openly defeated as sin is judged. In our short-sightedness, we get weighed down with the cares of life. Jesus says, “See, I have told you beforehand” (Mt. 24:25), as if to say, “I care about your heart being connected to Mine as the end-time drama unfolds.”
  2. The seventh bowl is God’s final judgment (Rev. 15:1). In it God will respond to the global blasphemy against the Spirit that occurred in the sixth bowl. This bowl releases the worst earthquake in history, which shakes the cities of the nations, especially the two great cities in Revelation (Jerusalem and Babylon—11:8; 14:8). It is accompanied by 100-pound hailstones and includes a plague “in the air” that causes the flesh to dissolve (Zech. 14:12, 15).
  3. The context of the seventh bowl is seen in the sixth bowl in which the Gentile armies of the earth gather to Jerusalem (Rev. 16:13-14; 19:19; Joel 3:2, 12; Zech. 12:3; 14:2; Zeph. 3:8; Ezek. 38:4). The next events following this bowl are recorded in Rev. 19:11-21. It will be the largest military battle ever seen in history. Millions will be deployed in this battle. Jesus will approach Jerusalem on a white horse with a multitude of saints (Rev. 19:11-14).
  4. ***Great***: Eight aspects are described as great in Revelation 16. John speaks of great heat (16:9), the great river Euphrates (16:12), the great day of God Almighty (16:14), the great earthquake (16:18), the great city (Jerusalem, 16:19), great Babylon (16:19), and great hail from heaven (16:21) as a great plague (16:21). God’s great works were extolled just before these (Rev. 15:3).
  5. Jesus will vindicate the saints and kill the wicked when He comes.

7…when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, 8in flaming fire taking vengeance on those…who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. (2 Thes. 1:7-8)

* 1. Jesus will destroy the final aspects of the infrastructure of the Antichrist’s empire.

8“I [Father] will give You [Jesus] the nations for Your inheritance…9You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter’s vessel.” (Ps. 2:8-9)

1. The plague
   1. ***Bowl into the air***: The implications of this are not clarified. Yet it will have the greatest impact out of all the bowls being sent on people (16:2), the sea (16:3), fresh waters (16:4), and the sun (16:8). The bowls grow in intensity. They start with sores (16:2), then destroy food and water (16:3-4), then release scorching heat and darkness (16:8-11), then demonically allure nations into war (16:12-16).
   2. Some suggest that the bowl poured into the air may cause the plague that Zechariah prophesied of when the flesh, eyes, and tongues of people and livestock dissolve (Zech. 14:12, 15).

12This shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths…15Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel…in those camps. (Zech. 14:12-15)

* 1. ***The temple and the throne***: The loud voice is God’s voice, as in Revelation 16:1. Only twice are the heavenly temple and throne mentioned together (Rev. 7:15)
  2. ***It is done***:God’s wrath is finished (Rev. 15:8). This echoes what Jesus said on the cross, crying out, “It is finished” (Jn. 19:30). He said this at the close of His 3½ year ministry, and at the close of the 3½ year Tribulation, He will say it again—first from the cross and then from the throne. He is either our Savior or Judge, depending on how people respond.
  3. ***Thunderings and lightnings***:A thunderstorm breaks out at the conclusion of each of the three numbered judgment series (Rev. 4:5; 8:3-5; 11:19; 16:18). This speaks of storms, hurricanes, cyclones, electrical storms, and floods occurring at the conclusion of each series.

1. The great earthquake
   1. ***Great earthquake***: The great earthquake will come on God’s enemies. Notice the earthquake sequence in Revelation (Rev. 6:14; 8:5; 11:13; 16:18-20). The last one is the biggest one (Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; 13:13; 24:19-20; 29:6; Ezek. 38:19; Hag. 2:6, 21; Zech. 14:4-5; Heb. 12:26-27).
   2. Haggai prophesied that God would shake heaven (sky),earth, sea, dry land, and all nations.

6“I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; 7and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations…21I will shake heaven and earth. 22…I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms.”   
(Hag. 2:6-7, 21-22)

26He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” 27Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28…since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken…serve God…with…godly fear. (Heb. 12:26-28)

* 1. A great earthquake will occur in Israel (Ezek. 38:19; Zech. 14:5; Joel 2:10; 3:15).
  2. The earthquake in Jerusalem will open the escape route for the besieged Jews. In Zechariah 14, after the earthquake, Jesus comes with all His saints to fully defeat the forces of the Antichrist.

4In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives…And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley…5Then you shall flee through My mountain valley…Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah…The Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You. (Zech. 14:4-5)

* 1. Jesus will march through the land of Edom to enter Jerusalem, arriving at the perfect time to rescue the unsaved remnant of Israel, who will be trapped against the Mount of Olives. He will split the mountain to provide a way of escape through the new mountain valley. As Israel had their backs against the Red Sea until Moses split the sea, so Jesus, as the “greater Moses,” will split the Mount of Olives, giving Israel an “exodus escape.” The Antichrist was winning the battle until this sudden turn of events (Zech. 14:2).
  2. While standing at the Mount of Olives, Jesus prophesied of mountains being moved by faith.

1…at the Mount of Olives…23“I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.” (Mk. 11:1, 23)

* 1. ***Great city Jerusalem***:There are two great cities in Revelation. History from God’s point of view is a tale of two cities—Jerusalem and Babylon. Both are called the “great city.” Jerusalem (Rev. 11:8) and Babylon (Rev. 14:8). The specific reference to Babylon later in the text makes it clear that it is distinct from the reference to Jerusalem as the great city that was mentioned first.
  2. ***Divided into three parts***:Jerusalem will be struck by an earthquake that will divide the city into three parts, as one-tenth of the city collapses and 7,000 die, causing many to glorify God.

13There was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand people were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. (Rev. 11:13)

9The Lord shall be King over all the earth…10All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place…11The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. (Zech. 14:9-11)

* 1. ***Great Babylon***:The greatest earthquake in history will destroy Babylon on the Euphrates River in Iraq (fifty miles south of Baghdad). Babylon will be one of the Antichrist’s headquarters.
  2. ***Was remembered before God***:Because the city of Babylonwill still be standing after all the previous judgments, some will think that she escaped. However, at the very end of the Great Tribulation, God will suddenly and permanently destroy her before the Millennium starts.
  3. Judgment will come on Babylon in two stages. First, ten kings will destroy the harlot religious system in the middle of the seven years and replace it with the Antichrist’s religion (Rev. 17:16). Second, at the end of the seven-year period, God will destroy it in the seventh bowl (Rev. 18:8).
  4. ***Cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath***:This phrase uses both of the common words for God’s wrath: ***thymos*** (anger or fierceness) and ***orge*** (wrath).
  5. ***Cities of the nations fell***:The earthquake will impact every city on earth as great skyscrapers collapse, causing fires. Imagine the leading cities of the earth falling, such as Washington, DC, London, Paris, Tokyo, Hong Kong, Seoul, New York, Rome, Moscow, Cairo, etc.
  6. ***Every island and the mountains***:The great earthquake will impact the entire earth, including every part of the ocean. It will cause every island to sink into the sea and many mountains to be leveled. This will serve as part of God’s reconstruction plan for the millennial earth.

5The mountains quake before Him, the hills melt, and the earth heaves at His presence, yes, the world and all who dwell in it. 6Who can stand before His indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger…the rocks are thrown down by Him. (Nah. 1:5-6)

1. Great hailstones
   1. ***Great hail***: Hail that is the weight of a talent—approximately 100 pounds, or the size of large blocks of ice—will fall on houses, buildings, vehicles, animals, bridges, crops, and people.
   2. Moses’ law required the stoning to death of idol worshipers (Deut. 17:2-5). Since the Antichrist’s worship movement is idolatry, therefore Jesus will stone them to death from heaven.

6“If your brother…secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’…10…you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the Lord…11So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness…” (Deut. 13:6-11)

16“Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord…the congregation shall…stone him.” (Lev. 24:16)

* 1. There will be no rain for three and a half years around Israel (Rev. 11:6). This great drought will be followed by a great storm in the seventh bowl (Isa. 28:15-22; 29:6; Ezek. 38:22).

22“I will rain down on him [Antichrist], on his troops, and on the many peoples who are with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.” (Ezek. 38:22)

* 1. Isaiah described the final end-time judgments many times.

19They shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily…21to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the crags of the rugged rocks, from the terror of the Lord and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily. (Isa. 2:19-21)

6“You will be punished by the Lord of hosts with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with storm and tempest and the flame of devouring fire.” (Isa. 29:6)

* 1. The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war.

13The Lord shall go forth like a mighty man; He shall stir up His zeal like a man of war. He shall cry out, yes, shout aloud; He shall prevail against His enemies. 14“I have held My peace a long time, I have been still and restrained Myself. Now I will cry like a woman in labor…15I will lay waste the mountains and hills…” (Isa. 42:13-15)

* 1. Isaiah spoke of God’s unusual act in His end-time judgments.

17“I will make justice the measuring line…the hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters will overflow the hiding place”…21For the Lord will rise up as at Mount Perazim, He will be angry as in the Valley of Gibeon—that He may do His work, His awesome work, and bring to pass His act, His unusual act. 22…therefore, do not be mockers…I have heard from the Lord God of hosts, a destruction determined even upon the whole earth. (Isa. 28:17-22)

* + 1. ***Mount Perazim***: When the Philistines attacked King David and Israel at Mount Perazim, God released a mighty breakthrough for them (2 Sam. 5:17-20). Mt. Perazim was a center of idol worship, or a high place, for Baal. There was such a sudden and total rout that the Philistines fled, leaving their idols. This is a type of God’s sudden and total victory.
    2. ***Valley of Gibeon***: Gibeon (modern el-Jib) is six miles northwest of Jerusalem. In the battle for Gibeon, God sent hailstones to help Joshua defeat the Amorites (Canaanites) in Joshua 10.

11As they fled before Israel…the Lord cast down large hailstones from heaven on them…and they died. (Josh. 10:11)

* + 1. ***Unusual act***: The Lord will rise up to defeat the Antichrist and all apostate Israelis in alliance with him. He will defeat them as He defeated the Philistines at Mount Perazim and the Amorites in the valley of Gibeon with hailstones (Josh. 10:11).
  1. God used hail in His judgments in the past (Josh. 10:11). Hail was used by God in the seventh plague with Moses (Ex. 9:23-24). Hail was also released in the first trumpet (Rev. 8:7).
  2. God asked Job if he knew about the treasury of hail that He has reserved for the day of battle when He judges His enemies (Ps. 78:47; 105:32-33; 148:8).

22“Have you entered the treasury of snow, or have you seen the treasury of hail, 23which I have reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war?” (Job 38:22-23)

* 1. The time Jesus enters Jerusalem will be unique.

6It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. 7It shall be one day which is known to the Lord—neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. (Zech. 14:6-7)

* 1. ***Men blasphemed God:*** Natural history will end with a final outcry of blasphemy against God. The earthquake and hail bring men’s hatred to the surface yet again. The wicked will know that.
  2. God sent the plagues, yet men will continue to curse and blaspheme God. They do it because of the great heat in the fourth bowl (16:9), then for the darkness in the fifth bowl (16:11), then in the global blasphemy against the Spirit in the sixth bowl gathering for war against Jesus (Rev. 16:13-14). Men would not blaspheme if this hail were merely symbolic or figurative.
  3. The seventh bowl will be necessary to stop evil men from exterminating the whole human race and polluting the earth with evil. Satan will be cast to the earth at the start of the Tribulation (Rev. 12:7-9). He will be filled with murderous rage against God’s people (Rev. 12:12-17).

21“For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened.” (Mt. 24:21-22)

6The curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isa. 24:6)

10The sun will be darkened…and the moon will not cause its light to shine. 11“I will punish the world for its evil…12I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold.” (Isa. 13:10-12)

* 1. God will cleanse creation by removing the old to prepare for the new (Zech. 13:1-6).
  2. Jeremiah prophesied of coming judgment.

23I beheld the earth, and indeed it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. 24I beheld the mountains, and indeed they trembled, and all the hills moved back and forth…26I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, and all its cities were broken down at the presence of the Lord, by His fierce anger. 27For thus says the Lord: “The whole land shall be desolate; yet I will not make a full end.” (Jer. 4:23-27)

* 1. Joel prophesied of the final judgment.

16The Lord…will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the Lord will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. 17“…you shall know that I am the Lord…dwelling in Zion My holy mountain.”  
(Joel 3:16-17)

* 1. Afterwards, Israel and the Gentile nations will rebuild the ruined cities (Ps. 69:35-36).

4They shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. (Isa. 61:4)