

**PREFACE**

These notes are to serve as a blessing and help to those studying the word with Pastor Neil Spencer. Pastor Neil does not claim to fully agree with all the thoughts, beliefs, writings, or teachings of every named source/person in these notes. The Bible is the ultimate authority & ALL believers are to be Bereans (Acts 17.10-11).

**INTRODUCTION**

1. In our study of the book of Revelation we've come to a **significant**, even **marvelous** point in what's known as the TRIBULATION & the great GREAT TRIBULATION.
2. What's the difference?
  1. The TRIBULATION is that future period of time of 7yrs in which Jesus as the merciful & just judge will:
    1. Wake Up the Nation of Israel
    2. Shake Up a ppl who are far from Him
    3. How — through Mercy & Judgment — delaying/minimizing the full judgment, but also bringing it.
  2. The GREAT TRIBULATION is the last half of the Tribulation period
    1. The last 3 1/2yrs, instigated by the Beast, or Antichrist, revealing himself...
    2. In Daniel 9 & Jesus spoke about this in Matthew 24 — known as the abomination of desolation
    3. The AntiChrist demands worship & sacrilegiously breaks a covenant w/ the nation of Israel (Rev 13)
3. We're at a point in this future drama ... that the Apostle John — author of the book... describes in 15.1 *Then I saw in heaven another marvelous event of great significance. Seven angels were holding the seven last plagues, which would bring God's wrath to completion.*
4. Remember in CH14... we learned the heart of God in His **Mercy** with His **Judgement**
  1. In v15 the angel says, *"Swing the sickle, for the time of harvest has come; the crop on earth is ripe."*
  2. It's interesting the word for ripe in the GK language — "totally ripe, almost rotten, withered"...
  3. Meaning, God has mercifully withheld His judgment until the time is over-ripe for judgment...
5. Today, we'll see the Culmination... the Climax... the Completion of God's Judgment in the GREAT TRIBULATION
  1. In chapter 15, John describes:
    1. That he saw 7 angels preparing to pour out 7 final judgments (v1-2, 5-8)
    2. That he heard the victors over the Antichrist singing a song of praise to God (2-4)
  2. In chapter 16, John describes these judgments — known as the bowl/vile judgments
    1. He'll describe the place & the punishment of these judgments:
      1. Earth — horrible sores break out upon people (1-2)
      2. Rivers & Springs (sources of fresh water) — becoming as blood (4-7)
      3. The Throne of the Beast — his entire kingdom being plunged into darkness (10-11)
    2. He'll also describe proclamations coming from heaven (17-21)
      1. The 7th Angel pours his final judgment
      2. A Mighty Voice from throne in the Temple — "It is Finished"
    3. He'll show us that some ppl still don't respond to God's call of repentance
      1. V9 — ppl are cursing God rather than turning to God
      2. V11 — ppl refusing to turn to God.
6. In ch 15/16 we'll see the preparation/delivery of *the 7 last plagues, which bring God's wrath to completion.*

## CHAPTER 15

*1 Then I saw in heaven another marvelous event of great significance. Seven angels were holding the seven last plagues, which would bring God's wrath to completion. 2 I saw before me what seemed to be a glass sea mixed with fire. And on it stood all the people who had been victorious over the beast and his statue and the number representing his name. They were all holding harps that God had given them. 3 And they were singing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your works, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations. 4 Who will not fear you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous deeds have been revealed."*

1. In this vision, John sees all those who were victorious over the beast, his statue, & his number (666) — Rev 13
  1. They're standing on what seems to be a glass sea ... mixed w/ fire
  2. They're holding harps — that God has given them
  3. They're singing a song — known as the song of Moses & song of the Lamb
2. What is this about — MOSES in the book of Revelation — a sea of glass mixed w/ fire?
  1. Remember the book of Revelation contains more than 500 allusions to the OT
  2. 70% — 278 of the 404 verses that make up the book of Revelation — make reference to the OT
  3. I love what Warren Wiersbe says about what John sees & hears here in Ch15:
    1. **(PP)** *This entire scene is reminiscent of Israel following the exodus. The nation had been delivered from Egypt by the blood of the lamb, and the Egyptian army had been destroyed at the Red Sea.*
    2. **(PP)** *In thankfulness to God, the Israelites stood by the sea and sang "the song of Moses." The tribulation saints whom John saw and heard were standing by the "sea of glass" in heaven (Rev. 4:6), just as the Israelites stood by the Red Sea.*
    3. **(PP)** *They were singing "the song of Moses" and also "the song of the Lamb." "The song of Moses" is recorded in Exodus 15, and its refrain is: "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation" (Ex. 15:2).*
    4. **(PP)** *This scene would give great assurance and endurance to suffering saints in any age of the church. It is possible to be victorious over the world system! One does not have to yield to the "mark of the beast." Through the blood of the Lamb, we have deliverance. Our Lord's work on the cross is a "spiritual exodus" accomplished by His blood.*
4. Don't you love that? What that shows/pictures for as believers?
  1. We can endure anything that God allows into our lives — b/c of what Jesus accomplished!
  2. You see, the enemy who is VERY real — is allowed to tempt, distract, discourage... in this time, even kill.
  3. But, as Wiersbe says, it is possible to be victorious over the world system.
  4. We know this from the clarity of God's Word — **Romans 8 9** *But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.) 10 And Christ lives within you, so even though your body will die because of sin, the Spirit gives you life because you have been made right with God. 11 The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, lives in you. And just as God raised Christ Jesus*

*from the dead, he will give life to your mortal bodies by this same Spirit living within you. 12 Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. 13 For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through the power of the Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

5. Life is not all about THIS life... but a set up for the life to come. And these victorious ppl are singing.

3. Don't you think this song could've easily been a "woe is me" kind of song?

1. Could be... these are martyrs of the Tribulation time

1. Those who didn't take the mark of the beast

2. They weren't able to buy/sell b/c they didn't take the mark

3. They were thrown in prison/many were killed

2. **(PP)** *In their song, the tribulation saints praise God's works as well as His ways. ... God's works are great and marvelous, and His ways are just and true. There is no complaint here about the way God permitted these people to suffer! It would save us a great deal of sorrow if we would acknowledge God's sovereignty in this same way today! "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works" (Ps. 145:17).*

4. I don't know what you're going through, how your week has been, but be encouraged by what we read here:

1. It is possible to rise above what the enemy seeks to bring into your life — *the cross is a "spiritual exodus"*

2. Trust God... He is sovereign... His works/ways are right!

5. Now before we look at this Culmination & Completion of God's Judgment that's about to come... look at what John sees & how God prepares to deliver this judgment:

**5** *Then I looked and saw that the Temple in heaven, God's Tabernacle, was thrown wide open. 6 The seven angels who were holding the seven plagues came out of the Temple. They were clothed in spotless white linen with gold sashes across their chests. 7 Then one of the four living beings handed each of the seven angels a gold bowl filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. 8 The Temple was filled with smoke from God's glory and power. No one could enter the Temple until the seven angels had completed pouring out the seven plagues.*

1. You really get the scene that God's judgment is about to be poured out...

1. Temple is filled with smoke — b/c of God's glory & power

2. No one could enter the Temple until the judgment was complete.

2. It is clear this judgment is coming from God — from His Temple, called God's Tabernacle — He's in control

3. These 7 angels — clothed w/ spotless white linen w/ golden sashes

1. Meaning that this judgment is pure & righteous (not a vigilante or antihero)

2. This judgment is overdue... God has been patient — **14.15**— "totally ripe, almost rotten, withered"...

3. God has mercifully withheld His judgment until the time is over-ripe for judgment...

4. Before we consider these judgments... I want to belabor this point... The interplay of God's MERCY/JUSTICE...

1. B/c what we're about to read is gnarly ... Sometimes what we read in the OT is gnarly...

2. The ppl of God commanded to kill so many as they conquering the land...

3. To do so, I want to read something to you from Pastor Jon Courson ... it's insightful...

1. **(PP)** *In Revelation 15, God says, "I have been patient with human rebellion and depravity—and now the*

*bowls are full.” In Genesis 15:13–16, God says to Abraham, “You’re going to be the father of a nation that will sojourn in another country for four hundred years. Your people will be afflicted and enslaved because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” In other words, while Israel was held captive in Egypt for four hundred years, God was giving the Canaanites an opportunity to repent and turn to Him. Tragically, however, they didn’t.*

2. **(PP)** *Four hundred years is a long time. ... while Israel was held captive in Egypt, God waited for the Amorites to turn from their bizarre, evil practices. But they didn’t. So finally, when the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God said, “Enough is enough. Destroy them.” Did He do so because He is cruel? No. The Amorites were already doomed, damned, lost, gone, toast, curtains, dust. They were so sick that in ordering their annihilation, God was simply putting them out of their misery.*
3. **(PP)** *I camp on this point because people who read the Bible casually or hear a story in a Sunday sermon occasionally can think God is cruel. We must explain to them how patient God is—but that we must not mistake His patience for apathy, impotence, or approval of sin. For while the wheels of God’s judgment turn slowly, they do, indeed, grind thoroughly.*

5. John the Apostle writes 15.1 *Then I saw in heaven another **marvelous** event of great **significance**. Seven angels were holding the seven last plagues, which would **bring God’s wrath to completion**.*

1. The time of God’s mercy has reached it’s fullness
2. B/c God is GOOD, He must be JUST... and now we read about this God’s wrath coming to completion in CH 16.
3. As I read through these judgments that are poured out upon the earth — let’s stand...

## **CHAPTER 16**

*1 Then I heard a mighty voice from the Temple say to the seven angels, “Go your ways and pour out on the earth the seven bowls containing God’s wrath.” 2 So the first angel left the Temple and poured out his bowl on the earth, and horrible, malignant sores broke out on everyone who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his statue.*

*3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse. And everything in the sea died. 4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel who had authority over all water saying, “You are just, O Holy One, who is and who always was, because you have sent these judgments. 6 Since they shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is their just reward.” 7 And I heard a voice from the altar, saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just.”*

*8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, causing it to scorch everyone with its fire. 9 Everyone was burned by this blast of heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over all these plagues. They did not repent of their sins and turn to God and give him glory. 10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. His subjects ground their teeth in anguish, 11 and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God. 12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west without hindrance.*

1. As God directs these angels to pour out the bowls containing His wrath, this is neither reckless nor random, but specific, measured, & focused.

1. The 1st angel — specific place & punishment...
2. The 2nd angel — specific place & punishment...
2. Did you notice the parallels between these judgments & the trumpet judgments of ch8?
  1. In each case, the judgment affect the same things — the seas, the earth, fresh water...
  2. But these bowl judgments are more severe & fuller in their extent of judgment
3. These judgments remind us once again of the plagues of Egypt
  1. But, these bowls of judgment seem to be like rapid-fire, occurring in quick succession
  2. And they're aimed a preparing the way for the final battle of Armageddon & ultimately the return of Jesus
4. Here's what we see in this 1st 6 judgements:
  1. First Judgment — Horrible & Malignant Sores (I brought pictures of what this could look like j/k)
    1. Poured out on the Earth
    2. Specifically those who worshipped the beast & took his mark
  2. Second Judgment — Sea becomes like Blood
    1. Every living thing dies
    2. Could be actual blood, could be something like intense Red Tide... but this is horrific
  3. Third Judgment — Fresh Water Polluted
    1. Hard to imagine... but Dasani, Vos, TopoChico... Berkey... won't keep it from being bloody
    2. There's a proclamation here from the angel: **5** *And I heard the angel who had authority over all water saying, "You are just, O Holy One, who is and who always was, because you have sent these judgments. 6 Since they shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, you have given them blood to drink. It is their just reward."* **7** *And I heard a voice from the altar, saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just."*
    3. This isn't God being CRUEL... this is a patient God who b/c of His love must bring JUSTICE
    4. Remember last week, the Croatian Theologian who was challenged by the wrath/justice of God: *Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love.*— Miroslav Volf, Free of Charge (Zondervan, 2006), pp. 138-139
  4. Fourth Judgment v8 — Sun Scorches Everyone With its Fire
    1. Is this a Supernova — where a star become extremely hot before the death of a star?
    2. Don't know... but what we do know is that judgment doesn't change the heart
    3. **9** *Everyone was burned by this blast of heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over all these plagues. They did not repent of their sins and turn to God and give him glory.*
    4. **(PP)** *The wishful thinking of some, that men would repent if they only knew the power and righteous judgment of God, is shattered by frequent mention in this chapter of the hardness of the human heart in the face of the most stringent and evident divine discipline.*
  5. Fifth Judgment — Directed Against the Beast & His Reign
    1. **10** *Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. His subjects ground their teeth in anguish, 11 and they cursed the God of heaven for their pains*

*and sores. But they did not repent of their evil deeds and turn to God.*

2. In other places we've seen darkness ...
  1. 5th Trumpet in Revelation 9
  2. Or remember the 9th plague in the land of Egypt
  3. But this darkness (be it literal or symbolic of some kind) is focused squarely on the beast & his rule
3. Even though it would seem that those being judged could barely speak due to the pain — *grinding their teeth in anguish* — they are still cursing God... and will not repent...
4. Anyone remember this movie from 1957 (**PP**)
  1. Breaks your heart when Travis has to put down old yeller
  2. But he's nasty, gnarling, has to be put to down...
  3. There is nothing that will reach the heart of these ppl... angrily grinding their teeth against God.
5. Now, we read of the 6th Judgment in v12, but let's read verses 12-16 as this judgment is preparing the way for the final battle of Armageddon & ultimately the return of Jesus.

**12** Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great Euphrates River, and it dried up so that the kings from the east could march their armies toward the west without hindrance. **13** And I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs leap from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. **14** They are demonic spirits who work miracles and go out to all the rulers of the world to gather them for battle against the Lord on that great judgment day of God the Almighty. **15** "Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed." **16** And the demonic spirits gathered all the rulers and their armies to a place with the Hebrew name Armageddon.

1. John is now describing the 1st of 2 events that will happen as the Great Tribulation — these final 3 1/2 yrs of judgment — come to a close: a global war & the 2nd & last... a cataclysmic earthquake.
2. The 6th Judgment — gives insight into this global war — commonly called the battle of Armageddon
  1. The river Euphrates dries up, making it easy for "the kings from the east" to march toward the Holy Land (v. 12).
  2. Who are these kings? — they are rulers from the Orient who invade Israel
  3. John sees something wild — Frogs (demonic spirits) — leaping from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, & the false prophet — this unholy Trinity — deceiving/enticing these kings to battle against the Lord.
3. This, to me is just wild... Skip Heitzig's commentary is helpful w/ this:
  1. (**PP**) *But why will the nations gather? Remember what will have transpired over the course of the first five bowl judgments. The world will be shrouded in thick darkness, and everyone will have boils on their sun-scorched bodies —and yet these armies will march toward battle. Why? Apparently they will have been deceived into believing that they have enough firepower to eliminate God. What utter deception!*
  2. (**PP**) *Satan knows that Jesus's second coming is close at hand, and he will use the Antichrist and the false prophet to bring the military might of the world together in Israel. He will get the combatants to believe they can overcome God. But in reality, God will be in full control of all that takes place. He says through Zechariah, "I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem...Then [I] will go forth and fight against those nations, as...in the day of battle" (Zechariah 14:2-3). Really, there won't be much "battle" in the Battle of Armageddon. God will simply put an end to*

*it all. He will come and take over. The end.*

4. John is seeing all of this in a vision & records for us the words of Jesus ... a warning to be prepared in light of Jesus' assured victory — **15** *"Look, I will come as unexpectedly as a thief! Blessed are all who are watching for me, who keep their clothing ready so they will not have to walk around naked and ashamed."*
5. Now we come to the 7th & final judgment... & we the 2nd event that will happen as the Great Tribulation — these final 3 1/2 yrs of judgment — come to a close: a cataclysmic earthquake.

**17** *Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. And a mighty shout came from the throne in the Temple, saying, "It is finished!"* **18** *Then the thunder crashed and rolled, and lightning flashed. And a great earthquake struck—the worst since people were placed on the earth.* **19** *The great city of Babylon split into three sections, and the cities of many nations fell into heaps of rubble. So God remembered all of Babylon's sins, and he made her drink the cup that was filled with the wine of his fierce wrath.* **20** *And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled.* **21** *There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below. They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm.*

1. You know, in Ephesians 2.2, the devil is called *the prince of the power of the air*
  1. In chapters 17, 18, 19 the enemies religious, political, and military systems will be judged
  2. Finally, in ch20 he is judged.
  3. So this 7th and final bowl judgment is poured into air b/c he is the prince of the power of the air... his rule & reign will be down away with completely.
  4. Anyone excited about that?
2. The world's most significant & deadliest earthquake will strike the earth...
  1. Now, the earth has had significant/catastrophic earthquakes
  2. **(PP)** Google — World's Deadliest Earthquakes
 

1. Shaanxi, China — 1556 — 830k deaths	4. Antakya, Turkey — 525 — 260k deaths
2. PAP, Haiti — 2010—316k deaths	5. Tangshan, China — 1976 — 242k deaths
3. Antakya, Turkey — 115 — 260k deaths	
3. When this hits, that prominent/pinnacle city of the antichrist — Babylon — will split & cities of many nations = rubble.
4. The earth will be catapulted into chaos — **20** *And every island disappeared, and all the mountains were leveled.* **21** *There was a terrible hailstorm, and hailstones weighing as much as seventy-five pounds fell from the sky onto the people below.*
5. And sadly... look at the response of the people... *They cursed God because of the terrible plague of the hailstorm.*

## **CONCLUSION & APPLICATION**

1. Today, we see the Culmination... the Climax... the Completion of God's Judgment in the GREAT TRIBULATION
2. What's our response? Our Take-a-way? — Reminded of God's Mercy/Justice — He's patient
  1. We can endure anything that God allows into our lives — b/c of what Jesus accomplished!
  2. It is possible to rise above what the enemy seeks to bring into your life — *the cross is a "spiritual exodus"*
  3. Trust God... He is sovereign... His works/ways are right!
3. Fresh SURRENDER of our lives to Him... not to be hardened, but pliable in His hands.