

Third Cyclic Vision – Seven Bowls

The Bowls are the third cyclic vision of human history from Jesus' Ascension to His second coming (the first was Seals and the second was Trumpets). All these cyclic visions cover the same time-period with different emphasis of what causes trials and tribulations, suffering and struggles in life. The Bowls emphasize God's judgments poured out on all the enemies of His Church.

The Church Triumphant (15:1-8): The glorious state of the faithful saints in heaven is first described to encourage the church militant on earth who are enduring the Bowls of God's judgments.

Bowls One to Four: Plagues of Nature (16:1-9)

These Bowls affecting physical health, salt water, fresh water, and the sun pour out plagues like the ones in Egypt that preceded the Exodus event (Exodus 7:14-11:10) as well as the first four plagues in the Trumpet vision (8:6-12). However, in the Trumpet vision only 1/3 of the earth was affected. Here, all the earth is impacted emphasizing these are the "last plagues" of judgment to bring about repentance even though not many will do so.

Bowls Five and Six: Plagues among the Nations (16:10-16)

The fifth Bowl pours out darkness symbolizing the collapse of all human systems and the sixth Bowl dries out the waters showing the removal of all barriers holding back God's enemies from giving full vent to their hatred as they assemble at Armageddon. While the name is possibly a reference to the region around Megiddo, a city near Mt. Carmel where the Israelites overcame their enemies and the prophet Elijah confronted false prophets of Baal, it is not intended to be a literal geographic location but a symbol for the place where the final overthrow of evil by God occurs.

Seventh Bowl: End of the Earth (16:17-21)

The fourth of five end of earth scenes is depicted with a great earthquake, the drinking of God's cup of wrath, and a horrific plague of hail. God's mercy is exhausted, and the end has come.