

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Revelation 16:1-17:18) | Session 21 | The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

In the book of Revelation, there are seven pairs of visions given to John. The first pair of visions pertains to events that are taking place in Heaven, and the second part of the pair concerns events taking place on Earth.

- The First Vision, in Heaven (4:1-5:14).
- The First Vision, on Earth (6:1-7:8)
- The Second Vision, in Heaven (7:9-8:6).
- The Second Vision, on Earth (8:7-11:14).
- The Third Vision, in Heaven (11:15-18).
- The Third Vision, on Earth (11:19).
- The Fourth Vision, in Heaven (12:1-12)
- The Fourth Vision, on Earth (12:13-13:18)
- The Fifth Vision, in Heaven (14:1-5)
- The Fifth Vision, on Earth (14:6-20)
- The Sixth Vision, in Heaven (15:1-8)
- The Sixth Vision, on Earth (16:1-18:24)

THE SIXTH VISION, ON EARTH (16:1-18:24)

The Seven Vials (Bowls) of Judgment

The Seventh Seal is opened (8:1), and within that Seal are the Seven Trumpets (8:6); as the seventh trumpet is sounded (11:15), the Seven Vials of Judgment are poured out upon the inhabitant of the earth. In this vision, John sees Seven Vials, and contained within them are The final Great Judgments of God's wrath.

In the book of Revelation, we read the word **Great** (Greek: *me gas*). Eleven times it is used in chapter 16, the most uses of the word **Great** in any chapter. Chapter 18 contains the second most, where it occurs nine times. With that truth discovered, we can say that the judgment that will fall on the Earth during the pouring out of the Seven Vials will be **Great**, or **Mega**.

A day coming is called *The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord*. That Day involves the Judgment of Jesus Christ upon all of the wickedness upon Earth and in the spiritual realm. In this case, The recipients of Christ's Great and Terrible Day will be The Dragon (Satan), The Beast (AntiChrist), and the False Prophet.

The Dragon (Satan) made war with Israel and will be attacked by Christ; the King of kings will attack the Beasts, Antichrist, and the False Prophet as they occupy their seats of authority.

Chapter 16

Verse 1—

As we have done throughout our study, we will take the effects on the inhabitants of the Earth in the literal sense whenever possible. What we read is exactly what will happen. There is no need to spiritualize them or call them figures of speech unless we can find evidence in the text. Even though these will be supernatural events exacted by God, “When the plain sense makes common sense, seek no other sense.” Notice, too, how some of these plagues are the same as the plagues of Egypt in the book of Exodus (5-12).

Why the similarities? There’s a reason for it. For one thing, just as the Exodus judgments happened, literally the things that we’re reading about in the Book of Revelation are literal! Beyond that, just as the plagues in the Book of Exodus kept increasing in intensity, that’s exactly what we see in the Book of Revelation. Beyond that, just as Pharaoh kept hardening his heart against God, that’s what mankind is doing.

And finally, in the Book of Exodus, what is God doing? What did those ten plagues accomplish? God, in plague number ten, finally broke the back of Pharaoh just like He’s breaking the back of Satan here, and consequently, God’s people were liberated. This is why it is called the book of Exodus, exit, leaving; they were taken out of 400 years of bondage. God is also breaking the stubborn will of the Jewish nation who have rebelled against Him.

What is God doing in the Book of Revelation? He is taking the whole earth out of the bondage it’s been in since the fall of man! The earth, Romans 8, is in a state of travail; it’s groaning under a curse, it’s been that way, going back to Adam and Eve in Eden, and God is performing the ultimate exodus; Satan is being evicted. And the light and the glory of His kingdom, which will last a thousand years, will now come to the earth, with a rightly functioning Jerusalem, a rightly functioning temple, and a worshipful human race that will travel to Jerusalem to pay proper homage to the King.

Here, **seven angels** are commanded to **pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth**.

Verse 2—**The First Vial**

The first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth...upon men which had the mark of the beast. These people had been warned in chapter 14:9-11, but they did not heed the warning.

Verse 3—**The Second Vial**

We should continue to take this literally. Nothing will survive in the sea; every **living soul** means all creatures. Just as God created every living creature in the sea in Genesis 1:21, now every creature in the sea will die. The sea will be toxic.

Verses 4-6—**The Third Vial**

Upon pouring the third vial, John **heard the angel of the waters** pronounce a divine comment on the judgments of this vial. Note also that angels have various spheres and titles that command God’s will over nature (An act of God). This divine comment speaks of God’s judgment rather than grace—a different

dispensation. We are not in the dispensation of God's judgment today. Are people judged for their sins today? Romans 5:13 states *but sin is not imputed when there is no law*. And 2 Corinthians 5:19 says that God is not *imputing their trespasses unto them* (i.e., the world) in the dispensation of the Grace of God. Why this judgment? **For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets** (e.g., Revelation 13:15; 17:6; see Psalm 79).

Verses 8,9—**The Fourth Vial**

Speaking of His second coming, Jesus spoke of *signs in the sun* in Luke 21:25. **Power was given to scorch men with fire and great heat**. Isaiah 24:6 speaks a prophecy of the *inhabitants of the earth being burned, and few men left*. Malachi 4:1 says, *“For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble...”*. The result is that men **blasphemed the name of God...and they repented not to give him glory**.

Verses 10,11—**The Fifth Vial**

The beast (or antichrist) is the vice-regent of Satan. We saw in session 5 (Revelation 2:13) that his seat of power would be in Pergamos. No matter where he rules from, he cannot keep the plague of darkness from his kingdom. The Day of the Lord is called *A day of darkness, gloominess, and A day of clouds and thick darkness*. In Mark 13:24,25, Jesus prophesied *the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light*.

As we have said, there is no reason to take this figuratively. Seattle, Washington, has long been known to be one of the most depressing places. Some think it is due to the dreariness and darkness of the winter. There is no question that people tend to be more agitated and fearful at night. In our passage, those thrust into darkness **gnawed their tongues for pain**; pain can mean great anxiety. Vitamin D deficiency can lead to Depression, bone pain, impaired wound healing, muscle pain, and anxiety. Of course, this is all speculation. We have no idea how long the beast's **kingdom was** plunged into **full darkness**. How long, or how it happens, the result is men still **blasphemed the God of heaven...and repented not of their deeds**.

Verses 12-16—**The Sixth Vial**

The great river Euphrates...was dried up. The Euphrates is 1,800 miles long and 30 feet deep in sections and runs through Türkiye, Syria, and Iraq. Portions of the river, due to drought and dams, have seen a drop in water flow. However, it will be completely dry in the Tribulation to **make way** for Antichrist's army to gather for the slaughter of the Jews, but just the opposite will happen; they will gather but will never return due to their slaughter by the King of kings.

Notice that unlike the plague of frogs in Egypt (Exodus 8:6), these **unclean spirits** are **like frogs**, not actual frogs. We see in verse 14 that **they are the spirits of devils** or demon spirits. These demons are responsible for gathering the anti-Christ's army **to the battle**.

Verse 15—

John hears and receives a blessing amid these horrific vials being poured out, and as he sees the armies gathering for battle against the Jews, Jesus speaks. He is speaking to those who have not worshipped the beast or his image and have not received the mark or the number of his name.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (5:4), “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should not overtake you as a thief.” we know from this verse that the Body of Christ, the Church is not in this judgment scene because It is as a thief that Jesus is now coming. This blessing of assurance is for Tribulation saints, not the Church.

Verse 16—

And he gathered them together...Armageddon. The KJV uses the third person “he.” But, other translations use the third person “they.” *They would indicate that the demons will gather the armies*, as implied in verse 14. However, **he** could also be correct in that, ultimately, this all flows from Satan, and Satan could be “**he**.” A third option is that the “**he**” is God. This is the option I take. If we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we find option three confirmed in the prophecy of Zechariah 12:2 and 14:2. The great deceiver thinks he has gathered the nations together against Jerusalem, but it is God who has used them to do so.

Armageddon is from Har-Megiddo. It is an ancient town about sixty miles north of Jerusalem, overlooking the plain of Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley. It is a place of Biblical battles (Judges 5:19; 2 Chronicles 35:22). From here, the armies of the antichrist will gather for an assault on Jerusalem.

Later in chapter 19, we will see the outcome of this battle.

Verses 17-21— **The Seventh Vial**

(Vs. 17) **There came a voice out of the temple of heaven.** This is the last time we see the **Temple** in Revelation. In 21:22, we read, **And I saw no temple...The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple** in the new Heaven and New Earth. **It is done.** All the judgments are accomplished. This is the final act, and it will bring on the opening of Heaven and the coming forth of the Son of God Himself to the battle (See 19:11).

(Vs. 18) This is the earthquake spoken of by the prophets in Ezekiel 38:20, Isaiah 2: 19,21, and Haggai 2: 21,22.

(Vs. 19) **The great city divided into three parts.** What city is this? Some view it as Babylon since it is referred to as *the great city* in Revelation 14:8. Others view it as Jerusalem since it too is referred to as *the great city in* Revelation 11:8. The New Jerusalem is called *that great city* in Revelation 21:10.

I will land on it being Jerusalem since, in chapter 18, Babylon will be completely destroyed.

Why would God destroy the city of Jerusalem? Because of the spiritual state of the city of Jerusalem at this time. You’ll notice Revelation 11:8 calls that city “spiritually.” [Revelation 11:8, And their dead bodies *shall lie* in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”] In other words, here is a spiritual application, “spiritually or mystically Sodom and Egypt.” Sodom symbolizes depravity; Egypt symbolizes bondage and legalism.

How it will be divided into three parts, we can only speculate

Although the city is not completely destroyed. It is the one eternal city. “For David said, The Lord God of Israel hath give rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever.” (1 Chronicles 23:25).

And as the Tribulation ends and the Millennium begins, God’s holy city will be more beautiful and perfectly situated than ever. Psalm 48:2.

(Vs. 20,21) This earthquake is going to change the topography of the world. There is so much havoc that **every island** disappears, and **mountains** are leveled. Since in Greek, the article “the” before **mountains** is not added. John likely means **certain mountains** since there will be mountains in the millennium. See Psalm 72:3,16; Psalm 148:9; Isaiah 2:2; 44:23; Ezekiel 36:8). The great prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled. “Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord hath spoken it” (Isaiah 40:4,5)

Talent. The exact weight of one talent is not known. A common number is around 75 lbs. The heaviest hailstone recorded is around 2.5 lbs. These stones, resulting from the fierceness of God’s wrath (vs. 19), are beyond our comprehension. But surely God can do it.

This concludes the great Judgments of the Seven Vials.