

Revelation Study Guide

Chapter 16

V.1 The Voice from the Temple This chapter begins with a loud voice calling out from the temple to the seven angels instructing them to go and pour out the bowls of God's wrath. We have just seen the smoke and the glory that has filled the temple in the previous chapter where we were introduced to the Bowls, the angels, and the saints who had conquered the beast. Now it is time to begin releasing the wrath. With the other judgments contained in the Seals and the Trumpets there were delays and breaks and intermissions between groups of judgments, but with the Bowls we get the impression that they are being poured out one after another with very little time in between them.

V.2 The First Angel This angel begins with a plague of sores that are poured out on the people who bare the mark of the beast. We see later in this chapter (v.11) that these sores don't appear to be temporary and will characterize those who worship the beast for the remainder of the revelation account. These sores don't appear in the Trumpet Judgments, but they are reminiscent of the Plagues of Egypt. Many of the Bowls of Wrath that we are going to see are repeated judgments either from the Trumpets or the Plagues of Egypt. The reason that these plagues are often referred to as "wrath" is because of the Greek terminology and the severity of the consequences that we looked at in the last chapter. The first four Trumpet Judgments were all limited to 1/3 damage of their respective elements. In the Bowls of Wrath it is the complete and thorough destruction of the intended target. (See the chart at the end of the chapter to evaluate the relationship between the Plagues, Trumpets, and Bowls)

V.3 The Second Angel This Bowl is similar to the 2nd Trumpet Judgment but as noted above the Bowl results in the entire sea turning to blood and every living creature dying. After this angel pours out his Bowl on the sea there is nothing left. No fish, no birds, no boats making their way across the channel – nothing and the stench will be unbearable. This is the pattern of the Bowls of Wrath and whatever they touch is completely devastated.

V.4-7 The Third Angel This angel pours his bowl into the fresh water rivers and streams and they all turn to blood as well. Another angel, who is specifically noted by John as being in charge of the waters makes an astute judgment about God's righteous actions:

“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve! And I heard the altar saying, ‘Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!’” (Rev. 16:5b-7)

This is a very intense judgment in which there is no more clean drinking water left on the earth and this angel who has evidently been monitoring and overseeing the water since the flood says it is just. He has seen the death of the righteous for countless generations and watched God's patient inaction but now that the wrath comes there is no hesitation about whether this is warranted or not. 'It is what they deserve'. Evidently the voice of the martyrs underneath the altar that we first saw in Revelation 6:9-11 respond to this angel with a resounding Amen! One other interesting note is that in the angel's address to God, he calls Him "the one who is and

who was” but he does not include “the one who is to come” - as we regularly see. Is this because His return is imminent and it would no longer be considered a future action? It is not clear how long this plague will last for, but since it would be impossible for anyone to live without water it must not be permanent. We also see in the 6th Bowl that the Euphrates River seems to be intact by this point in the narrative.

V.8-9 The Fourth Angel This angel pours out his Bowl on the sun and people are scorched by its heat. There is an interesting verse in Isaiah 30:26 that mentions a time when the Lord will increase the strength of the sun by seven times. Some commentators have envisioned this to be coming into fulfillment here with this plague. If this happens at this time scientists calculate that because of the polar ice caps melting sea levels would rise by 200ft. Regardless, the effects will be catastrophic and people respond in defiance by cursing God and His name. Although there may be other people on the earth including those Jewish saints gathered in Jerusalem the primary people that these Bowls of Wrath are intended for are those who retain the mark of the beast. We don't see anyone else repent or give God glory until Christ's return in the Revelation account. We are told that those who maintain the mark of the beast can not repent and we get the impression that the large percentage of people on the face of the earth stand with the Antichrist and now we see them talking like him as well. This is a sad and disparaging account of the result of those who take the mark. There may be no greater offense to the Lord than cursing Him. The God of blessing and power and might who created and sustained these lives is now cursed and accused. One of the interesting dynamics to consider is that many of these people claimed that there was no God and now in an automated response curse Him who they previously confessed didn't exist! This is further proof of James' teaching that even the demons believe that there is a God. The difference is – who submits to Him and serves Him. Repent and give God glory today!

V.10-11 The Fifth Angel The bowl from this angel gets poured out on the kingdom of the beast. The result is darkness and we aren't told how extensive this darkness is or how confined it will be. We know that it will be extremely unpleasant as people are described as “gnawing their tongues in anguish”. This will be a clear affront to the beast and the kingdom that he has amassed and in some way we picture God picking a fight with a bully as the next Bowl will result in the Battle of Armageddon. It is interesting to think about why the devil and the antichrist even attempt to amass this army at Armageddon. They know the end of the story and they know what has been written. The only reasons that I could conceivably come up with for them responding to the challenge is #1 They are so infuriated, embarrassed, and prideful that they feel they must respond to such an attack. #2 They don't understand or know that they are being summoned to the final battle. #3 They have no choice and God wills their participation at this final battle so they must attend. I envision it similarly to Jesus' death. The devil was intricately involved with Jesus' betrayal and execution. Why? Didn't he know that it would result in his eternal defeat?

V.12-16 The Sixth Angel The Battle of Armageddon. Just the word Armageddon gets people on edge. Ironically, it is only mentioned one time in the entire Bible and it is in this chapter. It is transliterated from the Hebrew “har Megiddo” which means mountain of Megiddo. The gathering place is literally a valley surrounded by mountains and this area is often referred to as the Jezreel Valley, the Valley of Megiddo, or the Valley of Armageddon. This is the sixth Bowl of Wrath that is poured out which dries up the Euphrates River and allows the armies of

the East to attack Israel. God is the initiator of this conflict. It is His angel. It is His Bowl. It is His wrath. This is how God has determined to bring the world as we know it to an end. This is accomplished by the activity of the devil, the antichrist, and the false prophet who all demonically inspire the armies of the world to gather together for the battle at Armageddon. There is some debate whether actual fighting will take place in the Valley of Armageddon or more specifically closer to Jerusalem in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, but when you are talking about all of the armies of the world they will probably cover the entire area. Jerusalem is about 60 miles south of the Valley of Armageddon and most likely there will be armies filling up the entire landscape between them. Regardless, the Bible tells us that Megiddo will be the gathering place “for battle on the great day of God the Almighty”. The Valley of Megiddo has been subject to numerous battles throughout history and has seen some of the greatest Bible and historic leaders rise and fall in this region. Deborah and Barak fought the Canaanites here. Gideon fought the Midianites here. King Saul died in battle here. King Josiah died to Pharaoh Neco in this valley. Napoleon called it the most natural battle field on the earth. Egyptian King Thutmose said that the one who conquers Megiddo conquers a thousand cities. Churchill said that never in the history of human conflict have so many battles been fought over such a small area. The valley itself depending on measuring points is only about 15 miles wide by 36 miles in length. It is surrounded by three mountains – Mt Tabor, Mt Gilboa, and Mt Carmel and it is centrally located in the Middle East. Historically, this area was vital for trade, travel, and commerce between Egypt, Mesopotamia (Iraq) and Europe.

Why this spot? Besides being a natural battle ground, being in Jesus’ childhood backyard, and at the center of the known world geographically I think that you could call it God’s home stadium. For us in the Western Church we might wonder why this battle must take place in the Holy Land. There are two other verses in Revelation that point to the place of this battle being in and around Jerusalem:

“And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army”. (Revelation 19:19)

“And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them...” (Revelation 20:9)

Depending on your view of the millennium these verses appear to be talking about the same battle at the same location. As much as we may not think this way in the West – Jerusalem is the holy city and it is the center of Biblical Christianity geographically. We know that because of Jesus’ death and resurrection that now our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit but there is still something special and beautiful to God about His beloved city and the apple of His eye. Of course His people are more important, but that does not negate His affection for Zion. Humanly speaking you might understand this as relating to your first home or where you grew up. There is something special about that place to you and there are fond memories and nostalgic moments when you go there or think about it. Even though God’s home on earth was established much longer ago than your home He has a tremendous affinity for this place and it is where this battle will take place, where Jesus will return, and where the New Jerusalem will be placed for all of eternity. So, although most Christians may be gone from the earth by this point the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet have come to make war against all that God stands for including His people, His name, and His city. I envision that although there has been widespread persecution and martyrdom that God has a select group of a faithful remnant that

will not take the mark that He has protected in and around Jerusalem. It is this group which may or may not include the two witnesses that the enemy has gathered to war against.

In his book "Revealing Revelation" Amir Tsarfati shares four prophetic Old Testament verses which describe the gathering of the armies for Armageddon and the resulting battle that takes place. Depending on your interpretation of these events I believe that this could be a plausible timeline for the Battle of Armageddon precipitating the return of Christ.

#1 God's Motivation "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it." (Joel 3:1-3)

#2 The Enemy Attacks "Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle." (Zechariah 14:1-3)

#3 God Responds "Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah. On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it. On that day, declares the Lord, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. Then the clans of Judah shall say to themselves, 'the inhabitants of Jerusalem have strength through the Lord of hosts, their God.'...And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:2-5,9)

#4 Israel's Response "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn...On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." (Zechariah 12:10 & 13:1)

It is at this point in these verses in Revelation that we see Jesus say "Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!" (V.15) While it might seem like an odd break in the action right as the armies of the world are gathering for the Battle of Armageddon it is a stark reminder that this is one of the repeated themes throughout Scripture about Jesus' return. There will be mystery, hiddenness, and suddenness involved in His return. This is comforting for believers who are encouraged to hold on for another day because Jesus could be coming to save you tomorrow and this is terrorizing to the enemy realizing that the gig could be up. The message is the same it just depends on your perspective. If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, or if you have left the faith, or turned away from God this is a vivid reminder that God is calling you to repentance and to make yourself ready for His return. He could not have put this verse in a more noticeable

and obvious location where the action is heating up and the armies of the world are gathering and now for this commercial break..." Behold, I am coming soon." God obviously wants us to get this and pay attention to it. So regardless of how much we talk about what we know about the book of Revelation this truth will remain - no one knows the day or the hour and at any time Jesus could return so be ready. Just to emphasize this point at this time here are all of the other places where Jesus illustrates this reality for us: I AM COMING AS A THIEF

Revelation 3:3 "Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I come against you."

Revelation 3:11 "I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown."

Matthew 24:42-44 "Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore, you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

1 Thessalonians 5:1-6 "Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."

Revelation 22:20 "He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

[The Battles of Armageddon: Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley from the Bronze Age to the Nuclear Age | Bible Interp \(arizona.edu\)](#)

V.17-21 The Seventh Angel While it feels like we already covered the final Bowl with our discussion of the Battle of Armageddon we are now reminded that there is still one more angel with one final plague. I imagine that at this point in the Revelation narrative that there are three final scenes in the story of the world. #1 The one that we just finished talking about which was the Battle of Armageddon. #2 The scene surrounding the return of Christ and the associated events including the 7th Bowl. #3 The New Heavens and the New Earth. We will talk about the events associated with the return of Christ in more detail as we study Chapter 19 but for now it is enough to understand that this 7th Bowl is most likely happening in conjunction with Jesus' return. Now does the account of the 7th Bowl happen just before we see Jesus in the sky, at the same time as Jesus descends from the heavens, or just after He shows up - I don't think it matters but the cataclysmic events that we see in this passage sound like the end of all things.

There are a couple of interesting notes from this passage and the final Bowl of Wrath worth noting in that we are told this will result in the greatest earthquake that has ever happened on

the face of the earth since the beginning of time. The other interesting fact is that this angel pours his Bowl into the air and we get the impression that every fiber and molecule of the universe is affected by this plague and that there will be nothing unaffected by this Bowl. Finally, we see that “every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found.” It is interesting to think about the re-creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth and how God has chosen to talk about them. This information should help us in our understanding of what we have to look forward to.

We know from the book of Revelation that there will be no more mountains and we will see in a few chapters that there will be no more sea. (Revelation 21:1) At first you might be tempted to be bummed by this because it sounds like there will be no mountains, no beaches – and that means no Hawaii either. These are some of the most beautiful places on earth and yet it appears that they will not exist in the New Heavens and the New Earth. I don't think that should disappoint us though because anything that God promises or provides is so much better than what we can imagine. This information should not make us sad or trouble us – it should make us realize how great heaven on earth will actually be. We see in part and prophesy in part and when Christ comes again, we will see fully. It is a reminder of how beautiful and glorious it will be in the presence of God and surrounded by His majesty at all times. The things of this world pale in comparison to what God has planned and to His heavenly beauty. I have seen some beautiful beaches, and some majestic vistas, and I love my wife dearly but all of these things shall pass away and there will be eternal glory with Christ forever that far outweighs any earthly beauty or treasure. I encourage you not to be discouraged by the fact that there will be no more mountains or sea, but to rejoice that God has something much grander in store for each of His children. If your son asked you for bread would you give him a rock? And if your son asked for a fish would you give him a serpent? If you being evil know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your father in heaven give good gifts to them who ask. So ask away for your heavenly prizes await you and they are beyond searching out.

Plagues of Egypt

Blood
Frogs
Gnats
Flies
Livestock
Boils
Hail
Locusts
Darkness
Firstborn

Trumpet Judgments

1/3 Grass & Trees
1/3 Sea To Blood
1/3 Water To Blood
1/3 Sun, Moon, Stars
Demonic Locusts
200 Million Man Army
Thunder, Earthquake, Hail

Bowls Of Wrath

Sores
Sea To Blood
Water To Blood
Scorching Sun
Darkness
Armageddon
Thunder, Earthquake, Hail

[Understanding the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments in Light of the Exodus Plagues – BiblicalCulture](#)

[The Wrath of God - Thinking on Scripture](#)