

# CHAPTER 16

## Revelation 16:1–11

[1] Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.” [2] So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. [3] The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea. [4] The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. [5] And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, “Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. [6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!” [7] And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!” [8] The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. [9] They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory. [10] The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish [11] and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

# CHAPTER 16

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We see God's final wrath poured out upon the earth through a series of bowl judgments. And each of these is a new level of misery for individuals who are dwelling upon the earth.

The first bowl judgment is a series of harmful and painful sores that come upon people who bore the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image. These sores that come upon the flesh of man are vile and wicked, causing unimaginable pain. Just imagine the amount of pain that individuals must have been feeling because of these sores.

## CHAPTER 16

The second bowl judgment kills every living thing that is in the sea. The stench of the dead animals would be awful, rotting and putrid. Aside from the dead fish, the water would become putrid and congealed. This would also shut down the water cycle of the planet stopping all rain on earth.

The third bowl judgment causes all fresh water on the earth to turn to blood. And the angel who pours out this bowl judgment says that this is repayment for the world pouring out the blood of the saints. Because the world did this, it says the world deserves to be without water. This is an indication that these judgements occur toward the end of the Tribulation because humanity cannot live without water for more than a few days.

The fourth bowl judgement causes the sun to burn even more in intensity that it burns men. This would further intensify the dead rotting animals from the ocean also. So a putrid smell on top of it all.

The fifth bowl judgment plunges the earth into darkness. And this is a darkness so intense that it causes unbearable pain. This is a pain because it isn't just physical darkness, but also spiritual darkness. The Lord has left the world exposed by withdrawing His protection.

The pattern at work here is a pattern of many judgements. And we could say that this is again a preview of what awaits unbelievers in hell. Scorching heat, darkness, no water, no relief from pain. Hell is the pouring out of God's wrath and in a way this is a preview of what awaits unbelievers.

## CHAPTER 16

What is the earth's response to these judgments? They continue to blaspheme and deny God without repentance. And this fits the pattern found in Exodus where Egypt held Israel captive and in order for them to be freed, God poured out his judgments upon them. Bowl judgments 1, 2, 3 and 5 mirror the plagues in Egypt. So it is a reminder that these judgments are ultimately moving the nation of Israel to a good outcome.

So how do these judgments fit the overall plan for the end of Tribulation?

The first five of these judgments are a systematic delivery of judgment upon the earth in preparation for the Lord's return. They bring God's wrath to the world but also prepare for the events of the next two chapters. The final two judgements are large in scale compared to these first five but they are part of a larger set of events. And these climax in the War of Armageddon with multiple stages.

The war ends the Tribulation and leads to Christ's second coming. The first two stages of the war are set into motion by the final two bowl judgements. Armageddon is a term that I'm sure you've heard before, and I think it helps for us to understand what this battle is. It is a fairly complex event like the events of war themselves. It is even more complex to understand because the description of this war is strung out over several chapters in Revelation. So we are going to talk about Armageddon over the next few chapters, but we first need to establish a relationship between the bowls and the events of this war.

# CHAPTER 16

## Revelation 16:12–16

**[12] The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. [13] And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. [14] For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. [15] (“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!”) [16] And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.**

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## CHAPTER 16

The sixth bowl judgement dries up the Euphrates River. The Euphrates River is a major river in present-day Iraq that is near the ancient city of Babylon. We know that the river is already turned to blood from a previous bowl judgement. So why is this a judgement?

Its because it prepares a way for the kings from the east. These kings are a reference to the Antichrist and the seven kings who serve him. We know that originally the Tribulation period begins with ten kings in power, but the Antichrist rises up and wipes out three of these ten kings and the remaining seven follow him. So the river dries up to make a way for them to travel.

What does traveling here have to do with the judgment? At the end of this section we see how this plays into the judgement. Satan sees this as an opportunity to enact his plan against God and he sends out demonic spirits described as frogs which is an Old Testament symbol for an unclean spirit. And these demonic spirits go out to the kings of the earth and have them assemble their armies. The gathering place of this place is called Armageddon or Har-Megiddo.

The word har in Hebrew means a hill or valley and Megiddo is the name of a city in the northern part of Israel in the Jezreel Valley. The transliteration of this name is Armageddon.

Satan knows that his time is short so he assembles the kings of the world and their armies in preparation for the return of Christ at the Mt of Olives. And when Christ returns, Satan will be waiting to attempt to destroy Him. Additionally he is going to attempt to destroy any Jews that are hunkering down in Jerusalem.

## CHAPTER 16

This war is going to unfold over several stages in the next several chapters. The first of those is the sixth bowl judgment. Stage one of this war is the movement of the Antichrist's forces out of the capital city, Babylon and toward Israel. We don't know that it is Babylon yet, but the Euphrates River drying up gives us a clue. The river was bloody so it was an obstacle.

The Lord dries it up so that these forces can move into action. He also adds a call to those who are reading in verse 15 that He will come like a thief in the night. It is a reminder for believers to be prepared for His return.

### **Revelation 16:17–21**

**[17] The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"**  
**[18] And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. [19] The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. [20] And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. [21] And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.**

# CHAPTER 16

## Notes:

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Finally we see the final bowl judgement poured out upon the earth. And the wrath of God covers the entire earth. Earthquakes occur unlike any that have ever occurred. Mountains are gone, islands are destroyed.

And then a voice says it is done. This means God is saying that it has been accomplished. Hail falls from the sky, and they are about 100 pounds each. They fall upon people and upon all of the land. Yet people still don't recognize the incredibly power of God and instead choose to curse Him.

John says that all of the cities of the nations fell. The Greek word for nations here is ethnos, a term translated to Gentiles. So God destroys all of the Gentile nations in this act. Only Jerusalem is excluded from this plague. There must also be one Gentile city remaining as well because in verse 19 John says that the great city was split into three parts.



## CHAPTER 16

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This great city is not Jerusalem, but rather Babylon. John says that Babylon is receiving the wine of God's wrath. Remember we talked about bowls and cups being used for pouring out God's wrath.

And now God's wrath is being poured out upon Babylon. The destruction of Babylon is complex and it takes two chapters to deal with its destruction. Babylon always plays the antagonist to Christ's protagonist in the story of the Bible.

In the next chapter we are going to talk more about Babylon as we move into chapter 17 and highlight a few themes in Scripture.