

Revelation 16:1-16

Verse 1

A loud voice from the temple – The voice of God! The word for “loud” is *megales* which occurs 10 times in this chapter and is also translated “great, fierce, and mighty.” Some have called this the “Great Chapter” of the Bible.

Go pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth – The bowl judgments deal with all the earth.

The First Bowl (verse 2) – Malignant Sores

Upon men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image – Literally “the men” denoting specifically those who received the mark of the beast. The fact that they worshiped his image (Revelation 13:14-15) lets us know that this is in the second half of the tribulation near the end. Note the parallel to Exodus 9:9-11.

The Second Bowl (verse 3) – The Seas Turned to Blood

The sea...became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died – The sea may literally become blood or it may correspond to blood in appearance. Regardless, all creatures in the sea die. Note the parallel plague in Exodus 7:20-25.

The Third Bowl (verses 3-7) – Rivers Turned to Blood

The rivers and the springs of waters...became blood – All sources of water have now become unfit to drink.

I heard the angel of the waters saying – The angel declares God’s righteousness in judging the wicked. Just as they shed the blood of the saints, God judges them in the same way.

The Fourth Bowl (verses 8-9) – Scorching Heat

It was given to (the sun) to scorch men with fire – Instead of repenting under God’s judgment men instead blaspheme the name of God. The Greek article is again present. The text says “the men” denoting that this plague is specifically falling on all who have received the mark of the beast. Apparently, God supernaturally protects tribulation believers from this scorching heat.

The Fifth Bowl (verses 10-11) – Darkness

Upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened
This is probably a literal darkening of the beast’s throne but could also refer to a confusion or complicating of his rule.

Note the parallel with Exodus 10:21-22. Severe pain is also associated with this plague. Their response is the same as in verse 9; they blaspheme God and do not repent.

The Sixth Bowl (verses 12-16) – The Euphrates dried up

The great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east – This bowl prepares the way for the final battle. The river Euphrates is the northeastern border of the land that God promised to Abraham’s descendants (Genesis 15:18). The kings of the east appear to be Oriental rulers who will descend upon the Middle East in connection with the final conflict.

Out of the mouth of the dragon...the beast...the false prophet – The unholy trinity!

Three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons – Their purpose, through signs, is to gather the armies of the whole world together for the final conflict. They are *like* frogs in the sense that they are unclean and loathsome.

The war of the great day of God, the Almighty – This ultimately refers to Armageddon (verse 16) but probably includes a number of military events leading up to that battle. Daniel 11:36-45 describes these events, as does Zechariah 14:1-9.

Behold I am coming like a thief – Jesus compares His second coming in this way in Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39.

Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments – This is the third *blessing* of the seven mentioned in Revelation (1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7, 22:14). The idea is that spiritual alertness and awareness will be rewarded.

Lest he walk around naked and men see his shame – There will be negative consequences for not being ready for the Lord’s return.

And they gathered them together – A reference to the three unclean spirits or if translated, “he gathered” as in the King James, a reference to God.

To the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon (or Armageddon, NKJV) – The Majority Text uses “Megiddo” which is the actual Hebrew word that corresponds to the Greek word “Armageddon.” Megiddo is the site of ancient ruins that overlook the Jezreel Valley. This will be where the main armies of the world concentrate although they will spread all over the land of Israel (14:20).