

Revelation - Chapter 16 & 17 Bowl Judgements, Doom of Babylon & Jesus' Victory

John has just seen Jesus, as the Lamb, in a prophetic vision of Jesus' ultimate triumph following His second coming to earth when He joins the 144,000 on Mount Zion, the highest point in ancient Jerusalem, at the beginning of His Millennial reign. Three angels flying in mid-heaven preach the everlasting gospel, pronounce judgment and promise doom. They also deliver God's last call to repentance before the final judgments fall and Jesus returns.



A blessing or encouragement is given to those who put their trust in Christ in the time of the Great Tribulation. The Holy Spirit repeats the blessing and adds the blessing of rest from their labors and that their deeds follow with them.

John sees Christ participating in God's judgments on an evil world. Jesus is seen as the Son of Man, sitting on a brilliant, white cloud, waiting for the proper time to stand and begin the reaping which includes the seven bowl judgments. He wears a golden crown, the type worn by victors in war. An angel announces the time has come and Christ reaps with his sharp sickle referring to the judgments at His second coming.

An angel with a sharp sickle comes out from the altar in heaven and swings his sickle to the earth, harvesting the clusters of overripe grapes symbolizing the earth's wicked people. Then John sees the Holy of Holies, the inner sanctuary where God's presence dwells, opens and out of the temple comes seven angels with seven plagues, the seven bowl judgments, the final and worst judgments of God. The song of the Lamb and the song of Moses are sung by the redeemed tribulation saints. We are assured of Christ's ultimate triumph and judgement of evil.



God's Final Judgement: The Seven Bowls of Wrath

John next hears a loud voice from the temple. Loud voices are heard six times in Chapter 16 and twenty times in Revelation. God commands the seven angels to pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Like the other judgments, the seven bowls are supernatural acts of God.

These seven bowls of wrath are God's final judgment on the earth and are carried out in a somber manner, one at a time, in a predetermined order. Because the bowls are shallow, their contents are dumped all at once unleashing God's final judgment on the earth in rapid succession. The effects are devastating to the earth and its inhabitants.

The first four trumpet judgements deal only with one-third of the earth, while the bowl judgments are carried out on the entire earth and are greater in intensity. The bowl judgements will occur within a short period of time toward the close of the Great Tribulation. The bowl judgements, the climax of God's divine dealings with a blasphemous earth, lead up to the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.¹

First Bowl of Wrath

The only people affected by the first plague were the people who, "had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." Those who have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will not be affected by this plague. Since the Beast and False Prophet don't rise until the second half of the Tribulation the bowls of wrath clearly occur in the very last days of the Tribulation.



The Beast followers will join in the persecution and killing of the followers of Christ. They will think they have spared their lives by taking the mark. Now they will receive God's judgement in the form of a cankerous, contagious sore that is putrefying and incurable. With the first bowl of wrath, everybody will begin to realize that the tide is turning and the Antichrist has been only *briefly* allowed to wreak havoc on the saints of God.



Second Bowl of Wrath

Before the sores of the first bowl could heal, the second angel pours out his bowl into the sea and every living thing in the sea died. This judgment is similar to the first plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-24) and the second trumpet judgment (Rev 8:8-9). In the second trumpet judgment only one-third of the sea is turned to blood and one-third of the sea life was killed by the fiery mountain that was cast

into the ocean (Rev 8:8-9). This time the effects will be worldwide and much more intense since approximately 70 percent of the earth's surface is covered in oceans.

What supernatural means God will use to destroy the oceans is not revealed but the effects will resemble those of the phenomenon known as the red tide, concentrated, toxic species of algae kill higher forms of marine life, including shellfish, fish and marine mammals. The stench from the dead, decaying bodies of every living thing in the sea will be unimaginable. The transforming of the world's seas into putrid pools of stinking death will be graphic testimony to the wickedness of man and a reversal to the day when God originally gave life to all sea creatures (Genesis 1:21).²

Third Bowl of Wrath



As the realization sits in that their lives are being torn apart once again, the inhabitants of the earth receive the third bowl of God's wrath. The third angel pours his bowl into all the fresh water and it is turned into blood.

In the first half of the Tribulation, one-third of all the fresh water was contaminated

by a star called Wormwood. The two-witnesses had the authority to shut up the sky so that rain would not fall and the temporary restraining of the earth's winds (Rev 7:1) will also cause drought. With no wind to move clouds and weather systems, the water cycle will be disrupted and no rain will fall. This time, at the end, no water will be safe to drink. This will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering.

As we study the book of Revelation, it is amazing to see the ministries assigned to angels. Now John hears an angel with authority over the waters pronounce God's justice in this judgment. The angel breaks into a brief doxology declaring that because evil unbelievers have killed God's people, spilling their blood upon the earth, God is righteous in cursing them with blood to drink.

The bloodletting during the Great Tribulation, with believers slaughtered by the thousands, is without parallel in the history of the human race. Christ declared it would be a time of trouble without precedent (Matt 24:21). The multitude of martyrs in heaven is revealed in Revelation chapter 7. The eternal God, though awaiting the proper time, is inexorable in His judgment of those who persecuted His people.³ Another voice, the

altar, reflecting the testimony of the martyrs of Rev 6:9 and the prayers of believers in Rev 8:3-5, confirms that God is true and just in His judgments.

The Fourth Bowl

Waiting for rains to quench their thirst, the inhabitants of the earth experience the fourth bowl of wrath. Like the fourth trumpet the fourth bowl is a judgment that affects the starry heavens, specifically the sun. In the fourth trumpet, the judgment extends to one-third of the sun, moon, and stars, resulting in the darkening of one-third of both the day and night. The fourth bowl relates only to the sun and increases rather than decreases the sun's intensity. Searing heat exceeding anything ever experienced will scorch the earth's inhabitants so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire.



A serious consequence of the sun's intense heat will be the melting of the polar ice caps. The resulting rise in the ocean's water level will flood areas for miles inland with the noxious waters of the dead oceans. The rays of the sun will no longer be filtered or deflected, causing all sorts of catastrophic climatic changes. There will be a true end times global warming. Widespread damage and loss of life will occur, adding further to the unspeakable misery of the devastated planet. ⁴

When Jesus died, the sun hid its face and refused to shine. When He is manifest in all His glory, there will be erupting flames of fire and judgment. One would think that such devastation would cause the people to repent, but sadly it does not. Until this point, only the Antichrist has been described as blaspheming God (Rev 13:1, 5-6), but now the world adopts his evil character. Neither grace nor wrath will move their wicked hearts to repentance (Rev 9:20-21; 16:11). ⁵

The Fifth Bowl

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast and his kingdom became dark and the people were consumed by excruciating pain. This affliction is reminiscent of the plague of darkness God brought on Egypt (Ex 10:21-23). Their beloved beast will not be able to help them now.

Even as the afflictions suffered by the enemies of God are cumulative; the sores brought on by the first bowl will continue to fester as darkness closed in around them, the water that would have soothed their sun-scorched flesh will stand in stinking,

stagnant pools; once-clean water will be polluted with decaying blood, nevertheless, the people continue to blaspheme God and refuse to repent.

Sadly, this is the last reference to their unwillingness to repent. The first five plagues were God's final offer and humanity's final opportunity for repentance. There will be no more. The bowls of wrath reveal that the minds, hearts, and wills of those who took the mark have been sealed in their sinful condition. They have become like the generation in the days of Noah (Gen 6:5). Paul describes this state of absolute depravity in Romans 1:18, 24-26. ⁶

The Sixth Bowl

When his turn came, the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates. As a result its water was dried up and the way is prepared for the kings from the east to cross into Armageddon. Earlier with the sixth trumpet judgment (Rev 9:14) two hundred million demons who were bound near the Euphrates were released.



The Euphrates is the longest and most significant river in the Middle East. Its source is in the snowfields and ice cap high on the slopes of Mount Ararat which is located in modern Turkey. The Euphrates flows eighteen hundred miles before emptying into the Persian Gulf. In ancient times the garden of Eden was located in the vicinity of the Euphrates (Gen 2:10-14).

The Euphrates was one of four rivers that irrigated the Garden of Eden before the Fall (Gen 2:14) and it also formed the eastern boundary of the land God gave to Israel (Gen 15:18; Deu 1:7; 11:24; Jos 1:4). It is the dividing line between the Near East and Far East. On the eastern side of the Euphrates are the multitudes from Asia, India and Japan.

Three spirits of demons from the unholy trinity, Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet, will seduce the kings from the east into making the difficult journey to their doom at Armageddon. The blazing heat from the sun during the fourth bowl judgment will melt the snow and the ice cap on Mount Ararat increasing the volume of water in the Euphrates, causing massive damage and flooding. Drying up the Euphrates River will insure that the eastern armies are able to reach their ultimate destination of Armageddon in the land of Palestine.

God's drying up of the Euphrates is not an act of kindness toward the kings from the east, but one of judgment. They and their armies will be entering a deadly trap. The evaporation of the Euphrates will lead them to their doom, just as the parting of the Red Sea led to the destruction of the Egyptian army.⁷

The deceiving demon spirits will gather the nations together "to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon". Har-Magedon is a Hebrew word meaning Mount Megiddo. Since there is no specific mountain by that name, and Har can refer to hill country, it is probably a reference to the hill country surrounding the Plain of Megiddo, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. The Greek word for Megiddo is Armageddon.



Megiddo



Valley of Armageddon

More than two hundred battles have been fought in that region. This area was the scene of many of the great battles of the Old Testament such as that of Barak and the Canaanites in Judges 4 and the victory of Gideon over the Midianites in Judges 7. Here is where Saul and Josiah died.

The Plain of Megiddo and the nearby Plain of Esdraelon will be the focal point for the Battle of Armageddon, which will rage the entire length of Israel as far south as the Edomite city of Bozrah (Isaiah 63:1). Other battles will also occur in the vicinity of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1–3).⁸

As the young Jesus anticipated His earthly ministry, He knew that one day Megiddo would be the rallying point for the armies of the Antichrist. For as long as anyone can remember, Megiddo, the surrounding hill country, and the Jezreel Valley have been a place for war. There, those who would gather to defy Christ’s sovereign rule would suffer judgment for their rebellion.⁹



Valley of Jezreel from Carmel

Then Jesus speaks, giving a final warning that his coming will be sudden and un-announced. He compares his second coming to a thief who will overtake those who are not ready (Matt 24:43; Luke 12:39; Rev Rev 16:15). A similar warning is given to the church in Sardis (Rev 3:3). In 2 Peter 3:10 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:2,4, the day of the Lord is said to come as a thief.

He also assures believers that they will not be forgotten. The exalted Lord pronounces the third of seven beatitudes in Revelation, “Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.” (Rev 16:15). Those who are prepared for his arrival, those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior, will be blessed.

The Seventh Bowl

Like the final seal and the seventh trumpet, the final or seventh bowl is introduced by the sound of voices, thundering, lightning and an earthquake greater than any previous one. The seventh angel pours his bowl upon the air. MacArthur suggests that by this action God is cleansing the earth’s atmosphere as the former domain of



Satan. As the time of the Gentiles comes to an end, the great city is split into three parts along with the destruction of the cities of all the nations.

Babylon will incur the wrath of God; the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. The islands and mountains disappear leaving a new topography of the Holy Land which is also described in Zech 14:4 and Luke 3:5. The final judgement also includes hailstones weighing 100 pounds which would destroy much that was still left standing by the earthquake. It will be the worst calamity in the world's history and is a judgment compared to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, but here extending over the entire earth. Sadly, unbelievers are still unrepentant, continuing to curse God.

The result of the great earthquake will leave all monuments of human ingenuity in shambles. The shaking from the earthquake will be so severe that it will renovate and reconfigure the earth in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom.

The reconfiguration will be completed when Jesus returns; the Mount of Olives will split in two and a new valley running east and west will be created (Zech 14:4). A spring of water will flow year-round from Jerusalem to the Mediterranean and Dead Seas (Zechariah 14:8), causing the desert to blossom like a rose (cf. Isaiah 35:1). Jerusalem will be elevated, and the surrounding region flattened into a plain (Zechariah 14:10).

Thus, the purpose of the earthquake as it relates to Jerusalem is not to judge the city, but to enhance it. Jerusalem was judged earlier in the tribulation by an earthquake, which led to the salvation of those who were not killed (Rev 11:13). The physical changes will prepare Jerusalem for the central role it will play during the Millennial Kingdom, when Christ will reign there as King (Psalm 110:2; Isaiah 2:3; 24:23; Micah 4:7).¹⁰

God will punctuate this final judgment against sinners with an earthquake, just as He did His judgment of sin at Calvary (Matt 27:51-54). The earth, the sea, the waters, the sun and finally the earth's atmosphere are all the target of judgment. Then God declares, "It is done". This is similar to Jesus' final words from the cross, "It is finished" (John 19:30). God's judgment of Christ on Calvary provided salvation for repentant sinners; the judgment of the seventh bowl brings doom to unrepentant sinners.¹¹

Seven Bowl Judgments - Revelation 16:1-21

Bowl Judgement	Location	Judgment
First Bowl	Earth	Sores on the Worshipers of the Antichrist
Second Bowl	Seas	Seas turned to blood
Third Bowl	Fresh Water	Fresh water turned to blood
Fourth Bowl	Sun	Intense, Scorching Heat
Fifth Bowl	Antichrist's kindgom	Darkness & pain
Sixth Bowl	River Euphrates	Armageddon
Seventh Bowl	Air	Earthquakes & Hail

Tribulation Judgments ¹²

Seal Series Rev 6:1-8:5	Trumpet Series Rev 8:6-9:21	Bowl Series Rev 16:1-21
1. Conquest	1. Hail & fire (1/3 of vegetation ruined)	1. Malignant sores
2. Warfare	2. Meteor shower (1/3 of sea life killed)	2. Poisoned seas
3. Famine & poverty	3. Water pollution (1/3 of water)	3. Poisoned freshwater
4. Death (1/4 of population)	4. Darkness	4. Humanity scorched
5. Mistreatment/Martyrdom	5. Demonic locust attack	5. Widespread darkness/Misery
6. Earthquake	6. Demonic hordes (1/3 of humanity killed)	6. Vast military invasion
7. Introduction of Trumpet Judgments	7. Introduction of Bowl Judgements	7. Most destructive earthquake & hail

The Doom of Babylon & Jesus' Return

Next John witnesses the destruction of Babylon both its ecclesiastical and political forms (political form will occur in Revelation 18). Some expositors believe that the doom of Babylon occurs at the beginning of the Great Tribulation while the bowl judgments occur at the end of the Great Tribulation.

John witnesses the destruction of Babylon, representing false religion and also the judgment of a woman, the symbol of Babylon, described as the "the great prostitute",

who is seen sitting on many waters - the many nations ruled by Babylon. Babylon has become the epitome of spiritual adultery and as such is judged by God.

John is carried away in the Spirit into a wilderness and here is what he sees:

A woman clothed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls. She is sitting on a scarlet beast that is full of blasphemous names with seven heads and ten horns. The woman is holding a gold cup full of abominations and unclean things. On her forehead is written, a mystery, "Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth". She is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus.



The vision was so appalling that when John saw her, he “wondered greatly,” expressing that he was confused, shocked, astonished, and frightened by the ghastly vision of such a magnificent figure of a woman with such a deadly intent. ¹³ So the angel leads John through some visionary symbols in order to explain the meaning of the images. Here is what we learn:

- Babylon here is not the city of Babylon but the representation of a final godless, humanistic and nationalistic world wide religious system.
 - Every false religion has its roots in Babylon. The subject of Babylon in the Scripture is one of the prominent themes of the Bible beginning in Genesis 10 where the city of Babel is first mentioned. Babylon in scripture is the name for a great system of religious error.
 - Babylon is a counterfeit religion that plagued Israel in the Old Testament as well as the church in the New Testament. The teachings of Babylon have had a tremendous influence in moving the church from biblical simplicity to apostate confusion. It can be in the form of false Christianity and in the form of pagan religion.
 - The tower of Babel was a forerunner of later towers dedicated to various heathen deities. It was a monument to human pride and an express act of rebellion against the true God. The city containing the tower of Babel was named Babel and later Babylon.

- Nimrod founded the city of Babel, later called Babylon. His wife became the head of the Babylonian mysteries that consisted of secret religious rites developed as a part of idol worship. She was a high priestess of the idol worship known by the name of Semiramis.

According to extra biblical records, Semiramis gave birth to a son who she claimed was conceived miraculously. The son, Tammuz, was considered a savior of his people, a fulfillment of the promise given to Eve, he promised cleansing from sin, was killed by a wild animal and then brought back to life.

This legend is incorporated into the religious rites and various pagan religions. Idols picturing the mother as the queen of heaven with the baby in her arms are found throughout the ancient world. Priestly orders furthered the worship of the mother and child cult. They practiced the sprinkling of holy water and established an order of virgins dedicated to religious prostitution.

Though many of these facts are not mentioned in Scripture, there are a number of references to this false religion. Ezekiel protests against the ceremony of weeping for Tammuz (Eze 8:14). Jeremiah mentions the heathen practices of making cakes for the queen of heaven (Jer 7:18) and offering incense to the queen of heaven (Jer 44:17-19, 25). Baal worship was another form of this same mystery religion and is considered identical to Tammuz.

The Babylonian cult made its way to other cities, including Pergamum, the site of one of the seven churches. The chief priest of the Babylonian cult wore crowns in the form of the head of a fish, in recognition of Dagon the fish god, with the title Keeper of the Bridge. This is the bridge between man and Satan which was imprinted on their crowns. The Roman equivalent of the title, Pontifex Maximus, was used by the Caesars and later Roman emperors and was also adopted as the title for the bishop of Rome. In the early centuries of the church in Rome, incredible confusion arose. Attempts were made to combine some features of the mystery religion of Babylon with Christian faith - the results of which are still present in the Roman church today.

It has been noted by many writers that the iniquitous and pagan rites of Babylon crept into the early church and were largely responsible for the corruptions incorporated in Roman Catholicism from which Protestantism separated itself in the Middle Ages. ¹⁴

- The woman is called the mother of harlots because she represents an apostate worldwide religion. She is evil signifying the spiritual adultery of those who outwardly and religiously seem to be joined to the true God, but who are untrue to Him.

The symbolism of spiritual adultery is not ordinarily used in Scripture of pagan nations that do not know God. The term is most often used of people who outwardly carry the name of God while actually worshiping and serving other gods.¹⁵ Scripture makes it clear that the apostate church has eagerly sought and solicited the adulterous relation with the world political powers and therefore is primarily to be blamed. She will reap the penalty of her sin.¹⁶

- The woman is sitting on many waters because all people, nations, and tongues around the world are under the influence of the worldwide false worship of the Babylonian religious system. She is sitting in a position of authority and sovereignty and has a close association with the kings of the earth. Her deadly embrace will encompass all the unredeemed, from kings and rulers to common people; all will worship and submit to her religion. Far from being separated, church and state will be united as never before in human history.¹⁷
- The spiritual immorality associated with idolatry will have caused the entire world to fall into a spiritual drunken stupor (Rev 17:2). She will be responsible for numerous religions that follow her example. Together the Antichrist and the woman will lead the world into untold abominations. She is portrayed as being drunk “with the blood of the saints.” (Rev 17:6) She will lead the zealous persecution and slaughter of countless true servants of God. She will have a murderous lust for violence.
- The woman is clothed in purple and scarlet, the colors of royalty, nobility and wealth. She is portrayed as a prostitute who is both attractive and has become extremely wealthy. Purple and scarlet, symbolically rich in their meaning when connected with true spiritual values, are here prostituted to this false religious system and designed to glorify it with religious garb, in contrast to the simplicity of pious adornment. As alliance with the world and showy pomp increase, so spiritual truth and purity decline.¹⁸
- The scarlet beast she is sitting on is the Antichrist, ruler of the end-times global empire and object of worship in the worldwide religion.

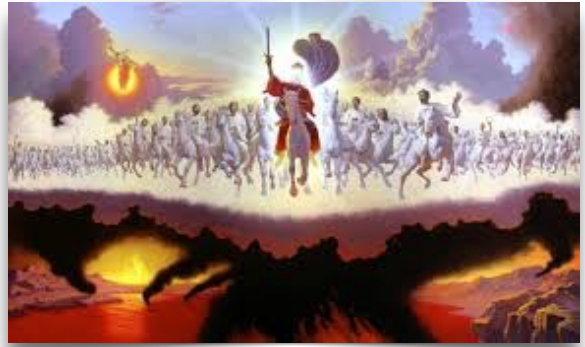


- The Antichrist will imitate Christ's death and resurrection in order to amaze the world and win its political and religious devotion. He is the beast that John saw who "was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss and go to destruction (Rev 17:8).
- Antichrist's reign will be limited ("he must remain a little while" Rev 17:10). He will be allowed to rule for forty-two months.
- The woman, the harlot, was "sitting on the scarlet beast" (Rev 17:3) signifies that he was supporting her. The initial unifying and controlling factor of Antichrist's kingdom will be religion.
- The seven heads represent the seven world empires that stood in opposition to God and His people. The first six are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The seventh will arise in John's future and is Babylon the empire of the Antichrist.
- The ten horns (in the Old Testament horns represent power) are the ten nations who will unite to empower the Antichrist. They will turn all their worldly authority over to him.
- The Babylonian beast or Antichrist will turn around and utterly destroy the mother of harlots. He no longer wants a one world religion, he wants all to worship him. He no longer needs the help and power of the church. He wants to rule the world. He will strip her of all her finery, her flesh is eaten, and she is burned with fire. This will be the downfall of the apostate world church. Revelation 17:17 says God will put it in their hearts.

The divine judgment inflicted upon apostate Christendom follows a pattern that can be observed in other judgments upon evil nations and ungodly rulers. Ancient Babylon was used to bring allocation upon the people of Israel, as were also the governments of Assyria and Egypt. But in due time, the same nations that inflicted divine judgment were themselves the objects of God's wrath. ¹⁹

The time of this event may be placed approximately at the midpoint of the seven years of Daniels' seventieth week. During the first half of the seven years, apostate Christendom flowers and establishes its power over all the world. During this period there is a measure of religious freedom as indicated by the fact that the Jews are allowed to worship and renew their sacrifices (Dan 9:27). ²⁰

- Antichrist and the ten nations who unite will wage war against the Lamb. The Lamb will return as King of kings and Lord of lords and overcome the Beast and the kings of the earth. Christ will be accompanied by those who have accepted Him as Lord and Savior (“the called and chosen and faithful” Rev 17:14).



Summary

In Chapters 16 and 17 we see the last of God’s wrath poured out on an unrepentant earth. God then judges and destroys the apostate world religion. Antichrist rules for a brief time along with ten nations. Together they wage war against the Lamb who overcomes them along with the called and chosen and faithful.

Today, the invitation is still open to those who will receive the grace of God by trusting in Christ and being saved from entering this awful period that may be impending for this present generation.

“while it is said, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me.” (Hebrews 3:15, NASB95)

““For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NASB95)

“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.” (Romans 10:9–10, NASB95)