

Revelation 16 Notes: June 19,2022

Something to Ponder: Are the seals, trumpets, and bowls separate occurrences that happen one after another or progressive parallelism? In other words, do they represent 21 separate judgments or are they essentially the same from a different camera angle, with more progressive intensity? Most Christians insist Revelation must be read literally. However, in my opinion (Pastor Kene), the biggest hinderance to this approach is that the seals, the trumpets, and the bowl judgments each have the sixth or seventh judgment culminating with the Day of the Lord (Revelation 6:12-17, 11:15-19, 16:17-21). In the end, this is problematic because The Day of the Lord cannot happen on three separate occasions.

While many will say you must read Revelation literally, unless it specifically tells you a vision is symbolic, I (Pastor Kene) believe just the opposite. You must interpret Revelation symbolically unless told otherwise. This is because visions, like dreams, are most frequently interpreted by the *meaning* of the vision / dream, not the literal vision. Think Joseph and his strange dreams

1. The First Three Bowls

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!"

- a. **Bowl # 1: Harmful soars** remind us of the sixth plague of Moses, where festering boils broke out amongst the Egyptian men, women, and animals (Exodus 9:1-12). There is no mention of the harmful sores killing anyone, but like the trumpet judgment of locusts with the scorpion tails, you want to die, but instead you suffer terribly (Revelation 9:3-5).
- b. **Bowl # 2: The Sea turns to Blood:** The judgment is very familiar, but far less graphic than the second of the Trumpet judgments, where the cause is a mountain that falls from heaven, which turns the sea into blood and destroys ships and kills a third the marine life (Revelation 8:8-9). In this judgment the sea is left with the blood of ALL that lived in the sea, no doubt producing a horrible stench from coagulated blood from corpses.
- c. **Bowl # 3: The Rivers and Streams turn to blood:** This is another judgment that happened during the trumpet judgments, were a star called wormwood fell from heaven and crashed into the rivers and streams, producing blood, with the water killing many people (Revelation 8:10-11).

In this bowl judgment, there is not much left for survival. The food from the sea is no longer an option, and now, the drinking water is filled with blood. Judgments like this remind us of all we take for granted in life. From good health to fresh seafood, to a glass of drinkable water, God deserves all the praise for this common grace to all.

- d. **After the first three bowl judgments, there is praise offered to the Lord** which speaks of His justice in these initial disasters. The first comes from the angel in charge of the waters; while the last comes from the alter, which we know represents the martyred saints (Revelation 6:9-12).

2. The Fourth and Fifth Bowls

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.

- a. **The Intensity really heats up** (No pun intended) with the final three plagues. An important observation to take note of is the shift from the previous section (Bowls 1-3). No longer will there be praise for the Lord, or repentance from those inflicted, but instead there will be a cursing of God.

Ultimately, what is revealed here is that if a heart is hardened towards the Lord, there is not much that can change that, including apologetics or terrible circumstances that occur in one's life. The heart cannot be changed by force, only through felt grace.

Likewise, I have discovered as a father that my body language, my tone, even exerting my own strength will never lead to improved behavior or a better relationship with my kids. Instead, the true change agents are grace, love, and sometimes my own confession of wrongful behavior. I may be able to force my boys to obey, but it will never change their hearts.

- b. **Bowl # 4: The scorching sun.** Can you imagine the sun setting you on fire? I can't! Anyhow, it's interesting that the sun is allowed (Divine Passive) to scorch people with fire, but once again, not kill people. The theme behind these judgments is torture, not death. The pattern in these disasters is to systematically make you more and more uncomfortable.

Once again, the people who worship the beast have hardened hearts, like the Pharaoh of yesteryear. What you see are people not willing to take responsibility for their actions and mistakes. Whether it is hatred towards God or pride of the highest degree, these folks want to go down cursing God. Do you know people like that? Their hatred and pride keep them from confession, forgiveness and a restored relationship. Unfortunately, all too often, these are the folks that don't worship the beast, but think of themselves as Christians.

- c. **Bowl #5: Darkness:** With this bowl, the throne of the beast and its kingdom were plunged into darkness, another judgment that has been repeated (Revelation 6:12, 8:12). What this means is not clear (At least to me) because in the next bowl, the seventh, the beast is still practicing its evil ways and taking it to a new depraved level.

Perhaps this has nothing to do with physical darkness, but everything to do with spiritual darkness. In that scenario, the entire world has entered spiritual dark-mode. This is quit probable since the previous bowl pictured a sun that was so hot (The very opposite of darkness) that it scorched people, setting them on fire. In that context the throne of the beast is everyone who worships him, that is, a part of his kingdom. Such a spiritual darkness may indicate that God gave this evil kingdom over to the depraved / debased mind, where people are given over to their sinful desires because they NOT only suppress the truth but ALSO approve of others who do the same. Such a darkness would set the stage for the final battle, known to many as Armageddon.

Do people repent? Absolutely not. Instead, they gnaw their tongues in anguish and curse God because of their pain and sores. Oh, how I wish that kingdom, and others I personally know, would respond differently. New life that promotes joy is first discovered after repentance.

3. The Sixth Bowl: Armageddon

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.

a. **Bowl # 6: The Dry Euphrates:** This sets the stage for the final battle most people refer to as the Armageddon.

- **The Stage is Set:** It is important to note that the enemies of God do not initiate this battle, but the Lord God does so by drying up the sea. He creates this symbolic pathway that served as a defense boundary. The Lord did this with the Red Sea when he made the land dry by parting the sea so the Israelites could cross on dry land, which led to the folding back of the sea as the Egyptian army was submerged.
- **Who are the kings of the east?** Some say China. Others say Russia. Still others believe it will be the European Union. Now these nations would have made little sense to John's readers because the kings they feared from the east were the Parthians, who represented a large army that would invade Rome. In general, the kings of the east is best understood as a term to describe the enemies of God's people. In the OT, two of these armies led by kings included the Assyrians and the Babylonians, both who overthrew God's people. Throughout the Bible, nothing good comes out of the east, which explains why Jonah did everything in his power NOT to go to Nineveh, but went as far west as one could go :)

b. **The Demonic Nature of the Beast, and the False Prophet**

- **Unclean Spirits** that look like Frogs come from the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. Their purpose is to gather kings NOT just from the east, but the whole world. Signs and wonders, deception, promises of reward, were all vehicles the dragon uses to entice others. This imagery once again shows that while we may see human armies, they are influenced by the satan.
- **The Purpose was to assemble armies and prepare for the Great Day of the Lord**, which constitutes the final battle. I (Pastor Kene) do not take this passage literally because the mountain plain that is known as Megiddo, simply is too small for the totality of the world's armies. However, this plain area was known for OT battles by Israel, Assyria, Egypt, and other countries. In this sense I see Armageddon as a metaphor to illustrate a great final battle will take place.
- **The Reaffirmation:** I am coming like a thief! This of course is a reference to the second coming of Christ. Unlike the disciples who fell asleep in the most vulnerable moment in the life of Jesus, Jesus encourages us to be awake. He can come at any moment. You want to keep your garments on, so when he comes you are ready. Garments refer most likely to the white garments associated with heaven, representing purity, faithfulness, no compromise. A compromised person is one who is naked, this exposed.

- Armageddon is not a geographical location. Instead, the Hebrew that is closest to that name is Har-Megiddo. Har = Mountain. Megiddo means Assembly or gathering. This location is more of a Tel than a mountain. As I mentioned, the plain of Megiddo was a place where there were many battles in the ancient times. I believe the reputation was well known to people as an ancient battlefield. It is a symbolic image, in a loosely similar way to the Twin Towers in NY during our time. If the enemies gathered at the Twin Towers, we would clearly understand the importance of that implication.

I personally don't see the dragon, the beast, the false prophet, and the armies of the whole earth assembling to fight God with tanks and new warfare weaponry, since that would be insane and an easy divine win, but rather this "army" is gathering to assemble to destroy God's people. In the end, Jesus, says, remain faithful, I am coming to rescue my people.

4. The Seventh Bowl: The Finale

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.

- It is Done!** The Battle of Armageddon was a rout for Jesus and his angels. The flashes of lightning, the peals of thunder, the great earthquake, and the great city and the cities of the nations have been destroyed.
- Who is the great city** that has been split in three parts? Is it China? Is it Russia? Is it Saudi Arabia, or Iran, North Korea? Maybe? The author is not concerned about naming a world power but describing a world system that entices the nations to put to death God's people. In this sense, they represent the great Babylon, a metaphor of a nation who will forever be remembered for waging war against God's people and destroying their temple. The great Babylon serves as a metaphor to illustrate the timeless threat of a world system that is enticed and influenced by the dragon.
- The earth** is described as a place that is now flat because of the hailstorms, each one weighing 100 pounds, the great earthquake, and the other of the seven bowls that administered their damage. Think of a table that has meticulously been set up for a great banquet, that now is no more because the tablecloth has been pulled out from underneath. Such is the vision of the earth after the Great Day if the Lord.
- What's the point? Is it to instill fear? Is it to rejoice over the destruction of the world? I think the point is to know that despite what's going on in the world, God hasn't forgotten His people. Jesus will come one day and make right what is wrong. Yes, the earth will be purged, like a sort of decoration; but this must happen for the curse to be lifted, the earth to be renewed, so that the New Earth / New Heavens will be far better than it was before. Are you ready to live with Jesus forever on the new earth? Be encouraged, he is coming like a thief, he has not forgotten you!