

Chapter summary – *The seven chosen angels have been selected, appointed, and equipped as God's final messengers of judgment. The last half of the seven-year tribulation period is getting under way and rebellious men and women still can avail themselves of God's saving grace, even though few will do so. The Jewish remnant has fled to the wilderness, and the fierce purges of the beast are under way. Those who are refusing to be branded with the mark of the beast are fleeing for their lives, but multitudes are being caught and executed. The long drought and famine are still plaguing the earth, and food supplies are critically short. This is the world scene as the plagues recorded in Revelation 16 get under way.*¹

*Chronologically this chapter is close to the time of the second coming of Christ, and the judgments described fall in rapid succession. Alford says, "There can then be no doubt here, not only that the series reaches on to the time of the end, but that the whole of it is to be placed close to the same time" (The Greek Testament, 4:696). Daniel indicated that these closing days of the Tribulation will be a time of world war (Dan. 11:36-45). World events are now pictured by John as rapidly coming to their climax.*²

*The vial judgments of Revelation 16 should not be confused with the trumpet judgments even though similarities are obvious. The vial or bowl judgments come out of the seventh trumpet...The bowl judgments concern the world at large with a concentration upon the empire of the beast. The bowl judgments do not last as long as the trumpet judgments, but they are much more severe and comprehensive. The effects of the bowl judgments are quite different from the effects of the trumpet judgments.*³

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IV. the vision of the Final Days, (Chs. 6-22)

D. THE BOWL JUDGMENTS - (15:1-16:21)

4. The angels leave to pour out the bowls, (16:1-21) - "THE CURTAIN IS DRAWN AND THE FINAL ACT OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD BEGINS!"

1) The first bowl, (1, 2)

 **INTERPRETATION:**

¹ **Then** (after the angels were given the bowls of God's wrath and the temple filled with smoke), **I heard a loud voice from the** (smoke filled), **temple saying to the seven angels, "Go** (now), **and pour** (empty), **out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."**

 **COMMENTARY:**

¹ Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 295

² Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos Library System.

³ Benson, *Revelation: The Grand Finale of History*, p. 68

² **So the first** (angel obediently), **went and poured out his bowl** (of wrath), **upon the earth, and** (as soon as he did), **a foul and loathsome** (a hideous and painful), **sore** (or ulcer such as the Egyptians experienced in Exodus 9:9-11), **came upon the men** (word used for both men and women; human race), **who had the** (identifying), **mark of the beast** (probably the Roman Prince), **and those who worshiped his image**, (that the anti-christ erected—The sores come upon only those who have affiliated themselves with the devil).⁴

F APPLICATION:

We petition and thank God for the relief of every kind of misery we experience and He is pleased to remedy. But we must remember that God tells us all through the Scriptures that He will discipline persistent sinful behavior through some form of calamity. He makes that promise to the believer and unbeliever alike.

2) The second bowl, (3)

INTERPRETATION:

³ **Then** (after the first bowl wrecked its havoc), **the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea** (which may mean the Mediterranean or all salt water bodies of water), **and it became blood as of a dead man**⁵ (as the gore one would find a corpse lying in [Ex. 7:20-25]); **and every** (single), **living creature** (from the biggest to the smallest), **in the sea died**, (adding to the stench and gore).

F APPLICATION:

Blood is the vivid, terrible mark of death—the wages of sin. This was the first plague in Egypt—the Nile turned to blood.

Now the sea covers far the greater portion of this globe. God, who made it, now turns it to blood—“as of a corpse lying in its own gore.” So the billions, trillions, shoals, of sea-creatures die; and come floating to the surface in horrible, rotting witness of the wickedness of men! There is no escaping these words of God: “every living soul died.” What a frightful stench! What fearful possibilities of disease! Yet remember that this is exactly what God is doing. “Behold,

⁴ Men had been well warned what would happen if they accepted the slave-brand of the Beast, that ceaseless torment would be theirs, and that they would not be able to rest day or night. Who can rest when tormented by a great, festering, painful sore? There, on the right hand, a horrible, putrefying, incurable cancer! There on the face, a loathsome, ugly, disfiguring, and agonizing blotch! Men become horrible to look upon, and their pains never end. (Phillips, *Exploring Revelation*, 190)

⁵ ...Chemically speaking, the composition of sea water is almost identical to that of blood, so that only a relatively small modification would be necessary...When men who know of the true existence of God refuse to glorify Him as God and are not thankful for the great gifts of His creation (Romans 1:20), God will finally give them up (Romans 1:24), so that even the creation itself turns against them. The sea and its creatures had once been a spring of life; now it becomes a turgid pool of death. (Morris, *The Revelation Record*, p. 298)

Jehovah maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste.... and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . Therefore . . . few men left . . . For thus shall it be in the midst of the earth among the peoples, as the shaking of an olive-tree, as the gleanings when the vintage is done” (Isaiah 24:1-13).⁶

3) The third bowl, (4-7)

INTERPRETATION:

- ⁴ **Then** (after the sea was turned to blood), **the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of** (the fresh), **water, and they became blood**, (as well).
- ⁵ **And I heard the angel** (who apparently has some responsibility in the area), **of the waters saying: “You are righteous** (upright, faultless in what You are doing), **O Lord, the One who is and who was and who is to be, because You have judged these things**, (brought just punishment upon the unrepentant sinners by changing the water into blood).
- ⁶ **For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets** (they have hunted down, persecuted and killed them; Your children), **and You have given them blood to drink**, (for the blood they have taken of the innocent). **For it is their just due**,” (Your punishment, Lord, fits the crime).
- ⁷ **And I heard another** (probably an angel), **from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty** (omnipotent), **true** (sincere), **and righteous** (faultless), **are Your judgments”** (upon unrepentant, sinful mankind).

F APPLICATION:

The Lord was not unjust for punishing sinful man. He would have been unjust if He did not! Those who have placed saving faith in Jesus Christ received what they didn’t deserve, cleansing from their sin. We all deserve what the unbelievers are getting in this chapter. But, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” (John 3:16-18) We ought never get over the wonder and joy of our salvation.

4) The fourth bowl, (8, 9)

INTERPRETATION:

- ⁸ **Then** (after the fresh water was turned to blood), **the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him** (the sun), **to scorch** (to intensely burn), **men** (mankind [seems to refer to the same as in vv. 2, 5-6]), **with fire** (i.e., to sear them with such an intense heat that they will feel like they are on

⁶ Newell, *The Book of the Revelation*, p. 248

fire [in Revelation 8:12 the sun was dimmed]).⁷ Cp. Mal. 4:1; Isa. 24:6; 30:26

⁹ **And men were scorched with great** (mega), **heat, and they** (the unsaved earth dwellers did not fear God, which would have been the beginning of wisdom, instead they), **blasphemed** (spoke evil of, disrespectful of, sacrilegiously of), **the name of God who** (they recognize), **has power** (the authority), **over these plagues; and** (yet), **they** (still), **did not repent** (turn away from their sin), **and give** (ascribe to), **Him glory**, (as is God's rightful due from His creation—by honoring Him with their words, repentance and obedient behavior).

F APPLICATION:

Here again we see how typical it is for any of us, to blame others or even God for the consequences of our own choices. In this context we see the death grip (absolute blindness), that sin has upon unbelievers. “There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one.” (Romans 3:11-12) They, as a whole do not repent of their sin, nor do they acknowledge that God is just in what He is doing. The angel clearly stated that God is just in His actions in verses 5-7. Sin makes us all stupid. We think, say and do stupid things.

Lest we get too high an opinion of ourselves as believers, there is so very little difference between believers and unbelievers at times. As believers “we do not doubt the existence of God; we know that God is interested in us and in the world which he has made; we are well aware of God's laws; we know his goodness and we know that sin has its punishment; and yet time and time again we go our own way.”⁸

5) The fifth bowl, (10, 11)

INTERPRETATION:

¹⁰ **Then** (after the sun was scorching everyone), **the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne** (the headquarters and thus nerve center), **of the beast** (probably the Roman Prince), **and his kingdom became full of darkness** (entombed in darkness, as the effects of the plague spread from the beast's capital across his kingdom, [cp. Ex. 10:21-23]); **and** (the result of the darkness was that), **they** (the subjects of the beast), **gnawed their tongues**

⁷ Besides the severe burns the sun would inflict upon people, water levels all across the world would drop dramatically. Crops would be turned to dust in a day. There would be virtually a world wide power outage and most machinery like transportation vehicles would cease to function in the heat. Everything on the earth would be so heated up that there would be little relief from the heat during the evening hours. The intensely heated earth would also keep most of the rain in the upper atmosphere from falling. When the rain did punch a hole to penetrate through the heat, it would probably be in the form of severe thunderstorms that spawn tornadoes. The polar ice caps would melt as well and it is estimated that if they did, the world's sea levels would rise about 200 feet.

⁸ Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Revelation of John* - Logos Library System.

because of the pain, (the severe agony of the ulcers, the lack of water, the searing heat and now the loneliness, disorientation and distress that the darkness caused).

¹¹ (But, even so), **They** (again), **blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of** (turn away from), **their** (sinful), **deeds**.

F APPLICATION:

The idea that people would repent of their sin if they really knew there was a God, that God was going to judge them for their sin, and had the power to do it, we see clearly is not true. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9)

6) The sixth bowl, (12-16)

(1) The oriental armies square off against the Roman Prince and his armies, (12-14)

INTERPRETATION:

¹² **Then** (after darkness imprisoned the beast’s kingdom), **the sixth angel poured out his bowl on** (what was left of), **the great river Euphrates** (that separates the promised land from Asia),⁹ **and its water was** (completely), **dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east** (lit. “*sunrising*,” probably at least China, who will oppose the beast and the false prophet), **might be prepared**, (made passable for the Oriental armies to easily attack).

¹³ **And** (after the river was dried up), **I saw three unclean** (demonic), **spirits like frogs**¹⁰ (which God declared unclean), **coming out of the mouth of the dragon** (Satan), **out of the mouth of the beast** (the Roman Prince), **and out of the mouth of the false prophet**, (the Jewish Antichrist).

¹⁴ **For they are spirits of demons** (fallen angels under the leadership of Satan), **performing signs** (wondrous miracles), **which go out to** (or with the intention of persuading), **the kings of the earth and of the whole world** (that are subjects or allies of the beast), **to gather them(selves) to the battle** (against the oriental

⁹ There has been endless speculation about “the kings from the East,” with many expositors trying to relate them to some contemporary leaders of their generation. A survey of 100 commentaries of the Book of Revelation reveals at least 50 interpretations of the identity of the kings of the East. The simplest and best explanation, however, is that this refers to kings or rulers from the Orient or East who will participate in the final world war. In the light of the context of this passage indicating the near approach of the second coming of Christ and the contemporary world situation in which the Orient today contains a large portion of the world’s population with tremendous military potential, any interpretation other than a literal one does not make sense. Alford states it concisely: “This is the only understanding of these words which will suit the context, or the requirement of this series of prophecies” (Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4:700).

This is related to the **great river Euphrates** because this is the water boundary between the Holy Land and Asia to the east (cf. comments on 9:12-16). Walvoord, and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, Logos Library System.

¹⁰ Frogs were declared to be unclean by God, (Lev. 11:10).

armies that God is sending their way, which the devil knows if he losses is), **of that great day of God Almighty**, (the battle of Armageddon and then Christ's second return to the earth).¹¹

F APPLICATION:

We too, have been persuaded at times by the devil and his subjects to believe we can fight against God and win. Everything is going your way. You have never been caught at what you are presently getting away with. You seemingly, have overcome all the odds. They say, "It can't be done!" but you are doing it! So you ignore God, and you stay steady on your course. Only to eventually find your life plagued beyond belief.

(2) God warns the saints, or those who have not yet bowed to the beast, (15)

INTERPRETATION:

¹⁵ "**Behold** (God says), **I am coming as a thief**, (I am coming suddenly and unexpectedly and may cause you some loss). **Blessed** (happy, fortunate, to be envied), **is he who watches** (is cautious, pass attention, is alert to My coming), **and keeps** (takes care of, guards), **his garments** (his material items or his personal well-being), **lest he** (not be alert, thus allow the thief to steal them and then have to), **walk naked and they see his shame**," (indecent, obscenity).¹²

(3) The armies face off, (16)

INTERPRETATION:

¹⁶ **And they** (the demonic spirits, successfully), **gathered them** (the kings and their armies that are the subjects or sympathetic to the beast), **together** (to meet the Oriental armies), **to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon**.¹³

¹¹ The Egyptian magicians blinded the eyes of Pharaoh to God's will and His ultimate power to exercise it with their ability to do miracles. The result of their work was that Pharaoh felt brave enough to fight against God. So will these evil spirits blind the eyes and minds of the kings of the earth. They too, the devil will persuade to fight against God.

¹² This passage may be a sort of parenthetical statement for the tribulation saints. It may be a warning for them to continue to keep the faith and fight the fight, that they may be found faithful at Jesus' soon second coming. God may be warning them not to let their guard down and become tarnished by the world and be ashamed at the Lord's coming.

It may be that God is warning those who have not yet taken the mark of the beast. Telling them that they still have time to repent of their sin and place saving faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, but to do it SOON! He may be saying to them "Wake up!" before you find yourself wanting at the day of judgment.

¹³ The name *Armageddon* comes from two Hebrew words, *har Megiddo*, the hill of Megiddo. The word *Megiddo* means "place of troops" or "place of slaughter." It is also called the Plain of Esdraelon and the Valley of Jezreel. The area is about fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long, and forms what Napoleon called "the most natural battlefield of the whole earth."... It was on this plain that Barak defeated the armies of Canaan (Jud. 5:19). Gideon met the Midianites there (Jud. 7) and it was there that King Saul lost his life (1 Sam. 31). Titus and the Roman army used this natural corridor, as did the Crusaders in the Middle Ages. British General Allenby used it when he defeated the Turkish armies in 1917. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Logos Library System.

F APPLICATION:

The Gentile nations will look on Armageddon as a battle, but to God, it will be only a “supper” for the fowls of the air (Rev. 19:17–21).

Zechariah 12 and 14 describe this event from Israel’s point of view. Since “the beast” has set up his image in the temple at Jerusalem, and since many of the Jews will not bow down to him, it is natural that the Holy City should be the object of attack. However, not only the Jews are involved; for God has a purpose for the Gentile nations as well. Joel 3:9–21 parallels the Zechariah references, and Joel 3:19 makes clear that God will punish the Gentiles for the way they have treated the Jews (see also Isa. 24; Zeph. 3:8ff).

The outcome of the “battle” is recorded in Revelation 19: the Lord returns and defeats His enemies. Obviously, the assembling and marching armies create no problem for Almighty God. When the nations rage and defy Him, “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure” (Ps. 2:4–5).¹⁴

7) The seventh bowl, (17-21)

 INTERPRETATION:

¹⁷ **Then** (after the armies of the nations were gathered at Armageddon), **the seventh angel poured out his bowl** (of God’s wrath), **into the air** (something that surrounds every human being and is the territory of the prince of the power of the air),¹⁵ **and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven from the throne** (the person that spoke John could not see as the temple is still engulfed in smoke), **saying, “It is done!”** (the exercise of God’s wrath upon sinful man is finished, completed, over, it has come to pass, [Rev. 15:1, 8])

¹⁸ **And** (the final affects of God’s wrath contained in the seventh bowl was that), **there were noises** (some say these are voices), **and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great** (mega), **earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth**, (it was the granddaddy of all earth quakes—even as severe as the earlier ones recorded in Revelation).

¹⁹ **Now** (as a result of the earthquake), **the great city** (probably Jerusalem [cp., Rev. 11:8; Zech. 14:4]),¹⁶ **was divided into three parts** (three sections), **and the cities of the nations** (the Gentiles were not divided, but), **fell**, (collapsed in utter ruin). **And great Babylon was** (especially), **remembered** (not forgotten or overlooked), **before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness** (passion, zeal, boiling), **of His wrath.**

¹⁴ Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Logos Library System.

¹⁵ **Upon the air.** All men breathe the air and this is worse than the smiting of the earth (verse 2), the sea (3), the fresh waters (4), the sun (8). Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Logos Library System.

¹⁶ Some believe that this is Babylon.

²⁰ **Then** (as a result of the earthquake), **every island fled away** (sank into oblivion), **and the mountains were not found**, (because they were leveled).

²¹ **And** (in addition to the earthquake and its destruction), **great** (mega), **hail from heaven fell upon men** (those who survived the earthquake), **each hailstone about the weight of a talent**, (around 100 lbs.). **Men** (again), **blasphemed God** (instead of repenting, [cp., vv. 9, 11]), **because of** (as a result of), **the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly** (vehemently), **great**.

 **INTERPRETATION:**

 **COMMENTARY:**

F **APPLICATION:**