

Revelation Chapter 16

Revelation chapter 16 describe the final seven Vials of the wrath of God, representing the climax of God's punishment of sinners during the Tribulation period. No repentance is invited or shown. The judgments are somewhat parallel both to the 10 plagues on Egypt and to the trumpets of chapters 8 and 9.

The vials (also called bowls), are more total and universal in their effects than were the trumpets, and generally affect people more directly.

Revelation 16:1 "And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."

The seven angels, each holding a vial (bowl), containing the judgments that are about to fall on the earth, seem reluctant to cast forth their bitter judgments. However, they are obedient to the voice of God when He speaks: These bowls constitute what the Lord Jesus referred to as the "great distress" (Matt. 24:21), or the last 42 months of the Great Tribulation period.

Four of these seven judgments occurred literally in Egypt among the ten plagues and have never been accepted by credible Bible teachers as anything but literal. In addition, part of the 6th judgment; that of drying up the Euphrates River and producing frogs, was also literally fulfilled during the history of Israel. Frogs were generated as one of the plagues of Egypt, and both the Red Sea and Jordan River were rolled back so that God's people could walk forth on dry ground.

Therefore, nothing new will be transpiring when God dries up the Euphrates River in order that the kings of the East may march over on dry ground.

If the plagues of Egypt were literal, and they certainly were, why should we not expect these awful judgments likewise to be literal?

Revelation 16:2 "And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and [upon] them which worshipped his image."

The First Vial Judgment. Foul and loathsome sore. When men choose to worship Antichrist rather than Christ and demonstrate their allegiance by accepting the mark of the beast, God responds by sending on them a plague of "a noisome and grievous sore". John makes it clear that these awful sores afflict only those who worship the Antichrist and who have accepted the mark of the Beast; no Tribulation saint suffers from them (see article "[Mark of the Beast](#)").

The first "vial" produces a painful "sore" on all the followers of the "beast", wherever they are. This parallels the boils of the sixth plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11; compare Deut. 28:27; Job 2:7-13).

The Septuagint (LXX), uses the same Greek word to describe the boils that plagued the Egyptians (Exodus 9:9-11), and afflicted Job (Job 2:7). In the New Testament, it describes the open sores that covered the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:21). All over the world, people will be afflicted with incurable, open, oozing sores.

“Mark of the beast”: Only the worshipers of Antichrist will be afflicted (see note on 13:16; compare 14:9-11).

Further confirmation that the three judgments; the seals, the trumpets, and the vials are sequential, not concurrent (as some bible teachers suggest), is clarified in the time of this judgment.

Antichrist will not be set up as the object of worship until the middle of the Tribulation period. This judgment falls on the human race because of their worship of Antichrist, which can only occur after the middle of the Tribulation.

The recipients are the beast worshipers. The selection from among the peoples on the earth is clearly seen in this passage: Only those containing the mark of the beast and worshipping his image will be selected for those awful sores.

Some might say "what a cruel thing for God to do". This is just not so. God is more than gracious to all of us. We all deserve every one of these plagues. God's love for us is the only reason He provided a way out for us (through Jesus). Each of these plagues happened not only in punishment, but to get men to repent. I cannot believe "they repented not". Notice here that the reason this fell on them, was because they worshipped a false god.

This indicates that God in His marvelous grace will not bring judgment on believers during this latter half of Tribulation, but will protect them as He did the Israelites during the plagues of Egypt.

This further confirms our assumption that in the previous judgments, when He slays 25% and then another third of the world's population that's remaining, (making a total of 50%) He will exempt believers.

Revelation 16:3 "And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead [man]: and every living soul died in the sea."

The Second Vial Judgment. Became as the blood of a dead man”: Now the second angel “poured out his vial upon the sea”, and it turns into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea dies.

“Second ... vial ... every living soul died in the sea”: This is reminiscent of the second trumpet (8:8-9), and of the first plague against Egypt (Exodus 7:20-25). However, this plague will be far more widespread. The water in the world’s oceans will become thick, dark, and coagulated, like the blood of a corpse. The death and decay of billions of sea creatures will only add to the misery of this judgment.

We have already seen that God will cause a third part of the sea to turn to blood during the 2nd trumpet, but this second bowl includes the entire sea. Imagine when all living creatures in the seas die. Think of the unbearable stench and the potential for disease.

“The “blood of a dead man” is coagulated and rotting. No evaporation for rain would be possible.

This judgment may well interfere with commercial shipping and send whole populations into confusion as people grope for an adequate supply of water, not to mention destroying what is left of the fish industry.

These vials, trumpets, and evil things happening are like the problems that came with the ten plagues on Egypt. In all cases, God brought them on to cause repentance. Just as Pharaoh repented not, these worshippers of the beast repented not. Many large cities have so much pollution today, that the water is bad.

Verses 4-7: The third “vial” turns all fresh “water” to “blood”, so that no pure water for drinking is left on earth. This again parallels the first Egyptian plague, but also the third trumpet (8:10-11). That it is “righteous” for God to judge the earth thus, is shown by the fact that the Beast and his followers “had shed the blood of saints and prophets”. Those who shed the blood of God’s people must now “drink” blood (compare Isa. 49:26).

Revelation 16:4 "And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood."

The Third Vial Judgment. Poured out his vial upon the rivers”: The third vial, a sequel to the second, carries with it an interesting explanation as to why God will permit it. God will destroy the only remaining sources of water, the rivers and fountains or springs of the deep, by letting them turn to blood.

“Third ... vial ... rivers and fountains of waters”: Fresh water, already in short supply because of the prolonged drought (11:6), will now suffer the fate of the oceans (compare Exodus (7:19ff), in addition to suffering from thirst, the worshipers of Antichrist will have no clean water with which to wash their sores.

Whether this means literal “blood”, is inconsequential, for if Christ can turn water to wine, He certainly can turn water to blood. What is significant is that it will become corrupt blood, which will breed disease and pestilence. One of the basic needs of humankind is water. Unless God provides water from another source or engineers by some process can turn this corrupted water into pure water, the world will be in a state of riot and confusion, seeking this necessity of life.

All of this describes devastation beyond what we can comprehend. The judgment of God has fallen. Sometimes, God uses wars to bring His will about. At any rate, this no doubt does away with a good part of humanity.

Revelation 16:5 "And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus."

Notice here, this is not the people saying that God is righteous. This is the angel saying God is righteous. At no time do the people repent. The angel here is saying that this judgment that God has brought is justified. This God mentioned here is the great "I Am".

"Which art, and wast": This phrase expresses God's eternality (compare 1:4, 8; 14:8; 11:17). Verse 6 says that the eternal God will judge justly because they have killed the believers and preachers of the gospel (6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:18; 17:6; 18:20). This slaughter will have no parallel in history (Matt. 24:21), and neither will the vengeance of God (compare Rom. 12:19-21).

Revelation 16:6 "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy."

"Given them blood to drink": The thick, blood-like substance which the fresh waters have become is all that is available to drink (compare verse 4).

"They are worthy": The angel exonerates God from any charge that His judgments are too harsh. The unspeakably wicked generation then alive will shed more blood than any before. It, including that of saints (6:9; 17:6), and prophets (11:7-10). God's judgment is fair and proper (compare Exodus 21:25-27; Lev. 24:19-20; Heb. 10:26-31).

It seems that blood in their water supply is in punishment for the blood of the saints and prophets. Throughout the ages, the world and its evil system has been opposed to God and His people. They deserve this punishment.

Revelation 16:7 "And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous [are] thy judgments."

"Altar": The personified altar echoes the words of the angel, reinforcing the truth that God is just in all judgment (19:1-2; compare Gen. 18:25; Psalm 51:4; Rom. 3:4).

As bad as these judgments are, they are deserved. As it was said before, everyone likes to think of God as love, but few remember also, that He is the Judge of the world. Thank God His grace saved me. He is longsuffering, not willing that even one should perish. However, there is a day of reckoning when the God of the entire world will judge fairly. This seems to be that time.

Verses 8-9: The forth "vial" scorches the earth with "fire" from the "sun". This is the opposite of the fourth trumpet (8:12). The followers of the Beast are scorched as well (contrast 7:16). Since they have by now made a permanent decision to reject God and follow the Beast, they blaspheme "the name of God" and refuse to repent. Like Pharaoh, their hearts have become hardened (compare Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35).

Revelation 16:8 "And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire."

The Fourth Vial Judgment. "Scorch men with fire": Their mouths already parched from lack of water, those who are unrepentant suffer even more intense thirst when God causes the sun to "scorch them with fire".

"Forth ... vial ... scorch men with fire": The sun that normally provides light, warmth, and energy will become a deadly killer. With no fresh water to drink, earth's inhabitants will face extreme heat. The scorching heat will melt the polar ice caps, which some estimate would raise the level of the world's oceans by 200 feet, inundating many of the world's major cities and producing further catastrophic loss of life (compare Amos 9:5-6). The resulting disruption of ocean transportation will make it difficult to distribute the dwindling resource of food and water.

How right the angel was who said to God, "True and righteous are Your judgments" (16:7). Like Pharaoh, their hearts have become hardened (Exodus 7:13, 22; 8:15, 19, 32; 9:7, 34-35).

The environmentalists are telling us every day that we are destroying the Ozone layer above the earth. Every time a person sprays their hair or uses an aerosol spray of any kind it does away with a little more Ozone. The scientists tell us that this is so thin that it might just go away altogether. And if it did, people would die by the thousands from harmful rays from the sun that had not been filtered to make them safe.

You see, God put this earth together very intricately and man, in changing God's ways, has messed up the atmosphere. An interesting thing to note in connection with this is, that it takes just a very thin coat of the shed blood of Jesus to protect us from the enemy. What a comparison.

Revelation 16:9 "And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory."

"Scorched with great heat". But even this does not drive the rebels to their knees in repentance. Instead, they blaspheme the name of God "who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory."

With this type of rays from the sun, they would be covered with sores. This terrible plague is vented at the beast and its followers. The worst thing they could possibly do was to curse God, and that is just what they did. They did not repent; their hearts had been hardened. They either were not aware of God's power or just did not want to give Him the glory. Either way, they are in trouble.

This type of "heat" would burn up all crops, cause droughts, and probably even melt all the polar ice region.

"They repented not": Incredibly, sinners will still refuse to repent (compare verses 11 and 21), but instead blaspheme God, the One they know has caused their afflictions.

The worst thing they could possibly do was to curse God, and that is just what they did. At any time, they could have fallen on their knees before God and repented of their sins, and God could have turned the plagues off. They did not repent. They either were not aware of His power or just did not want to give God the glory. Either way, they are in trouble.

Verses 10-11: The fifth “vial” produces “darkness” on the “seat” and “kingdom” of the “beast”. His seat is his throne or headquarters, probably either Rome or Jerusalem. His followers suffer “pain” agony, and fear. There are parallels with both the ninth plague on Egypt (Exodus 10:21-29), and the fourth trumpet (8:12). The “sores” of the first vial continue, and the Beast’s followers continue to blaspheme God and refuse to repent of their sins.

Revelation 16:10 "And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,"

The Fifth Vial Judgment. Darkness: What's John talking about when he refers to the judgment falling upon the throne or seat of the beast and his kingdom? It's probably best to think of the beast's throne as a reference to his entire kingdom since his kingdom was full of darkness. Some see this to mean the city of Babylon, but his kingdom will be worldwide.

“Fifth ... vial ... seat of the beast”: This refers to either Antichrist’s actual throne, or his capital city, but extends to all his dominion. Regardless of where the darkness begins, it eventually covers Antichrist’s entire kingdom.

“Darkness”: Worldwide darkness is elsewhere associated with the judgment of God (compare Isa. 60:2; Joel 2:2; Mark 13:24-25).

Notice also that tremendous darkness envelops the beast's kingdom. This same phenomenon occurred in Egypt during the plagues; the whole land was consumed in darkness so oppressive that Moses said you could actually feel it. That's the sort of thing that will come upon the kingdom of the Antichrist at this time. This divine judgment will give a physical illustration of their spiritual darkness.

You see, the beast may have control of evil men upon the earth, but he cannot control God or nature.

This "darkness" here was not just physical darkness, which is bad enough; but this "darkness" is of the spirit as well, bringing depression, attempted suicide, and all sorts of evil attacks on the mind.

“Gnawed their tongues”: A futile attempt to alleviate the pain from their sores, the drought, and the fierce heat.

Two things indicate that this darkness will prevail for some time on the earth: the predictions of other prophets, and the effects on human beings. This judgment, a repetition of the 9th plague of Egypt, is to be understood literally:

Amos 5:18 "Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light"

Nahum 1:6 "Who can withstand his indignation? Who can endure his fierce anger? His wrath is poured out like fire; the rocks are shattered before him".

Nahum 1:8 "but with an overwhelming flood he will make an end of Nineveh; he will pursue his foes into darkness".

Zephaniah 1:15 "That day will be a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness".

The answer to all of this is to cry out to God for forgiveness. God is good and kind. This beast they are worshipping is the created, not the Creator. God is a jealous God. He will not allow us to worship any thing or anyone other than Him. The only good thing I can say about all of this is that the Christians are in heaven when this takes place.

Revelation Chapter 16 Questions

1. In chapter 16, what is poured out?
2. Where did the great voice he heard come from?
3. Who was this voice speaking to?
4. What did the great voice tell them to do?
5. Who were these plagues poured out on?
6. These sores mentioned, describe what?
7. Is God cruel in pouring out these vials?
8. What percent died in the sea?
9. What Egyptian happening do we relate these plagues to?
10. Who said "thou art righteous, O Lord"?
11. In verse 6, why did God give them blood to drink?
12. What name was God called by in verse 7?

13. What protection must the Christian apply to be safe from the enemy?
14. When these men were scorched, what did they do?
15. Who had the power over these plagues?
16. What could these people have done to stop this horror?
17. What other things would this type of heat do?
18. What did they do because the pain was so great?
19. What two kinds of darkness prevailed?
20. What is the only good thing here?
21. Write a mini-sermon about how you would convince someone to repent.