

The Wrath of God
Revelation 16
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The temple is full of smoke representing the glory of God and no one is able to enter signifying a cutting off of intercession for the earth. The pouring of God's wrath is coming into its fullest stages and there is no detour in sight. John is now allowed to focus on the events occurring when God's wrath is finally poured out on the earth.

An announcement originating in the temple announces that the time is come. The loud voice speaks to the angels holding the seven bowls of God's wrath to pour them out upon the earth. Because God's glory fills the temple and no one is allowed in, a conclusion must be drawn that the voice is none other than God's voice.

Six Plagues

The plagues have an order as the angels and their bowls are numbered one through seven. There is a growing intensity in the wrath poured out pointing toward a climax, which in actuality is the climax of human history following the seventh bowl. The first bowl finds its target on the earth causing loathsome and malignant sores on people who had received the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image. The sixth plague to come upon Egypt prior to the Exodus account was the plague of sores.

The sequence has begun and the second bowl (Verse 3) was poured into the sea causing it to become blood like that of a dead man. Bible scholars typically believe this means that it is as coagulated blood. The result is death to everything in the sea. The scene is reminiscent of the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico during the spring and summer of 2010. The oil looked red from the sky and it was thick killing both sea life and fowls of the air. The pictures were vivid leaving a heightened imagination as to what it might look like on a much larger scale as in this second plague. The first plague on Egypt was one which turned the Nile River to blood.

The vial held by the third angel was also a blood plague but this one attacked the fresh water (Verse 4). Following this plague an angel gives an explanation. The words of the angel are like a hearty amen speaking of the righteousness of God in sending this plague. These who are being contaminated by the blood of the rivers and springs are the ones who caused the blood to flow from the saints and prophets. Perhaps the sound is heard on the earth and perhaps it is the sounds of worship in heaven.

The Bible speaks of man reaping the harvest of his own actions. Weirsbe notes that Pharaoh tried to drown Jewish baby boys, but it was his army that drowns in the Red Sea. Haman planned to hang Mordicai on the gallows and to exterminate the Jews; but he himself was hanged on the

gallows, and his family was exterminated. King Saul refused to obey God and slay the Amalekites, so he was slain by an Amalekite.

When the fourth angel poured out his vial in verse 8, an intense heat came upon the men who had received the mark of the beast. Although there is no corresponding plague in the Exodus account, there is a parallel response. Instead of responding in humility, the people with the mark of the beast experiencing the intense heat responded just as Pharaoh with a hard heart. John seems to be surprised that after four plagues directly from the will of God, men blasphemed God rather than repenting. Once again the pride of man stands between the blessings of the Lord and the condition of man.

Bowls of God's wrath have reached the earth, the sea, the rivers of the earth, and the sun. The fifth is poured out upon the throne of the beast causing darkness to come upon the kingdom. Some have suggested that darkness fell on all of those who had taken the mark. Others have asserted a sort of spiritual darkness. Whatever the case, there is a direct attack on Satan. His kingdom has always been one of darkness but now it reaches a new low. It is likely these plagues come in rapid succession and are cumulative. The pain of the sores are continuing to have their intended consequences upon the people. No doubt there is anarchy on the earth. With a contaminated water supply and a dead sea worldwide, distrust of government and anxiety has reached extreme levels. The pain of the events is so severe at this point that people begin to gnaw upon their own tongues. Even so, to John's amazement, they did not repent and give God glory.

The sixth bowl is poured out upon the Euphrates River sometimes referred to in ancient times as the great Euphrates River. This river has sometimes served as a protection for Israel making attacks more difficult. When God's wrath is poured upon the Euphrates it dries up. The intent is to set the stage for a gathering of the armies of the world to facilitate what appears to be the climax of human history when the forces of evil come full circle into a battle with the forces of good. Although the Euphrates is a major river of the Middle East, it has little barrier to the assembling of armies in modern warfare. In the second Gulf war, US Troops were back and forth across this river in amphibious ships as well as temporary bridges. Perhaps there is symbolism here of a new kind of partnership to emerge between the nations of the world with a breaking down of the barriers by the hand of God even in evil empires.

A Short Interlude

John's eyes are taken from the pouring of the bowls to the response of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet in verse 13. John is giving a heavenly perspective of the events but pauses to give a glimpse of the response of the kingdom of Satan. Three unclean spirits like frogs come from their mouths. Spirits coming from their mouths must be a reference to them speaking. Frogs have long been associated with evil in the ancient world. One of the plagues on Egypt was that of frogs. These evil spirits from their mouths were effective in bringing the armies of the world together "for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty."

The interlude also includes a flashback warning to believers. In the parables concerning the end times Jesus continually exhorted his hearers to be ready at all times. His coming will be quick, certain, and unexpected. Verse 15 gives the same warning including a call to keep themselves clothed so they would not be exposed as naked. This is certainly a call to be robed in the righteousness of Christ.

Finally John tells of the location of the gathering of the kings of the world. He refers to it as a place called in the Hebrew, Har-Magedon. From those words Bible interpreters have concluded several ideas. The most popular among dispensationalist, put a definite location of the battle at a place called Megiddo. This valley is located in the Middle East and has been the place of many great battles. It was connected to Deborah and Barak's overthrow of Sisera in Judges 5:19-21. Ahaziah was wounded nearby and died in Megiddo (2 Kings 9:27). Josiah died there at the hands of Pharaoh Neco according to 2 Kings 23:29. Napoleon called this valley "the most natural battlefield in the whole earth." One problem is the interpretation of the name Har-magedon. First it is given as a Hebrew name and not a Greek name. Second, the Har means hill or mountain and while there is a levy at Megiddo there is no mountain.

Others have insisted this battle will take place in Rome and the drying of the River is simply to allow easy passage of the armies to surround the city of Rome. One major problem with all these interpretations is the geographical capabilities of sustaining armies of this magnitude even long enough to prepare the battle field. It appears to be a logistical impossibility to sustain the troops. It is likely that there will be a great battle and that battle in either Jerusalem or Rome with other battles scattered around various parts of the globe. Rome is the more likely interpretation given the intended recipients of the original writing and the future references to Babylon which is known as code language for Rome. The battle is certainly symbolic of the final battle between the forces of Satan and the forces of God.

The Seventh Plague

With the kings of the world set in place, the seventh vial is emptied into the sky prompting a loud voice from the temple to declare, "It is done." Surely this brings to mind Jesus words from the cross "It is finished." At the pouring of the final bowl, a light show is seen in the heavens, loud sounds of thunder reverberate across the earth, and a terrifying earthquake literally shakes the earth. This mighty earthquake is on a scale never experienced before, even though in times just previous to this day, many earthquakes have gripped the earth. Cities around the world feel the devastation from this quake but the great city is split into three parts.

Verse 19 highlights the final object of the wrath of God, Babylon. As we have noted previously, Babylon was the central pagan city of the Persian Empire. It was Babylon that mixed the religions of the world and seduced the Israelites to worship pagan gods. Her name is a code name for Rome among first century Christians. The name goes further in Revelation to represent

Satan's many systems of deceiving individuals and nations to gain their allegiance and ultimately their worship. God's fiercest wrath is reserved for Babylon and is yet to come.

The results of the earthquake are devastating. Mountains that once stood tall will be leveled and Islands will simply disappear. The Japan earthquake of 2011 caused the Island to move 17 feet into the Pacific Ocean and people all over the globe stand in amazement. But on this day, Islands will disappear into the sea that is like coagulated blood. In addition to the earthquake, the sky opened up and released hailstones weighing up to and over 100 pounds. In a recent experiment on the weather channel, broadcasters poured a set of pool balls from a third story balcony onto a car. The results were broken windows and a severely beat up trunk. The impact would have caused great physical harm to humans. A full set of 15 pool balls will weigh less than 15 pounds. One can only begin to imagine the pain and injury inflicted by hail stones weighing 100 pounds. Death and carnage are all over the earth. Buildings that did not fall in the quake will certainly suffer greatly from the hail.

God's wrath will result in extermination of evil from the earth. Even under the intense pressure of earthquakes, war, and large hail stones, men continue to choose to blaspheme the name of God. God is giving men everywhere ample opportunity to repent yet over and over their hearts become hard just as did the heart of Pharaoh.