

“The Seven Bowls (Chap. 16)”

INTRODUCTION

Back in 11:14 John writes, *“The second woe has passed; the third woe is coming soon.”* Thus, the seven seals and seven trumpets are now followed by seven drinking bowls full of wrath. So far in Revelation, we can view God’s judgement in two ways: in one sense it is an attempt to harvest believers in Christ, in another sense it is God’s holy wrath poured out on those who have rejected Him. As God promised Israel, so it comes to pass: *“If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve”* (Leviticus 26:21).

NOTES ON CHAPS. 16

1. There are many similarities in the sets of seal, trumpet and **bowl** judgements in Revelation, but the similarities are most evident in the trumpet and bowl judgements, which seem to mirror the 10 plagues on Egypt in Exodus 7-11. But they are different in that the trumpets bring destruction to a third of the earth, and the bowls bring destruction to the whole earth.
2. The **“great river Euphrates”** formed the eastern border of the promised land God granted to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 15:18). It was also the eastern border of the Roman Empire. In the time Revelation was written, the Romans greatly feared invasion across the Euphrates from the Parthian Empire.
3. Most interpreters feel that the **“kings from the East”** (v.12) are included among, but not identical with, the **“kings of the whole world”** in v.14. Perhaps these are Parthian rulers who will overthrow Babylon the Great (cf. 17:15-18:24).
4. **Armageddon** is a Greek translation of the Hebrew name *Har-Megiddo* or “mountain of Megiddo.” Megiddo is the site of an ancient city in central Israel that commanded a pass between the coastal plain and the valley of Esdraelon. Because of its strategic importance, it was the site of many famous battles from 1468 BC to 1917 AD. Some interpret this passage literally, but others think this reference to Israel’s greatest battlefield symbolizes the final overthrow of evil in the world. Nothing is mentioned about the battle itself until 19:17-21.
5. Levitical laws classify the **frog** as unclean. Most feel this isn’t meant to describe an actual occurrence, but to symbolize how the beasts’ deceptive propaganda will, in the last days, lead people to accept and support the cause of evil and join its battle against God. It is also interesting to note the connection to the plague of frogs in Exodus.
6. 16:15 is the third of seven **beatitudes** (“blessed are...”) in Revelation. Note the similarities with the parables Jesus tells in Luke 12: 35-40 and Matthew 25:1-13.
7. **The great city, Babylon the Great** - which is described in greater detail in chaps. 17-18 - is thought by some to be Jerusalem, others Rome, others a future great city called Babylon which will rise in the last days, and others as a symbol for all civilized people who rebel against God.
8. **Earthquakes and hailstones**, in Revelation and throughout the Bible, are associated

with God's judgement and wrath. It is interesting to note that these events are described as the like people have never seen before.

QUESTIONS:

1. In light of the crimes of humanity (16:4-7) and the people's response to the plagues (16:9, 11, 21), are the bowls of wrath, horrible as they are, perfectly just?
2. Why is the third beatitude in 16:15 so relevant in the context of this chapter? How is this promise of Jesus relevant to your life?
3. What does it mean to be "watchful" for Jesus' Second Coming? Does studying Revelation help us to do that?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Compare the Plagues of Egypt (Exodus 7:14-11:9) to the "trumpets" and "bowls" plagues of Revelation. You might even want to make a three column chart to help you see similarities. Why do you think God planned the plagues of Egypt to foreshadow those of the last days? How is mankind's reaction similar to Pharaoh's (Exodus 7:22; 8:15, 19)?
2. Compare Revelation 16:15 to Luke 12:35-48 and Matthew 25:1-13. How can you apply this truth to your life even now?