

## **THE SEVEN BOWLS JUDGMENTS OF GOD** **Revelations 16:1-21**

### **THE FIRST BOWL JUDGMENT: GRIEVOUS SORES. Revelation 16:1-2**

The dramatic events which are about to unfold begin as God speaks from the temple and commands the seven angels to *"Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God."* These seven vial judgments are the last of three sets of judgments God brings upon the earth and ends with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the judgments God's has previously brought upon the earth have become progressively worse and the vial judgments far exceed the severity of the Seal and Trumpet judgments. The vial judgments appear to come in rapid succession as the descriptions of them are brief. In time they could come in the span of a few weeks or months.

The first plague which is poured upon the earth comes as grievous sores that will be ulcers or abscesses of the skin. The sores are called "noisome," which means to annoy, vex or be troublesome. This is the only place in the King James Bible this word is translated as "noisome." Elsewhere it is translated, "bad" or "evil" and describes "a foul and angry sore," meaning that the sores ran and were malignant. To be sure they will be most painful and everyone who has the mark of the beast will be infected by them. Those that have not received the mark of the beast are free of this sore, which plainly shows that God is the source of this plague and is bringing judgment on those who denied God and worshiped the image of the Antichrist.

### **THE SECOND BOWL JUDGMENT: THE SEAS ARE SMITTEN. Revelation 16:3**

This second plague seems to be like the first plague that God brought upon Egypt, in that the waters are turned to blood. (Exodus 7:20-25) It can be translated "like (as) the blood of a dead man," meaning the waters will be red and foul. It could mean that the water in the seas became in appearance "like" the rotten blood of a dead person and not actually human blood. Whatever it is it kills everything in the seas. In the earlier judgments which affected the sea, God left part of the life there alive, but now all living fish and animals are killed. Can we imagine the panic and fear that this causes upon the people of the earth, yet it has little effect in bringing men to Christ. The majority of those left alive refuse to turn to God and instead look to the Antichrist for help.

### **THE THIRD BOWL JUDGMENT: THE RIVERS ARE SMITTEN. Revelation 16:4-7**

In this judgment the rivers and water supplies of all the earth are also turned to blood. The angel then states that God is just in judging this way because those effected had killed the saints and prophets of God. They shed the blood of the saints and now they only have blood to drink. Another angel at the altar in the temple praises God for being true and righteous in His judgments.

Today there is little fear of God among men and many think very little of God's true and uncompromising preachers who preach God's word and stand for God's truth. False

religious leaders are generally held in high esteem and have a cult like following. These false preachers whom Jesus referred to as “hirelings” seek the praise of men and misuse God’s institution of the church to their advantage (John 10:13-14, Titus 1:11). Throughout history God has always send his preachers to proclaim His truth and for the most part they have been treated badly and many have suffered and given their very lives in being God’s messengers. In 1 Chronicles 16:22 and Psalms 105:15 God warned, *“Touch not my anointed.”* Yet sinful men, who would not tolerate God in their lives, will also not tolerate God’s men who proclaim His word and warn of the consequences of sin. Hebrews 11:32-40 God gives them the tribute they are due saying:

*“. . .of the prophets: Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”*

Surely those who have killed and persecuted the messengers of God have no understanding of the truth that God will not long tolerate such behavior. As sure as is the truth of God’s grace, is the truth also of His judgment. Many Christians miss the blessings of God and suffer greatly, because they do not fear God’s wrath and judgment of sin. Many become sick and some are even in the grave prematurely because of their unconfessed sin. (See 1 Cor. 11:27-31, 1 John 2:19, 5:16)

Those upon whom this judgment is poured out are the one’s who murdered those who believed and received Jesus Christ as their Savior during the prior years of the Tribulation. These are the ones who are caught up in the blood lust of the Antichrist. They made war against God’s saints and beheading those that preached the Gospel including the 144,000 saved Jews. (See Rev. 13:7, 14:1-5)

In 1962, while in the military I was stationed at Munich, southern Germany. My wife and I visited the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau which was ten miles northwest of the city. This was only sixteen years after the death camp was liberated. I was shocked at the horror seeing the place where 200,000 men, women and children were murdered and their bodies callously disposed of by burning them in ovens. Dachau was a beautiful little Bavarian town and the Germany people appeared friendly and peaceful. As we rode our bicycles through the town the thought came to my mind that some of these people probably worked in the camp and they knew of the atrocities that were being done on the edge of their town. They certainly could smell the stench of burning flesh coming from the furnaces. The thought has haunted me all these years that ordinary men and women

could have degraded to such a state as to heartlessly carry out the carnage of murdering tens of thousands of people. Yet, it helps in understanding that in the Tribulation the slaughter of believers will be done by ordinary people who put aside all human compassion and in mass carry out the butchery ordered by the Antichrist and his false prophet. How evil and depraved is the heart of a man who rebels against His God and Creator.

#### **THE FOURTH BOWL JUDGMENT: THE SUN'S POWER IS UNSHIELDED. Revelation 16:8-9**

Many times it is said that if men only could see the power of God at work they would turn from their sins unto Him. In Chapter 14 God sent His angel who preached the everlasting Gospel to all men who dwell on the earth. Every nation, kindred, tongue and people heard the Gospel of God's offer of grace and mercy to all who would believe. Yet, most men, lovers of their sin and in their ugly pride turned a deaf ear to God's love and chose instead to worship Satan. These, as well as the other judgments which demonstrate the power of God, show this is only wishful thinking. Even as the sun's power is released on earth with the effect that men are scorched by its heat they refuse to repent and turn to the Lord. Even as the fire burns their living bodies in a foretaste of hell fire they do not cry out in repentance to God, but blaspheme even God's very name. (See Malachi 4:1-2, Luke 16:27-31)

#### **THE FIFTH BOWL JUDGMENT: DARKNESS POURED ON THE SEAT OF THE BEAST. Revelation 16:10-11**

Each judgment is rapidly heaped one on the other and the sufferings of sinful men grow to a terrible state. The fifth judgment is poured directly upon the throne of the beast, the false prophet, and there is a great darkness. This judgment adds to the torment of those who have rejected God and they are now in terrible suffering from the accumulated effects of the first five judgments. All over the world the power that lights our cities and homes will cease to flow. Darkness in the Bible always symbolizes sin, death and Satan. This significance of darkness being poured on the headquarters of the beast clearly indicates that God is exposing the false religious leader as Satan's man. Men turned to him for their salvation. They put their faith in the government of the Antichrist as being able to bring peace and provide for them the necessities of life, but in the catastrophic event they see the futility of the Antichrist to provide even light. God shows the whole world that light and power come only from Him. Still men do not repent of their sins and in the face of the awesome power God continue to blaspheme the Lord. William Newell said, "Men who will not be won by the Grace of God will not be won at all."

#### **THE SIXTH BOWL JUDGMENT: PREPARATION FOR ARMAGEDDON. Revelation 16:12-16**

*"And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the*

*spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon” (Rev. 16:12-16).*

The Euphrates River forms the ancient eastern border of the Roman Empire and also the northern border of the land God has promised to Israel. One can only take this prophecy in its literal sense that this great river will be dried up and in turn this will cause the way for the invasion of the Oriental nations to begin their march into Palestine for the battle of Armageddon. John in verse 12 says "I saw." It is a clear statement that what John saw will literally happen. The Eastern kings, such as China and India have in recent history become powerful nations. It is predicted that India's population will exceed that of China. Another interesting statistic is because of forced abortions in China for every 117 boys born in 2002, there were only 100 girls born. If this trend continues," author Yan Tai stated, "China will have up to 40 million more men than women by 2020."<sup>1</sup> Every nation east of Palestine are pagan nations who today hate and oppose God, Christians and God's people the Jews. It appears that at this time in the Great Tribulation, they rise up together and join forces to do battle with God Himself.

John also sees demons, which are like frogs come out of the mouth of the Anti-christ, the beast and the false prophet. These demons called "spirits of devils" do miracles and their power impresses the nations of the earth who then join with them to do battle with God Himself. These frog-like demons go forth over the earth to gather the nations to this great battle with the intent of destroying Israel which can only be seen as a direct attack against God. This event has a spiritual dimension as these demons work "miracles" which somehow will bring these nations together. This battle will be literally fought by these Eastern nations against Israel and the forces of the Antichrist.

The use of the word "battle" is somewhat misleading in that a battle would normally be thought of as one engagement. (See Daniel 11:40-45) This is more than one action and should more correctly be seen as a war, having many battles. Russia will first attack as recorded in Ezekiel 38-39 and are defeated by the Antichrist. This is followed by a rebellion in the South which will probably include Egypt and some African nations and then this is followed by the invasion of the Eastern Armies.

It would seem that in the beginning of this war the nations of the earth rebel against the Anti-christ and seek to overthrow him. However, by the end of the war, just before Christ returns, they join forces to fight against their common perceived foe the Son of God.

The nations first begin to battle among themselves and then suddenly they learn of the coming of Christ and they turn to attack Him. Matthew 24:29-30, states there will be

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<sup>1</sup> The Illinois Leader, "STANEK: Abortion and Armageddon, Wednesday, March 24, 2004 By Jill Stanek , <http://www.illinoisleader.com/news/newsview.asp?c=13334>.

visible signs of the Coming of Christ in the air. (See Acts 1:11)

In Revelation 16:15, God sends a message to the believers who still remain alive on earth. He stresses that the Second Coming of Christ is now only a short time away and those who have not defiled themselves should continue to keep themselves pure so they will have the protection of God at His Second Coming.

The word "Armageddon" is Hebrew, and in Greek is "Megiddo." It means "Mount of Slaughter" and geographically it is referring to the plain of Megiddo or the Jezreel Valley which is in northwest Palestine, and to the west of the greater Plain of Esdraelon. Here many great battles have been fought. Here was fought the great battle of Israel against Barak, (Judges 4) and later Gideon won the victory over the Midianites (Judges 7). Saul and Josiah were both killed there in battle. The actual size 14 miles long and 20 miles wide, which would not be large enough for all the armies of the world. It would appear that this is the central point in the war.

### **THE SEVENTH AND FINAL BOWL JUDGMENT: DESTRUCTION OVER ALL THE EARTH. Revelation 16:17-21**

The effects of the seventh judgment which is poured into the air are catastrophic. God speaks from the throne and says, "*It is done.*" The final judgment is poured into the air and totally encompasses the whole of the earth. The resulting thunder, lightning and earthquakes are the greatest the earth will ever see.

It is not clear immediately clear what city is being referred to in verse 19. The city it seems is a literal city in that it is destroyed by an earthquake and breaks into three sections. The title "the great city" is used ten times in the book of Revelation. It is first used in Revelation 11:8 to refer to Jerusalem "the holy city" (Rev. 11:2) where the two witnesses are killed and lie in the street. The name is also used of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:10. The term is also used of Babylon in Revelation 14:8. (Also see Rev. 18:10, 16, 18, 19, and 21) The key is found in Revelation 17:18, where the angel of 17:7 reveals the mystery as to the identity of the characters of verses 17:1-6.

The angel explains "*And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.*" (Revelation 17:18) The context is a description of "MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Rev. 17:5) Thus the great city is seen as a symbolically a reference to Babylon. Babylon has always symbolically referred to false religion, gross sin and wickedness and is applied here to the Antichrist's ten nation confederacy which reigned over the kings of the earth.

The verse further identifies the city as Babylon as God now "remembers" this evil city. Here it maybe that God's attention is directed specifically to Rome and the Vatican who has lied for centuries claiming to represent Christ on earth. The great sinful city finally receives the full blunt of the fierce wrath of God. The effects of this judgment extend all

over the earth and are of such severity that every island in the sea and even the mountains were completely wiped away. It helps our understanding to realize that almost every nation on earth has Roman Catholic churches and it is the dominate religion of many countries. Therefore the destruction of the Roman Catholic Church will be worldwide. Protestantism also could be in view as it is based on Roman Catholicism and has always held to many of its false religious practices and beliefs. The ultimate scope of this judgment will be directed towards all false religions worldwide who as Paul states, *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.”* (Romans 1:21-23)

John sees great hail stones of about a hundred pounds in weight (a talent), begin to fall on men. However, these evil and rebellious men with their last dying breath blasphemed God because of the plague of hail. How truly evil is the human heart and how ugly is blind pride that would rather spend eternity in hell rather than submit to their loving and gracious Creator.

The humanists and false religions of today hold the morality of man in high regard, while ignoring the great evil inhumanity of men against one another and against God. Nowhere in the Bible do you see what sinful man truly is apart from God, and more graphically, than in this final description of the judgments of God at the end of the Great Tribulation. Man apart from God is a depraved, evil and pitiful creature who hates his Creator and would destroy even God if he could. His nature is that of his master Satan, whom he serves. It is no wonder man can degraded himself to such an evil state. Remember that during this time the restraining work of the Holy Spirit will not be operative. The Holy Spirit will not be holding back Satan and his demons and he will have almost a free hand in his destructive plans. God the Holy Spirit will not be restraining Satan, his demons, or those that follow him. Without God’s constraint sinful men will on a world wide scale mimicking the depravity of Satan.