# Seven Bowls of Revelation 16

As Part of the Final Judgment--Pastor Emeritus Joe Fuiten, June 10, 2020

**“The Voice” authorizes final judgment**

*1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth." 2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image*.

 What is striking in this passage is the similarity between what happens here and what happened to the Egyptians at the time of the Exodus.

*So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The word used in the Septuagint, in reference to the boils that were the sixth plague brought upon the Egyptians, is the same as what is used by John. The same point is being made. An oppressor of the soul has been operating but his days are over. These plagues are designed to show that God is the sovereign of the universe, not the imposter who has been the center of attention until now. Just as the magicians could not stand before Moses, so now the worshippers of the beast and his image cannot stand before the Lord and his people. The ugly sores do their work. This is a herpes outbreak times 10. It is ugly and it is painful. They have worshipped the beast and now they get the beast’s reward.

**All water is turned to blood as punishment for killings like Egypt’s plagues**

*3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died. 4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 5 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; 6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." 7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."*

 In this passage there are two ideas. First we have the judgment itself. The water is turned to blood. The two angels double-team the water both at its sources and in its destination. As a result there is wholesale death in the waters. Once again, the similarity between this and the Egyptian judgment is quite clear. God is consistent and reliable both in the good that he does and in the judgment that he gives. This is the second idea. God is just. The angel himself notes that God is the one who was and who is. What he was back then, he still is today. In the case of Pharaoh, he had extracted labor and blood from the backs of the Hebrews. God paid him back with blood to drink. Here the angel informs us that God will repeat the matter. The beast has killed saints and prophets alike. That is, he didn’t just begin with God’s people in the Christian era, but has been persecuting the righteous from the beginning. The “prophets” represent those of the Old Testament era who were persecuted.

 It is curious that a response comes from the “altar.” Since the dialogue is taking place in heaven, this must be the altar that is in the temple in heaven. In that case, it is the altar of incense, the place of prayers. The place of prayer agrees with the actions of God.

**Turning up the heat**

*8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. 9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him*.

 The fourth and fifth bowls contrast with each other. The beast has glorified and deified the forces of nature. One too many times the religious environmentalists have glorified the sun’s impact upon the earth. They have rejoiced in “mother nature” one time too many. She is said to bless the people and to provide for their needs. Now, at the direction of Father God, “mother nature” burns the subjects who worship creation more than the Creator.

 This is more than a hole in the ozone or global warming. This is a hole in divine protection. God lifts the protection he normally has over all people and lets the plague in. He still hopes they will repent when they know that a God in heaven truly governs all the earth. However, these are rebels. They are so committed to their environmentalism and worship of mankind and the earth that they will not convert. They remain committed to the pagan ways.

**Darkness upon the beast’s kingdom**

*10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony 11 and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done*.

 If the fourth angel brings too much sun, the fifth angel closes it down. Once again, the Egypt’s 9th plagues is repeated. This plague seems aimed at the leader himself. He is so proud of his fake kingdom of enlightenment. When God turns off the power, it is exposed for what it is, darkness.

 Again we are reminded that God’s goal is repentance. If they see his power and his kingdom compared to the kingdoms of this world they will surely repent. But they do not!

**Demons draw politicians to fight against God**

*12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. 13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. 15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." 16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon*.

 The sixth angel is preparing for Armageddon. If the Euphrates stands in the way, it will be dried up. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet team up to deceive the hard-hearted leaders of the world and bring them to the great battle. The location is probably near Raqqa where ISIS had their capitol and where there has been known occultic activity since the time of Abraham. Politicians are constantly under demonic attack to lead them astray. Consider the horror unleashed by Roe v. Wade, and the flood of pornography pouring over our land under the guise of freedom of speech. The present crisis of unlawful police action against blacks and the state and local government’s reaction to it are examples of lawlessness at many levels. In this case, it is an example of demonic activity within government to foster lawlessness and rebellion against God. This activity takes place passively as a “doctrine of demons” and actively by the direct deception of political leaders. This is why we are taught to “pray for kings and those that are in authority.”[[2]](#footnote-2) God uses the prayers of his people as the releasing agent to close gaps in the hedge that protects government officials. Without that shield of prayer, they become increasingly vulnerable to attack. The vulnerability may be multiplied because many government officials also lead ungodly lives. However, like the unjust judge moved by the persistence of the widow, even ungodly government officials can be protected from the tragic results of demonic influence. The only known mechanism for this is by the prayers of Christians.

In my series on Israel on February 22, 2017 detailing the nature of lawlessness and included Seattle in my description. You can see it or read the notes online at nwcreation.net not far from where the Revelation notes are kept. It is timely as it relates to this passage and the current crisis.

**The earth’s cities destroyed by earthquake and hail**

*17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. 19 The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. 21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible*.

In the first verse, the loud voice said, “go.” Here it says the task is completed. As a finale to God’s fireworks from the sky, he sent a terrible earthquake upon the earth. It was greater than every earthquake before it.

The impact of the quake is to split Babylon and crush the cities of the earth. The effect is so severe that islands disappear and mountains sink or have their tops blown off. It is more than a quake because the sky and atmosphere are affected. Giant hailstones indicate updrafts of moist air. Hail was the 7th plague against Egypt.

 An interesting question from Revelation is why Babylon appears more in this one book than in the rest of the New Testament combined. Only here is it described as a present reality. Rev 14:8 has "*Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great, which made all the nations drink the maddening wine of her adulteries*." The woman riding the scarlet beast in Rev 17:5 has “*This title was written on her forehead: MYSTERY BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*.” Rev 18:2 has "*Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird*.” Rev 18:9-10 says "*When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry: "'Woe! Woe, O great city, O Babylon, city of power! In one hour your doom has come!*’” In Rev 18:21 we have this: “*Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: "With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again*.”

 First, Babylon is used here as a code for Rome rather than for itself. When John wrote Revelation, Babylon still existed but it was not a city of great consequence. Rome however, was the central city of the world and the seat of the anti-Christian persecuting power. It was Rome, not Babylon which was killing Christians. Tertullian writing around 200 AD said, “*So, again, Babylon, in our own John, is a figure of the city Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints*.” (Vol. 3, chapter 9). The Christians of John’s time understood Babylon to be Rome whose king was the devil. It was the power that had killed the prophets of old and was now killing them. Babylon is the evil empire of the devil now taking the form of Rome.

 Second, Babylon is a summary term for all the kingdoms of this world. Remember that Revelation references the Old Testament at least once per verse on average. Daniel interpreted the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the statue destroyed by the rock. There would be four kingdoms of which Babylon was the head of gold and the greatest. You could say that Babylon represented the four kingdoms of man and the devil standing in contrast to the kingdom of Christ which is to come.

 Augustine quoted Isaiah 14 to show the Bible regards the devil as the king of Babylon: “*And how do they answer the prophetic proofs,-either what Isaiah says when he represents the devil under the person of the king of Babylon, "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!’”* The devil’s fall from rule in Revelation is the fall of Babylon*.* Later Augustine called Rome, “*another Babylon in the west*.” *“…when Abraham was born, which was about the 1200th year before Rome was founded, as it were another Babylon in the west”* (Vol. 3, Ch. 17). In “City of God” Augustine said *“…Babylon, like a first Rome, ran its course along with the city of God, which is a stranger in this world. But the things proper for insertion in this work in comparing the two cities, that is, the earthly and heavenly, ought to be taken mostly from the Greek and Latin kingdoms, where Rome herself is like a second Babylon*.” Later he added “….*the city of Rome was rounded, like another Babylon, and as it were the daughter of the former Babylon,…*” He called Rome, the “western Babylon” and its persecutors “*adversaries of the city of God who belong to Babylon*.”

 I have mentioned Irenaeus several times recently as being the disciple of Polycarp who was discipled by John. Irenaeus is essentially John’s spiritual grandson using John as his authority for authentic interpretations against the heretics. In Book 5, chapter 26 he notes that both John and Daniel predicted the “*Dissolution and Desolation of the Roman Empire, Which Shall Precede the End of the World and the Eternal Kingdom of Christ.*” He begins section 1 like this “*In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel*…” If the Apostle John and the Prophet Daniel are tied together, then the earthly system of governance starting with Babylon can be called Babylon whether it is actually Medo-Persian, Greek, or Roman. **So in Revelation, the fall of Babylon is the fall of the earthly kingdoms at the coming of Christ’s kingdom.**

1. Exodus 9:10-11 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 1 Timothy 2:1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)