

The Last Days

An In-Depth Study of Biblical Eschatology

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

“Write ... what will take place later” – Revelation 4-22

Revelation 16 *The Bowl Judgements*

Chapters 16, 17, 18 are God's response to “Who can make war against [the beast]?” Revelation 13:4

The Worst Days Ever on Earth (16:1-12)

16:1 The loud voice from the temple^{Revelation 11:19} was probably Jesus (God the Son), who ordered the start of the last set of judgements (“the seven bowls”) containing His wrath^{Leviticus 26:21} on both individuals^{Ezekiel 22:31} and nations^{Zephaniah 3:8} who have been defiantly against Him and His people^{Psalms 79:5-7, Jeremiah 10:25}. However, the Lord’s heart would much prefer to pour out love^{Romans 5:5} and grace^{1 Timothy 1:14} on the faithful.

16:2 First Bowl Judgement: Those who had the mark of the beast^{Revelation 13:16-18} and worshipped his image^{Revelation 13:14-15, 14:9-11} were afflicted with horrible sores (same Greek word as the 6th Plague on Egypt^{Exodus 9:8-12}, Satan’s affliction on Job^{Job 2:7} and Lazarus’ plight^{Luke 16:19-21}). In the OT “blessings for obedience” and “curses for disobedience”, sores were prophesied as a curse for disobedience^{Deuteronomy 28:27,35}.

The next two plagues complete the partial (1/3) devastation of the 1st and 2nd Trumpet Judgements^{Revelation 8:8-9,10-11}. They also are an expansion of the 1st Plague of Egypt^{Exodus 7:17-21}, because God turned both the fresh water to blood^{v.4}, as in Egypt, but also the salt water^{v.3}.

16:3 Second Bowl Judgement: The “sea” (salt water) turned to blood^{Revelation 11:6}, killing all sea life. The misery of this plague will result from both the the dead sea life and the blood like a corpse, which would be thick, coagulated and dark.

16:4 Third Bowl Judgement: The “rivers & springs” (fresh water) turned into blood, making all fresh water unusable. The lack of clean water not only produced a suffering from thirst^{Psalms 78:44}, but also an absence of water to wash or soothe the sores^{v.2}.

These two curses also resulted in a sudden, significant decrease in the world's food supply.

16:5-7 The third angel also exclaimed Jesus is and was eternal^{Revelation 1:4,8, 4:8, 11:17} and holy^{Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8}, and His judgements are just^{Psalms 33:5, Revelation 15:3-4}. Mankind has the privilege to “drink” the atoning blood of Jesus^{Leviticus 17:11, John 6:53-57}, but God forces those people to drink the blood of His wrath^{Isaiah 49:26, Ezekiel 16:38} who have shed the blood of His servants^{Luke 11:47-51, Revelation 6:9, 11:7-10, 17:6, 18:24}. And the personified altar (possibly the souls of the 5th Seal^{Revelation 6:9-11}) echoed God’s justice.

16:8-9 Fourth Bowl Judgement: The fourth angel gave the sun the power to scorch people with fire. The Bible speaks of fire being used to refine believers ^{1 Corinthians 3:10-15}, as a general instrument of judgement ^{2 Kings 1:10,12, Isaiah 66:15-16, Luke 9:54} and as a central characteristic of the eternal judgement ^{Matthew 18:8-9, 25:41}. In this bowl judgement, God used the sun in a much more extreme way than in the 6th Seal ^{Revelation 6:12-13} and the 4th Trumpet judgements ^{Revelation 8:12}. The heat intensified the effects of the sores ^{v.2} and the blood ^{v.3-4}; however, even though they all knew the plagues were from God, they did not repent and actually arrogantly cursed God ^{Revelation 2:20-23, 6:15-17, 16:10-11,21}. This judgement was a fulfillment of an OT prophecy ^{Malachi 4:1}.

The earliest form of paganism was sun worship, which originated on the plain of Shinar.

The defiant, unsaved people had 'K' (knowledge) & 'A' (acceptance), but did not have 'T' (trust).

"It is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man." - Albert Einstein

16:10-11 Fifth Bowl Judgement: The angel poured the fifth bowl on the throne of the beast (the Antichrist, an agent of Satan ^{Revelation 13:2}, and perhaps this throne is the one in Pergamum ^{Revelation 2:13}), resulting in complete darkness (similar to the 9th Plague of Egypt ^{Exodus 10:21-23} – a "felt darkness", and the expansion of the 6th Seal ^{Revelation 6:12} and the 4th Trumpet judgements ^{Revelation 8:12}). This type of darkness was prophesied many times in Scripture ^{Ezekiel 32:7-8, Amos 5:18-20}. The combination of complete darkness, pain ^{v.3,4,8-9} & sores ^{v.2} compelled the people to gnaw their tongues in agony ^{Matthew 25:30} (the way tongues are used is a reflection of a person's character ^{Proverbs 15:4, James 3:5-10}). The people continued to curse God and refused to repent, because of pride/hatred ^{v.9}. Sores ^{v.2} and darkness ^{v.10-11} are used here to indicate a great spiritual illness and blindness. Leprosy (sores) models sin: (1) it is deeper than the skin ^{Leviticus 13:3}, (2) it spreads ^{Leviticus 13:5-8}, (3) it defiles & isolates ^{Leviticus 13:42-46}, (4) it produces things only fit for the fire ^{Leviticus 13:47-52}. Complete darkness is symbolic of being blind, and blindness is also a model of sin ^{John 9:35-41}.

16:12 Sixth Bowl Judgement: The "sixth angel poured out his bowl" on the "great river Euphrates" ^{Genesis 15:18, Deuteronomy 1:7, Revelation 9:14} (signifying the eastern boundary of the Promised Land ^{Deuteronomy 11:24, Joshua 1:4}). The river was "dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East" (some or all of the kings ^{Revelation 19:19} heading for the 'battle' of Armageddon ^{v.14,16}). The Euphrates River was the third body of water God dried up for His set purposes ^{Isaiah 11:15}; the first two were the Red Sea ^{Exodus 14:21-22} and the Jordan River ^{Joshua 3:14-17}.

The Last Interlude: *Armageddon and One Last Plea* (16:13-16)

16:13-14 Three demonic (unclean/impure ^{Matthew 12:43, Mark 1:23, Luke 8:29}) spirits appeared like frogs (unclean animals ^{Leviticus 11:9-12,41}, like the 2nd Plague of Egypt ^{Exodus 8:1-14})

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The Last Days: 16 Revelation 16-17

out of the mouths of the satanic (or unholy) trinity (the dragon: Satan^{Revelation 12:3}, the beast/sea: Antichrist^{Revelation 13:1} and the beast/earth: False Prophet^{Revelation 13:11}). The "spirits of demons"^{1 Timothy 4:1} performed "miraculous signs"^{Mark 13:22, Revelation 13:13} and gathered kings/armies^{Revelation 19:19} to (foolishly^{Revelation 17:14, 20:7-9}) war against God; however, no one can stand against Him^{Psalms 2:1-6, Joel 2:11, Revelation 6:17}.

16:15 Jesus declared He would come to those in darkness^{1 Thessalonians 5:1-8, Revelation 3:1-3} as a "thief". He exhorted His followers they must be "dressed [and] ready"^{Luke 12:35-40} (clothed in Christ^{Romans 13:11-14} and righteousness/justice^{Job 29:14}, with the armor of God^{Ephesians 6:10-18}), and not be caught in a state of spiritual nakedness^{Revelation 3:17-18}. This is the third of the seven Revelation Beatitudes^{Revelation 1:3, 14:13, 16:15, 19:9, 20:6, 22:7,14}.

16:16 The 'war'^{Revelation 19:19-21} centered on^{Revelation 14:20} Mount Megiddo: *Har-Magedōn*.

The Conclusion of the Bowl Judgements (16:17-21)

16:17 Seventh Bowl Judgement: The 7th angel poured his judgement into the air, which 'was' the dominion of Satan^{Ephesians 2:1-2}. The loud voice of Jesus came from the throne^{v.1} to announce "It is done!", signifying the completion of the judgement of the earth and Israel's redemption^{Isaiah 48:20b, 63:9} (the 70 weeks of Daniel^{Daniel 9:24-27}), and the closeness of the Glorious Appearing of Jesus Christ^{Revelation 19:11-16}.

Three Biblical announcements proclaim the ends of specific judgements:

- † "It is finished.": judgement on sin^{John 19:30},
- † "It is done.": judgement of the earth and redemption of the Jews^{Revelation 16:17},
- † "It is done.": judgement of the rebellious angels and humans^{Revelation 21:6}.

16:18 Then came lightning and thunder^{Exodus 19:16-19, Jeremiah 10:12-13, Revelation 4:5, 11:13}, which express the presence and power of God (also part of the 7th Plague^{Exodus 9:22-26}). God also sent the worst earthquake of all time (completing the 6th Seal^{Revelation 6:12} and 7th Trumpet^{Revelation 11:19} judgements and fulfilling Ezekiel's prophecy^{Ezekiel 38:19-20}).

16:19-20 Jerusalem split in three parts (possibly a negative reference to the present-day Jewish, Christian and Muslim sections). The imagery indicates Jesus was preparing Jerusalem as the world's capital city in the Millennium^{Isaiah 2:2-4, Micah 4:6-8, Zechariah 14}, while other cities would be judged ('collapse'). The world systems will "drink the wine of God's fury"^{Revelation 14:10}, and (represented by Babylon, the "great city"^{Revelation 17:18}) are destroyed by His wrath^{Revelation 17-18} ("God remembered her crimes"^{Revelation 18:5}). Moreover, all islands were destroyed and the mountains leveled^{Isaiah 40:4, Jeremiah 4:23-27}. This was a completion of what was initiated in the 6th Seal judgement^{Revelation 6:12-14}.

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16:21 Finally, "about one hundred pound" (literally: a "talent", probably ~75 pounds) hailstones fell on mankind (possibly symbolic of the stoning punishment ^{Leviticus 24:13-16} for blasphemy), who continued cursing God ^{v.9,11}, because "the plague was so terrible" (as prophesied ^{Ezekiel 38:22}). The 7th Plague of Egypt ^{Exodus 9:22-26} and the 1st Revelation 8:7 and 7th Revelation 11:19 Trumpet judgements foreshadowed the worst of the hailstones.

Revelation 17 *The Destruction of Abominable Religion*

John's Vision: *The Woman Prostitute and the Beast* (17:1-6)

17:1 One of the Bowl judgement angels ^{Revelation 15:1, 21:9} took John to see the judgement ^{Jeremiah 51:11-14} (and condemnation ^{Revelation 19:1-3}) of the "great prostitute" sitting on "many waters". The "prostitute" is symbolic of apostate and pagan religions (founded on spiritual immorality: the world's systems ^{v.18} of religion ^{v.3-5}) and the "many waters" were the world's "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages" ^{v.15}. The "prostitute" ^{v.1,15,16} and the "woman" ^{v.3,4,6,7,9,18} refer to the same symbol/religious system. Many cities (e.g., Jerusalem ^{Isaiah 1:21, Ezekiel 16:30}, Tyre ^{Isaiah 23:17}, Nineveh ^{Nahum 3:1-4}) as well as nations (e.g., Israel ^{Jeremiah 3:6-9} and Judah ^{Jeremiah 2:20}) have been referred to as harlots.

17:2 John saw the prostitute in two adulterous relationships: (1) an immoral marriage between the world religious system (headed by the False Prophet ^{Revelation 13:11-17}) and the "kings of the earth" (political power headed by the Antichrist ^{Revelation 13:1-8}) and (2) spiritual adultery, committed by the "inhabitants of the earth" (unbelievers) who were "intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries" ^{Revelation 14:8, 18:3} (the sensual appeal of mind-numbing sin). Conversely, followers of God are called to be 'intoxicated' ("filled") with the Holy Spirit ^{Ephesians 5:18}.

17:3 John was taken "in the Spirit" ^{Revelation 1:10, 4:2, 21:10} by the angel ^{v.1} to see a "woman" (the "great prostitute" ^{v.1}) on a scarlet (luxury ^{Jeremiah 4:30, Revelation 18:12,16}, royalty ^{Matthew 27:28-29}) beast (the Antichrist, who used the world's religious systems to create a world unity) with blasphemous names (because he is a blasphemer who is against and wishes to replace Jesus Christ ^{Daniel 7:25, 11:36, 2 Thessalonians 2:4, Revelation 13:5-6}) (Antichrist's name or the number of his name is the mark of the beast ^{Revelation 13:16-18}) and 7 heads and 10 horns ^{Revelation 13:1} (political alliances ^{v.9-13}). In this context, the "desert" represented both a physical wasteland and a spiritual wasteland ^{Mark 1:12-13}, which was the spiritual condition of the religious system of the Antichrist/prostitute.

17:4 The affluent woman was adorned as a prostitute ^{Proverbs 7:10}, in lavish clothes and precious jewelry ^{Jeremiah 4:30, Revelation 18:16} (similar to Satan before his fall ^{Ezekiel 28:12-13}). The woman also held a gold cup ^{Jeremiah 51:7}, which symbolized her wealth and contained "abominable things" (her attitudes/actions against God) and her adulterous wine ^{v.2}.

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17:5 The title on her forehead was an obvious reference to who she was: a system of physical and spiritual prostitution known as "Babylon the Great" ^{Revelation 14:8, 16:19, 18:2}. A mystery is some portion of information that God has yet to reveal. The mystery of Babylon will be explained ^{v.7} by this ^{v.1} and "another" ^{Revelation 18:1} angel ^{in Revelation 17,18}. Spiritual immorality is an intimate relation with anybody or anything in a way that is counter to God's principles. Spiritual prostitution is spiritual immorality done for gain. The gain being power, wealth, pleasure or stature obtained from sources other than God. Therefore, spiritual immorality/prostitution is actually a general description of all sin ^{Exodus 20:1-17, Deuteronomy 5:6-21}.

17:6 The woman was a bloodthirsty murderer of "saints" (prophets ^{Revelation 18:24} and OT/NT saints ^{Revelation 16:6}) and those that testified about Jesus ^{Revelation 6:9}. John was astonished at the sight of her. (Was this the result of her using the label of Christianity to justify her bloodshed or was even John being deceived in some way ^{Matthew 24:24} ?)

The Interpretation of the Vision (17:7-18)

17:7 The angel questioned John about his astonishment and then assured John he would explain to him "the mystery of the woman and the beast" she rode.

17:8 When the Antichrist mimicked the life, death & resurrection of Jesus ^{Revelation 1:18} by being the one who "was, is not and yet will come" ^{Revelation 13:3, 12-14}, all the unsaved ("inhabitants of the earth") were deceived ^{Mark 13:21-22} into worshiping him ^{Revelation 13:8} (with the help of the False Prophet ^{Revelation 13:12}). The Antichrist initially rose out of the sea ^{Revelation 13:1} (his human ascension to power) and then out of the abyss ^{Revelation 11:7} (his demonic resurrection), but eventually he went to his destruction ^{2 Thessalonians 2:3} eternally in hell ^{Revelation 19:20}. Every unsaved person throughout world history, including the "inhabitants of the earth" during the Tribulation, do not have their names written in the Lamb's Book of Life ^{Revelation 20:12, 15} (a listing of all genuine children of God).

17:9 John emphasized heavenly wisdom ^{Mark 8:33, Revelation 13:18} was needed to interpret these passages. The seven hills represented seven kingdoms ^{v.10}, as well as what the adulterous woman was sitting on. Many scholars have concluded it to be Rome, because Rome is known as the city on seven hills, and John seems to use Babylon and Rome interchangeably in this chapter (as Peter did earlier ^{1 Peter 5:13}).

17:10 The seven kings are usually interpreted in terms of a series of empires: Those that were fallen: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece; the one that is: Rome; and one that has not yet come: United World under the Antichrist in the Tribulation (sometimes referred to as the resurgent Rome). The first two kingdoms (Egypt and Assyria) were already in the past when Daniel wrote his book, the next four kingdoms

The Last Days: 16 Revelation 16-17

(Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome) were seen/prophesied in Nebuchadnezzar's first dream (interpreted by Daniel ^{Daniel 2:36-45}) and in Daniel's first dream, in which the seventh kingdom (United World) was also prophesied ^{Daniel 7}.

17:11 The beast (the Antichrist) was initially a *worldly* king (the seventh king) who outwardly exhibited the image of a man of peace ^{Daniel 9:27a}, but in the middle of the Tribulation ^{Daniel 9:27b} he will reveal himself as "the man of lawlessness" ^{2 Thessalonians 2:1-4}. He will then act out his death and resurrection (from the Abyss ^{v.8}), and come back as a *demonic* king (the eighth king), prepared to martyr the followers of God ^{Revelation 11:7}, but will eventually receive his appropriate judgement of destruction ^{see notes on v.8 above}.

17:12-13 The ten horns ^{Revelation 12:3, 13:1} were symbolic of sub-rulers ("kings" ^{Daniel 7:24}, "toes" ^{Daniel 2:41-42}) who will "receive" (given) authority (along with the beast) to rule. However, these ten kings will only have a brief reign, symbolically called "one hour". The "one hour" ^{Revelation 18:10,17,19} probably relates to 3½ years ^{Revelation 12:6,14, 13:5}, exactly half of the Tribulation. Therefore, the ten kings will rule for the first half and the Antichrist for the second half of the Tribulation (Seventy Weeks of Daniel ^{Daniel 7:24b-25}).

17:14 As Satan attempted to do ^{Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19, Revelation 12:7-9}, the earthly rulers foolishly ^{Psalms 2:1-6} attempted to defeat the Lamb ^{Revelation 16:14,16, 19:19}, but were destroyed by the sovereign Ruler/King (Jesus Christ) ^{Revelation 19:20-21}, who was accompanied by His chosen ^{Matthew 22:14} and faithful followers ^{Revelation 19:14}.

One of the titles of Jesus in the NT: *King of kings and Lord of lords* ^{1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16}, and in the OT, He is alternately called: *God of gods and Lord of lords* ^{Deuteronomy 10:17, Psalm 136:2-3}.

17:15 The angel revealed to John that the "waters" ^{v.1} the prostitute sat on are the "peoples, multitudes, nations and languages".

17:16 The Antichrist and his sub-rulers used the false church to gain the support of all the people, but then destroy her as prophesied ^{Ezekiel 16:35-42}, so everyone's attention and worship was on the Antichrist. John graphically described their cruel destruction of the prostitute: "eat her flesh" (contrast with God's use of this practice ^{Revelation 19:17-18}) and "burn her with fire" ^{Revelation 18:8}. Evil's house is divided against itself (perfect hate), so consequently it will fall (as prophetically stated by Jesus ^{Mark 3:23-26}).

17:17 God uses evil thoughts/deeds for His purpose and glory ^{Genesis 50:20}, in His timing. God is sovereign, using all situations for His purposes, but He does not put anything into a person's heart unless there is a leaning in that direction already. ^{Exodus 9:35, 10:20, 2 Corinthians 8:16-17}

17:18 Babylon ^{v.5}/Rome ^{v.9} symbolize the woman: world system of abominable religion.

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