

*Charts: The Bowls of Wrath: Chart #17*

## PREFACE

In our last session we saw the *equipping* of the seven angels who would pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath. The angels emerged from the sanctuary of the heavenly tabernacle already equipped with their respective "plagues."

Let us first consider the group as a whole before we examine each bowl's effect on the earth and its remaining people.

- One striking difference between these plagues and the first two groups (Seals and Trumpets) is that whereas the pain or destruction inflicted by the first two was partial—i.e., Death given authority over one fourth of the earth (6:8); damage by the first four and sixth trumpets limited to a third of the earth or a third of mankind—now, with the Bowls the devastation will be total: *all* who have the mark of the beast; *all* of the sea and every living thing in it; *all* the fresh water on earth; *all* scorched by the sun.

- These plagues are reminiscent of earlier plagues during the Tribulation, as well as the plagues of Egypt in the book of Exodus, but they are not identical. There seems to be no good reason to establish some connection, some congruity with the earlier plagues. Again, while those inflicted earlier (even in Egypt) were limited in one manner or another, these, for the most part, will be total.

- Finally, every commentator I have read declares that these seven bowl judgments, in the words of John Walvoord, "...fall in rapid succession like trip-hammer blows, and they all will be consummated within a short period of time toward the close of the great tribulation." Not one of the commentators cites, and I have been unable to find, the Scripture text that reveals this; nonetheless I will bow to their superior scholarship and let their position stand.

A passage in Hebrews serves as a suitable preamble to the Third Woe—which, in my old NASB study Bible is given the heading, "Christ or Judgment."

**Read Hebrews 10:26-31.**

**Read Revelation 16:1-2.**

v1

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

Remember what we learned from v8 in Chapter Fifteen: “And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.”

Thus we can safely deduce that the “loud voice” coming from the temple commanding the angels to pour out the bowls of wrath *must* be the voice of God, since no one else is permitted in there.

In fact, His strong voice *bookends* the seven judgments: He commands the angels to begin here in v1, and after the seventh and last bowl is poured out in v17, the same voice of God declares, “It is done.”

## v2: THE FIRST BOWL

So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

The Greek *helkos*, translated “sore,” means a festering, ulcerous wound. Interestingly, half of our common versions render this plural (sores), but the original text is singular. Perhaps the plural is used to express multiple *people* so inflicted, but one sore per person. In any case, this will be unpleasant in the extreme. The KJV is the most poetic, with “noisome and grievous,” but not much help in describing the actual wound.

“Loathsome” (noisome) translates, *kakos*, and “malignant” (grievous) translates *poneron*. Both are words for evil, but the second word *poneron* means *more* evil. MacArthur points out that “used together they stress that the sores will be festering, painful, and incurable... They will bring unrelieved physical torment to those who have rejected Jesus Christ.”

No thirds or halves with this judgment; these sores will not be inflicted upon believers—only those who bear “the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.” But *all* of them. And here is evidence that this will indeed take place during the latter half of the Tribulation—the *Great* Tribulation—since not until then will the beast’s image be in place.

## Read Revelation 16:3-4.

### V3: THE SECOND BOWL

The first plague was aimed directly at people; the second and third plagues will be directed toward all waters on the earth—but, of course, they will bring even more misery and death upon the populace of the earth.

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

Words, and their placement, are important—even the small, two-letter kind. By their placement of just the simple word “as,” or the word “like,” our mix of versions are saying, or at least implying, different things—primarily regarding the constitution of the sea after the second bowl is poured out upon it.

NASB	the sea, and it became blood <b>like</b> that of a dead man
ESV	the sea, and it became <b>like</b> the blood of a corpse,
NIV	the sea, and it turned into blood <b>like</b> that of a dead person,
NKJV	the sea, and it became blood <b>as</b> of a dead man;
KJV	the sea; and it became <b>as</b> the blood of a dead man:
YLT	the sea, and there came blood <b>as</b> of one dead,
CSB	the sea. It turned to blood <b>like</b> that of a dead person,
TLV	the sea, and it became blood <b>like</b> that of a corpse;

Though these versions offer a number of variants, the important difference for our purpose is this: Are the words “as” or “like” before or after the word “blood.” If before, as in the ESV and KJV, this leaves open the possibility—but doesn’t demand it—that the sea has become something other than literal blood—perhaps just red in color, or with a thick viscosity, as blood would be in a corpse. The rest of our common versions make it clear that it is real blood, with the “as” or “like” modifying the *nature* of the blood. As far as I can determine, the original Greek has “as” between blood and corpse—i.e., “blood as a dead person”—which makes the blood real (*haima*, from which we get our *hemo-*, as in hemoglobin).

This means that in a moment, all the oceans of the world are turned from sea water to blood with the consistency of molasses. And as with all of these plagues, it does not stop there. This will set loose a chain reaction of despair.

*BibleRef.com*: No doubt, this judgment cripples the beast's [\[Antichrist's\]](#) shipping and fishing industries. The effects of this judgment would be even further reaching than simple commerce. A massive change in ocean waters can have a drastic effect on weather and rain. Also, if “everything” living in the oceans were to die, it would remove a primary food source for the entire world. Even more dire, ocean plants produce most of the oxygen in the atmosphere. The death of everything in the oceans would start a countdown to the extinction of all life on earth.

I don’t think we can even imagine the stench.

#### V4: THE THIRD BOWL

Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

Now God visits upon the fresh water what He just did with the salt water. Remember that all these judgments, beginning with the Seals and continuing on through the Trumpets and the Bowls, are cumulative. For example, the third Trumpet poisoned one third of the world's fresh water, so since then it has been in short supply. Now it will *all* be gone. John MacArthur describes the result.

*MacArthur:* The destruction of what is left of the earth's fresh water will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering. There will be no water to drink; no clean water to wash the oozing sores caused by the first bowl judgment; no water to bring cooling relief from the scorching heat that the fourth bowl judgment will shortly bring.

Again, no half measures here. The entire sea and all fresh water, rivers and springs, will be afflicted and "every living thing" in the waters will die.

We can well imagine that the remaining poor souls on the earth would be crying out to the heavens—just as people do today whenever cataclysmic events occur. We can hear them even now: "How could a loving God do such a thing? God is gracious and kind! How could He permit this to happen!?" Or perhaps the denizens of earth will take a more strident, accusatory tone: "Just who do you think you *are* God? We don't deserve to be treated this way!"

In vv5-7 we have God's answer to this cry. Here an angelic go-between—"the angel of the waters" (who is now, by the way, out of a job)—speaks in defense of God and His righteous judgments.

And I [John] heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things;

The angel declares that God, the Holy One, is innocent of the charges because He is right, He is correct. And you have to love v6; remember how the world celebrated, even exchanged gifts with each other at the murder of the two witnesses ([Revelation 11](#)). Their dead bodies were left exposed for three and a half days so that people could rejoice over their demise.

for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

*All right, God says, since the beginning of time these people have treated my prophets with contempt—and much worse. They have spilled the blood of my messengers, so now they deserve to drink blood. That is all they will have to drink.*

Then either another angel from around the altar, or the altar itself, personified, chimes in.

And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

The time for the Lord God’s longsuffering with sin has come to an end, and as to the retribution meted out, His judgments are “true and righteous.” He has the right—and they “deserve” it. So, after this brief interval, the judgments continue.

### **Read Revelation 16:8-11.**

#### **VV8-9: THE FOURTH BOWL**

The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

The prophet Malachi, writing around 432 BC, spoke of this day.

### **Read Malachi 4:1.**

The first three angels poured out God’s wrath on the earth; the fourth pours out His wrath on the sun—but, of course, with dire consequences for those on the earth. None of our common versions include it, but in the Greek of both v8 and v9 the word “men” (*anthropoi*) includes the definite article (“the men”), which seems to refer back to the same people spoken of in earlier verses, such as v2: “the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.” That is, it would seem that any believers still on the earth—admittedly few—will possibly be spared the intense heat of the sun. Yet there is no indication that they will be given a secret source of fresh water to drink.

God, here, is giving these people a taste of that which awaits them in the lake of fire, their eternal home after the great white throne judgment (20:15).

There are those who have been claiming for decades that the polar ice caps are melting, though they have not. But now they really will; imagine a sea of blood being pushed and raised onto the land by all this melting ice.

Some commentators seem surprised that this powerful judgment does not result in repentance, but I am not in that camp.

I think it makes perfect sense that the judgments thus far: hideous sores, the seas and rivers turned to blood, the sun (or earth) shifted so that welcome warmth has now become unbearable scorching, all these after the previous judgments of the Seals and Trumpets—would harden even further the hearts of those who already hate God.

They of course will shake their fists at God rather than bow down before Him. They know He is the one responsible for their misery, and they resent it. “It’s not fair! We don’t deserve this!” It won’t matter to them, in their fallen logic, that they do indeed “deserve it” (v6); just as people do today, such hardship orchestrated by God will not excite repentance, but further sharpen their anger against what they see as an “unjust” God.

And I believe that God is not doing this *expecting* a change of heart in these people; that is not why He is doing it. These judgments are poured out from bowls of His *wrath*, one after the other dispensing *His* anger and punishment upon those who have persisted in rejecting Him and His Christ. If some do indeed repent, then so be it. But that is not His purpose in these final days. The late, great Charles Haddon Spurgeon had something to say about this.

*Spurgeon:* Judgment may produce a carnal repentance—a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The same sin rules in him, but it is called by another name, and wears another dress. The stone is carved into a more slightly shape, but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image, but it is not transformed into gold. This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree?

#### VV10-11: THE FIFTH BOWL

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

**Note:** The accompanying graphic for the fifth bowl on Chart #17 shows fire coming down onto the Jerusalem temple—the seat of the beast’s power. The text does not mention fire, but darkness. But how does one portray darkness? A black square? So I used fire to portray God’s wrath poured out on the beast and his kingdom.

The first account of such a plague sent by God was as the next to last plague inflicted on Egypt before the exodus.

### **Read Exodus 10:21-23.**

Later, a number of the OT prophets would speak of God doing it again during the last days.

**Isaiah 60:2-3** “For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising.”

**Joel 2:1b-2** For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people; There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Jesus spoke of it as well:

**Mark 13:24-26** “But in those days, after that tribulation, THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL BE FALLING from heaven, and the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN CLOUDS with great power and glory.”

J. A. Seiss can be a bit florid at times, but he paints a vivid picture of this fifth judgment upon the earth.

*Seiss:* This darkening of the Beast’s kingdom, added to the earlier inflictions, brings terrible distress. The description indicates the intensest writhings of anguish, the very madness of vexation and pain. The people who suffer these plagues bite their tongues, chew them, gnaw them, as their best diversion from their misery. Their tongues have spoken blasphemies, and they themselves thus punish them. Earth has become like hell for wickedness, and so it becomes like hell for darkness and torment,—nay, still further like hell, because there is no repentance in its inhabitants. Instead of cursing themselves for their impieties, they curse God as the offender, for thus interfering with their preferences and their peace. To the ulcers, the bloody waters, the sun-scorches, now comes this horrible darkness; and a God of such administrations they disdain to honor, even under all their miseries. They will gnaw their tongues with pain and rage rather than speak a prayer of penitence to Him. Nothing but cursing and horrid denunciations will they utter. When they saw the two slain Witnesses come to life again and ascend to heaven, they were willing to own that the God of heaven is God, and to give Him something of His glory. But it was only a temporary reverence, which soon faded away. Here they are again compelled to acknowledge Him as “the God of heaven,” but it is only to heap new blasphemies on His name.

A few moments ago I referred to Chart #17 and “fire coming down onto the Jerusalem temple—the seat of the beast’s power.” That is my own conclusion—but it requires some explanation. Perhaps you, like me, prefer to know *where* certain events are taking place. But the Revelation is maddeningly vague about just where “the throne of the beast” is. Let me explain my thinking on this, and why I believe it to be Jerusalem—at least for the sake of this judgment.

In a short while we will be discussing, in Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen, the destruction of “Babylon,” the “great harlot.” The identity of the harlot is given in v17:18, “The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.” That is, the world-wide power structure established under the beast, Antichrist. But Babylon also represents the false religion established under the beast. Verse 17:5 says that the city is “a mystery.”

Understanding these two chapters about the fall of Babylon is (as most expositors agree) very difficult. Some say Babylon is Rome, while others say it is the corrupt papacy in Rome. Some say Babylon is a restored city along the Euphrates—and there is much that commends that position.

But now I go back to Chapter Thirteen, which was all about the establishment of the Antichrist—“the beast from the sea”—and the false prophet—“the beast from the earth.”

If we cannot say for certain where the throne of the beast is located, we can know where it *began*—especially the aspect of his rule that used a false and blasphemous religion to establish and extend his power.

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. (Revelation 13:11-12)

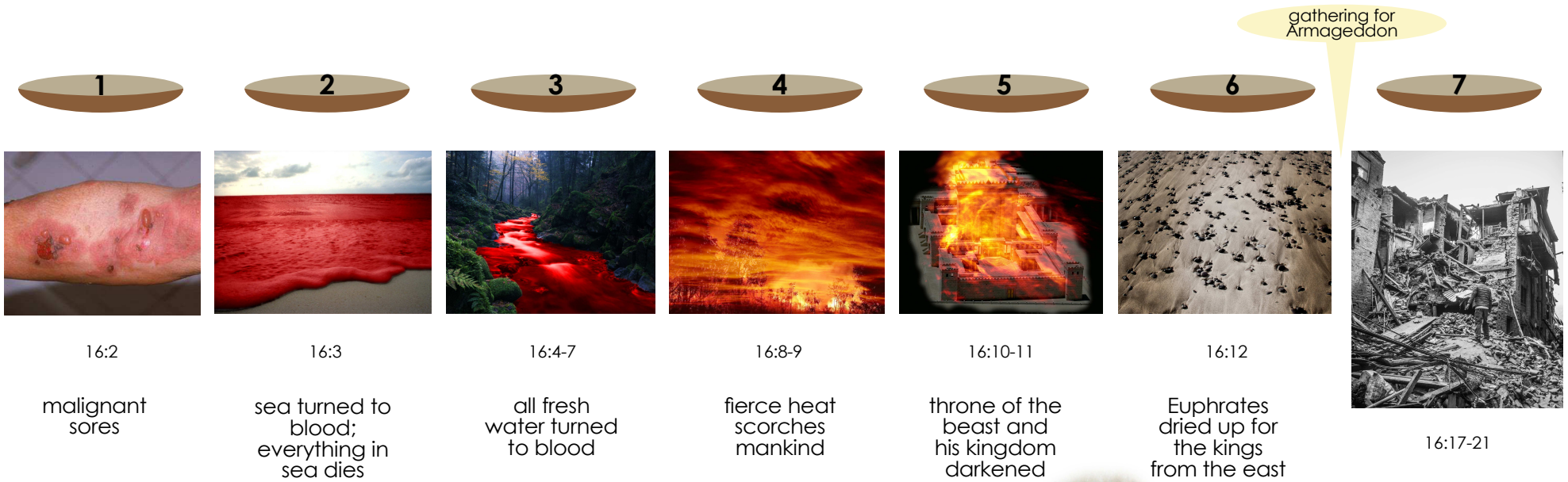
The supernatural idol to honor Antichrist and cause people to worship him as god was erected in the Jerusalem temple—the “abomination of desolation.” No matter where “Babylon” is—if it is a real city at all—no matter from where Antichrist rules the world, Jerusalem is the root from which such power sprouted.



# THE TRIBULATION

## The Third Woe: The Bowls of Wrath

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels,  
 "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."  
*Revelation 16:1*



### Footnotes

<p><b>1</b></p> <p>Revelation 13:16-17                  Revelation 14:9-10                  Exodus 9:9-11                  Deuteronomy 28:35                  Job 2:7</p>	<p><b>2</b></p> <p>Revelation 8:8-9                  Exodus 7:20-24                  Genesis 1:21</p>	<p><b>3</b></p> <p>Revelation 8:10-11                  Revelation 11:6                  Exodus 7:20-24                  Psalm 78:43-44</p>	<p><b>4</b></p> <p>Revelation 8:12                  Genesis 1:14-19                  Isaiah 24:3-6</p>
<p><b>5</b></p> <p>Revelation 13:3-6, 11-15                  Exodus 10:21-23                  Joel 2:2-3                  Joel 3:15-16                  Zephaniah 1:15-17</p>	<p><b>6</b></p> <p>Genesis 15:18                  Exodus 14                  Isaiah 11:15-16                  Zechariah 10:11</p>	<p><b>7</b></p> <p>Matthew 27:50-53                  Haggai 2:6-7                  Hebrews 12:25-27                  Zechariah 14:4</p>	

