

THE REVELATION TO JOHN

THE THINGS FUTURE, REVELATION 4 - 22

INTRODUCTION

- The seven bowl judgments which were introduced by the seventh trumpet in chapter 11, are now about to take place. These seven bowls are an expansion of the seventh trumpet. These judgments are poured out rapidly just prior to the establishment of the millennial kingdom. Again, it is noted that despite the severity of the bowl judgments, people refused to repent (16:11).
- George Ladd, *Daniel indicated that these closing days of the Tribulation will be a time of world war (Dan. 11:36–45). World events are now pictured by John as rapidly coming to their climax.*
- Charles Swindoll, *The fifth and sixth bowl judgments, however, like their trumpet counterparts, are more obviously supernatural, targeting the political realm (the Beast’s kingdom and the kingdoms of the world).*

THE SEVEN BOWLS OF JUDGMENT, REVELATION 16:1-21

THE FIRST FOUR BOWL JUDGMENTS, REVELATION 16:10-21

A. The fifth bowl (10-11)

1. It was directed toward the kingdom of the beast (10a), ***The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness.***
 - a. Related verse, Revelation 13:2, *And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear’s, and its mouth was like a lion’s mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.*
 - b. Comments
 - 1) Charles Ryrie, *The fifth plague comes on the “throne” of the Beast and brings darkness to the seat of his government. Undoubtedly, this slows up his attempt to force all people to worship him or be killed.*
 - 2) John Walvoord, *The fifth judgment resulting from the pouring out of the fifth vial is directed to the throne of the beast and his subjects . . . The beast is probably the first beast of Revelation 13.*
 - 3) Charles Swindoll, *The term “throne” in the Bible isn’t concerned with furniture but with the seat of a ruler’s authority. In the tribulation, the “throne” specifically refers to the center of the Antichrist’s reign, but it will also include his entire kingdom and those over whom he will reign for forty-two months.*
 - 4) Grant Osborne, *This event in fact inaugurates the demise of the antichrist’s throne. The antichrist’s kingdom is short-lived, and the darkness into which it is plunged is a foretaste of the eternal darkness awaiting it.*
2. Its impact (10b-11), ***People gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.***
 - a. Charles Ryrie, *The result of the plague is that people gnaw their tongues and blaspheme God for their pains and sores (which they received under the previous judgments and which are still with them).*
 - b. John Walvoord, *The wicked in their suffering are declared to gnaw their tongues for pain, a description of severe agony. The sores inflicted in the first vial were, in this judgment, aggravated and increased. Again, we have the sad note that they blasphemed God as the author of these judgments and did not repent of their deeds.*
 - c. Charles Swindoll, *Revelation 16:11 reminds us that the afflictions suffered by the enemies of God are cumulative. The sores brought on by the first bowl will continue to fester as the darkness closes in around them. The water that would have soothed their sun-scorched flesh will stand in stinking, stagnant pools; once-clean water will be polluted with decaying blood. Nevertheless, believe it or not, the people will continue to blaspheme God and refuse to repent.*
 - d. Grant Osborne, *This is closely connected to Jesus’ metaphor for eternal punishment—“darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). These are idioms for intense pain, and the purpose here is to provide a harbinger of the final judgment ... The pain did not drive them to their knees but stiffened their spines against God.*

B. The sixth bowl (12)

1. It was poured upon the Euphrates River (12a), *The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates,*

a. Related verses

- 1) Genesis 15:18, *On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,*
- 2) Revelation 9:14, *saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *This sixth bowl does not inflict a plague on people but serves instead as a preparation for the final eschatological battle. The Euphrates River is the northeastern border of the land that God promised to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4). The Bible calls the Euphrates River (cf. Gen. 2:14) the great river, and it calls the Mediterranean Sea, which is the western border of the Promised Land, the Great Sea.*
- 2) Charles Swindoll, *In John's vision, the wrath from the sixth angel's bowl fell upon the Euphrates River. The Euphrates has been an integral part of world affairs since creation. It was one of four rivers that irrigated the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:14). It was supposed to have provided the northern and eastern boundaries of the land God promised to Abraham's descendants (15:18; Josh. 1:4). The Hebrew people simply called it "the River," or "the great river."*
- 3) Grant Osborne, *The Euphrates is called the "great river" because it was the largest river in that part of the world (2,000 miles long).*

2. Its result (12b), *and its water was dried up,*

- a. Related verse, Isaiah 11:15, *And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt, and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching breath, and strike it into seven channels, and he will lead people across in sandals.*

b. Comments

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *The sixth judgment will dry up the Euphrates River (which previously had been turned into blood) . . . This is an actual drying up of the river that forms the eastern border of Palestine (Ge. 15:18).*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *God much earlier had dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could advance on the Promised Land from the west (Exod. 14:21–22; cf. Isa. 11:16). He had also dried up the Jordan River so they could cross over from the east (Josh. 3:13–17; 4:23). Elijah too parted the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:8). Cyrus may have conquered Babylon by redirecting the waters of the Euphrates and marching into the city over the dry riverbed (cf. Jer. 50:38; 51:36). All of these previous incidents should help us to accept that a literal fulfillment of this prophecy is possible.*
- 3) John Walvoord, *As the result of judgment, the water of the river is dried up ... The most natural explanation is the best, namely, that this is the judgment which actually dries up the great Euphrates River, thereby preparing for an invasion from the East.*

3. Its reason (12c), *to prepare the way for the kings from the east.*

- a. Charles Ryrie, *This is done to facilitate the crossing of the armies of the kings from the east (cf. Dan. 11:44) as they march to the final war of Armageddon.*
- b. Thomas Constable, *The problem that this judgment poses for earth-dwellers is not some immediate affliction from the judgment itself but its later consequences, namely, war.*
- c. Warren Wiersbe, *... an army from the nations of the world gathers for the great battle at Armageddon. The drying up of the river will make it possible for the army of the "kings of the East" to come to Palestine and invade the Holy Land.*
- d. Mark Hitchcock, *The armies of the world will be gathered to Israel for this final, suicidal war. Among the specific participants in this horde of nations are "the kings from the east" (16:12) ... I view the army in Revelation 9 as a demonic one, not a human one ... all John tells us here is that the kings of the east will bring a human army that comes from east of the Euphrates. It's best to leave it at that. What we do know is that whoever these nations are, they will pour into Israel at the appointed time to the appointed place, just as God said.*

4. Its method (13-14)
- a. The use of unclean spirits (13), *And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.*
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) Revelation 12:9, *And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.*
 - b) Revelation 13:1, *And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.*
 - c) Revelation 19:20, *And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Charles Ryrie, *John saw “three unclean spirits like frogs” come out of the mouths of the trinity of evil - the dragon (Satan), the beast (13:1-10), and the False Prophet (13:11-18). They are identified as “demons ...”*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *Something proceeding from the mouth suggests a proclamation. This is the first mention of the false prophet, but he is clearly the beast out of the earth (cf. 13:11–17).*
 - c) John Walvoord, *The three unclean spirits that proceed from the mouths of this diabolical trio are demonic (fallen angels, v. 14; cf. Matt. 10:1; Mark 1:23–24; 3:11; 5:2, 13; Acts 5:16; 8:7). They resemble frogs, in that they are unclean and loathsome (cf. Lev. 11:10–11, 41). The second Egyptian plague involved actual frogs (Exod. 8:5), but these demonic spirits are only like frogs.*
 - b. A call to battle (14), *For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.*
 - 1) Related verses
 - a) 1 Timothy 4:1, *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,*
 - b) Revelation 6:17, *for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”*
 - c) Revelation 13:13, *It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in front of people,*
 - d) Revelation 19:19, *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.*
 - e) Revelation 20:8, *and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.*
 - 1) Comments
 - a) Charles Ryrie, *their task is to bring the kings of the earth to the war of Armageddon (“Har-Magedon).*
 - b) Thomas Constable, *The dragon, beast, and false prophet will evidently join in making a proclamation that will mobilize the armies of the world to converge on Palestine ... He [false prophet] deceives the mass of people. What he urges them to do (i.e., take the mark, worship the beast, and assemble in Palestine), supposedly for their advantage, will result in their destruction eventually.*
 - c) Thomas Constable, *Here John identified the spirits as spirits of demons. These spirits go out to the kings of the whole world deceiving them into assembling their armies in Palestine for the Battle of Armageddon ... The spirits persuade them, but their decision is something that God, the ultimate cause, puts in their hearts (17:17) . . . Satan’s purpose in bringing all these soldiers into Palestine in the first place appears to be to annihilate the Jews. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, specifically to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1–4), these soldiers will unite in opposing Him.*
 - d) John Walvoord, *The relationship between the drying up of the Euphrates and the battle that follows has sometimes been connected with the sixth trumpet in 9:13–21. In the sixth trumpet an army of 200 million men is loosed to slay a third part of men (9:15) ... Probably the best explanation is that the seven vials follow very rapidly after the trumpets and that the events such as a great invasion are pictured in their early stages in the sixth trumpet with a statement of their ultimate purpose that is actually realized in the sixth vial. The time sequence here may be in terms of days rather than months or years.*

- e) John Walvoord, *Though the nations may be deceived in entering into the war in hope of gaining world political power, the satanic purpose is to combat the armies from heaven (introduced in chap. 19) at the second coming of Christ ... The war is said to continue right up to the day of the Second Coming and involves house-to-house fighting in Jerusalem itself on the day of the Lord's return (Zech. 14:1-3).*
- f) Charles Swindoll, *While the Lord is never the author of evil, He will allow wicked people to destroy themselves by their own evil acts (Rom. 1:20-32).*
- g) Warren Wiersbe, *Zechariah 12 and 14 describe this event from Israel's point of view. Since "the beast" has set up his image in the temple at Jerusalem, and since many of the Jews will not bow down to him, it is natural that the Holy City should be the object of attack ... Joel 3:9-21 parallels the Zechariah references, and Joel 3:19 makes clear that God will punish the Gentiles for the way they have treated the Jews (see also Isa. 24; Zeph. 3:8ff).*

5. A divine proclamation (15), ***("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!")***

a. Related verses

- 1) Revelation 3:2-3, *Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.*
- 2) Revelation 3:18, *I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.*

b. Comments

- 1) Charles Ryrie, *In the midst of this statement about Armageddon comes a warning and an appeal for purity and watchfulness (v. 15).*
- 2) Thomas Constable, *Jesus Christ Himself evidently gave this parenthetic invitation and warning (cf. 3:3, 18) ... Jesus Christ urged these faithful believers, the Tribulation saints, to be watchful and pure (cf. Matt. 25:1-30). The alternative is embarrassment (cf. Exod. 20:26; Lev. 18:6-19; Deut. 23:14; Isa. 47:3; Ezek. 16:37; 23:24-29; Hos. 2:10; Nah. 3:5). This is the third of the seven beatitudes in Revelation (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14).*
- 3) John Walvoord, *The utterance of verse 15 is apparently a direct quotation from God Himself, though the text does not indicate it specifically ... The contrast between those who are overtaken by the Lord at His coming and those who are prepared by faith in Christ is expressed in the beatitude "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" ... The symbolism of preservation of garments is not entirely clear from the passage. Some have construed this symbolism as the garments of salvation, but more probably the righteousness of the saints is symbolized, as expressed in their life and testimony (cf. 19:8). The saints will thus be protected from spiritual nakedness at the coming of the Lord. The saints in view here are evidently those still on earth who have been able to escape martyrdom even though remaining true to their Lord.*

6. An epic battle (16), ***And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.***

a. Related verses,

- 1) Zechariah 12:11, *On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.*
- 2) Revelation 19:19, *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.*

b. Commentary

- 1) The location of Armageddon
 - a) *Armageddon means Mount Megiddo. Megiddo is a town in northern Israel overlooking a huge valley called the Valley of Jezreel. The mountain closest to Megiddo is at the southern edge of the Valley of Jezreel. It may refer to Mount Carmel which is to the west of Megiddo. Or, it could refer to Mt. Tabor at the east end of the valley.*
 - b) *Mark Hitchcock, This valley is about 10 miles wide and 35 miles long. Napoleon said it would make for an ideal battlefield. It is in this place that the armies of the nation will gather for the final war of this age.*

- c) Robert Thomas, *The plain of Megiddo is admittedly not large enough to contain armies from all over the world, so this must be the assembly area for a much larger deployment that covers a two hundred mile distance from north to south and the width of Palestine from east to west (cf. 14:20). Some decisive battles against this massive force will probably occur around Jerusalem (Zech. 14:1–3).*
 - d) John Walvoord, *What this Scripture seems to indicate is that this area is the central point for the military conflict which ensues.*
 - e) William Barclay, *Megiddo is in the Plain of Esdraelon, which was part of the great highway from Egypt to Damascus. From the most ancient times to the time of Napoleon, it was one of the great battle grounds of the world. This was the plain where Barak and Deborah overthrew Sisera and his chariots (Judges 5:19–21); where Ahaziah was killed by the arrows of Jehu (2 Kings 9:27); where the good Josiah perished in battle with Pharaoh Necho (2 Kings 23:29–30), a tragedy which became ingrained in the minds of all Jews and which they never forgot (Zechariah 12:11).*
- 2) The war of Armageddon
- a) Warren Wiersbe, *Standing on Mount Carmel and overlooking that great plain, you can well understand why it would be used for gathering the armies of the nations.*
 - b) Mark Hitchcock, *Several key military movements are part of this campaign ... Various armies will muster at Armageddon in the north of Israel (Revelation 16:12-16); Jerusalem will be attacked (Zechariah 12:1-3); Jesus will return to the Mount of Olives, and while He is coming, the armies gathered against Him will be slain by the breath of His mouth (Zechariah 14:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11-21); Jesus will travel to Edom in southern Jordan evidently to deliver the Jewish remnant who fled there from the Antichrist (Isaiah 34:1-7; 63:1-3) ... After Jesus defeats armies of Antichrist and the rebellious nations gathered with him the kingdom of God will come to the earth ... Mark Hitchcock, ... why do the demons gather the armies to Israel? It makes more sense that they are brought together for a final, all-out assault on Israel and the Jewish people. Satan's age-long vendetta against the Jews will reach its climax. Satan will gather the armies in an attempt to wipe out any final vestige of the Jewish race.*
 - c) Charles Swindoll, *The final outcome of this battle is not described until Revelation 19, when we see the armies of Satan finally meet their match with the armies of Christ.*

TO BE CONTINUED, LORD WILLING

C. The seventh bowl (17-21)