

Chapter Sixteen

The Seven Bowls of God's Anger

16:1 And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.”

Loud voice from the temple: The last verse of chapter 15 stated that “No one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.” No one was in the temple, yet this command to the seven messengers comes from the temple. This is God’s voice commanding.

Pour out the seven bowls: The phrase ‘pour out’ (*ekcheo*) means *to greatly bestow*. God promised to “open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing” on His people. (Mal 3:10) “Pour out thy wrath upon the nations that know Thee not, and upon the kingdoms that call not upon Thy name.” (Psa 69:24) Note how this pouring out is related to Har-Megadon:

I will *pour out* on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *the Spirit of grace and of supplication*, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (Zech 12:10-11)

Zechariah speaks of a pouring out the Spirit of grace and supplication, which would seem like a great blessing. The result: the Jews will mourn—they will weep bitterly.

It will come about after this that I will pour out (*greatly bestow*) My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. (Joel 2:28)

God’s Spirit was poured out to satisfy those thirsty for the Word of Life. The earth absorbed Satan’s false doctrine due to its thirst. (12:15-16) There are many verses in the OT where *pour out* refers to God’s wrath being poured out on Israel. Indeed, this seems to be the case with the first bowl of wrath.

16:2 And the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

Loathsome and malignant sore: To the Jews, being covered with sores of this nature meant two things: (1) shame and misery, reminiscent of Job’s suffering; (2) being ostracized from the temple worship because of physical defilement.

Boils made up the sixth plague handed to Egypt. (Exo 9:8) It was also a punishment on the children of Israel if they did not obey God:

It shall come about, if you will not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you...The Lord will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. (Deut 28:15, 35)

Job was stricken in a test allowed by God:

Then Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. (Job 2:7)

In a prophecy concerning Israel's captivity and exile into Babylon:

For thus says the Lord, "Your wound is incurable, and your injury is serious. There is no one to plead your cause; no healing for your sore, no recovery for you. All your lovers have forgotten you, they do not seek you; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the punishment of a cruel one, because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous. Why do you cry out over your injury? Your pain is incurable. Because your iniquity is great and your sins are numerous, I have done these things to you." (Jer 30:12-15)

Excluding Job, the inference is to punishment resulting from disobedience, and is described here in Revelation as coming upon those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped its image. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. (Rom 1:18) Like the boils and sores depicted both here and in Exodus, payment will be exacted for humanity's disobedience.

The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands... (Rev 9:20)

These are "those who dwell on the earth." They are not every man, woman and child on the planet. The usage of this title narrows it down to the nation of Israel residing in the *land of Judah*. Thus, the bowl is *poured into the land of Palestine* (see notes on 6:10). These are opposite "those who dwell in heaven." The first group does not belong to God, for they are fleshly-minded (carnal), and to this end their flesh is afflicted. (Keep in mind the boils are symbols.)

The second group are those who dwell in heaven, and are of a spiritual inclination. The souls beneath the altar cried to God to avenge their deaths on "those who dwell on the earth." (6:10) Those souls were the martyrs killed by the Jews who rejected God's word.

In chapter 8, God's judgments fall on those who "dwell on the earth." (8:13) They are the ones who rejoice over the death of the Two Witnesses (11:10) who tormented them. This is an obvious reference to the Jews, who denied the prophets and Christ Himself. They worship the beast and their names don't appear in the Book of Life. (13:8) They are deceived by the false messiah who spoke with Satan's authority (13:14), and also made the image of the beast with the fatal wound. They became drunk from the Great Harlot's wine of immorality. (17:2) Lastly, they "wondered" about the beast "who was and is not and is to come." (17:8)

Mark of the beast: The sign of Satan's *ownership*. They had his brand or mark, showing allegiance to his evil kingdom (see notes on 13:16-18). The Jewish religious community believed themselves to be sons of God merely by their association with Abraham. Jesus, however, said that because of their stubborn and unrepentant hearts, they were actually children of the devil. (John 8:44) They were marked, branded, and therefore Satan's property to do his bidding, not God's. Unfortunately, just as Satan used God's word to justify himself before Eve and during Jesus wilderness temptation, so too did the Jews misuse the Law to justify their actions.

Worshiped his image: The image a deception, a representation of what is *supposed* to be true. They loved the lie their hands had made, and so worshiped it, exalting it in their minds instead of exalting the Living God. They walked or lived by what they had done, deceived by their own self-righteousness. "There are many roads to heaven," is still popular today.

16:3 And 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.

The first plague goes into the earth, *the land of Judah*. This second plague is poured into the *nations*, and speaks to the consequences of Egypt's rebellion. (Exo 7:20) (See notes on 4:6; 5:13)

Became blood like that of a dead man: In other words, cold and lifeless blood coagulated like gelatin. Anyone experienced in butchering animals understands the metaphor. The life is in the blood (Lev 17:11), but this blood was not life-giving. God forbade consuming blood for this reason, and the command was carried over into the NT church. (Acts 15:20; Lev 17:14) While "the life was in the blood," its connection to *death* is what the OT sacrifices stressed. The sacrificial shedding of blood emphasized *death*, not life. The animal's life was poured out to atone for sin. Jesus confused many by saying that if a person did not drink His blood, they had no life (John 6:53ff), which would have seemed contrary to the Law's mandate against drinking blood. This symbol in Revelation concerns the nations being turned into *a dead man's blood*, which caused them to die. The symbol of a dead man can also mean someone doomed to die. (Gen 20:3) Solomon said the dead were soon forgotten. (Ecc 2:16) David said, "I am forgotten as a dead man, out of mind, I am like a broken vessel." (Psa 31:12) In other words, the nations were without hope—they were dead or doomed to die in their trespasses and sins. (Eph 2:1)

16:4 And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

Rivers: Can be seen as a symbol for *abundant* words, representing abundant spiritual vitality. Satan tried to drown the faithful in a flood of false doctrine. (12:15) Rivers are the larger water feeds that are typically fast-moving and have the ability to flood the countryside. However, rivers can symbolize nations. (Isa 8:7) They are those conduits that bring life to the earth. Now, they bring death, though it does not say that anyone dies here as a result. This third plague sounds very much like what happened during the third trumpet, with similar results:

The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood; and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. (Rev 8:10-11)

Springs of waters: Used four times in Revelation. The Lamb shall guide those emerging from great tribulation to *springs of the water of life*. (7:17) The other three times, calamity befalls these springs of water. Peter spoke of false teachers, who were “springs without water.” (2 Pet 2:17) False teachers bring false doctrines, which result in spiritual death, not life. Spiritual water is for the afflicted and thirsty. (Isa 49:10-13) Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst... the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of *water springing up to eternal life*.” (John 4:13-14) Water is connected to the word of God. (Amos 8:11-13) In the NT, the Holy Spirit is defined as water, which brings God’s Truth to the world. (John 7:39)

Up to this point, the Jews are made unclean by malignancy, the nations are lost and spiritually dead, and the sources of spiritual life are cut off. Note the next verses:

16:5-7 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.”

Who killed the saints, prophets, and the Christ? The Jews. It cannot be speaking to any other people. Here also is evidence that the earth and sea are *people*, seen in the statement, “Thou didst judge *these things* (earth and sea); for THEY—the earth and sea—poured out the blood of the saints and prophets, and Thou has given THEM—earth and sea—blood to drink.” This is directed primarily against the Jews, who were the murderers of the saints and prophets. (Luke 11:49-50) Since Jerusalem poured out the blood of the righteous, blood is now poured out on them. They were bloodthirsty, and so they reap what they sow—they are given blood to drink. While the boils are not literal, it is referring to terrible slaughter. Note the prophecy concerning Egypt:

That day belongs to the Lord God of hosts, a day of vengeance, so as to avenge Himself on His foes; and the *sword will devour and be satiated and drink its fill of their blood*. For there will be a slaughter for the Lord God of hosts, in the land of the north by the river Euphrates. (Jer 46:10)

I will feed your oppressors with their own flesh, and they will become drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. (Isa 49:26)

In describing the murder of two evil tyrants, Josephus wrote, “they drank the blood of the populace to one another, and divided the dead bodies of the poor creatures between them (selves).”¹

Angel of the waters: Opposite to the angel of fire. (14:18) This is the messenger who oversaw the dispensing of truth and life. Water is the symbol for words that bring life.

I heard the altar saying: The place of promise and sacrifice adds its testimony to that of the angel of the waters. (See notes on 8:3.)

16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.

¹ Josephus, *Wars*, V, x, 4

This agrees with chapter seven:

(The righteous) shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; *neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat*; for the Lamb in the center of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them to springs of the water of life; and God shall wipe every tear from their eyes. (Rev 7:16-17)

Judgment now comes down from heaven, as seen in the sun's heat and light rendering a grievous and burning heat. The spiritual light by which men walk (the sun) is now the source of their pain. There is no water (truth) to quench their thirst. They are in the desert wilderness with no Savior to provide a source of relief from their agony. "The rebellious dwell in a parched land, scorched by the sun." (Ps 68:6)

16:9 And 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.

In Pharaoh's arrogance, he refused to glorify God, consequently suffering the plagues that fell upon Egypt. The "fierce heat" alludes to trials and tribulations with no relief. Just as the Egyptians stubbornly refused to repent, so to did the Jews follow in their footsteps. How great is man's sinful pride!

Blasphemed the name of God: They were those who blasphemed, calling themselves Jews (chosen by God) but who were from Satan's synagogue. (2:9) The term is used three times:

1. Blasphemed because of the fierce judgment (fire). (16:9)
2. Blasphemed because of the pain felt. (16:11)
3. Blasphemed because their man-made fortifications were knocked down. (16:21)

Did not repent so as to give Him glory: This repentance comes through admitting that Jesus Christ is the only way to reconcile one's self to God. The Jews refused to accept Him as their Savior. The world follows in their footsteps.

16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain,

The first four bowls are poured out on men and the things they depend on for guidance. The following three bowls are poured out on the realm of spiritual darkness.

Throne of the beast: The authority Satan had handed over to the nations (13:2) was now thrown into darkness. The earth lusted after Satan's throne (power and guidance) in the same way the idolatrous Jews followed after false gods and lusted after the ways of the nations from which they were to keep themselves separate. (Deut 12:29-31; Neh 13:25-26)

Kingdom became darkened: Even though the fierce heat of judgment (the sun) beat down on the disobedient (those who followed Satan), that kingdom was in darkness. The sun's heat is a metaphor of severe trials or judgment from God. Yet they were in spiritual *darkness*. The picture shown is that of

man trying to overthrow God's rule.

Gnawed their tongues: Literally, they *devoured* their own tongues. Tongues declare false prophecies (Jer 23:31), deceit (Jer 9:8; Micah 6:12; Rom 3:13), wickedness (Isa 59:3), and lies. (Jer 9:3-5)

The tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell. (James 3:6)

You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue. (Psa 52:4)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit. (Prov 18:21)

Their kingdom is *dark*, being without truth and light. Therefore, what they *speak* is falsehood. As the idolatrous Jews loved the words of the false prophets, they reaped much pain from them, being brought into slavery by other nations. They refused God's true prophets, since they did not "tickle their ears." (2 Tim 4:3-4)

16:11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

The question arises as to the nature of this blasphemy. The Jews were taking what was good and turning it into something evil, resulting in blasphemy. Here, they are inflicted with judgment *because* of their blasphemy. They blasphemed God *because* of what they had become. It was their own fault, but they laid the blame on God. Those rejecting the bible sometimes present this line of thought. "If God *knows* everything, and He *knows* I'm going to hell, He's partly responsible because He created me."

16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east.

The sixth plague corresponds to the sixth trumpet, and both involve the Euphrates River.

The Sixth Trumpet (Rev 9:14-16)	The Sixth Plague (Rev 16:12-16)
...the 6th angel who had the trumpet (said), "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."	...the 6th angel poured out his bowl upon the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for kings from the east
angels...were released, so that they might kill a third of mankind	...spirits of demons...go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty
the number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million	And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

What brings this together is a look at the sixth seal, which seems to also correspond to the sixth trumpet and the sixth plague:

The kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?” (Rev 6:15-17)

We see here the war between God and man (influenced by Satan’s empire). The number 666—sign of one’s citizenship and beliefs—may then be seen in the three 6’s of *seal*, *trumpet*, and *plague*. They all involve a *conflict* between God and man. It is the number of *man*, but its origin is from Satan, all constituting *rebellion*. If we summarize the symbols, we see this:

1. Seal: *reveals* God’s judgment.
2. Trumpet: *announces* the warning of judgment.
3. Bowl: the judgment given.

Euphrates river dried up: Whereas drying up the Red Sea allowed Israel to escape their enemies (and begin their journey to the promised land), this drying up of the Euphrates allows “kings from the east” to enter into the promised land.

The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; and He will wave His hand over the (Euphrates) River with His scorching wind; and He will strike it into seven streams, and make men walk over dry-shod. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant of His people who will be left, just as there was for Israel in the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt. (Isa 11:15-16)

Kings of the east: The ancient Jews viewed the compass points contrary to our Western culture. They were not simply terms of navigation, but divided the world into four parts, termed “the four corners of the earth.” (Isa 11:12; Rev 7:1; 20:8) The primary direction was east—the direction of the rising sun. The east was considered the *front*, sometimes called the “place of dawning.” All other directions were positioned *relative* to the east. West was the *rear*, north was to the left, and south was to the right.²

In Revelation, kings are nearly always associated with the earth (Judah). Only in 16:14 do we have “kings of the east.” These would include the nations of Assyria, Persia, and the Medes. These nations were from the descendants of Noah’s third son, Shem. (Gen 10:21-31)

Since the drying up of the Euphrates River is indicative of God’s miracle with the parting of the Red Sea, it appears to be a reversal of *who* is going *where*. It seems to be symbolic of providing a pathway for the Gentile nations into the Promised Land. Allowing the Gentiles into God’s covenant starts a war, incited by Satan and borne out by the Jews. They absolutely rejected God’s salvation extending to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:46-50; 14:1-2)

16:13-14 **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; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.**

² American history tells us that the early settlers buried their dead with their feet pointing to the east. The reason was that when Christ came and the Great Resurrection commenced, the dead in Christ would rise, already facing their Savior.

Frogs catch prey by their *tongues*. So here, the lying spirits and man-made teachings snatch away the unwary. Responding to the passage of the eastern kings (Gentile nations), Satan reacts accordingly. The devil, his evil empire, and the false messiah all spew out deception. In chapter 12, Satan went after the *offspring of the woman*, which would be the church. He poured out a great flood, hoping to drown the church in false doctrine. Here, we have something else pouring forth from mouths—evil words. Out of each come forth *doctrines of devils*. They perform *signs*, providing evidence of their *testimony*.

Kings of the whole world: Which is not to be confused with the *kings of the east*. The Gentile nations are allowed access into the Promised Land. The *kings of the world* are enraged, incited by the Jews to rain havoc on God's people:

Why did the Gentiles rage and the peoples devise futile things? The *kings of the earth* took their stand, and *the rulers were gathered together* against the Lord, and against His Christ." For truly IN THIS CITY (Jerusalem) there were gathered together against Thy holy servant Jesus, whom Thou didst anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles (the sea) and the peoples of Israel (the earth) to do whatever Thy hand and Thy purpose predestined to occur. (Acts 4:25-28)

Three unclean spirits like frogs: Defined as *spirits of demons*. In the plague inflicted upon Egypt, dead frogs were piled in heaps, polluting the land. (Exo 8:14) So too do these demons defile the earth with their stench of lies against Christ and God.

We can see similarities here: Abraham's descendants were *as the sand on the seashore*. Satan stood on the sand of the seashore (13:1), established among the unbelieving multitudes. In chapter 20, Satan will...come out to deceive the nations...to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the *sand of the seashore*. The Dragon stood upon the nations and they are now ready to do his will.

Gather them together: Which results in their spiritual destruction. The fruit from men's devices were *gathered together* to be thrown into the wine press of God's wrath (See notes on 14:20).

Great day of God: It's preposterous to assume that man could physically war against God. Man can only shake his little fist at the sky. The notion that there will be a future battle between antichrist's army and God is woefully misunderstood. Even in the face of natural disasters, all men can do is run and hide. A spiritual confrontation took place in Eden and continues at an accelerated rate today. Paul's persecution of the church was war against God. (Acts 9:4) God is provoked by man's unrighteousness. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him. (1 Kgs 16:30-33) He provoked God to move against him by having Elijah stop the rain for 3 years. (1 Kgs 17:1) God repaid Ahab and his throne *through* the prophet. In the same way, Jesus predicted the destruction of the Jews for their failure to believe. (Matt 24; Mark 13; Luke 21) How was it done? Through the agents of Rome.

Zephaniah spoke of a "great day" of the Lord: "I will completely remove all things from the *face of the earth*," declares the Lord. (Zeph 1:2) However, the "face of the earth" is defined in verse 4 as Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This was fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar finally took the city. The entire book of Zephaniah reads like a section out of Revelation, describing the complete and utter destruction of the Jewish system, yet it is written as a global event. The reason for their destruction was ongoing and long-term disobedience. In Revelation, it is the rejection of the Messiah that causes their down-throw.

16:15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.”)

Coming like a thief: A thief plans and works without one’s knowledge. Realization of a thief’s objective always comes too late for preventing the loss of prized possessions. The emphasis is on surprise, where the Holy Spirit uses it as a way of describing the day of the Lord:

Be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect. (Luke 12:39-40)

For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, “Peace and safety!” then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief. (1Thess 5:2-4)

The day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. (2 Pet 3:10)

Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. (Rev 3:3)

Matthew 24 and Luke 21 refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, while the context of the Thessalonian letter refers to the impending punishment of the persecuting Jews.

Blessed is the one who stays awake: Those who *sleep* are also *naked*. Sleep is a metaphor for death and nakedness is indicative of shame, guilt and sin (see notes on 3:18). The message behind the Parable of the 10 Virgins, is “blessed is the one who keeps alert and ready to meet the Lord.” (Matt 25:1) The wise virgins were prepared to meet the Lord, while the foolish virgins were not. (Matt 25:1ff) Jesus told the Laodiceans to purchase from Him white garments, so that they could clothe themselves, that the shame of their nakedness may not be revealed. (Rev 3:18)

16:16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

Gathered them together: Who is doing the gathering? God’s angels, not some antichrist. The term “gathered together” refers to either location or attitude. The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were “gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ.” (Acts 4:25ff) This is an attitude, not a place.

So it will happen in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of heaven, on high, and the kings of the earth, on earth. And they will be *gathered together* like prisoners in the dungeon, and will be confined in prison; and after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be abashed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders. (Isa 24:19-23)

- ◆ A great multitude of saved are *gathered together* before the throne from every nation, tribe, tongue and people. (7:9)
- ◆ In chapter 14, the Gospel is preached to them. (14:6) *People* is translated by Thayer to mean *a great part of the population gathered together anywhere*. Acts 2:5 says there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men, *from every nation under heaven*. (God) made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. (Acts 17:26-27)
- ◆ The idea is summed up in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, where a gathering together of people for the Lord is begun.
- ◆ As the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. (Matt 13:40)
- ◆ Jesus compared the Last Judgment with the harvest. (Matt 13:30, 39)
- ◆ He also used “gathering together” to mean those who were united and thus believed in Him (Matt 9:37-38; Luke 10:2), indicating that the final harvest had already begun with His first coming. (John 4:35)

Like so many spiritual concepts, “gathering together” is not evident to the physical eye, just as Christ’s coming was not evident to the Jews. The establishment of God’s kingdom on earth is seen in the church, but is clearly not a visible kingdom.

Har-Magedon: Also spelled ‘Armageddon.’ False teachers, best-selling “Christian” books, and Hollywood, have all conspired to sensationalize Armageddon as a portrayal of the end of the world. Many Christians have been swept away by this nonsense. The word means *mountain of Megiddo*, and is the Greek word for an ancient battle location.

- ◆ *Megiddo* means ‘place of soldiers.’ History shows that this was a place where decisions were resolved, the victor being those following Jehovah.
- ◆ Megiddo is part of the Carmel mountains (Mt. Carmel), and was part of the inheritance given to the tribe of Manasseh. (Josh 17:11; Jud 1:27; 1 Chr 7:29)
- ◆ The Canaanites built shrines to pagan weather deities on Mt. Megiddo/Carmel. Elijah confronted the idolatrous Canaanite priests here, who were later destroyed when they couldn’t get their god to ignite their altar. (1 Kgs 18)
- ◆ It was also from the top of Mount Carmel that Elijah saw the sign of a coming storm (1 Kgs 18:44), which signaled the end of a prolonged drought.
- ◆ The two great slaughters in the valley of this mountain were of the Israelites (2 Kgs 23:29) and Canaanites. (Jud 4:16-19) A careful consideration of this battle reveals that although Israel defeated Sisera’s army, verse 20 says that “the *stars* fought from heaven, from their courses they fought against Sisera.” Thus, the power of God was at work, but it was done through Israel’s efforts. Some of the 12 tribes didn’t show up for the battle. Named or absent were Meroz (not a tribe, but cursed by an angel of the Lord), Judah, Simeon, Dan, Asher, and Reuben. Reuben preferred to “sit among the flocks and listen to the flute music.” (Jud 5:16)

The implication in Revelation is that the Jewish nations were not able to align themselves to battle against God. Because of its history, Megiddo is simply a symbol of the final conflict between God and the forces of evil (see notes on 16:1).

16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.”

Poured his bowl upon the air: The final plague is released into the spiritual realms. Satan is the prince of the power of this realm (Eph 2:2), so it is his kingdom that finds the end of God’s wrath. Again, it is not a *place*, but a *condition* that is judged. For example, death and the grave are thrown into the Lake of Fire. Death and the grave are not physical—they are conditions. Neither is the Lake of Fire physical, but represents God’s final judgment against these conditions. You can’t “burn up” death in a physical volcano.

It is done: This declaration appears twice in Revelation; here, and in chapter 21, where God says, “It is finished. Behold, I am making all things new.” (21:5-6) When Jesus was given the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” He then bowed His head, and gave up His spirit. (John 19:30) But did this include the end of Jerusalem? In speaking of its destruction, note:

Because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written *will be fulfilled*. (Luke 21:22)

Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to *finish* the transgression, to *make an end* of sin, to *make atonement* for iniquity, to *bring in* everlasting righteousness, to *seal up* vision and prophecy and to *anoint* the most holy place. (Dan 9:24)

Thus, when Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” He was referring to the whole of God’s plan, not merely His earthly ministry. God’s work—His plan of redemption—was finished from the foundation of the world. (Heb 4:3) In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, *then the mystery of God is finished*, as He preached to His servants the prophets. (Rev 10:7) John saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, *because in them the wrath of God is finished*. (Rev 15:1) At the last trumpet, the plan of redemption was finished. In the last bowl, the wrath of God is completed.

16:18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.

Flashes of lightning, sounds & thunder: These typically refer to the coming or *presence* of Christ. Thunder and lightning accompany the power and majesty of God. (2 Sam 22:15; Job 36:32; Psa 18:14; Jer 10:13) God’s presence on Mount Sinai was accompanied by thundering, lightning flashes, and smoke. (Exo 19:16; 20:18) Jesus compared His Second Coming to the lightning that comes from the east and flashes to the west. (Matt 24:27) He declared a revealing of God’s kingdom that would be announced from horizon to horizon, i.e., *everywhere*.

Great earthquake: A great shaking up and revolution of the Jewish nation (see notes on 16:2). This disturbance was of such significance, that there was nothing with which to compare it. This was spoken

of by Christ concerning Jerusalem's destruction:

...there will be a great tribulation (*great shaking up*), such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world (*since man came to be upon the earth*) until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. (Matt 24:21-22)

16:19 And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Not only was the seat of Jewish influence, Jerusalem, shaken, but Gentile cities also.

Great city split into three parts: Jerusalem was divided into three parts: the upper city, the lower city, and Ophel. At the moment before death Jesus cried, "It is finished!" a clear parity of the seventh plague, "It is done." God's plan of redemption was, for all intents and purposes, finished at the cross. Other events took place at His death, such as the temple veil being torn in half, an earthquake, and a resurrection of saints. (Matt 27:51-53; Eph 4:8) The crucifixion and establishment of God's church were predicted by Zechariah:

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man, My Associate," declares the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered; and I will turn My hand against the little ones. And it will come about in all the land," declares the Lord, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it. And I will bring the third part through the fire, refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.'" (Zech 13:7-9)

Israel (represented in Jerusalem) was split apart spiritually, with two parts being lost (through unbelief) and the third (the faithful remnant) becoming God's chosen.

Cities of the nations fell: Not only did the Jews fall from their exalted position, but the Gentile nations—Rome, Greece, and others—were brought down. Their great cities—the work of their hands and that which brought them security and wealth—fell as the kingdom of Christ was raised up. Ancillary to Jerusalem's destruction, the Romans also besieged Decapolis (Ten Cities), which contained Greeks, Syrians, Arabs, and Jews. All were de-throned, just as Satan was cast down. All had sinned and *fallen* short of the glory of God. (Rom 3:23) It was time for the Lord to reign in Mount Zion.

Babylon the great was remembered: God remembered Jerusalem because of her great sin of shedding the blood of the prophets:

The kings of the earth (Jews) did not believe, nor did any of the inhabitants of the world (the nations), that the adversary and the enemy could enter the gates of Jerusalem. Because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests, who have shed in her midst the blood of the righteous. (Lam 4:12-14)

Rome was never guilty of murdering the prophets. At the time John wrote the Revelation, Babylon

was nothing more than a pile of stones in the desert. The OT prophecies concerning its destruction were common knowledge among the Jews. Jesus' words strike a chord here:

Fill up then the measure of the guilt of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell? Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I say to you, *all these things shall come upon this generation.* (Matt 23:32-36)

The punishment was to be directed at Jerusalem, not Rome.

Remembered: This term is seen throughout scripture, and refers primarily to God's covenant relationship. He remembered Noah (Gen 8:1; 9:15). He remembered His promise to the patriarchs (Lev 26:42, 45). He remembered Israel (Isa 49: 15, 16). He also remembered their sins (Ezek 21:24). Nowhere does God "remember" any Gentile cities. Thus, the term means *to be given God's special attention*. Cornelius' prayer was remembered by God. (Acts 10:31) Wicked men who repent no longer have their sins remembered by God. (Ezek 18:19-22; 33:13) In this sense, they are forgotten, erased, and not charged by God. Both times *remembered* is used in Revelation, it concerns Jerusalem (16:19) who was given the cup of God's fierce wrath. (18:5)

Wine of His fierce wrath: This wine is from the "great wine press of the wrath of God," found in 14:19-20 and 19:15. It comes from the disobedient and rebellious *works* (clusters of grapes) of men. "They poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it." (Rev 16:6)

16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Every island fled away: In Revelation, *fleeing* carries the idea of *escape* for the purpose of *hiding*. The woman fled into the wilderness to be nourished by God and to *escape* (hide from) the dragon. (12:3-6) Islands are symbolic of far away people. (Isa 49:1) They are regarded in the same sense as nations. (Isa 40:15) "The Lord reigns; let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad." (Psa 97:1) In other words, at the presence of Christ (and the destruction of the Jewish economy) distant nations could no longer hide from God. All men became accountable and a time of judgment was at hand. These faraway nations flee. Heaven and earth flee from God's presence, with nowhere to hide. (20:11)

When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the multitude and laid hands on him, crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to *all men everywhere* against our people, and the Law, and *this place*; and besides *he has even brought Greeks into the temple* (those who were once far away from God) and has defiled *this holy place.*" (Acts 21:27-28)

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *everywhere* (islands far away) should repent... (Acts 17:30)

Mountains were not found: Mountains are kings. (17:9-10) The root word means, 'to rear up,' as a

mountain *rears up* over the plain. King Nebuchadnezzar was portrayed as *a mountain which filled the earth*. (Dan 2:35) Jerusalem was called God's holy mountain. (Dan 9:16; Heb 12:20-22) The word defines the one who rules and the kingdom over which he has authority. The Lord called Babylon a "destroying mountain, one who destroys the whole earth." (Jer 51:25) The city itself destroyed no one, but the king surely aimed it as one would a deadly weapon.

Kings are those exalted positions of power. These once majestic mountains are now insignificant, since Jesus Christ now rules and forces "every knee to bow." Every knee includes those knees belonging to other kings:

Mountains of Israel, listen to the word of the Lord God! Thus says the Lord God to the mountains, the hills, the ravines and the valleys: "Behold, I Myself am going to bring a sword on you, and I will destroy your high places." (Ezek 6:3)

Obviously, God wasn't going to attack literal mountains, hills, ravines, and valleys with a literal sword.

The mountains will melt under Him, and the valleys will be split, like wax before the fire, like water poured down a steep place. All this is for the rebellion of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the rebellion of Jacob? Is it not Samaria? *What is the high place of Judah? Is it not Jerusalem?* (Micah 1:4-5)

Referring to Jerusalem's destruction, Jesus implied that it would be a kingdom (mountain) leveled flat:

When He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, *and will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another*, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:41-44)

The words are directed at the physical city but it was the Jews that were to be cast from their exalted position as God's chosen people, along with their descendants:

Now it will come about that in the last days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the chief of the mountains, and *will be raised above the hills*; and all the nations will stream to it. (Isa 2:2)

Note the similarity between Revelation and Isaiah:

For the Lord of hosts will have a day of reckoning against everyone who is proud and lofty, and against everyone who is lifted up, that he may be abased. And it will be against all the...lofty mountains, against all the hills that are lifted up...against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft (*islands*). And the pride of man will be humbled, and the loftiness of men will be abased, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day. But the idols will completely vanish. And men will go into caves of the rocks, and into holes of the ground before the terror of the Lord, and before the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble (a

great earthquake). In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats their idols of silver and their idols of gold, which they made for themselves to worship, in order to go into the caverns of the rocks and the clefts of the cliffs, before the terror of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty, when He arises to make the earth tremble. *Stop regarding man, whose breath of life is in his nostrils; for why should he be esteemed?* (Isa 2:12-22)

Thus, man's pride is symbolized as a mountain to be leveled flat. Those who exalted themselves wore the mark of the beast. It is humanity becoming god-like, raising itself up high.

16:21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

Once again, the figurative language portrays events of a fantastic degree, since there is no way men could survive an onslaught of hundred-pound hail balls. Anyone growing up in the central US knows that even golf-ball-sized hail can kill anything unfortunate enough to be outside.

Huge hailstones: Hailstones were one of the judgments against Egypt (Exo 9) used as a symbol of God's judgment against other nations. (Isa 28; 32:19; Ezek 38:22) God also used hailstones against the five Amorite kings, "the hail killing more than those who were killed by the sword." (Josh 10) Hailstones are called the voice of God. (Psa 18:12-13; Isa 30:30-31) In prophecy, hailstones knock down protective barriers in which men place their trust and the whitewash (falsehood) that covers them.

...they have misled My people by saying, "Peace!" when there is no peace. When anyone builds a wall, look: they plaster it over with whitewash. So tell those who plaster it over with whitewash (falsehood), that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out. Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, "Where is the plaster with which you plastered it?" Therefore, thus says the Lord God, "I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume it in wrath. So I shall tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the Lord. Thus I shall spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I shall say to you, 'The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone, along with the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,' declares the Lord God. (Ezek 13:10-16)

There were no whitewashed walls, nor did God send literal hail to smash them. It is all poetic language describing the lies of the false prophets (the whitewash), the trust that the people placed in these prophets (walls of protection), and God's judgment (hail).