

### Bible Study Revelation 16-17

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

This chapter begins the seven Bowl Judgements. This is the third series of seven judgements in the book of Revelation. Here is a chart of all three:

The Seal Judgements		The Trumpet Judgements		The Bowl Judgements	
6:1-2	The Lamb as Conqueror	8:7	Vegetation Struck	16:2	Loathsome Sores
6:3-4	Conflict on Earth	8:8-9	The Seas Turned to Blood	16:3	Seas Turned to Blood
6:5-6	Scarcity on Earth	8:10-11	The Fresh Waters Made Bitter	16:4	Fresh Waters Turned to Blood
6:7-8	Widespread Death	8:12-13	The Heavens Darkened	16:8-9	Humans Scorched
6:9-11	Cry of the Martyrs	9:1-12	The Painful Locusts	16:10	Darkness and Pain
6:12-17	Cosmic Disturbances The Sealing of the 144,000	9:1-12	Plagues	16:12	Euphrates Dries Up Demons like Frogs
8:1-6	Prelude to the Trumpet Judgements	11:15-13:15	The Kingdom Proclaimed War in Heaven War on Earth The Beast vs the Saints	16:17-18	Great Earthquake and Hail

There are several parallels between the current Bowl Judgements and Previous Trumpet Judgements:

Trumpet Judgements		Bowl Judgements	
8:8-9	<i>“Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and <u>a third of the sea became blood.</u> And <u>a third of the living creatures in the sea died...</u>”</i>	16:3	<i>“Then the second angel poured out his bowl on <u>the sea</u>, and it became <u>blood</u> as of a dead man; and <u>every living creature in the sea died.</u>”</i>
8:10-11	<i>“Then the third angel sounded: And a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and <u>it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.</u> The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and</i>	16:4	<i>“Then the third angel poured out his bowl <u>on the rivers and springs of water</u>, and <u>they became blood.</u>”</i>



	<i><u>many men died from the water, because it was made bitter.</u></i>		
8:12	<i>“Then the fourth angel sounded: And <u>a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened.</u> A third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night.”</i>	16:10	<i>“Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and <u>his kingdom became full of darkness;</u> and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.”</i>

*“However, let us pray that we be chastised in a fatherly manner and not be scourged with harsh treatment by the wrath that comes from the Lord—“for there is no longer health in our flesh because of his anger” – so that having cleansed through the tears of repentance our robes which have been stained by sins, and being dressed as for a wedding, we might enter into the bridal chamber of Christ, our God” (Andrew of Caesarea).*

Pain often leads to repentance. Isn’t this the case today? It was pennilessness and hunger in a far country that brought the prodigal son back to his father’s house. We see this principle at work in the two thieves that were crucified with Christ. Both were experiencing the extreme pain of being crucified, and were facing certain death and subsequent judgement.

The same pain drove them in opposite directions. One was driven further from Christ: *“One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, ‘Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!’ But the other thief, experiencing the same pain as the other, was driven to repentance: “...We indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our crimes; but this man has done nothing wrong.’ And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!’”* This is the dynamic of the woes of the end times. Pain led the repentant thief directly into Paradise at the last moment before his death and judgement. The pain of the end times will drive many in that generation to repentance at the last moment before the Second Coming of Christ and His Judgement Seat.

St. Irenaeus sees a parallel between the Bowl Judgements of the End Times and the Old Testament Exodus:

*“The whole exodus of the people out of Egypt, which took place under divine guidance, was a type and image of the exodus of the church that should take place from among the Gentiles; and for this reason he leads [the church] out at last from this world into his own inheritance” (Irenaeus).*

In these two chapters we will see several parallels between the woes of the Bowl Judgements and the plagues of the Exodus.

**First Bowl: Loathsome Sores**



*“<sup>2</sup> So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.”*

God sent a similar plague on the Egyptians leading up to the Exodus:

*“And [Aaron and Moses] caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast. And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils were on the magicians and on all the Egyptians” (Exodus 9:10-12).*

*“We can interpret these things in a twofold manner. Either these events will occur literally at the time of the consummation, or they are to be understood allegorically.... And a little later he said, “For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be.” As each of the seven bowls is poured out, the events said to have occurred in the present passages should be interpreted in the light of those things [the Lord said]... (Primasius)”*

*“Therefore, it probably means here that a huge and terrible sore has come upon those persons who have the mark of the beast’s name and who worship its image, so that confounded by the singular guilt of this wound, they are sentenced to the punishment of eternal torments. Concerning this sin as not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. ‘If I had not done among them the works that no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have seen and hatred both me and my Father’ [quoting Christ in John 15:24]” This is an incurable sore” (Oecumenius).*

**Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood**

*“<sup>3</sup> Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.”*

God sent the same punishment on the Egyptians leading up to the Exodus:

*“And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the LORD commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. <sup>21</sup> The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exodus 7:20-21).*

Primasius observes:

*“...we knew without difficulty to be symbolized in that first of the plagues that we read was inflicted upon the Egyptians. For then it reports that the fresh waters were turned to blood, whether the rivers of Egypt or the rain waters, as some translations have it, saying, “And their rain waters [were turned] to blood.”... And so, perhaps in this passage what is described in the exodus to have happened in the first plague is placed in the second bowl, in that from the sterile waters [of the sea]... And so, perhaps in this passage what is described in the Exodus to*



*have happened in the first plague is place in the second bowl, that being the sterile waters of the sea.”*

### **Third Bowl: The Waters Turn to Blood**

*“<sup>4</sup> Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup> And I heard the angel of the waters saying:*

*“You are righteous, O Lord,  
The One who is and who was and who is to be,  
Because You have judged these things.  
<sup>6</sup> For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
And You have given them blood to drink.  
For it is their just due.”*

*“<sup>7</sup> And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”*

*“So let us hasten to bestow upon them joy and gladness for our repentance, recognizing that a divine angel attends each one of us and by a certain unutterable word implants in us what must be done, in as much as his mind imperceptibly converses with our mind and he intends to rejoice over that which is heeded, but like God to grieve over that which is disregarded”  
(Andrew of Caesarea)*

### **Fourth Bowl: Men Are Scorched**

*“<sup>8</sup> Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. <sup>9</sup> And men were scorched with great heat...”*

**Rather than repent, the people followed the example of the unrepentant thief on the cross, and hurled abuse at God:**

*“... and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.”*

*“It is clear that the plagues are for this purpose, to bring those to acknowledge their Master through his beneficent work” (Oecumenius).*

*“It is not given to the sun, but to that angel who poured out [the bowl] on the sun [to scorch people.” (Primasius)*

*“...some have fallen to such depth of evil that by the depravity of their minds, they will not turn to conversion but rather to blasphemy” (Andrew of Caesarea).*

### **Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain**



*“<sup>10</sup> Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.”*

God sent a similar plague of darkness on the Egyptians leading up to the Passover:

*“So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another; nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings” (Exodus 10:22-23).*

*<sup>11</sup> They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.”*

Pharaoh also rejected the opportunity repent, and therefore invited more plagues:

*“But the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart, and he would not let them go. Then Pharaoh said to him, “Get away from me! Take heed to yourself and see my face no more! For in the day you see my face you shall die!” (Exodus 10:27-28).*

Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dried Up

*“<sup>12</sup> Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. <sup>13</sup> And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.”*

*“He calls the demons ‘frogs’ because they rejoice that the life of people that is muddy and slimy. Moreover, they take pleasure in the life of sinners, which is moist and without constraint, rather than in the life of the righteous, which is steadfast and austere...” (Oecumenius).*

*“Perhaps for this reason he adds the horrible filthiness of frogs as a comparison with their impudence. For like frogs living in sewers at night, these false prophets make a great noise with their damnable ranting of their error. Just like frogs are loathsome in the places they inhabit, in their appearance and their annoying croaking, so the devil and his followers are recognized to be abominable to the truth, and is deservedly and justly damned to eternal fire” (Primasius).*

God sent a similar plague of frogs on the Egyptians leading up to the Exodus:

*“So Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt, and the frogs came up and covered the land of Egypt...” (Exodus 8:6).*

*“<sup>14</sup> For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*



*“One form of the wonders worked by the demons is that they gather the kings for war against each other at the time of consummation” (Oecumenius).*

*“<sup>16</sup> And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.”*

*“...an archaeological site in northern Israel, the ancient city of Megiddo is believed to have been inhabited for about six millennia from around 7000 BCE, and is named in the New Testament as the location for the epic final battle between the forces of good and evil... most scholars agree that the word derives from "Har Megiddo" – meaning "Mount Megiddo" – which was among the most important cities of the ancient world.*

*Located on the Via Maris – the principal land route linking Egypt with Mesopotamia – Megiddo held enormous importance as both a military and trading outpost since Neolithic times... As waves of occupants rebuilt the city upon the ruins of their predecessors over thousands of years, Megiddo was eventually transformed into an enormous "tel", or mound. Initial excavations at Tel Megiddo were carried out between 1925 and 1929, revealing an incredible sequence of civilizations that stretched all the way back to the end of the Stone Age” (<https://www.iflscience.com/the-biblical-location-of-armageddon-is-a-real-place-68608>).*

#### **Seventh Bowl: The Earth Utterly Shaken**

*“<sup>17</sup> Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!””*

This is exactly what Christ said on the cross as he died: *“And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last” (Mark 15:37). “So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30).* With this loud cry, Christ was proclaiming that His earthly work had ended, and the salvation of the faithful was about to be accomplished by His resurrection. By shouting “It is done” in Revelation, He is proclaiming that the earthly plagues had ended, and the judgement of the evil was about to be accomplished by His second coming.

*“<sup>21</sup> And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent.”*

God sent a similar plague of hail on the Egyptians leading up to the Passover:

*“And Moses stretched out his rod toward heaven; and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire darted to the ground. And the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, so very heavy that there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation” (Exodus 9:23-25).*

#### **The Scarlet Woman and the Scarlet Beast**

*“<sup>17:3</sup> So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. <sup>4</sup> The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and*



pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication.

<sup>5</sup> *And on her forehead a name was written:*

***MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT,  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS  
AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS  
OF THE EARTH.***

<sup>6</sup> *I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement.”*

This Harlot of Babylon is the utter opposite of the woman described in chapter 12:1-5.

*“Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth... She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.”*

Because of her celestial majesty, her giving birth to a male child who would rule the nations, the dragon desired to kill her when born child, and she fled to the wilderness, and her child would be caught up to God and his throne, there is strong evidence that the woman in chapter 12 is the Theotokos.

By contrast, the woman described in this chapter of the utter opposite of the Theotokos as symbolized by the woman in chapter 12. This woman is a “*harlot*.” The Theotokos is a perpetual virgin. This woman is “*full of names of blasphemy*.” The Theotokos has many titles of praise; “most holy, pure, blessed and glorious lady”, “panagia” (all-holy). Greater in honor than the cherubim, and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim.” This woman is called “*the mother of harlots*.” The Theotokos is called the Mother of God. To the writer of Revelation, and to all faithful Christians, Christ said of John, “Behold your mother.” This woman is “*...drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs*.” Through her Son, the Theotokos provides the life-blood of the saints and martyrs in Holy Communion.

The “Babylon” of which this evil woman is called “the mother of harlots” is a symbol of another city. That city was known for its extreme moral depravity: “*... having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication*.” That city was a conglomeration of nations: “*...the waters which you saw, where the harlot sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues*.” That city was a superpower: “*And the woman whom you saw is that great city which reigns over the kings of the earth*” (Verse 18). That city had been waging war against the Church: “*...drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus*.” The city called “Babylon” in this chapter was a symbol of the city of Rome and its Empire. Peter wrote his first Epistle while living in Rome, and called that place “Babylon:” “*She who is in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you; and so does*

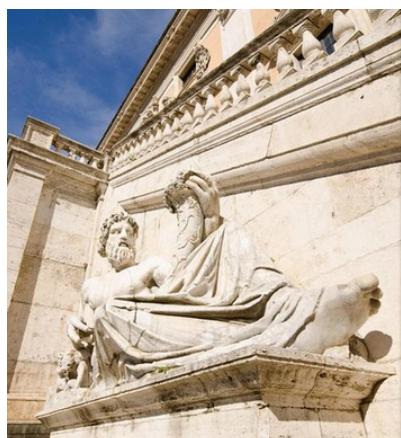


*Mark my son” (1 Peter 5:13). If there is any doubt, the text continues: “Here is the mind which has wisdom: The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits” (verse 9).*

The city of Rome was nicknamed the city of “Seven Hills” long before Christianity:



That nickname for Rome is still used today:



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There were practical reasons for Peter and John codenamed Rome as “Babylon.” The Roman government was already persecuting Christians, and watching for any hint of treason from them. They may not have noticed the mention of another, more ancient and famous city, or been aware that it was a secret Christian metaphor for the Imperial capital. However, the first Christians to read Revelation would have instantly made the connection.

The early Christians reading Revelation, who were suffering severe persecution, and were powerless to stop it. Therefore, they would have taken great comfort reading that God would soon powerfully avenge the evil done by Rome against them. *“Vengeance is Mine, and recompense; Their foot shall slip in due time; For the day of their calamity is at hand, And the things to come hasten upon them”* (Deuteronomy 32:35).

Finally, many Protestant commentators read this chapter of Revelation and interpret the “Harlot of Babylon” and its connection to the “city of seven hills” as describing the Roman Catholic Church. Orthodoxy rejects this view. As we saw, the Apostle Peter described himself as living in “Babylon,” and he was certainly not part of the evil and persecution of Christians. Moreover, the Church of Rome would someday become the highest-ranking church in Orthodoxy. The descriptions in this chapter of Rome is exactly what we know it was – morally debauched, unjust, brutal, anti-Christian, pagan empire awaiting conversion to Christ.