

Revelation 16 (NASB)

Six Bowls of Wrath

16:1 "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."

John 'heard' the commands because smoke actually covered God during the pouring out of God's wrath. Revelation 15:8 says *"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."*

"Righteous wrath is no less noble than love, since both coexist with God." John MacArthur

"A god who is all love, all grace, all mercy and no sovereignty, no justice, no holiness and no wrath is not a god but an idol."

This is a hard thing for unbelievers and even some who claim to know Christ to accept. But . . .

The Bible is a book of both hope and judgment. God cannot reward unless He also punishes. God will destroy all unbelievers with fire (Matthew 3:12). The unsaved are under God's wrath forever and ever (John 3:36). Colossians 3:6 (Not the NLT) says the day of God's wrath is coming. All unbelievers will be punished with unquenchable fire (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). Hebrews 10:30-31 says that He will judge and punish unbelievers.

There is nothing said about love and forgiveness for unbelievers in any of those verses. These verses do not refer to people today, so unbelievers still have a chance. Verses 16-19 are NOT in chronological order. The events of Chapter 16 follow Chapters 17 and 18 and end with the beginning of Chapter 19. As all of these coming wraths are poorer out, the people on Earth realize who the wrath was coming from (Revelation 6:15-17). Even with all the wrath of God being poured out, they will NOT turn to God (Revelation 9:20-21). After the seven bowl judgments there will be NO more judgments. There are three sets of plagues listed in Scripture. They differ in the number of people they were directed. The Exodus Plagues were directed at one nation, Egypt. The trumpet judgments in Revelation 8:7-12, were directed against one-third of the Earth. The Bowl judgments in Revelation 16:1 will be directed against all the Earth. These judgments culminate the woes of Revelation 11:14, which describe the Seal judgments, the Trumpet judgments and the Bowl judgments.

16:2 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 terms "loathsome and malignant" are 'kakos' and 'poneros', both are Greek words that translate as evil. Sore is the Greek word 'helkos' and means "ulcers". The same word is used in the following verses. In Exodus 9:9-11 the word is translated to "painful boils". In Deuteronomy 28:27 and 35, the boils are described as *"tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured"*. In Job 2:7 they are described as *"painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head."* These judgments will come upon all who don't believe and fear God instead of the beast. This plague is different than the one described in Zechariah 14:12 in that their flesh will rot and so will their eyes in their sockets and tongues in their mouths. According to the same verse, it is directed not only against those who oppose God, but those who oppose Israel.

16:3 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.

This plague will completely destroy 70% of the Earth. 100% of the creatures in the sea will die. The sea is not smooth running blood as we view it but is dark thick coagulating. In comparing Genesis 1:21 to Revelation 16:3, God creates in Genesis and He destroys the world in Revelation.

“The vague and tenuous hope that God is too kind to punish the ungodly has become a deadly opiate for the consciences of millions.” A.W. Tozer

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

This plague differs from the one in Revelation 8:10-11 (Trumpet judgment, 1/3 of the water) in that this plague is for all water on the Earth. Since humans can't live long without drinking water, the plague must occur immediately (within days) before Christ returns. The period is Wrath because that is what God is pouring out on the Earth. The time for mercy and forgiveness no longer exists. People will wonder how a God of love, mercy and grace can do something so horrible.

16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” 7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

As if knowing their thoughts, the Angel with authority over water answers them. This angel defends God. This fitting judgment is sent by God (Note: Again why God sends His wrath) because they shed the blood of God's people. It is because of HOW believers were treated. Today we should not be so eager to retaliate when we are wronged. *“It is mine to avenge; I will repay.”* (Deuteronomy 32:35).

“Although His wrath is terrifying and deadly, it is a just, deserved and appropriate response to sinner's rejection of Him.” John MacArthur

The number of Christians murdered during this time are uncountable. (Revelation 7:9, 14) God has given them blood to drink as pay back because they enjoyed killing God's people. (Revelation 17:6)

“They refused the Living Water and now they have death to drink.” Pastor David Guzik

The angel says that God is just or righteous. A voice from the Altar says that God's JUDGMENTS are righteous. The NASB translation says that the Altar is speaking. It could be an angel or the Altar personified. The most chilling words in these verses and perhaps the entire Bible are “They deserve it.” God is just but at this time we are living under Grace, we get what we don't deserve, it is awful to think that there will be a time when people will get what they do deserve. Many people think of our God as a soft and sweet god, but He is JUST. We should have confidence in God because several times in the Bible God says be patient, I will repay. (Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30) There are numerous verses that describe God's wrath, justice and judgments.

Genesis 18:25	“Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” Abraham begs for Sodom.
Psalms 19:9	True and righteous
Psalms 119:75	Fair and righteous

Romans 2:5 Fair and righteous
Revelation 19:1-2 True and Just

The word righteous means morally right and justifiable. Paul teaches in Romans that man can never attain righteousness through what he does. Man is credited righteousness by God through faith. Romans 4:5 says *“to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.”*

16:8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 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 this bowl judgment, the angel's bowl is poured out on the sun. A lot of commentators say this describes nuclear war. This verse literally says “the sun”. There is no mention of nuclear war or any other explanation. Another consequence of this heat will be the hottest debate of today's news, Global warming. The ice will melt.

Consider what is going on here on Earth and apply it to this quote . . .

“For the save, life on this Earth is as bad as it gets. For the un-save, life on this Earth is as good as it gets.” Neither grace nor wrath would move these people to repent. They DO know where these plagues are coming from God. Verse 9 says “they blasphemed the name of God.”

“The failure of men to respond with repentance shows that knowledge or experience of judgment will not change man's sinful condition. Those who are not won by grace will never be won.” Pastor Guzik

“The wishful thinking of some that men would repent if they only knew the power and righteous judgment of God is shattered by frequent mention in this chapter of the hardness of the human heart in the face of the most stringent and evident divine discipline.” Walvoord

16:10 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, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

The fifth bowl is poured out, literally and figuratively on the throne of the Beast. The darkness is Absolute, Exodus 10:21-22. The following verses describe darkness:

Joel 2:2-3	Day turned to night, An Army of Locusts
Joel 3:14-15	Total darkness – Armageddon
Zephaniah 1:15	Wrath, gloom and day to darkness
Mark 13:24	Literal darkness
Acts 2:20	Daytime to darkness
Isaiah 13:10	No light from the sky.

Jesus describes Hell in Matthew 25:30 as being Absolute darkness. The darkness described in verse 10 is a preview to their future. It says they gnawed their tongues, gnawed means they kept on chewing. We picture Armageddon as being a long drawn out battle but according to these verses, it might be over as quickly as it begins. This battle will be pit the world's armies against Jesus. Jesus will destroy them in an instant.

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

These verses describe Armageddon – the last battle on Earth. This bowl is poured out to do nothing more than prepare for what comes next. How is the river referred to elsewhere in the Bible. Genesis 15:18 describes it as the Great River as does Deuteronomy 1:7 and Joshua 1:4. This terminology is used because it is the protective river of Israel, wide, deep and long. It flows from Mt. Ararat, 1800 miles to the Persian Gulf. It is between 300 and 1200 yards wide. It needs to be dried up so that the armies from the east can cross it. If you think of the previous bowl judgment where the ice caps will be melted and flooding has occurred, these armies could not march across the flooded river. This is not an act of kindness from God, but is done to bring the kingdoms of the world to destruction. Satan's purpose in this final battle is not to obtain world political power but to combat the armies of Heaven. The place of the battle has three names in Scripture, Armageddon, Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley. Megiddo was actually a small town on the edge of the Jezreel Valley. It led into the most important pass to the valley. Pharaoh Thutmose III said that capturing that small town was equivalent to capturing 1000 other cities. The parting of the Red Sea during the Exodus is like the drying up of the Euphrates River in that God's enemies are lead to their doom.

Armageddon

16:13 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;

The dragon is Satan. The beast is the Antichrist. The false prophet is the False prophet – 2nd. The things that came out of their mouths were not actual frogs. They looked may or may not have looked like frogs. John saw them as frogs because they were unclean and frogs are unclean. (Leviticus 11:10 and 41). Knowing that, Revelation 16:13 describes them as unclean spirits like frogs. This is probably a fulfillment of Jesus' words in Mark 13:22, *"For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect."* (NIV)

16:14 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.

These three creatures are clearly described as demons. All armies of the world will fight this battle, not just the armies from the East. This is NOT a battle pitting nation against nation, it is the world against God. This battle will not include Arabs (Muslims) battling against God. Obadiah 1:18 says

*"Jacob will be a fire and Joseph a flame;
Esau will be stubble, and they will set him on fire and destroy him.
There will be no survivors from Esau.
The Lord has spoken."*

The descendants of Esau are the Arab nations. They will be destroyed by Gog and Magog. (Ezekiel 38:1-4) We know that God wins the battle because John says that *"the Great day of God has come."* God's wrath is because of the treatment of God's people. God's punishment is exclusion for heaven and eternity in fire. This battle was fought because of what the world did to Jerusalem. (Joel 3:2) What is God's response as Satan gathers these armies, He laughs!

16:15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.")

The phrase “*I am coming like a thief*” means that He will come fast and unexpectedly. When a thief breaks into your home, it is without warning. The phrasing in this verse to not go naked and ashamed refers to being ready or you will be embarrassed and ashamed.

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

The NASB is the only version to get this correct. It is actually Har-Magedon, which translates as Mt. Megiddo. There were 200 battles fought there. This is where Gideon with the three hundred men that lapped water like dogs defeated the Midianites in Judges 7. According to Zechariah 14:1-4, this battle will only last one day. This battle will be explained in detail in Revelation 19:11-21.

Seventh Bowl of Wrath

16:17 Then 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.”

This final bowl, the final judgment, is poured out on the air. It is poured out on the air because that is Satan’s domain. Ephesians 2:2 says “*in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*” This is God’s final act. He has poured His wrath out against:

Revelation 16:2	earth
Revelation 16:3	sea (salt water)
Revelation 16:4	rivers (fresh water)
Revelation 16:8	sun
Revelation 16:17	air

This shows that they will not be able to escape from the wrath of God. God, the Father, is doing the talking.

John 19:30 says “*Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*” This is Jesus speaking here, “*It is finished!*” In Greek, ‘tetelastai’ means it is finished or paid in full. Sin is paid for. God says sin is gone. It is done in Greek is ‘Gegonen’, “it has come to be”. They are the same because they are the ending.

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.

This verse is the fulfillment of a rarely recognized prophecy. This fits with Hebrews 12:26-27 in that it is the earthquake to end all earthquakes. An earthquake like this has NEVER happened before.

This bowl, Revelation 16:18, is like the last seal judgment (Revelation 8:5) and the last trumpet judgment (Revelation 11:19) in that there will be lightening, thunder and an earthquake. The prophecies about God’s final judgment upon sin state that it will shake the heavens and the earth. (Isaiah 24:19-20 and Haggai 2:6-7)

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

This great city is not Babylon but it is Jerusalem. Revelation 11:7-8 NLT says *“7 When they complete their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the bottomless pit[a] will declare war against them, and he will conquer them and kill them. 8 And their bodies will lie in the main street of Jerusalem, the city that is figuratively called “Sodom” and “Egypt,” the city where their Lord was crucified.”*

We don't know if “Babylon the great” is a city or an area. All of the cities are destroyed. The “wine of the fury (or fierceness)” is ‘thymos’ and translates as an outburst of anger. The word of His wrath is “ogre” which translates as a standing state of anger. The phrase “Thymos Ogre” then show the strongest pouring out of God's judgment.

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

This verse is also a fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah 40:4 says *“Fill in the valleys, and level the mountains and hills. Straighten the curves, and smooth out the rough places.”* According to Henry Morris, one of history's greatest experts on Genesis, this will result in “Jerusalem alone, of all the great cities of the earth, is thus to be spared destruction by the earthquake at the end of the tribulation. It is the one eternal city, and will survive as long as the earth endures in its present form, finally being replaced as the new Jerusalem, in the new earth.”

*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.*

God has used hailstorms/hailstones as a judgment in Old Testament time, see Exodus 9:24, Joshua 10:11, Isaiah 28:2 and Ezekiel 38:22. Ezekiel 38:22 says *“I will punish you and your armies with disease and bloodshed; I will send torrential rain, hailstones, fire, and burning sulfur!”* The NASB says that the hailstones will weigh about one hundred pounds each, the NLT says 75 pounds and the KJV says *“The weight of a talent each. The largest hailstone ever recorded was about the 8 inches in diameter and weighed about 2 pounds. In light of what has come before, these hailstones are even more deadly and frightful because there is no place to hide. In all of these accounts of God using hail as judgment, they were used against God's enemies. People responded by cursing God. We can make sure that we escape this coming wrath by making sure the we belong to Christ. Romans 8:1 and Hebrews 4:7. Hebrews 4:7 says “God again set a certain day, calling it “Today.” This he did when a long time later he spoke through David, as in the passage already quoted: “Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.”*