

# Ministry of Grace

## Revelation Chapter 16

<sup>1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

<sup>2</sup>So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

<sup>3</sup>The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

<sup>4</sup>The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. <sup>6</sup>For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" <sup>7</sup>And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"

<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.

<sup>9</sup>They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

<sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup>and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

<sup>12</sup>The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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.

<sup>15</sup>("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!")

<sup>16</sup>And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

<sup>17</sup>The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup>And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. <sup>19</sup>The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup>And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. <sup>21</sup>And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

## Notes

### Revelation 16:1

**<sup>1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."**

“a loud voice from the temple” – based on the last verse of the previous chapter, this must be God talking

and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. (**Revelation 15:8**) [ESV]

These seven angels are the ones who have the seven plagues, the last ones, to be poured out on the earth and its inhabitants.

### Revelation 16: 2

**<sup>2</sup>So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.**

The first bowl is poured out on the earth. Notice that the first trumpet (**Revelation 8:7**) involved throwing hail and fire upon the earth and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of all the trees were burned up. This bowl judgment affects those who have the mark of the beast and those who worship his image.

“harmful” – This is the Greek word *kakos*, an adjective which describes something which is bad in its very nature. It is derived from the verb *chazō*, which means to give back or to retreat in battle. It is used of a soldier who runs instead of fighting.

“painful” – This is the Greek word *ponēros*, an adjective which describes something as evil, malicious, hurtful, or painful. With regard to people this word implies malicious intent. Hence, it is sometimes translated as malignant.

“sores” – From the Greek word *helkos*, which refers to a boil full of oozing pus. In the Septuagint it is the word that is used to describe the plague of boils inflicted on the Egyptians (the sixth plague on Egypt - **Exodus 9:8-12**).

Notice that this plague only affects those who have the mark of the beast and those who worship his image. It does not affect believers who have stayed faithful to the true God.

### Revelation 16:3

**<sup>3</sup>The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.**

The second bowl is poured out on the sea. Notice that the second trumpet (**Revelation 8:8, 9**) only affects  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the sea (becomes blood) whereas this affects all of the sea (becomes blood as of a dead man) and every living creature in the sea died. Some have speculated that this only refers to the Mediterranean Sea not all the seas of the world. This is similar to the first plague on Egypt where all water became blood (**Exodus 7:15-25**). However, since the other bowls seem to affect the entire earth, it is reasonable to believe that this means all the oceans of the earth.

**“it became like the blood of a corpse”** – The placement of the word “like” is critically important to interpreting the Greek text. The Greek word *hōs*, meaning “like” or “as” appears after the word for blood, not before. Thus, this verse should read, “it became blood like a dead person.” This plague will actually turn the sea into blood like that of a dead man. Apparently this is the thick dark coagulated blood which quickly begins to stink. The effect of this will be that all oceanic life from the smallest plankton to the largest sea mammal will die. All hydrologic processes will cease, hence all weather systems will cease as well. All the dead animals will wash up on ocean shores around the world and will rot and stink! The oceans themselves will be a cesspool of stinking, rotten, putrefying coagulated blood.

John MacArthur writes in *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Revelation 12-22*:

The transforming of the world’s seas into putrid pools of stinking death will be graphic testimony to the wickedness of man, and the reverse of the day when God originally gave life to all sea creatures in **Genesis 1:21**.

### **Revelation 16:4-7**

**<sup>4</sup>The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. <sup>5</sup>And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. <sup>6</sup>For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" <sup>7</sup>And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"**

The third bowl is poured out on the rivers and sources of water. Notice that the third trumpet only affected 1/3 of the rivers and sources of water (**Rev 8:10, 11**). This bowl judgment affects them all.

**“springs”** – This is from *pēgas*, meaning “a fountain or spring” in the sense of being the source of water. This could also refer to snow pack and glaciers as the source of rivers and springs.

**“angel in charge of the waters”** – The original Greek reads “angel of the waters.” Compare this to the angels of the four winds (**Revelation 7:1**) and the angel who has power over fire (**Revelation 14:18**). It was a common opinion among the Hebrews that the angels presided over elements, and that each element was committed to the jurisdiction of a particular angel. Since this is the angel having responsibility for the waters it is appropriate that he should be the one to declare God as righteous in his destruction of the waters as a judgment on unbelieving mankind.

**“who is to be”** – This phrase is included in some translations after **“who is and who was,”** but is not in the best manuscripts and probably should be omitted. In its place in most manuscripts is the word *hosios*, meaning Holy one.

**“And I heard the altar saying,”** –The word translated “altar” is in the genitive case implying “of the altar” or “from the altar.” It is not the altar itself saying something otherwise the word translated “altar” would be in the normative or accusative case. It is possible that what John heard was the unified voice of the martyred saints under the altar affirming what the angel has just declared, that God is acting in righteousness and justice as he passes judgment on the world of unrepentant mankind.

## Revelation 16:8, 9

**<sup>8</sup>The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup>They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.**

The fourth bowl is poured out on the sun. Notice that the fourth trumpet judgment (**Revelation 8:12**) affected the sun, moon, and stars so that they did not shine  $\frac{1}{3}$  as much as previously. This judgment is on the sun only and it is not absence of light that takes place but burning heat.

“**to scorch**” – This is the Greek word *kaumatidzō*, which means to burn, and “**fire**” is the Greek word *pur*. Hence, the sun was given power to burn men with fire. Apparently, this is more than just a severe sun burn from ultraviolet rays rather an intense heat from infrared rays that burns like fire.

Old Testament references to this include:

"For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble. The day that is coming shall set them ablaze, says the LORD of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. (**Malachi 4:1**) [ESV]

Therefore a curse devours the earth, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left. (**Isaiah 24:6**) [ESV]

Moreover, the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day when the LORD binds up the brokenness of his people, and heals the wounds inflicted by his blow. (**Isaiah 30:26**) [ESV]

“**they cursed the name of God**” – The reaction of mankind is not repentance but defiance of God. Their refusal to submit is their sentence of suffering and death.

This may seem strange to someone who believes in the one true God. However, keep in mind that the Beast will claim to be a god and will demonstrate so with miraculous signs performed by his false prophet. Even today there is a growing belief that a man can become a god. It won't take very much evidence to convince the permanent earth dwellers of that time that the Beast really is a god. It is very likely that he will proclaim himself to be equal to Jehovah God and that he will declare war against the Jews and their God. Since the people who receive the mark of the beast will be devoted to the beast, they will also consider Jehovah God to be their enemy and will willingly blaspheme His name.

## Revelation 16:10, 11

**<sup>10</sup>The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup>and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.**

The fifth bowl is poured out on the throne of the beast. Compare this to the fifth trumpet (**Revelation 9:1-12**) in which a fallen angel is given the key to the abyss and he releases smoke causing the sun and moon to be darkened and, along with the smoke come demons from the abyss. In the fifth bowl judgment there are no demons involved, just darkness so

intense that it produces pain. Though it is said that the bowl is poured out on the throne it is clear that the entire kingdom of the beast is affected. Since he is the world ruler, it appears that the darkness extends to the entire world.

This judgment is similar to the ninth plague inflicted on the Egyptians (**Exodus 10:21-29**). Notice that the darkness of the Egyptian plague was so severe that it could be felt:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt." (**Exodus 10:21**) [ESV]

Similarly, the darkness of the fifth bowl judgment produces pain which is so excruciating that it causes men to gnaw on their tongues. Also, it appears that the darkness thrust upon the Egyptians was more than just lack of sunlight:

So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch 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 people of Israel had light where they lived**. (**Exodus 10:22, 23**) [ESV]

Here is the darkness of the fifth bowl judgment as seen by Old Testament prophets:

a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and **thick darkness!** (**Joel 2:2a**) [ESV]

A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of **darkness and gloom**, a day of clouds and **thick darkness**, (**Zephaniah 1:15**) [ESV]

For the stars of the heavens and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be dark at its rising, and the moon will not shed its light. (**Isaiah 13:10**) [ESV]

The word “pains” is from the Greek word *ponos*, which is from the same root as *ponēros* from verse two, meaning pain. The word translated “sores” is from *helkos*, the same word used in verse two to describe the pustering boils of the first plague. It appears from this verse that the bowl judgments are poured out so rapidly that there is insufficient time for mankind to recover from former bowl judgments.

The cumulative effect of the painful sores, fouled oceans, lack of fresh water for drinking or cleansing of sores, intense heat, all engulfed in thick darkness, will bring unbearable misery. The effect that these plagues have on mankind is to produce cursing, not repentance. Just as Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, so will unbelieving mankind in the last days.

“**did not repent of their deeds**” – This is the last mention of their lack of repentance. Just as Pharaoh resisted God by hardening his heart until God finally declared his heart hard, so mankind during these final plagues will refuse to repent until God finally declares them unrepentant and unleashes the final two bowl judgments on them.

## **Revelation 16:12-14**

<sup>12</sup>The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup>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. <sup>14</sup>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.**

The sixth bowl is poured out on the great river Euphrates. Compare this to the sixth trumpet judgment (**Revelation 9:13-21**) where the four demons are released from the great river Euphrates. In this case, the river is dried up (no weather system to cause rain or snow and scorching heat to melt the snow pack) which will allow the kings of the east to cross to Israel. These kings will be joined by all other kings under control of the beast and all will be gathered by the three unclean spirits.

The drying-up of this river may have been the subject of prophecy in the Old Testament:

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. (**Isaiah 11:15**) [ESV]

He shall pass through the sea of troubles and strike down the waves of the sea, and all the depths of the Nile shall be dried up. (**Zechariah 10:11a**) [ESV]

“**three unclean spirits like frogs**” – A better translation would be “three unclean spirits as frogs.” This does not say that the spirits were like frogs but that they are unclean the same as frogs. Frogs were considered unclean animals and their slimy filthiness is an indication of the vileness of these three unclean spirits. These three spirits are apparently Satan (out of the mouth of the dragon) and two other demons who indwelt the beast and the false prophet. These three spirits will perform signs to draw the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of God Almighty (the day of the LORD). It is possible that one of the signs they perform is to provide light for the armies to see their way to Israel.

### **Revelation 16:15**

<sup>15</sup> (“**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!**”)

God pronounces that he is coming as a thief. This image has been used in several places as a reference to the Day of the LORD, that day of His judgment on mankind.

Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. (**Matthew 24:42, 43**) [ESV]

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. (**1 Thessalonians 5:2**) [ESV]

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. (**2 Peter 3:10**) [ESV]

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. (**Revelation 3:3**) [ESV]

**“Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed.”** – This is apparently a military reference to soldiers who are alert and fully dressed for battle. Those who are not alert and not ready will be seen in their dereliction and will be ashamed. This is a beatitude directed at those who have not received the mark of the beast but who are anxiously awaiting the return of the Lord.

## **Revelation 16:16**

**16** **And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.**

The narrative returns again to the work that the three unclean spirits will do in gathering the kings of the earth to the battle of the great day of the Lord’s wrath. They will be gathered to a place which in Hebrew is called *Har-Mageddōn* which literally means “the mountain of Meggido.” But there is no hill or mountain in Israel named Mount Meggido. Therefore, it is believed by many that this refers to the hill country surrounding the plain of Meggido which is located some sixty miles north of Jerusalem.

Dr. Michael Heiser in his book “The Unseen Realm” makes a pretty convincing case for this to be *Har-Mo’ed* rather than *Har-Megeddon*. *Har-Mo’ed* means “the mountain of assembly” which would be Mt. Zion, the hill upon which Jerusalem is built. This also makes more sense since Christ will set his feet on the Mount of Olives, across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem. It is also commonly believed that the Kidron Valley is the same as the Valley of Jehoshaphat referred to by the prophet Joel

I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, (**Joel 3:2**) [ESV]

Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. (**Joel 3:12**) [ESV]

This battle (slaughter) will be brief and devastating as Jesus Christ returns in all His glory and defeats his enemies with the words of his mouth,

Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (**Rev 19:11-16**) [ESV]

Since it appears that the world is still shrouded in thick darkness, the brightness of the glory of God will be all the more spectacular (and probably painful).

## Revelation 16:17-21

<sup>17</sup>The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup>And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. <sup>19</sup>The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup>And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. <sup>21</sup>And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

“**It is done!**” – The voice of God declaring that with this bowl the judgment of mankind is completed. This phrase is translated from the Greek word, *gegonen*, which is the perfect tense of the verb meaning to come into existence. Hence, this means something has come into being with the effect that it exists. As used in this verse it implies that God has accomplished what He intended to do; He has executed judgment on unbelieving mankind. He has done it and it is done!

Compare this with what Christ said on the cross as he completed payment for our sins:

When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit. (**John 19:30**) [ESV]

The phrase “It is finished!” is from the Greek word *tetelestai*, which also is a perfect tense word. This word means it has been completed therefore it is now complete or finished.

“**the great city**” – For the identification of this city we need look no further than:

and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically is called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified. (**Revelation 11:8**) [ESV]

The reaction from God’s proclamation is **flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake**. This is the greatest earthquake that has ever struck the earth. It is far greater than the earthquake that accompanied the sixth seal judgment. As a result of this earthquake Jerusalem is divided into three parts, all the other cities of the world are destroyed, all islands disappear, and all mountains are laid flat.

This flattening of the mountains was predicted by Isaiah as a preparation for the return of the Lord to set up His millennial kingdom

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken." (**Isaiah 40:1**)

“**the fury of his wrath**” – Literally this reads, the wrath of His anger.

Compare Zechariah’s description of the Day of the LORD:

On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one. The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security. And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths. And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other. Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. (**Zechariah 14:4-14**) [ESV]

Following the earthquake, great hail weighing about 100 pounds per hail stone will fall from the skies. **and they cursed God!** Even in their final hour of judgment they will not submit to almighty God.

*Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*