

BITTER HONEY: THE REVELATION

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CHAPTER 16: BOWLS OF WRATH

Verses 1-11

Revelation 16:1 ended the description of the heavenly temple from chapter 15. The voice calling from the temple resembled closely Isaiah 66:6 which described the Lord's voice as a voice from the temple and the city. It was a voice that rendered recompense on His enemies. Revelation 16 then went on to discuss the seven bowls of wrath. Like the trumpets, the seven bowls of wrath described the destruction of the new Babylon, the events around Armageddon, and the final judgment. The first five trumpets and the first five bowls of wrath described Babylon's destruction. The first bowl of wrath produced a malignant sore on men who had the mark of the beast. If the first trumpet described a nuclear attack, then the malignant sore would be cancer caused by radiation. This cancer showed up on men who worshiped the beast because cancer took time to grow. After the first attack, many men exposed to radiation would have cancer, but the tumors would take time to become visible.

The rest of the bowls paralleled the trumpets. The second trumpet and the second bowl of wrath were both poured out on the sun. They killed sea life and sank ships. If a nuclear war occurred, missiles would drop on the oceans in an attempt to destroy enemy navies. This plague turned the oceans into something that looked like blood. This could describe dead plankton or sea weed. The third trumpet and the third bowl of wrath were poured out on rivers and springs of water turning them into blood. Many men died from drinking the water. After a nuclear attack, fallout would be washed into the streams. Anyone who drank the water would die from it. Heat and radiation would kill plant life in rivers as it had in the ocean. The fourth trumpet and the fourth bowl of wrath were poured out on the sun. The trumpet darkened the sun, moon, and stars. The darkening may have been caused by smoke in the atmosphere. The fourth bowl scorched men with burning heat. If trees and grass are burned as the first trumpet promised, there would be no shelter left from the sun. Also, without any vegetation, any rain that fell would quickly run off. The land would be left a desert, and men would be scorched by the sun.

The fifth trumpet and the fifth bowl of wrath summarized the first four plagues and added to them. The trumpet described events between Babylon's fall and Armageddon. The fifth bowl described man's suffering during this period. The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. This throne was Babylon, the greatest military and economic power during the mixed nations. The beast's kingdom would be darkened. This predicted the smoke darkened sky seen in trumpet four. Men would gnaw their tongues because of pain. After this first war, men would carry severe burns, feel great hunger and thirst, experience radiation sickness, and suffer from cancer. Despite all this, men would still blaspheme God and not repent of their deeds. The three Woes were not only judgments on sin, but they were also God's last attempt to break man's rebellion. Men refused to repent no matter what God did to them. So God finally sent them to hell. Men blasphemed God after Babylon fell (Revelation 16:11) and after Armageddon (Revelation 9:20; 16:21).

Verses 12-18

The sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl of wrath gathered men to Armageddon. Revelation 16:12, the Euphrates River was dried to prepare the way for the kings of the east. John saw three unclean spirits which came from the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. These three spirits performed signs and gathered the whole world to Armageddon. The three spirits may be a reference back to Daniel 7:8. Daniel saw the fourth beast of Rome whose ten horns were the mixed nations. A small horn sprouted among them. It uttered great boasts and tore up three horns by the roots. The small horn became the Antichrist's empire. The three horns may have been three nations or power blocks that gave their authority to the Antichrist. These three power blocks may also be the three spirits in Revelation 16:13. After the

Antichrist reigns for a short time, the power blocks making up his empire may gather the world to Armageddon. As the nations destroyed each other at Armageddon, the seventh bowl of wrath was poured out on the air. There followed thunder, lightning, sounds in the sky, and the greatest earthquake in history. This earthquake was consistently associated with Armageddon and with Christ's return. The Lord returned in judgment, and history was finished.

Verses 19-21

When the seventh bowl was poured out, Christ declared *gegonen*, "It is finished." A form of the word *gegonen* began Revelation 16:18 and 16:19. Both verses said what had been finished. 16:18 claimed that Armageddon was finished. 16:19-21 then claimed that the seventh bowl of wrath was finished. God's final wrath had been expressed in three great Woes. Babylon the great had been given the cup of God's wrath which was the first Woe. 16:20 described calamities associated with Armageddon. 16:21 concluded that men still blasphemed God despite their pain.