

## ***The Church of the Servant King***

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### **PROPHECY SERIES**

(Proph21R\_Revelation\_chp16\_The Bowl Judgments)

#### **THE FIRST BOWL – SORES (16:1-2)**

God commands seven angels to pour out their bowls upon the earth in apparent simultaneous fashion – or at least rapid sequence. All of the bowl judgments are experienced directly by the individual unbeliever rather than indirectly through a judgment that affects nature first and man second or indirectly.

This first bowl judgment is evidently some type of skin ulcer – perhaps associated with the cosmic disturbances affecting the sun and the earth's atmosphere. Another possible cause could be germ warfare that is associated with the warfare between competing powers during this period. This is reminiscent of the sixth plague of the Exodus that affected Pharaoh's magicians (see Exodus 9:8-12). However, unlike the sixth plague of the Exodus scenario, this is a pandemic.

#### **THE SECOND BOWL – SEAS AND SEA LIFE DESTROYED (16:3)**

This judgment resulted in the destruction of all sea life, not just one-third of it as in the second trumpet (8:8-9). This may involve actual coagulated, rotting blood or a liquid that resembles blood. This resembles (to a much larger extent) the first plague of the Exodus (Exod 7:14-25).

#### **THE THIRD BOWL – FRESH WATER SOURCES DESTROYED (16:4-7)**

If the water is literal water, then the blood should probably be interpreted that way also. In this judgment, all fresh water sources are corrupted and destroyed. The enemies of God poured out the blood of God's servants and His believing children, so in an interesting twist, God makes His enemies suffer by being forced to drink blood. The believers who are martyred during the Tribulation (Rev 7:9-17; 8:3) cry out from the altar associated with the throne room of God (Rev 16:7) as they observe God's justice respond to His enemies in a way that is so ironic. In fact, this is not the first time that God's dealings with His enemies has occurred with an ironic twist.

Pharaoh tried to drown the Jewish boy babies, but it was his own army that eventually drowned in the Red Sea [Exod. 1:22; 14:28]. Haman planned to hang Mordecai on the gallows and to exterminate the Jews; but he himself was hanged on the gallows, and his family was exterminated (Es. 7:10; 9:10). King Saul refused to obey God and slay the Amalekites, so he was slain by an Amalekite (2 Sam. 1:1-6).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Vernon McGee, *Through the Bible with J. Vernon McGee*, 5 vols (Pasadena, Calif.: Thru the Bible Radio, 1983), 2:610 cited in Thomas Constable, *Notes on Revelation*, [www.soniclight.com](http://www.soniclight.com). Constable correctly notes that "at least an Amalekite claims to have slain Saul."

As the bowl judgments come to a conclusion in close proximity to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent of Christ, cataclysmic changes occur that will set the stage for the renewal of fresh water sources (vv. 17-21).

#### **THE FOURTH BOWL – SCORCHING HEAT (16:8-9)**

Evidently climatic changes will take place and the sun's heat will become much hotter than normal. This may be due to a destruction of the earth's ozone layer – a result of God's judgment, not man's use of fossil fuels. Since the United States will either not exist or be an impotent nation during that period, the unbelieving world will only have God to blame.

Interestingly enough, the unbelieving world actually curses God! This is rather odd – an “unbeliever” acknowledging God's sovereignty (cf. Rom. 1:28; 2:24; 1 Tim. 6:1; James 2:7). Their “hearts” are so hardened that they can only reject Him more – similar to Pharaoh.

#### **THE FIFTH BOWL – DARKNESS (16:10-11)**

The fifth trumpet judgment involved literal darkness (Rev 9:2) as did the ninth Egyptian plague (Exod 10:21-22). God also darkened Jerusalem when Jesus Christ died on the cross (Matt 27:45; Mk 15:33; Lu 23:44). Since the beast's kingdom is worldwide, this darkening amounts to a global judgment. The faithful remnant will somehow remain unaffected by this judgment as it did earlier in Egypt (cf. Exod 10:23).

The pain associated with the darkness is totally understandable. Imagine no artificial light from electricity. Imagine no relief from intense heat. Imagine water sources unavailable. Imagine crops and food being affected. Imagine the theft, butchery, hatred, looting, rape, hunger, etc. – all taking place under the cover of darkness. Mankind's sin nature is most manifest in the darkness of the night.

#### **THE SIXTH BOWL – (16:12-16)**

The problem that this judgment poses for earth-dwellers is its consequences – war. God effectively allows Satan to create the stage for the destruction of his own human armies. It does not inflict a plague on people but serves as a preparation for the final eschatological battle.

The Euphrates River is the northeastern border of the land God promised to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4). Now God dries up this river that had previously turned into blood (v. 4) so the kings of the East can cross with their armies (cf. Dan. 11:44; Isa. 11:15).

Earlier in history, God dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could advance on the Promised Land from the west (Exod. 14:21-22; cf. Isa. 11:16). He also dried up the Jordan River so they could cross over from the east when they re-entered the Land after the Exodus (Josh. 3:13-17; 4:23). Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:8). Cyrus conquered Babylon by draining the Euphrates and marching into the city over the riverbed (cf. Jer. 50:38; 51:36). All these previous incidents should help us believe that a literal fulfillment of this prophecy is possible.

The dragon, beast, and false prophet will evidently join in making a proclamation that will mobilize the armies of the world to converge on Palestine. Something proceeding from the mouth suggests a proclamation. This is the first mention of the false prophet, but he is clearly the beast out of the earth (cf. 13:11-17). He deceives the people. What he urges them to do for their advantage results in their destruction.

The three unclean spirits that proceed from their mouths are demons (fallen angels, v. 14; cf. Matt. 10:1; Mark 1:23-24; 3:11; 5:2, 13; Acts 5:16; 8:7). They resemble frogs in that they

are unclean and loathsome (cf. Lev. 11:10-11, 41). The second Egyptian plague involved frogs (Exod. 8:5), but these demons are only like frogs.

These kings from all over the world will gather to destroy Israel (cf. Ps. 2:1-3; Joel 2:11; 3:2; Zech. 14:2-3). Satan's purpose in bringing all these soldiers into Palestine in the first place appears to be to annihilate the Jews.

When Jesus Christ returns to earth, specifically to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1-4), they will unite in opposing Him. The description of this battle follows in Revelation 19:11-16.

His second coming will be as a thief in that it will be sudden, and His enemies will not expect it (cf. Matt. 24:43; Luke 12:39; 1 Thess. 5:2). Believers who understand the revelation of this book, on the other hand, will be expecting His return.

I believe that verse 15 is a warning to Jews who fail to accept the gospel of the kingdom and are therefore not watching for Jesus' coming (cf. 1 Thess 5:3-6). For a Jew, a son of the kingdom, to not accept Jesus as the Messiah is compared to "sleep." To keep one's garment is tantamount to expecting the wedding banquet at the beginning of the Millennium, thus being a believer. If a Jew fails to keep his wedding garment, then he is an unbeliever who does not expect Jesus to return as the Messiah. Therefore, the unbeliever will be cast out at Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent and not participate in the wedding banquet (Matt 22:2-14).

Some interpret verse 15 as a reference to believers and specifically the loss of rewards for unfaithful believers. However, I believe the previously presented explanation to be more consistent with the whole of Scripture on the subject of the fate of the unbelieving Jew of the last days of the Age of Israel.

The demons will assemble the kings of the earth and their armies. They will go to what in Hebrew is called "Har-Magedon" (lit. mountain of Megiddo, Megiddo meaning either place of troops or place of slaughter).

This mountain may refer to the small hill on the south-central edge of the Jezreel (Esdraelon) Valley in northern Palestine on which the town of Megiddo stood. Alternatively, "Har Magedon" may refer to the mountain closest to Megiddo, namely, Mt. Carmel. There God humiliated the host of prophets of Baal who gathered to oppose Him in Elijah's day (cf. 1 Kings 18:16-40). God and Elijah slaughtered them in the Valley of Jezreel.

*History and Geography of "Harmagedon"* – The hill country surrounding Megiddo includes all of the mountains that border the approximately 14 by 20 mile Valley of Jezreel. Earlier Deborah and Barak had defeated the Canaanites in this valley (Judg. 4—5), and Gideon had routed the Midianites (Judg. 7). King Josiah also died there when he opposed Pharaoh Neco (2 Chron. 35:22).

### **THE SEVENTH BOWL – WIDESPREAD DESTRUCTION (16:17-21)**

Lightning, thunder, and the greatest earthquake this planet has ever experienced will accompany, and to some extent produce, the desolation that follows. These are signs of divine judgment, but this earthquake is much larger than any previous one mentioned in Scripture (cf. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13, 19; Hag. 2:6; Heb. 12:26-27). It heralds the seventh bowl judgment and the end of the seals and trumpets judgments. All three series of judgments end at the same time.

The "great city" probably refers to Jerusalem (11:8). It is contrasted with the cities of the nations, and the phrase "the great" described it before (11:8). Zechariah's prophecy of topographical changes taking place around Jerusalem at this time is consistent with the Revelation account (Zech. 14:4).

Evidently the earthquake will destroy virtually all the cities of the world. Babylon on the Euphrates is the most significant of these other cities (14:8). It is the special object of God's judgment, which the cup of wine that she receives symbolizes. Chapters 17 and 18 will describe the fall of Babylon in more detail.

The earthquake will produce other effects. It will level mountains and cause islands to disappear. As the Flood produced global topographical changes, so will this earthquake. It will prepare the earth for the Edenic conditions that the prophets predicted would characterize the earth during the Millennium.