

**UNDERSTANDING END TIMES PROPHECY  
FOCUS #6—THE TRIBULATION PERIOD  
REVELATION 6:1-18:24**

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The Tribulation Period consists of events surrounding the pouring out of God's wrath upon those who live on the earth. These events of God's wrath are centered on the seven seals opened by the Lamb of God (Revelation 6:1-17; 8:1).

With the opening of the seventh seal, seven trumpet judgments were unleashed on the earth (Revelation 8:1-9:21; 11:15). With the blowing of the seventh trumpet, and after a lengthy textual interlude including chapters 10-14, the seven bowl judgments (16:1-21) are poured out upon the earth just prior to Christ's Second Coming.

Chapter 15 serves as an introduction of these judgments and prepares the reader for the execution of the judgments described in chapter 16. They are first described as the seven last plagues and then as seven bowls full of the wrath of God (vs. 7; 16:1). These seven plagues will chronologically bring to an end the ordered events of the Tribulation judgments in a dramatic crescendo. The plagues described here are extremely severe and occur in rapid succession, which adds greatly to their severity.

Chapter 15 provides a needed introduction to this final phase of God's wrath. In this chapter, John was given two glorious visions from heaven in preparation for the coming bowl judgments. First he saw martyred saints, who were victorious over the Antichrist, singing the song of Moses and the song of Christ the Lamb (15:1-4). Then he saw seven angels proceeding from God's Temple in heaven with bowl judgments in hand, ready to pour out God's wrath (15:5-8).

**The Seven Bowl Judgments. (Revelation 15:1-18:24)**

***Prelude to the Bowl Judgments (Revelation 15:1-8)***

*Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. (2) And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God. (3) And they \*sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! (4) "Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED." (5) After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, (6) and the seven angels who had the seven plagues*

*came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.*

*(7) Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. (8) 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.*

#### A Vision of the Victorious Saints: (Revelation 15:1-4)

*The Introduction:* Verse 1 serves as an introductory statement for chapters 15 and 16. It serves as a summary, advance statement, or sort of a preface or descriptive title to what follows. Two signs were presented in 12:1 and 3. Now the third is recorded here. “Another” ALLOS, (another of the same kind) refers back to the two preceding signs of chapter 12.

The sign is called “great” because of the awesome implication of these judgments in both extent and degree. “Marvelous” means wonderful or awe inspiring, and shows the effect this sign had on the heart and soul of John.

This sign is described as seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, literally: having seven Plagues, the last ones. This literal arrangement in the Greek makes this an emphatic statement. These are the very last plagues. They are the final judgments preceding the Second Coming of Christ.

They are called the last plagues because in them the wrath of God is finished. The verb is TELEO and means, “to complete, bring to an end” in amount, number, degree, effect or purpose. It is in these last plagues that God’s wrath finds its culmination and accomplishes His purposes.

*The Scene in Heaven:* First, John saw as it were, a sea of glass mixed with fire. This is a reference to the same sea as mentioned in Revelation 4:6. This is not a literal sea, but is metaphorical language. Revelation 21:1 tells us that there is no sea in heaven. The phrase, as it were could be translated “something like” and emphasizes that it is not really a sea.

In fact from John’s perspective he had no other way of describing what he saw but to associate it from something here on earth that he had experienced. We see similar terminology in Exodus 24:10 and Ezekiel 1:22. It is probably important to note that glass was a costly material in ancient times and in Job 28:17 crystal is ranked among the most valuable of all treasures on earth.

This crystal clear floor/pavement added to the glorious splendor by reflecting the flashing many-colored light from the throne (Revelation 4:6). Some have suggested that it may symbolize God as set apart, Holy & Pure. It is like a mirror reflecting the glory and

holiness of God. Here it is mingled with fire, symbolizing the divine judgment that is about to be manifested from a holy God.

Second, after John got a glimpse of the throne room floor he noticed those who were standing upon that floor, those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name.

This is a clear reference to the martyred saints of the Great Tribulation. These are the ones who were blessed in Revelation 14:13. These are the ones who had refused the mark of the beast (Revelation 13:16-18), refused to worship the beast (Revelation 13:15) and were thus killed by the beast and his false prophet.

The word for victorious is *NIKAW* and means “to be a victor, conquer, or to prevail.” Biblically, the means of conquering is faith in Jesus Christ and the Word, but this is always a victory based on the victory accomplished by the Savior’s death for us through the cross and His resurrection (John 16:33).

The context of this victory is really the idea of deliverance. The preposition “from,” *EK* means “out of, from, away from.” It is used to introduce the person, place, or thing from which a separation takes place...Because of their victory in Christ, they were delivered from the beast, from his image, and from his mark. So John gets a glimpse of these victorious martyred saints standing before the throne of God. These saints are described as holding harps and they are preparing to burst forth with song.

*The Song of the Saints:* The song of these saints is referred to as the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb. The song of Moses was sung by the people of Israel after their passage through the Red Sea and their deliverance from the Egyptian armies (Exodus 15:1-21; cf. Deuteronomy 32:1-43), this was a song of victory and deliverance that the redeemed who overcome Antichrist and his system will readily identify with. The song of the Lamb is a reference to Revelation 5:8-14.

These two songs celebrate two great redemptive events: 1) Deliverance of Israel by God from Egypt through Moses; and 2) Deliverance of sinners by God from sin through Christ. David Levy in His commentary notes the similarities between the song of Moses in Exodus 15 and the Song of the saints here in Revelation 15:

- The theme of both songs is victory of believers over their enemies.
- Both Songs speak of the Lamb. The Passover lamb protected and delivered Israel from judgment. Christ the Lamb of God, will provide a greater deliverance from judgment for Tribulation believers.
- Both songs speak of the Lord’s marvelous works and ways in deliverance.

(Exodus 15:6-7; Revelation 15:3).

- Both songs speak of God’s holiness (Exodus 15:11; Revelation 15:4).
- Both songs mention similar plagues that would come upon the enemies of Israel and Tribulation believers.
- Both songs express apocalyptic-type judgments on Egypt and the beast’s kingdom.
- Both songs refer to the nations’ fear of God when they hear of His works.
- Both songs speak of people giving triumphant praise to God for His glorious deliverance.

What a marvelous song of praise this song is! God is declared to be powerful in His works, omnipotent in His character, righteous and true in His ways, Sovereign in His control over the nations, deserving of reverence and glory, perfectly holy in character, deserving of the worship of all nations, and as one who has revealed His righteous judgments.

A Vision of the Seven Angels with the Bowls: (Revelation 15:5-8)

*The Seven Angels:* John now has an additional vision in heaven immediately after the vision described in Revelation 15:1-4. David Levy accurately explains this scene in his commentary: “The scene changes as John is given another vision, focusing his attention back to the Temple of God in heaven and the seven angels holding bowls of judgment.

The Apostle John wrote, “And after that I looked and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened” (Revelation 15:5). The words “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” refer to the tablets of the Ten Commandments kept in the Ark of the Covenant that stood in the Holy of Holies where the presence of God dwelt.

John saw the veil of the Holy of Holies part, and out of this inner sanctuary of the Temple appeared "seven angels" (Revelation 15:6) who had been selected to administer God’s bowl judgments.

They are holding “the seven plagues, while clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles” (Revelation 15:6). White linen is symbolic of the purity of the angels, their righteous character, and the righteous act of God in pouring out His wrath on earth.

Golden girdles held the linen garments in place and were worn by the priests as they

ministered in the Temple. Gold is symbolic of God's riches, beauty, greatness, and majesty. Christ wore the same apparel when He appeared to John in Revelation 1:13).

*The Seven Bowls:* (Revelation 15:7-8) After noting the appearance of the seven angels, John goes on to describe the scene as the bowls of God's wrath are given to these seven angels. It is one of the four living creatures from Revelation 4:6-9, who distribute the seven bowls to the seven angels.

These are shallow saucers, familiar items often associated with various functions of the temple worship (1 Kings 7:50; 2 Kings 12:13; 25:15), such as wine (Amos 6:6) and blood sacrifice (Exodus 27:3). Their flat shallowness pictures how the divine judgments will be emptied instantly rather than slowly poured, drowning those who refused to drink the cup of salvation.

Notice also that these bowls are full of the wrath of God. The term full means to be full to the brim. The word *full* addresses the comprehensive, complete, and totally devastating character of this final set of judgments from God. The wrath spoken of here is not the normal term used for wrath. It is more intense and depicts a violent wrath from God against sin.

A brief mention is made here to the eternal nature of God and then John notices the temple in heaven filled with smoke. Smoke throughout the Scriptures refers to the glory, power and holiness of God (cp. Genesis 15:17; Exodus 19:18; 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11).

It is noted in this text that this smoke is from two sources. It is from the glory of God and it is from the power of God. The smoke that fills the temple will be so thick and intense that no one was able to enter the temple until the seven last plagues of the seven angels were finished. Smoke from God's glory made entering the Temple impossible until His seething indignation was poured out.

God's hatred of sin is so intense and this hatred of sin will result in the pouring out of His intense wrath in the form of these seven bowl judgments referred to here in vs. 8 as the seven plagues. The stage is set and the world will soon feel the intense and burning anger of God as the seven angels are in position to pour out the seven bowl judgments of God.

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## **The Pouring Out of the Seven Bowls of Wrath (Revelation 16:1-21)**

Chapter 15 served as an introduction to these judgments and prepared the reader for the execution of the judgments described here in chapter 16. They are first described as the seven last plagues and then as seven bowls full of the wrath of God (Revelation 15:7; 16:1). These seven plagues will chronologically bring to an end the ordered events of the Tribulation judgments in a dramatic crescendo. The plagues described here are extremely severe and occur in rapid succession, which adds greatly to their severity.

### **Revelation 16:1-21**

*(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.” (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. (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. (4) Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. (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.” (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. (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. (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. (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; (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. (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.”) (16) And they gathered them together to the place, which in Hebrew is called Har-magedon. (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.” (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. (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. (20) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. (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.*

### **The First Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:1-2)**

*The Introduction:* The beginning of chapter 16 begins with a command for the pouring out of the seven bowl judgments. It is at this point in John's vision that he hears a loud voice from the Temple. Remember that the scene is in heaven and this is a reference to the temple in heaven.

This loud or great voice is none other than the voice of God. He issues forth the command that the seven bowls of His wrath are to finally be poured out and His judgment against the earth completed. The term for "loud" MEGAS can mean "loud, great, huge, fierce or large." It is interesting that it is used 11 times here in chapter 16 of Revelation (cp. vv. 1, 9, 12, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21). The focus is on the fierce and great wrath of almighty God against those who have rejected Him.

*The Pouring out of the First Bowl:* Now John sees the first angel pour out his bowl unto the earth. This judgment will be that of a loathsome and malignant sour upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

Notice first of all the recipients of this judgment are particularly those who have received the mark of the beast and have worshiped the beast's image. Those believers who have been left alive during this terrible time will be spared this terrible judgment. The focus of these judgments seems to be upon the unbelieving world.

Second notice the form of this judgment as being loathsome and malignant sores. "Loathsome" comes from the Greek, KAKOS, which means "evil, injurious" and refers to what brings about a crippling effect. "Malignant" is from PONHROS, which means "active, malignant" and looks at what is painful, destructive, and even vicious. This stresses the effect, degree, and intensity of this judgment.

This judgment will involve a foul-smelling, malignant ulcer (like a boil) that is extremely painful and will not heal. The Septuagint (LXX) uses the same Greek word to describe the boils that plagued the Egyptians (Exodus 9:9-11) and afflicted Job (Job 2:7). In the New Testament, it describes the open sores that covered the beggar Lazarus (Luke 16:21). All over the world, people will be afflicted with incurable, open oozing sores.

### **The Second Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:3)**

While the unbelievers of the earth are severely suffering from the result of the first bowl judgment, the second angel immediately pours out his bowl into the sea. The result is

similar to that of the 2nd trumpet judgment in that the seas turn into blood. The difference here is that all of the seas upon the earth are turned to blood rather than 1/3 of the seas as in the 2nd trumpet judgment.

This demonstrates the extreme severity of these bowl judgments. The type of blood that the salt waters of the earth are turned into is compared to that of a dead man. The water in the world's oceans will become thick, dark, and coagulated, like the blood of a corpse. The death and decay of billions of sea creatures will only add to the misery of this judgment.

Notice the emphasis of verse 3 regarding the result of such a devastating judgment upon the sea. Every living thing in the sea died. Such a judgment will further reduce the scarcity of food.

It will also make it next to impossible for transporting anything by way of the sea, as traveling by boat will be impossible under such conditions, not to mention that there will be a terrible stench from the waters. The shipping and fishing industries will be non-existent from this point on.

### **The Third Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:4-7)**

*The Pouring out of the Bowl:* At this time the third angel pours out his bowl and the fresh water supply is now contaminated. Fresh water already in short supply because of the prolonged drought (Revelation 11:6), will now suffer the fate of the oceans (cf. Exodus 7:19ff). In addition to suffering from thirst, the worshipers of the antichrist will have no clean water with which to wash their sores. All rivers, lakes and springs will be affected. All the water supply that is used for drinking will be turned to blood.

This is similar to the third trumpet judgment when the meteor or comet wormwood poisons 1/3 of the fresh water supply. The results are not mentioned, but it can clearly be implied that there will no longer be any pure drinking water driving the world to an unquenchable thirst. Those who even attempt to drink the water will die. Without water, people will go mad and will stop at nothing to quench their thirst. We can only imagine the agony, panic, and death this pollution will create. Thus far the bowl judgments have brought incredibly painful sores that cannot be healed, upon the unbelieving world, and all the waters of the earth both salt and fresh water will be turned to blood.

*The Statement of Vindication:* It is at this point that we are told that John heard an angel speak forth. This angel is called the angel of the waters. This angel has some sort of jurisdiction or control over the waters. It is unclear whether this is a reference back to the third bowl angel or some other angel. This angel makes a statement vindicating the holiness of God and setting forth the reason for the judgment (Revelation 16:5-6).



This statement begins with an affirmation of the righteousness of God. After proclaiming the righteousness of God the angel goes on to affirm the eternity of God in the statement who are and who were. This is followed by an affirmation of the holiness of God. God is depicted as righteous, eternal and holy, therefore just in pouring out His wrath upon these rebellious rejecters. Since these evil individuals poured out the blood of the saints and the prophets, God has given them blood to drink instead of water. This is what these wicked people deserve and God is completely righteous and just in doing so.

At this point John personifies the altar in heaven and this altar echoes the words of the angel. God is affirmed as being almighty and His judgments are called true and righteous. It is apparent that the world rightly deserves the just judgment of God in the pouring out of these bowl judgments.

#### **The Fourth Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:8-9)**

*The Pouring out of the Fourth Bowl:* The fourth angel now moves forward and pours forth his bowl. This angel pours his bowl out upon the sun rather than on the earth. The purpose in doing so is so that the sun will scorch men with fire. This judgment like the fourth trumpet, involves the sun, yet it is quite different. Under the fourth trumpet, one-third of the sun will be darkened (Revelation 8:12). Here, the sun's intensity will be supernaturally increased by God causing it to scorch people with fire.

The term fire is defined for us in the next phrase as it states that men were scorched with fierce heat. The sun that normally provides light, warmth, and energy will become a deadly killer. With no fresh water to drink, earth's inhabitants will face extreme heat. Many have suggested that the scorching heat will melt the polar ice caps, which some estimate would raise the level of the world's oceans by 200 ft., inundating many of the world's major cities with water turned to blood and producing further catastrophic loss of life.

*The Response of Mankind:* Verse 9 goes on to explain that men were scorched with fierce heat from the intensity of the sun. As a result mankind blasphemed the name of God. Notice that the people of the earth clearly recognize these events from the bowl judgments as being from the hand of God. Instead of repentance, however, they blaspheme God. They refuse to repent of their sin and give glory to God. They will become hardened in heart and more callused than before.

#### **The Fifth Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:10-11)**

It is unclear how much time falls between each of these bowl judgments. They do come in rapid-fire succession one right after another. However it is unclear whether we are looking at just days between them or weeks between them. One thing is clear that they

are long enough to have a great impact upon the people. In this fifth bowl judgment the throne of the beast is the target of the judgment.

The fifth angel pours out his bowl upon the throne of the beast and his kingdom becomes darkened. Since the entire world will fall under the jurisdiction of Antichrist's control, the entire world will be darkened. This understanding is clear also in that thus far the bowl judgments have had world-wide implications.

The people of the world will still have the terrible loathsome sores weeping, oozing, itching and causing great pain. They will still have no water to drink or to bathe in or clean their sores with, since the waters will still be blood. They will still have terrible burns from the fierce heat of the sun. Then the sun will be completely darkened throwing the world into a dark state of chaos.

Without rain from the world-wide drought and without sun to produce photosynthesis, all the plants of the world will surely be dead by now if they haven't been killed or burned up already.

The loss of heat from the sun will cause temperatures to plunge drastically all over the world. That will severely disrupt the earth's weather patterns and the seas' tides, leading to the possibility of violent, unpredictable storms and tides, the destruction of crops, and further loss of animal and human lives.

The world will be plunged into darkness and there will likely be widespread panic and fear. In fact the pain from the previous judgments and the fear of this particular judgment will drive many to gnaw their tongues. Some have suggested that this is a preview of the outer darkness of hell that unbelievers will suffer (cf. Matthew 25:30). It has no effect however on the spiritual state of these people as they further blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores. They were not moved to repent of their wicked deeds.

### **The Sixth Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:12-16)**

*The Pouring out of the 6th Bowl Judgment:* Now the sixth angel pours out his bowl of judgment. Notice first of all the direction of this judgment. This bowl is specifically directed at the great Euphrates River. J. Hampton Keathley III lists some important facts about this river in his study of Revelation 16:

- (1) It formed the Eastern boundary of ancient Rome and its conquests.
- (2) It forms the Eastern boundary of the land as promised to Abraham (cf. Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 1:7; 11:24; Joshua 1:4).
- (3) For a brief season David and Solomon extended their authority to the Euphrates (1 Kings 4:21; 1 Chronicles 18:3; 2 Chronicles 9:26).

(4) The river is 1,800 miles long and has always stood as a natural barrier separating the east from the west.

(5) The river forms in Armenia and 1,800 miles later empties into the Persian Gulf. About 90 miles from the Persian Gulf, it is joined by the Tigris.

This no doubt sheds some light as to why the Euphrates River is called great. Second notice the specific result of the pouring out of this bowl judgment. The Euphrates River was dried up. Remember back in the third bowl judgment that the rivers were turned into blood. The raging river of blood in the Euphrates will be dried up completely at the pouring out of this bowl. John goes on to explain the reason or purpose for this river to be dried up and it is that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. It will be necessary for the kings from the East to move forward across the Euphrates River and will be unable to do so without the pouring out of this bowl to dry up the flow of blood.

God providentially draws these kings and their armies in order to destroy them in the battle of Armageddon (v. 14). Their reason for coming may be to rebel against the antichrist, whose failure to alleviate the world's suffering will no doubt erode his popularity. Or, this may be a final act of rabid anti-Semitism intent on destroying Israel, perhaps in retaliation for the plagues sent by God.

Since the sun may have melted the ice caps on Ararat, flooding the valley of the Euphrates as the river overflows its banks and bridges, the land will be swamped. God will have to dry it up miraculously for the eastern army to get to Armageddon. There are as many as 50 different interpretations as to the identity of these armies.

In the Greek it is literally rendered, "the kings of the rising sun." This signifies simply the direction that these are coming from. Today nations such as China, India, Iran and a host of others are positioned due east from Israel across the Euphrates River, which runs through modern day Iraq. It is important to note that the Scriptures here in Revelation do not give us any further identification of these kings, nor does it provide a specific reason for their coming. It is unwise to speculate beyond the data given.

*The Resulting Vision:* It is at this point that John has a vision, which speaks of the direct result from the sixth bowl judgment.

First of all John describes demonic activity. He sees frogs coming out of the mouths of the dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet. Then he goes on to explain what these frogs represent. They are more particularly the spirits of demons.

They are pictured as frogs more than likely to emphasize their vileness especially since frogs were considered to be unclean (cf. Leviticus 11:10, 11, 41). These demonic spirits will perform miracles that will entice all nations to bring their armies to Israel for the battle of that great day of God Almighty (v. 14).

These are supernatural wonders (Revelation 13:12-15) designed to deceive (cf. 19:20; 1 Kings 22:20-23; Mark 13:22) the kings into invading Israel. Their impact will be so great that the unclean spirits are able to induce the kings to make the journey to Israel in spite of their sores, the intense heat, drought, and darkness. Now these demonic spirits influence more than just the kings from the East, but they seem to influence the kings of the whole world to gather together for war.

The Greek term for war POLEMOS signifies more than a single battle or isolated conflict. It truly represents an entire campaign or a full-fledged war. Either, war will have broken out upon the world scene due to Antichrist's lack of control over world conditions, causing some to rebel against him. Or, this is simply a reference to their desire, brought on by these demonic spirits to wage war against the nation of Israel and eventually against the Lord Himself.

Whatever the case God allows these demonic spirits to influence the kings of the world to gather together for war. The specific war they are gathering for is the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. This war we know of by the term Armageddon, as is made clear in the actual place these armies are gathering (Revelation 16:16).

It is at this point that a voice calls forth with a special announcement. This special announcement includes the third beatitude in the book of Revelation (cf. Revelation 1:3; 14:13). The voice first states, "Behold, I am coming like a thief." This is obviously the voice of the Lord. It is in Matthew 24:43 and Luke 12:39 that Christ compares His Second Coming to that of coming as a thief. It is also the warning of Christ to the church in Sardis in Revelation 3:3.

Clearly this is a reference to the Lord's voice and He is clearly announcing that He will return suddenly and unexpectedly. Although tribulation saints know that they are living in the end of times, they still will not know the exact moment of Christ's coming. After the announcement of His certain coming, Christ pronounces a third beatitude: "Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame."

This beatitude is offered to those tribulation saints who have survived the seven-year ordeal and have obviously escaped martyrdom. This is an encouragement to true believers and a call for them to stay alert in light of Christ's imminent return. "The word garments is symbolic of the righteousness of the saints (cp. Revelation 19:8).

Those who are walking in sin before God (p. 3:18) and the world are considered to be spiritually naked.

This is shameful at any time, but especially in light of the Second Coming of Christ. Believers must guard their lives from evil at all times and be clothed in God's righteousness. Don't misunderstand here. True believers will find this statement as an

encouragement, while the unregenerate will see this as a warning.

At the close of this vision John moves on to identify the location of the gathering armies. It is none other than Armageddon. Armageddon is a Greek translation of the Hebrew term Megiddo. Geographically it relates to the Mount of Megiddo located adjacent to the plain of Megiddo to the west and the large plain of Esdraelon to the northeast.

### **The Seventh Bowl Judgment: (Revelation 16:17-21)**

Finally, the last of the seven bowls is poured out. This is the most severe and devastating judgment of all and the final judgment of the tribulation judgments (7 seals, 7 trumpets & 7 bowls).

Notice first of all, that this seventh bowl is poured out upon the air. The Greek term AERA refers to the atmosphere. Thus, this judgment has a much wider impact than the preceding ones and will prove to be catastrophic.

After the pouring out of this bowl a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, “It is done.” This bowl will complete God’s wrath (except for final judgment on the rebellion at the end of the Millennium; Revelation 20:7-10) and immediately precedes the Second Coming of Christ.

It will usher in the worst calamity in the history of the world. The voice from the temple in heaven is undoubtedly that of God Himself. It is done is best translated, “It has been and will remain done.” At this point the scene shifts to the effect of this judgment upon the world:

*Atmospheric Disturbances:* The first result of the pouring out of the seventh bowl is that of atmospheric disturbances. These include flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, as is the case in the seventh seal (Revelation 8:5) and the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:19).

*A Great Earthquake:* As is also the case in the seventh seal (Revelation 8:5) and the seventh trumpet (Revelation 11:19) there follows an earthquake. This earthquake is different though. It is referred to as a great earthquake. The Greek term MEGAS is used here.

This mega quake is the second such quake during the tribulation period. The first occurred as a result of the sixth seal judgment and caused the mountains and islands to be moved out of place. This one here in accordance with the seventh bowl will be much worse.

It is once again a world-wide quake. In fact it is a quake that is so strong and mighty that it is said that such a quake had not been since man came to be upon the earth. It will be a quake far exceeding any ever recorded and far worse than the one associated with the sixth seal.

Look at the effect of such a quake on the earth:

1-It first of all split the great city into three parts. The great city is a reference to the city of Jerusalem (cf. Revelation 11:8). The city of Jerusalem has previously suffered a great earthquake in Revelation 11:13, causing 1/10th of the city to fall. Now what remains is split into three parts.

2-Not only is Jerusalem affected by this great quake, also the cities of the nations fell. Jerusalem fared better than most since it was only split into three parts, but the rest of the cities among the nations will be destroyed; completely demolished. They will fall into a heap of rubble.

3-Thirdly, Babylon the Great will be remembered by God as He gives her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. Babylon the Great seems to be a reference to the rebuilt city of Babylon and the likely capital of the Antichrist's kingdom.

God will especially direct His wrath at Babylon the great. Antichrist's capital will not be spared, but will receive the brunt of God's righteous and burning anger. Clearly this seems to imply that the future rebuilt city of Babylon will be utterly destroyed.

4-Lastly, every Island fled away, and the mountains were not found. The sixth seal mega-quake only shifted the islands and mountains out of their place, but this quake here will cause the islands to disappear and the mountains to be flattened. What a powerful force! What powerful shaking! EVERY Island fled away! NO mountains were found! The Earth will be utterly shaken by the great and mighty wrath of God. There will be widespread death and destruction across the globe.

*A Great Hail Storm:* Not only will there be atmospheric disturbances and the world's worst recorded earthquake, there will also be an unprecedented hailstorm. These huge hailstones will weigh over 100 pounds each as they fall from heaven upon the earth.

In fact the Greek term TALANTIAIOS (talent) refers to a weight of 108 to 130 pounds. There will be widespread devastation all over the earth from these huge boulders of ice. The severity of this judgment is so extreme that it is called a plague. The atmosphere is convulsing and raining God's wrath down upon the earth.

The people recognize this as a judgment from God and they blaspheme God for the severity of this plague. At this point in the chronology of Revelation, God's judgment during the tribulation period is complete. Chapter's 17 & 18 will be one final interlude providing further needed explanation of the world situation just prior to Christ's Second Coming.