

Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Book of Revelation

Chapter 16

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ON THERN UNITED

Introduction

- ➤ In this chapter the full outpouring of wrath upon the enemies of God is described
- The seven angels with the seven bowls pour out the seven last plagues, Revelation 15:1
- These are not partial judgments, as with the seven trumpets described earlier (chapters 8-11)
- ➤ In the pouring out of these plagues the wrath of God is complete, Revelation 15:1



Introduction

Chapter Outline

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The Pronouncement 16:1

- ➤ I heard a loud voice, Characteristic of all the heavenly utterances, Revelation 14:7,9
- ➤ We have now the narration in full of the events of which Revelation 15 has given us a summary
- > from the temple, The shrine of God, mentioned in Revelation 15:8, and which no one could enter; the voice must, therefore, be the voice of God Himself
- The command from Temple is a reminder of Isaiah, "The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the LORD, Who fully repays His enemies!" (Isaiah 66:6)



The Pronouncement 16:1

- ➤ All things are prepared, the angels have received their instructions from God, and the bowls are filled with the wrath of God, by one of the four living creatures, Revelation 15:7
- > St. John heard the word of command given to the seven angels to pour out their bowls
- The inhabitants of the earth are ripe for those judgments which the justice of God had appointed for their punishment
- > These bowls coincide with the plagues which happened in Egypt
- ➤ However, they are in agreement with the spirit of the book which is symbolic



The Pronouncement 16:1

- > The plagues that happened in the past were real
- These bowls also agree with the seven trumpets except that they are more severe, and more harsh
- ➤ His saying, "bowls of the wrath of God," does not mean by "wrath" revenge without mercy, but as we noticed before, the wrath of God is in reality love
- ➤ Perfect love of God directed to human beings, for God is never concerned for taking revenge on us, in the general meaning that we understand, but out of His love, He allows punishment, or abandons us for our repentance, or the repentance of others

First Bowl: Loathsome Sores 16:2



- ➤ The plague here described resembles the sixth of the Egyptian plagues, Exodus 9:8-12; Deuteronomy 28:27
- Egypt is one type of the world-power; and the plagues are used as types also, and are not to be understood literally
- The reason why the sixth Egyptian plague is the *first* here is because it was directed against the Egyptian magicians so that they could not stand before Moses
- And so here the plague is sent upon those who in the beast worship had practiced sorcery

First Bowl: Loathsome Sores 16:2



- As they submitted to the mark of the beast, so they must bear the mark of the avenging God, Revelation 7:3; Ezekiel 9:4,6
- > Some scholars think that these bowls are symbols of the punishment of God, which befalls man through history
- > Therefore, the first is God's threat to the wicked Jews
- > upon the earth, All the bowls are poured forth on the earth, Revelation 16:1 generally
- The first angel pours his bowl forth *upon the earth*, that is, the dry land

First Bowl: Loathsome Sores 16:2



- The plague falls only on those who carry *the mark of the beast*, and *who worship* it
- ➤ Like the plagues of Egypt, they are directed against those who aid the oppressor
- ➤ The plague of the "evil sore" denotes some agonizing and hateful sore, perhaps spiritual or mental, which distracts attention and disturbs the personal serenity of the worshippers of the world-power and cause anxiety
- ➤ It is impossible to say with certainty what (if any) particular judgment upon the ungodly is intended to be signified by St. John in this plague

Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood 16:3



- > Almost an exact reproduction of the second trumpet
- ➤ However, with the second trumpet we have seen God will cause a third part of the sea to turn to blood
- > But this second bowl includes the entire sea
- Also the reference to the first of the Egyptian plagues is clear, Exodus 7:20; Revelation 8:8-9
- ➤ It has been remarked that the Egyptian plagues stood in a very close connection with the natural state and circumstances of Egypt

Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood 16:3



- ➤ The Nile, which was their strength, became worse than useless when its waters were turned to blood and it is a similar feature here
- This bowl is poured on the pagan Gentiles, who did not know God, and were confused in knowing Him
- The sea is much mentioned in the Holy Bible to point to the world and its troubles

Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood 16:3



- The sea, out of which the wild beast rose, from which the worldpower drew strength, is turned to blood, the blood as of a dead man, corrupt and evil
- ➤ If we accept the principle, that these bowls concern the time of the Antichrist, we will say that this plague occurs to the peoples who are submitted to him, and worship him as a god
- They die spiritually



- Those represent a dangerous and deadly category, to whom God entrusted the springs of life, and it was suitable for them to present heavenly living water to the thirsty mankind, to drink
- ➤ But after they got to know the Lord, drank from His springs, and received positions of service, preaching and work in the Church, they deviated
- > These are the category of heretics whose springs became blood
- This bowl resembles the 3rd trumpet in Revelation 8:10-11, the Trumpet judgment



- And there is an allusion to the first Egyptian plague, Exodus 7:20, since it affects the rivers and streams, turning all the drinking water to blood and bringing death
- ➤ Whatever plagues God inflicted on the Egyptians in former times, He will inflict on the enemies of his people in all later times
- ➤ It is also a plague which happens at the time of the Antichrist
- ➤ It happens to those to whom the Antichrist gave leading positions to serve and preach
- Among those we find some who were once preaching the truth, and proclaiming the truthful pure word



- > the angel of the waters, The angels, throughout this book, are represented as having individual offices to fulfill
- Here we have a reference to the angel whose duty is to control the rivers, just as, in Revelation 14:18, another angel is represented as having authority over fire
- ➤ The 3rd angel address God by the title the Upright One, He who is, He who was, the Holy One
- The reference to God as "He who is, He who was" is in Exodus 3:11-14



- > He is Praising God for His righteous judgment
- > Because of the righteous law which these judgments manifested
- This is also the answer to the prayer of the souls of the Saints gathered around the base of the altar who cried out for justice
- > The ungodly have shed the blood of saints, therefore God deals out death to them



- ➤ The beast-marked worshipers who by association are a part of the beast of Revelation 13 are directly responsible for the death of the saints
- ➤ The altar beneath which the souls of the martyrs cried, and on which the prayers of saints were offered, is represented as confirming the testimony to the just dealings of God
- The angels who are full of love and mercy desire that God disciplines them, not for revenge, but for the sake of the simple souls, that drink deadly blood from their hands



- > power was given to him, Nothing can be done but by the will of God, Revelation 13:5,7,14
- The *men* perhaps referring to those mentioned in verse 2, who had the mark of the beast, and those who worshipped his image, and who are the object of all the vial plagues
- ➤ Though different in form from the fourth trumpet, where the sun was darkened, yet the judgment is similar, though here of a more intense nature
- ➤ It is also similar to the 9th plague of Egypt but now the heat of the sun in increased so that it scorches with its great heat



- ➤ The sun, the great source of light and warmth, whose beams call forth the flowers of the earth, becomes a power to blast, not to bless
- ➤ This is another example of the way in which the things full of goodness are turned into powers of sorrow to those who follow evil
- Not only the pleasant gifts and influences, which, like streams, were made to gladden men, grow corrupt, but the very source of light and knowledge becomes a power to destroy



- God has said to us, "You are the light of the world" And also He says that in the kingdom of our Father, we will shine as the sun, Matthew 3:43
- ➤ The Christian, and particularly the pastor, who deviates, who shows a deviant behavior, stumbles those who are around him, forgetting his mission
- > Such a pastor is the object of this punishment, when the fourth bowl is poured upon him



- Christ rose as the light and sun upon the world, because He diffused the knowledge which gave life to men
- > But here we have a light and sun which scorches
- > There is a knowledge which withers while it illumines
- > There is a teaching which does not warm the heart, but dries both heart and conscience, and brings pain
- The result, painful as it is, does not work repentance
- > Suffering, without grace and humility, does not bless men; they grow angry; the fire hardens instead of purifying



- This is a reversal of the Covenantal blessing of the Exodus when Israel was protected from the sun's heat by the Glory-Cloud, the Shadow of the Almighty, Exodus 13:21-22; Psalms 91:1-6
- ➤ This is a Covenantal promise that would be repeated again and again throughout the books of the Prophets
- Now that protection is withdrawn
- As it was pointed out in Revelation 13:1, non repentance and continuance in the service of the dragon are considered blasphemy against God



- Let's not forget that generally the name "blasphemy" is for the open acknowledgment of infidelity to God
- > they did not repent, The whole purpose of suffering and judgment is meant to be redemptive turning the transgressor to rejection of sin, to sincere repentance and to restored fellowship with God
- ➤ It has been noticed as a coincidence that the objects of creation which are the subjects of the judgments of the fourth trumpet and fourth bowl, were created on the fourth day

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain 16:10-11



- ➤ Here the plague is poured upon the Antichrist himself, thus his kingdom becomes spiritually and ethically dark
- ➤ The vials of judgment gradually dissolve the integrity and organization of the kingdom of the wild beast
- ➤ Men were filled with doubts and confusion about him, but unfortunately they did not repent of their deeds, instead they blasphemed the *God of heaven*
- ➤ Another allusion to the plagues of Egypt, Exodus 10:21-23

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain 16:10-11



- There was a typical force in that ancient plague: the kingdom which boasted itself so full of light becomes darkened
- > But even the failure of their own light does not work repentance
- > But there is no softening or humbling of themselves, no turning to God
- > The people are biting their tongues and cursing God because of their sores
- When God says, *did not repent of their deeds*, He points to the purpose of pouring this bowl, even during the dark period of the Antichrist; He aims at their repentance!

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain 16:10-11



- This bowl shows heavens' challenge to the Antichrist and his followers, who say, "Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" (Revelation 13:4) And still they did not repent
- The expression, "*God of heaven*," seems to enhance the exaltation of God, and to place in more extreme contrast the sin of those who ventured to blaspheme One so high, so far above them
- ➤ In spite, therefore, of their plagues, and perhaps as a consequence of their spiritual darkness, they still own the supremacy of the beast and deny God; just as Pharaoh hardened his heart



- Another allusion to the seventh plague, Exodus 8:2-4
- This river also figures in the sixth trumpet vision, Revelation 9:13-21, and possesses the same significance in both places
- ➤ It is the natural direction from which enemies arise; and it derives this meaning from the fact that the enemies of the Jews often came from that direction
- The Euphrates river is called *the great river* in Genesis 15:18



- There seems to be an allusion here to the ruin of Babylon by Cyrus, predicted by the Prophet Jeremiah, Jeremiah 50:1-51:64
- ➤ The water of the Euphrates drying up may have a historical connection
- The ancient city of Babylon sat on both sides of the Euphrates River and was encircled by canals
- > This natural protection made the city practically secure



- ➤ But the Persian King Cyrus solved this problem by damming up the great river and marched his army across the drained river bed
- This event of the river being *dried up* may occur again in the future for some reasons and that may lead to the beginning of a war with *the kings from the east*
- ➤ Babylon, which points to the opposition to God, is where the kingdom of the Antichrist and his assistants established



- ➤ Babylon was the center of their domination, their planning, and their management
- ➤ The dryness of the Euphrates indicates the dryness of the civil kingdom of the Antichrist, and its harsh authority
- Though the bowl is poured out upon the Euphrates, it is not with the purpose of inflicting injury on the river, but upon the men who are thus laid open to the attacks of their enemies
- the way of the kings from the east might be prepared, indicates the purpose of why the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up



- > The kings of the east represent God's judgments
- > God Himself prepares the way for the kings
- ➤ Fr. Hyppolitus thinks, that God allows this dryness to the kings, the followers of the Antichrist who live there, that they might come to him, and assemble to help him; but they turn against him
- ➤ Ibn-el-Assal thinks, that these kings are against the Antichrist, and God facilities their way to destroy him



- I saw, Introduces a new phase of the vision
- ➤ The sixth bowl, as well as the sixth trumpet, show the intensity of the last war between the unclean trinity, i.e. the dragon, the beast of the sea (the Antichrist), the beast of the earth (the false prophet) and the Church
- ➤ Here is the imagery of the unholy trinity of the Dragon the Beast and the False Prophet with the Dragon being imitated by the Beast and False Prophet and the triple use of the word "mouth"
- > The three agree to wage a devastating war against the Church, in one spirit



- Evil is reckless now, and moves to its destruction; but it cannot so move without working upon men
- > Three evil spirits go forth for this purpose
- ➤ And out of their three mouths come out three unclean spirits like frogs
- These three spirits represent the influences of the dragon, the first beast and the second beast, which is interpreted as the devil, the love of the world and worldly power, and self deceit
- > In other words, the devil, the world, the flesh



- > There are three radical enemies of Christ and His righteousness
- > The dragon, representing the hate of evil spirits
- > The wild beast, representing the hostility of world-power
- ➤ The false prophet, representing the antagonism of world-culture and intellectualism
- These three send forth each their representative appealing to the pride and passions of men



Their likeness to frogs consists in their common quality of uncleanness:

- 1- They are evil unclean spirits, who cannot bear the Holy Spirit of God working in the Church
- 2- They go out in the dark, for they do not bear light
- 3- They live in muddy places, as they mislead with the unclean desires
- 4- They fill the people's ears with uproar, urging all to resist God



- For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, This explains the account given in verse 13
- ➤ In the plague of the frogs, the Egyptian magicians imitated the plague of Moses
- The second beast (the false prophet) is represented as leading men astray and for misleading and deceiving by his miracles, Revelation 13:13
- After the sixth trumpet came the digression, in which an account was given of the two witnesses of God, who worked miracles, Revelation 12



- ➤ Here, after the sixth bowl, we have a short addition or change, in which an account is given of the three witnesses of Satan, who endeavor rework on his behalf, by exhibiting miracles
- > This will be the last effort of the dragon, beast, and false prophet
- > kings of the earth, Are those whose aim and delight is the possession of the pleasures of this world
- Those who have their treasure in this world, and whose hearts are therefore also there



- Those who exercise their influence and power in regard only to the things of this world; in short, the worldly
- The final conflict for the kingship of the world described in Revelation 19:17-21
- > However, the Dragon is not in charge
- ➤ God is in charge and He will use the work of error performed by these lying spirits in order to bring about the destruction of His enemies in the War of that great Day of God



- ➤ that great day of God Almighty, Is a biblical term which refers to a "Day of Judgment" against the wicked, Isaiah 13:6,9; Joel 2:1-2,11,31; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 1:14-18
- > St. Jerome thinks, that the meaning of "Armageddon," is the mountain of the thieves, for the Antichrist and his denomination are thieves, who usurp God's right and glory
- ➤ Ibn-el-Assal thinks, that it means "the lowly place."



- ➤ Here is a sudden but timely warning to put every man on his guard, when this sudden and generally unexpected tribulation should take place
- ➤ He will come suddenly as the kingdom of God does not come with anticipation
- > This warning from God is addressed to every man at every time
- This warning often repeated in Scripture, Revelation 3:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; 2 Peter 3:10; Luke 12:35-40



- ➤ *I am coming as a thief*, This may be to demonstrate the inappropriateness of endeavoring to compute and calculate the times and seasons, as has been done by so many Apocalyptic writers
- > Blessed are they who are watching
- > But vigilance is not enough
- > The garments must be kept clean and pure
- Laziness and pleasure may recommend ease, and tempt the watcher to lay aside his garments and take rest and sleep



- ➤ he walk naked, As what happened to Adam and Eve when they disobeyed the Lord, "Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, 'Where are you?' So he said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." (Genesis 3:9-10)
- ➤ Jesus told the church of Laodicea to purchase from Him, "white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed" (Revelation 3:14)



- ➤ Also as we read in Matthew 22:1-14 the parable of the wedding feast
- The man was thrown out of the feast because he was not dressed in a wedding garment
- When we come to the Lord's Eucharistic feast we must be certain that we are wearing the proper "wedding garment"
- > The white garment we received on our baptism day
- > St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:3, "if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked."



- ➤ Nakedness, in Scripture is a symbol of humiliation, shame, guilt, judgment, sexual impropriety, and exploitation
- And nakedness opposed to clothed is symbolic of a sin-filled life opposed to redemption which is being clothed in God's gift of grace
- The garment points to the grace of God working within us, and God's virtues that He bestows on us, to practice it, and as we proceed they guard us



- > Armageddon is the mountain of Megiddo
- The literal spelling in the Greek is *Har-Magedon*, which means Mount Megiddo
- > It is the high table-land surrounded by hills
- ➤ It is referred to in Zechariah 12:11 as a type of woe, on account of the overthrow and death of Josiah having taken place there, 2 Kings 23:29
- ➤ The Plain of Megiddo was the site of the assassinations of King Jehoram of Israel and his ally King Ahaziah of Judah



- Ahaziah escaped only to die of his wounds in Megiddo, 2 Kings 9:27
- ➤ There was the scene of Joshua's victory over Canaanite forces in the conquest of the Promised Land
- There the cause of liberty has triumphed
- ➤ Megiddo was one of the battle sites in the war with the Canaanite general Sisera who was defeated on Mt. Tabor by the army of the Israelite judge Deborah and her general Barak



- For the generation of St. John the Apostle, Mt. Carmel was a symbol of victory while Megiddo was a symbol of defeat and desolation for those who set themselves against the Word of God
- The name is, therefore, indicative of battle and slaughter, and intimates the complete overthrow in store for the dragon and the kings of the earth, which is described later in Revelation 19



- Suddenly the scene changes and an announcement is made
- The time of judgment has come, therefore the Apostle heard a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne saying "It is done."
- The last possible thing to offer to human beings for their salvation is done
- The same voice as in verse 1, of God Himself, as the words, *from the throne*, seem to show
- into the air, It was directed to Satan, the prince of the power of the air, Ephesians 2:2



- > It is done! In Greek is a single word: ghegonen
- This single word can mean "it is finished, it is fulfilled," it is completed or even "the end has come"
- ➤ It is finished or fulfilled would be similar to Jesus' last (or next to the last) words from the cross as recorded in the Gospel of St. John, John 19:30
- This phrase is the central theme of the Book of Revelation as it was announced by Christ's warnings to the 7 churches in Revelation 2-3, 2:5,16,25, 3:3,11



- The Old Covenant is fulfilled as Jesus promised in Matthew 5:17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill."
- ➤ It is also the fulfillment of Hebrews 9:8 that the New Covenant could not be fully implemented until the Old Covenant passed away, "the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing."
- ➤ The work of God is done, His counsels for the destruction of His enemies, and the deliverance of His people, are brought forth in the issue of His providence



- > noises and thunderings and lightnings, As at the giving of the law, Exodus 19:16 and at the sounding of the seventh trumpet
- ➤ The usual accompaniments of any special manifestation of God's power or presence, Revelation 4:5 and Revelation 6:12-17
- ➤ They may intend either the pure ministry of the Gospel in the spiritual reign, the voices of Christ's ministers, and the effects of them, who will be "Boanergeses", sons of thunder, and will be the means of enlightening the minds of many, as well as of shaking the consciences of men, signified by the earthquake following
- > Or, rather, the tremendous and awful judgments of God upon the remains of the antichristian party



- ➤ a great earthquake, As we have read in Revelation 6:12, Revelation 11:13; but this earthquake seems distinguished from those as surpassing them greatly in degree
- > The earthquake such as was not since men were upon the earth
- ➤ It is the shaking down of the kingdom of evil, Hebrews 12:26-29
- ➤ It completes the overthrow of which the earlier judgments have been precursors
- ➤ The throne of the wild beast and the centre of his power are smitten



- And the great city (i.e., Babylon, the symbol of the world-power's capital) became into three parts
- > It lost its power of cohesion
- ➤ The three evil spirits endeavored to unite all powers in one grand assault, but there is no natural cohesion among those whose only bond is hatred of good
- The fall of the great city points to the holy city, Jerusalem, where the Lord was crucified, 11:8; 14:8
- And which became no more holy, because of the Antichrist who uses her as a satanic center, to spread his misleading



- ➤ It was intended to be a the light of the world, a City set on a hill, but she is now denigrated to an apostate, harlot murderess and is condemned to perish under the Law
- ➤ Under this final Chalice judgment she is condemned to be split into 3 parts
- ➤ The imagery is from the 5th chapter of the prophet Ezekiel in which God instructs the prophet to act out the coming destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel 5:1-12
- As for the fall of the great Babylon, and the cities of the Gentiles, will be spoken about in chapters 17 and 18



- > This continues the description of the earthquake in ver. 18
- Then every island fled away, Expressive of great and terrible judgments, as if the very earth were convulsed, and everything were moved out of its place, Revelation 6:14
- > and the mountains were not found, The same image occurs in Revelation 6:14
- ➤ Some, by islands and mountains, understand the inhabitants of both



- This heavy hailstones coming from heaven is but a metaphor, to reveal the severity of Gods anger which destroys the world
- ➤ The hailstone in the Revelation passage not only recalls the plague of hail on Egypt, Exodus 9, but also the large stones from heaven that God threw down upon the Canaanites when Joshua was conquering the Promised land, Joshua 10:11
- ➤ Hail" is frequently mentioned as a judgment of God, Psalm 78:47, 105:32; Isaiah 28:2, 30:30; Ezekiel 13:11, 38:22; Haggai 2:17; also Revelation 8:7, 11:19



- > The unease and humiliation and the plague work no repentance
- The men blaspheme God because of the hail, *plague was* exceedingly great
- > The proud, hard spirit which still hates the good remains
- > Thus is sin its own worst penalty



- ➤ The Chalices containing the last of the plagues of God's wrath have been poured out on Jerusalem but this is not the end
- ➤ The next chapters will deal with the destruction of the great Harlot-City and her allies
- ➤ The final chapters will conclude with the revelation of the glorious Bride of Christ: the true and Holy New Jerusalem and the Final Judgment to come at the end of time as we know it!

CONTHODOR DIDE

Discussion

- ➤ Who told the seven angels to pour out on the earth the seven bowls of wrath?
- > What are these bowls of wrath resembling of?
- > How and why does the altar speak to the third angle?
- ➤ How can the judgments contained in God's bowls of wrath be true and just?

Discussion



- > Why does God allow the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet the power to perform signs?
- ➤ What is the "war of the great day of God, the Almighty"?
- ➤ When the seventh Angel poured out his bowl into the air, what was the result of the seventh bowl?
- What does Jesus mean when He says, it is done?