

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 16

Pastor Paul Cannings, D.Phil.

“God will be Respected”

We may not want to worship Him; we may even try to ignore Him. One day, the world will have to bow before Him. He will reign with or without us.

“God is a Jealous God; His name is Jealous” (Exodus 34:34)

Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (Deuteronomy 4:23-24; NIV)

A. Comparison of the Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets and the Seven Bowls:

1. The question has been raised as to whether the bowls of the wrath of God are chronologically subsequent to or identical with the seven trumpets of the angels. There is clearly many similarities between the trumpet judgments and the bowl judgments:

a) They both deal with (a) the earth (8:7) or the land (16:2), (b) the sea (8:8: 16:3), (c) the rivers and springs of water (8:10; 16:4), and (d) the sun, moon, and stars (8:12) with only the sun mentioned in the bowl judgments (16:8–9).

· “The first one departed and poured out his bowl upon the earth.” Only the first angel is actually said to pour out his bowl on the earth, which is in

keeping with the explicit command of the voice from the temple in v 1. ^[1]
This is the only bowl that is poured out on all the earth.

- The second bowl of God's wrath poured out and turned all the seas to blood. In contrast to the second trumpet that affected one-third of the sea, this judgment affects the entirety of earth's saline bodies of water. Every living thing in the sea dies. ^[2]

- 16:4 The third bowl of God's wrath poured out turns all the freshwater sources to blood. Once again, this third bowl judgment affects the entire earth, whereas the third trumpet judgment affects only one-third. God destroys all of humankind's potable water. ^[3]

- The fourth bowl of God's wrath poured out affects the sun, so its heat scorches humankind with fire. Humankind realizes that these plagues come from God; he is the one who has authority over them. Once again, humankind has the chance to repent and receive forgiveness and salvation, but once again, humanity rejects it. ^[4]

b) The fifth trumpet dealt with demon possession with the sun and sky darkened (9:1–3), which is similar to the fifth bowl in which darkness will cover the earth and sores will cause agony among men (16:10–11).

c) The sixth trumpet deals with the river Euphrates (9:13–14), and the sixth bowl will dry up the Euphrates (16:12).

- Taken as a whole, the sixth bowl of the wrath of God is preparation for the final act of judgment before the Second Coming, and is the later stage of development related to the river Euphrates, anticipated earlier (Rev. 9:14). The time factor between the sixth trumpet and the sixth bowl is comparatively short. ^[5]

· The sixth bowl of God's wrath poured out produces two things. First, the Euphrates River dried up to make way for the eastern kings to proceed to the land of Israel for battle. Second, three unclean spirits issue from the mouths of the unholy trinity to deceive humanity into gathering for the final battle. These spirits perform miraculous signs, targeting the kings of earth with their deception. ^[6]

d) The seventh trumpet implies that the Great Tribulation is coming to its end (11:15–19), and the seventh bowl of the wrath of God records a loud voice from heaven, saying, "It is done!" (16:17) with resulting destruction of the earth by earthquake and hail, which is also included in the seventh trumpet (11:18–19). ^[7]

· John was then informed that this would be the greatest earthquake of all time (other earthquakes are mentioned in 8:5 and 11:19), and the resulting description indicates that it will affect the whole earth with the possible exception of the land of Israel. The great city, which split into three parts, refers to the destruction of Babylon. The most important event, however, is that the nations' cities collapsed. The huge earthquake will reduce to rubble all the cities of the nations (Gentiles). The stage is thus being set for the second coming of Christ. Obviously, in the collapse of the world's cities, there will be tremendous loss of life and destruction of what is left of the world empire. ^[8]

Ø The seventh bowl judgment is poured out into the air, and the same loud voice from the temple—God's voice—that called for the bowl judgments to be poured out now proclaims that they are completed. ^[9]

B. Key Words and Apocalyptic Definitions:

1. The kings from the East:

a) The simplest and best explanation, however, is that this refers to kings or rulers from the Orient or East who will participate in the final world war. [\[10\]](#)

b) In the light of the context of this passage indicating the near approach of the second coming of Christ and the contemporary world situation in which the Orient today contains a large portion of the world's population with tremendous military potential, any interpretation other than a literal one does not make sense. Alford states it concisely: "This is the only understanding of these words which will suit the context, or the requirement of this series of prophecies" (Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 4:700). [\[11\]](#)

· The final battle takes place at Armageddon, a Hebrew word that means "hill of Megiddo." This hill appears today beside the plain of Megiddo in the land of Israel. God dries up the Euphrates River, a natural barrier, so as not to impede the arrival of the eastern kings in preparation for the final battle. [\[12\]](#)

2. 16:13–16. John was then given a symbolic and comprehensive view of the preparation for the final bowl of God's wrath. He saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouths of Satan (the dragon) and the two beasts (Antichrist [13:1–10] and the false prophet [13:11–18]). One need not speculate on the identity of the three frogs, for verse 14 explains that they are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs. [\[13\]](#)

a) These demons go throughout the world, influencing kings to assemble for the battle on the great day of God Almighty ("Almighty" [*pantokratōr*] is also used in 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7; 19:6, 15; 21:22). [\[14\]](#)

b) The answer seems to be in the events which follow. Satan, knowing that the second coming of Christ is near, will gather all the military might of the world

into the Holy Land to resist the coming of the Son of Man who will return to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4). Though the nations may be deceived in entering into the war in the hope of gaining world political power, the satanic purpose is to combat the armies from heaven (introduced in chap. 19) at the second coming of Christ. [\[15\]](#)

c) The war is said to continue right up to the day of the Second Coming and involves house-to-house fighting in Jerusalem itself on the day of the Lord's return (Zech. 14:1–3). The reference to “the battle” (*ton polemon*, Rev. 16:14) is probably better translated as “the war” (NASB). Thus, it is better to speak of “the war of Armageddon” (see v. 16) rather than “the battle of Armageddon.” The war will continue for some time, but the climax will come at Christ’s second coming. “Armageddon” comes from the Greek *Harmagedōn*, which transliterates the Hebrew words for Mount (*har*) of Megiddo. That mountain is near the city of Megiddo and the plain of Esdraelon, the scene of many Old Testament battles. [\[16\]](#)

3. 16:15 Christ interrupts John’s vision to warn readers that his coming will be unexpected and they must be alert. [\[17\]](#)

4. 16:17–20. The seventh angel then poured out his bowl into the air. John heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!” A similar pronouncement followed the seventh trumpet (11:15–19). Here, John also saw lightning flashes and heard thunder, which was followed by a severe earthquake (16:18). John was then informed that this would be the greatest earthquake of all time (other earthquakes are mentioned in 8:5 and 11:19), and the resulting description indicates that it will affect the whole earth with the possible exception of the land of Israel. The great city, which split into three parts, refers to the destruction of Babylon. The most important event, however, is that the nations’ cities collapsed. The huge earthquake will reduce to rubble all the cities of the nations (Gentiles). The stage is thus being set for the second coming of Christ. Obviously, in the collapse of the world’s cities, there will be tremendous loss of life and destruction of what is left of the world empire. [\[18\]](#)

5. 16:21. In addition to the earthquake, huge hailstones of about 100 pounds each fell on people. Such huge masses of ice supernaturally formed would destroy anything left standing from the earthquake and would no doubt kill or seriously injure those they hit. Despite the severity of the judgment and its cataclysmic character, the hardness of human hearts is revealed in the final sentence: And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.^[19]

a) 16:21 Unbelievably large hailstones fall and crush people in the wake of the seven bowl judgments, and the people respond by cursing God—they still refuse to repent.^[20]

b) The question is sometimes raised as to why eternal punishment is eternal. The answer is that people, in the hardness of their hearts, will not change; they deserve eternal punishment because they are eternally unrepentant. With the final destruction coming from the seventh bowl of the wrath of God, the stage will then be set for the dramatic and climactic second coming of Christ, revealed in chapter 19. Before this event, however, a future detailed description is given of Babylon in chapters 17–18.^[21]

^[1] Aune, D. E. (1998). [Revelation 6–16](#) (Vol. 52B, p. 883). Word, Incorporated.

^[2] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:2–4). Lexham Press.

[3] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:2–4). Lexham Press.

[4] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:8–9). Lexham Press.

[5] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 969). Victor Books.

[6] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:12–16). Lexham Press.

[7] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 966–967). Victor Books.

[8] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 969). Victor Books.

[9] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:17–21). Lexham Press.

[10] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 967–968). Victor Books.

[11] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 967–968). Victor Books.

[12] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:12–16). Lexham Press.

[13] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 968). Victor Books.

[14] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 968). Victor Books.

[15] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 968). Victor Books.

[16] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 968). Victor Books.

[17] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:12–16). Lexham Press.

[18] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 969). Victor Books.

[19] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 969). Victor Books.

[20] Mangum, D., ed. (2020). [Lexham Context Commentary: New Testament](#) (Re 16:17–21). Lexham Press.

[21] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 969). Victor Books.