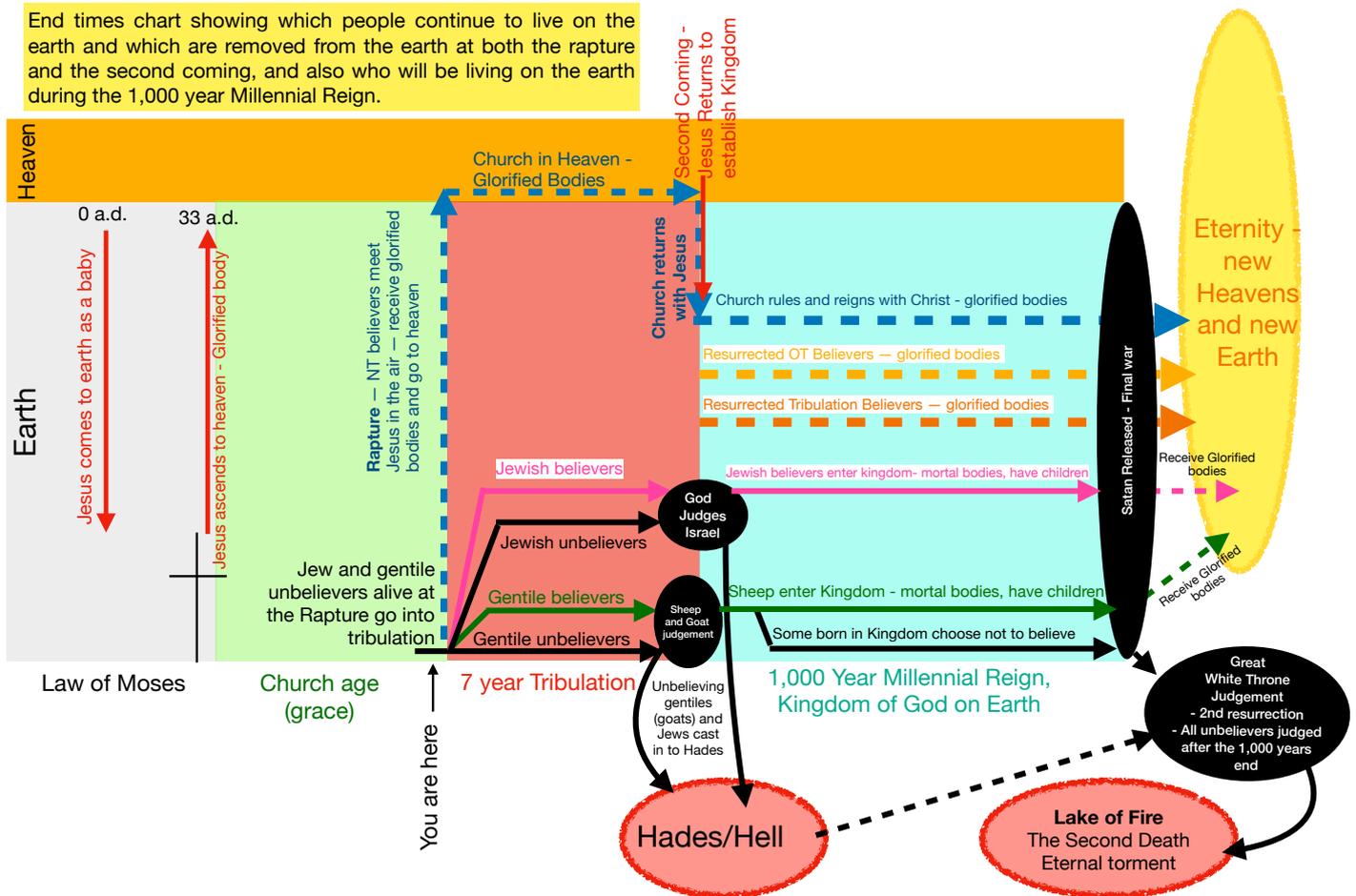


Revelation 16:1-21—The 7 Bowl Judgements

We'll quickly have a look at the chart to see the big picture. Let's start by revising the overall order of events:

Church age → Rapture → 7 year Tribulation → 1,000 yr Millennial Reign → Eternity



We are currently studying events that happen during the 7 year tribulation (Revelation chapters 6-19). There are three sets of judgements during the 7 year tribulation. First there were the seal judgements, then the trumpet judgements, and now the bowl judgements. These last seven bowl judgements are far more severe than the other two sets of judgements and they are what we will be reading about today. We'll start at chapter 15 verse 5 to get the context.

Revelation 15:5-16:21 NKJV

After these things I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened. ⁶ And out of the temple came the seven angels having the seven plagues, clothed in pure bright linen, and having their chests girded with golden bands. 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 The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed [finished/paid in full].

16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

First Bowl: Loathsome Sores

² So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

Second Bowl: The Sea Turns to Blood

³ Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

Third Bowl: The Waters Turn to Blood

⁴ Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

“You are righteous, O Lord,

The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.

⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink.
For it is their just due.”

⁷ And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

Fourth Bowl: Men are Scorched

⁸ Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. ⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Fifth Bowl: Darkness and Pain

¹⁰ Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. ¹¹ They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Sixth Bowl: Euphrates Dried Up

¹² Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

Seventh Bowl: The Earth Utterly Shaken

¹⁷ Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air (atmosphere), and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!” ¹⁸ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

¹⁹ Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. ²⁰ Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹ And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

The End of the World as We Know it

Not a very bright future, not something that a person should be looking forward to. I'm glad that we will be looking at it from Heaven. There will be almost complete destruction and misery beyond measure as the people who "**dwell on the earth**", those who "*so identify with the things of this earth that they possess him,*" are judged. We looked at the phrase, **dwell on the earth**, last time. These people, those who **dwell on the earth**, are the ones who are being judged. They are the ones who have chosen to find their joy and fulfilment in the passing pleasure of sin and so have rejected God. Their love of the world and the world system has caused them to hate God and the things of God.

As we go through Revelation chapter 16 we will see that these people, those who **dwell on the earth**, are completely unrepentant. Nothing that God does will change them. Neither blessings nor trials. They have completely rejected God and everything that He represents.

We looked at repentance last time we met. Remember that at its heart, repentance is responding to God's kindness towards us, which causes us to want to surrender our life and will to God so that we want to live a life that pleases Him. We replace our will—what we want to do, with God's will—what God wants to do, and we do it willingly. As we learned last time, we are bond servants of Jesus Christ—servants for love for life.

This chapter records chronologically the end of this world as we know it. It doesn't destroy the planet, but it does destroy everything about the planet that man, from the flood until now, has made. Also, these events happen rapidly, and occur at the very end of the 7 year Tribulation. It's pretty obvious that if Jesus didn't come back at this time, then there would be no one left alive. Listen to what Jesus said in:

Matthew 24:21-22 NKJV

For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. ²² And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened.

Matthew 24:21-22 NLT

For there will be greater anguish than at any time since the world began. And it will never be so great again. ²² **In fact, unless that time of calamity is shortened, not a single person will survive.** But it will be shortened for the sake of God's chosen ones.

Chronology or Sequence of Events

Just to summarise, there are three sets of judgements during the seven year tribulation. First there were the seal judgements, then the trumpet judgements, and now the bowl judgements. These last seven bowl judgements are far more severe than the other two sets of judgements.

Following Revelation 16, the next chronological report that John gives will be in Revelation chapter 19, where he describes the second coming of Christ. Jesus returns back to earth with all of His saints, the church, riding on white horses with Him—that's you and me. So at this point, at the end of chapter 16, everything has been brought to

total destruction. The next event, immediately to follow, will be Christ's second coming in Revelation chapter 19—He has to come back! And when He does, He will renovate the planet, resetting the ecology, and make it liveable again—in fact, more than liveable—the whole earth will be like like the garden of Eden, and we will rule and reign with Jesus for 1,000 years.

The Three Great Signs

Let's go back and get the big picture. Firstly, this is the third of the three great signs that appear in Heaven. They originate in Heaven and affect the whole of mankind. Let's review the signs:

First sign, Revelation 12:1—The woman (A picture of Israel throughout history)

Revelation 12:1 NKJV

Now a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars.

So the first of the three great signs given to mankind is the nation of Israel, and her history, showing the primary reason why Israel was created—from Israel came the Saviour. Who would be the one who would be dedicated to trying to destroy her—Satan.

Second sign, Revelation 12:3 and 9—Satan and the seven world empires or kingdoms

Revelation 12:3 NKJV

³ And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

⁹ So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who [continually] deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

So again, another great sign is shown to man, which helps us to understand how history has been shaped or influenced by Satan. Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2) and has been granted by God to have power and influence over the nations of the world. Satan has been working and continues to work through human government to deceive the world. The seven heads represent the seven great world empires, finishing up with the seventh, the revived Roman empire. We'll learn more about this next week.

Third sign, Revelation 15:1—The seven last plagues or bowl judgements

Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete.

These shallow bowls were also used as censers—the priests would burn incense in the temple, which represented the prayers of the saints. So, if the bowls contained the prayers of the saints. What were their prayers?

Revelation 6:10 NKJV

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?”

The people praying this prayer are those tribulation believers who had been brutally tortured and murdered by “those who dwell on the earth,” that is, the unbelievers, the unrepentant ones, the ones who are being judged during the seven year tribulation. So now in Revelation 16 we have the final answer to their prayers—brutal judgements as fair justice for the brutal treatment of God’s people. We will also see that Satan is locked up when Jesus comes back as well. God is faithful to answer our prayers.

This is a good time to remind us that we need to be working hard to warn our friends and family of this coming judgement, because the seven year tribulation will be an absolutely terrible time to be alive. Most of the many who come to believe during those seven years will be killed, and anyone who doesn’t believe will be damned to eternal destruction in the Lake of Fire.

So to link the three signs together: Firstly, God creates Israel so as to provide a Saviour, and gives the world the opportunity to be saved. Secondly, Satan works through human government to deceive the world, turning them against God, and all the way through has been brutally persecuting both the nation of Israel and the church. Thirdly, God judges those who refuse to repent, who refuse to accept God’s gift of pardon, those who “*so identify with the things of this earth that they possess him.*”

So, in these three great signs we have the gospel. Today we are looking at the judgements that God sends on the those who dwell on the earth, the unrepentant unbelievers. These judgements are directly from God, and the people know that they are from God because they curse God because of them.

Verse by verse study of Revelation 16

Revelation 16:1 NKJV

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.”

v 1 **Then I heard a loud voice from the temple:** Since no one could enter the temple (Revelation 15:8), this **loud voice from the temple** must be God Himself, who personally initiates the horrific judgment of the bowls.

v 1 **Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth:** These bowls of judgment are the *third woe* described in Revelation 11:14. Because they are described as **the wrath of God**, they are *chastisements* (with the purpose of bringing repentance) as much as *punishments* (with the purpose of dispensing justice). God’s disciplines are always designed to bring people to repentance.

These events occur at the end of the seven-year period, immediately before Jesus’ return.

David Guzik: “Images from Israel’s Exodus are prominent in the bowl judgments. In the days of Moses, God sent plagues upon Egypt that included plagues of boils (Exodus 9:8–12), waters turning to blood (Exodus 7:14–25), and darkness (Exodus 10:21–29).”

v 1 **On the earth:** This is where the judgements will occur

Those who believe the Book of Revelation is all fulfilled in history (preterist view—allegorical or non-literal interpretation of prophecy) have a hard time with this. In Poole's commentary, his suggestions on what **earth** might mean show how difficult it is to make sense of Revelation when interpreted allegorically.

- Poole says **earth** might mean *some parts of the earth*
- Poole says **earth** might mean *the common people*
- Poole says **earth** might mean *The Roman Empire*
- Poole says **earth** might mean *The Roman Catholic clergy*

The point is clear. If **earth** doesn't mean **earth**, then no one can tell what it means, and God may as well not have written it. Think about it, when have all the waters of the earth been turned to blood and all the fish died? When have all the rivers and lakes turned to blood? When has there been a world wide earthquake that has destroyed every building? When has the whole earth been scorched and so on? The reality is that if we don't take prophecy literally, then it doesn't make sense and people are forced to make it mean whatever they want it to mean—which is exactly what they do.

As we have spoken about before, every word of scripture is inspired or God breathed, and all prophecy must be taken literally. All fulfilled prophecy has been fulfilled literally, so why would any sensible person think that currently unfulfilled prophecy won't be fulfilled literally. Some might object, saying, but Revelation is full of symbols, so it can't be taken literally. True, it is full of signs and symbols, but every sign or symbol has a literal meaning—we simply have to look through scripture to find it so we can correctly interpret it.

The first bowl: foul and loathsome sores (Revelation 16:2)

Revelation 16:2 NKJV

So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

v 2 **A foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast:** Those who worshipped the beast and received his **mark** are now marked by God with **foul and loathsome** sores.

Notice that this judgement doesn't affect the tribulation believers, because they haven't taken the mark of the Beast.

The second bowl: the sea turned to blood (Revelation 16:3)

Revelation 16:3 NKJV

Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

v 3 **The sea (all the oceans) ... became blood:** Revelation 8:8–9 (second trumpet judgement) described a partial contamination (one third) of the sea. Here all the oceans are turned to blood making it so (**every living creature in the sea died**).

v 3 **Blood as of a dead man:** The sea doesn't necessarily *become* blood, but **as of** a corpse's blood. It will match the appearance and sickening character of the blood in a dead body.

The third bowl: fresh waters polluted (Revelation 16:4)

Revelation 16:4 NKJV

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

v 4 **The rivers and springs of water, and they became blood:** This *complete* contamination is in contrast to the partial (one-third) pollution of fresh waters shown in Revelation 8:10–11 (third trumpet judgement).

v 4 **They became blood:** When these judgments come, the time must be very short until the return of Jesus. With ecological disaster such as this, the human race cannot survive long.

“They thirsted after blood and massacred the saints of God; and now they have got blood to drink!” (Clarke)

The righteousness of God's judgments (Revelation 16:5–7)

Revelation 16:5–7 NKJV

And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

“You are righteous, O Lord,

**The One who is [are] and who was [were] and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.**

⁶ For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,

And You have given them blood to drink.

For it is their just due.”

⁷ And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

v 5 **The One who is (are) and who was (were):** Here is more evidence for the trinity, the triune God. In the original Greek, the words are plural (are and were).

v 7 **And I heard the angel of the waters:** Notice that there is an angel in charge of all the fresh water, and this judgement is against all the fresh water.

v 5-6 **You are righteous ... For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink:** It is completely fitting that those who delighted in shedding the blood of the saints should now be forced to drink **blood**. They refused the Living Water, and now will be given death to drink.

v 5 **You are righteous, O Lord:** Even in the midst of judgment, it is right that the angel says this. Not only is God's justice *fair*, it is also *pure* and *appropriate*. There is no “vigilante justice” with God.

v 7 **I heard another from the altar saying:** This voice could be an angel speaking from the **altar**, but I believe that it is more likely that it represents the corporate testimony of the Tribulation martyrs who are described as being under the altar (Revelation 6:9) and the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3–5).

The fourth bowl: the sun scorches men (Revelation 16:8–9)

Revelation 16:8–9 NKJV

Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. ⁹ And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

v 8 **The sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire:** What is normally taken for granted as a blessing—the warmth of the shining **sun**—is now a curse.

This is the bible's version of global warming. The difference is that it will come suddenly, and man will have nothing to do with it.

Genesis 8:22 tells us that God will keep the planet going, the seasons happening. We as Christians don't need to worry about the hype of global warming, the repeated warnings that the world will end because there are too many cows and too many cars, which are always followed by the repeated failures of those predictions to come true.

v 9 **They did not repent and give Him glory:** The failure of men to respond with repentance shows that knowledge or experience of *judgment* will not change man's sinful condition. These people's hearts are hardened beyond repair because of their repeated refusal to repent.

Those who are not won by *grace* will never be won. Romans 2:4 tells us that it's God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

Romans 2:2-9 NLT paraphrase

And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³ Since you judge others for doing these things, why do you think you can avoid God's judgment when you do the same things? ⁴ Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin [repent]?

⁵ But because you are stubborn and refuse to turn from your sin, you are storing up terrible punishment for yourself. For a day of anger is coming, when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will judge everyone according to what they have done. ⁷ He will give eternal life to those who **keep on doing good**, seeking after the glory and honour and immortality that God offers. ⁸ But he will pour out his anger and wrath on those who live for themselves, who refuse to obey the truth and instead live lives of wickedness. ⁹ There will be trouble and calamity for everyone who **keeps on doing what is evil...**

“The wishful thinking of some that men would repent if they only knew the power and righteous judgment of God is shattered by frequent mention in this chapter of the hardness of the human heart in the face of the most stringent and evident divine discipline.” (Walvoord)

We can see this as we discipline our kids. Yes, we need to discipline them, but long term obedience is driven by relationship, by love.

The Fifth bowl: a plague of darkness (Revelation 16:10–11)

Revelation 16:10–11 NKJV

Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. ¹¹ They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

v 10 **His kingdom became full of darkness:** This is similar to the ninth plague on Egypt where there was a literal, impenetrable darkness for three days. It could be *felt*, as described in Exodus 10:21–22. But here, it will be associated with excruciating pain as well. Just imagine the fear and despair that these people will be experiencing. The location will be Rome and the surrounding nations—most likely Western Europe.

v 10 **They gnawed their tongues because of the pain:** David Guzik: “The darkness of the fifth bowl is like a preview of hell itself, which is described by Jesus as *the outer darkness* (Matthew 25:30). Those under the judgment of this fifth bowl stand, as it were, on the shores of the lake of fire.”

v 11 **And did not repent of their deeds:** In man’s sinful condition, he *increases* his sin when under God’s judgment, the very time he should *forsake* his sin. Their hearts are so hard that not even this will change their hearts.

Two quotes from Spurgeon regarding repentance:

“Judgment may produce a carnal repentance—a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The same sin rules in him, but it is called by another name, and wears another dress. The stone is carved into a more sightly shape, but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image, but it is not transformed into gold. This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree?” (Spurgeon)

“This is real penitence, when the man gives glory to the justice of God, even though it condemns him. O my hearer, do you thus repent? Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of hell? If not, your repentance needs to be repented of.” (Spurgeon)

Again, we can see this both in ourselves, and in our kids. When we know that there will be a consequence, we change that behaviour, and instead look for another way to satisfy our sinful desires. And, if the consequence is removed, we often go back to the behaviour—this is not true repentance. Also, we often complain about the consequence—another sure indicator that we have not truly repented. True repentance is marked by humility, and a willingness to change because we love Jesus more than we love sin.

The sixth bowl: Armies are gathered for a great battle (Revelation 16:12–16)

Revelation 16:12–16 NKJV

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing (miraculous) signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame.”

¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

v 12 **The great river Euphrates:** Historically, the Romans considered the **Euphrates** River to be a secure barrier against invasion from the empires of the east. In that day it was 1,800 miles (2,900 kilometres) long and anywhere from 300–1200 yards (275–1,100 meters) wide. It’s always been considered the division between the near east and far east.

v 12 **Its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared:** If the Euphrates were dried up and made a road, massive armies from the east (nations such as China, India, and Japan) could move westward with ease.

Some speculate on the *reason* these armies of the east come westward. Some think it is to wipe out Israel, or to rebel against a European-based world leader (the Antichrist). Ultimately, they come to do battle against God and His Messiah (Psalm 2).

v 13 **I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon:** The spirits are **like frogs** in form. These demons are like the lying spirit who led Ahab into battle (1 Kings 22:19–23).

v 14 **They are spirits of demons, performing signs:** Again, real signs and wonders are used by demons as tools of deception. I believe that even today, signs and wonders are being used to deceive many, regardless of if they are false or real. People see the evidence for the supernatural and embrace it, but fail to check the source of the power—from God or from Satan.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 NLT paraphrase

“Suppose there are prophets among you or those who dream dreams about the future, and they promise you signs or miracles, ² and the predicted signs or miracles occur. If they then say, ‘Come, let us worship other gods’—gods you have not known before—³ do not listen to them. The Lord your God is testing you to see if you truly love him with all your heart and soul. ⁴ Serve only the Lord your God and fear him alone. Obey his commands, listen to his voice, and cling to him. ⁵ The false prophets or visionaries who try to lead you astray must be put to death, for they encourage rebellion against the Lord your God, who redeemed you from slavery and brought you out of the land of Egypt. Since they try to lead you astray from the way the Lord your God commanded you to live, you must put them to death. In this way you will purge the evil from among you.

v 13 The **false prophet** here is the second beast of Revelation 13, the right hand man of the antichrist.

v 14 **Gather them to the battle**: This battle is not nation against nation, but the nations against God (Psalm 2:2). This is one of three important battles mentioned in prophecy.

i. The battle of Gog, Magog. Russia and her allies come against Israel (Ezekiel 38 and 39).

ii. The battle of **Armageddon**, when the Antichrist leads the world system against a returning Jesus (Revelation 17:12–16, 17:14, 19:19).

iii. The final battle, when Satan and his allies, after the millennium, make war against God (Revelation 20:7–10).

v 14 **That great day of God Almighty**: The winner of this battle is apparent. It is the **great day of God**, not the great day of man, not the great day of the Antichrist, not the great day of the dragon.

v 15 **Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame**: In the midst of the description of the coming battle, there is a warning to be prepared in light of Jesus' assured victory. You don't want to find yourself on the wrong team when the dust has settled and the battle finished.

This also gives the believers who are still alive at this time great assurance. Jesus is saying, don't compromise, don't give into fear, stay strong, because the victory is near.

v 15 **Garments** are pictures of spiritual and practical righteousness. We are given the righteousness of Jesus as a garment (Galatians 3:27), but we are also called to "put on" the nature of Jesus in terms of practical holiness (Ephesians 4:20–24). Above all, we must not be "**naked**"—that is, without a covering, or trying to provide our own covering like Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:7), which is like filthy rags in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6).

v 16 **And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon**: This great battle happens at a place called **Armageddon** (*Har-Megiddo*).

Megiddo is in a region in northern Israel frequently associated with decisive battles: biblical examples include Deborah over Sisera (Judges 5:19); Gideon over the Midianites (Judges 7); Pharaoh over Josiah (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:22). It is also a place of end-times mourning (Zechariah 12:11).

Also, the vast Valley of Megiddo has seen tremendous battles through the centuries. Over 200 battles have been fought in the region, from 1468 b.c. (with Pharaoh Tutmosis III) to 1917 (with Lord Allenby of the British, WW1).

Here in Revelation 16:12-16, The region of Megiddo is where the armies of the world will gather at the very end of the 7 year tribulation, but not necessarily where the fighting happens (See Revelation 16:14, 17:14 and 19:19). We'll talk more about this battle another time.

The seventh bowl: the final judgments (Revelation 16:17–21)

Revelation 16:17–21 NKJV

Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”¹⁸ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.¹⁹ Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.²⁰ Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.²¹ And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

v 17 **It is done:** This announcement, coming from the throne itself tells us that there will be no more delay. In mercy, God has stretched out this scene as much as He possibly could. The seals were followed by trumpets; the trumpets were followed by bowls; but there will be no more judgments upon the earth after this—it is done.

v 17 **Poured out his bowl into the air:** The fact that the bowl is poured into the air may show judgment against Satan, the *prince of the power of the air* (Ephesians 2:2), and his allies.

v 18 **There was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth:** In these final judgments, God shakes the earth with a tremendous earthquake. The same is promised in Hebrews 12:26: *Now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.”* Yet, what cannot be shaken will remain.

v 19 **Now the great city was divided into three parts:** This is Jerusalem. There will be geographical changes to the landscape around Jerusalem.

v 19 **and the cities of the nations fell:** This is total global destruction—there has never been anything like this. Probably 20-25 on the richter scale, and not localised to one particular location. It will be world wide. There will not be one structure left standing, not one house, not one sky scraper.

v 19 **Great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath:** The fall of Babylon (**the great city**) is more explicitly described in Revelation 17 and 18. Here, it is enough to say that God gives her **the cup of the wine of the fierceness** (the ancient Greek word *thymos*, describing a passionate outburst of anger) **of His wrath** (the ancient Greek word *orge*, describing a standing state of anger).

“The combination of *thymos* and *orge* connotes the strongest kind of outpouring of divine judgment.” (Walvoord). What this means is that God is not just angry, but He is openly expressing His anger.

v 20 **Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found:** This earthquake will be so severe that every island will be destroyed, and every mountain will be flattened.

v 21 **Great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent:** Giant hailstones fall, weighing up to 100 pounds (45 kilograms), all over the world. How did the people respond? Men responded in utter, unrepentant depravity (**men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail**).

Hail is frequently a tool of judgment against God's enemies, as seen against Egypt (Exodus 9:24), the Canaanites (Joshua 10:11), apostate Israel (Isaiah 28:2), and Gog and Magog (Ezekiel 38:22). In each of these instances, **hail** rained down from heaven as a tool of judgment, not as a corrective chastisement of God's own children.

Take Home Message/Application

As we discussed earlier, despite all their suffering, and despite years of extensive evangelistic efforts, many still will not repent. Again, observe the dangers of hardening your heart against God.

Hebrews 3:12-13 NLT paraphrase

Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. ¹³ You must warn each other every day, while it is still "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.

This is true for believer and unbeliever alike.

For believers, if we don't destroy the sin in our lives, then that sin will destroy us. We'll still make it to heaven, but the journey will be rough, we will be a curse to others instead of a blessing, we will grieve the Holy Spirit, and we will miss out on our heavenly reward. Remember, sin will keep us from the bible, and the bible will keep us from sin.

For unbelievers, every decision to not humble yourself before God and accept His gift of pardon or forgiveness hardens your heart just that little bit more, and it gets harder and harder for you to be saved. This is why relatively few older people get saved—they have had a lifetime of rejecting the Holy Spirit when He convicts them of their sin of not believing in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. It's so important to reach the children for Christ.

What's next?

Chronologically, the second coming comes next in chapter 19 when Jesus returns to earth, defeats the armies of the world, and then sets up His kingdom, His Millennial reign—this is absolutely imminent. But before we get there, Revelation chapters 17 and 18 show us some of the reasons why mankind was so deceived. They are the final two vignettes, stories with a meaning, that explain the people, events, and organisations that are a part of the 7 year tribulation. We'll get into chapter 17 next week.