**March 25, 2020 | A Study on Chapter 16 of the Book of Revelation**

## The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath

In the last chapter seven angels were given bowls containing God’s wrath.  Now they are instructed to pour out the bowls on the earth.  This is apparently God speaking since verse 8 of chapter 15 said no one could enter the temple and now the voice is coming from the temple.  Unlike the 7 seals and 7 trumpets, the contents of the bowls are poured out successively with no interludes separating them.  While there are those who believe that the 7 bowls, 7 seals and 7 trumpets all occur at the same time, I tend to think they are separate with the bowls happening last.  The best description I read was that the seals are to reveal, the trumpets are to warn and the bowls are to execute.  As I mentioned last week, the plagues may occur during the last 45 days of the tribulation.

The first angel pours out his bowl and painful sores break out on the people who worship the beast.  This is similar to the 6th plague sent against Pharaoh in Ex. 9:11.  The second bowl is poured out and the sea is turned to blood like the 1st plague in Ex. 7:19.  When the 2nd trumpet was sounded in chapter 8, a third of the sea was turned to blood and a third of sea life was killed.  Now the entire sea becomes blood and all sea life is killed.  Verse 3 says the blood is like that of a dead man.  Blood that provides oxygen for life becomes useless at death since it cannot sustain life unlike the blood of the living Christ that saves us and provides eternal life.  Next all fresh water sources become filled with blood.  In chapter 8 with the sounding of the 3rd trumpet a third of fresh waters became bitter.  As the angel says in verse 6 because Satan and his followers shed the blood of saints and prophets, it is fitting that now they have no water to drink so they must drink blood.  The 4th angel pours his bowl on the sun which scorches people with fire.  When the 4th trumpet was sounded in chapter 8, a third of the sun turned dark.   Notice in verse 9 and again in verse 11 that no one would repent so it would seem that they had an opportunity to do so.  Instead they are so completely given over to Satan that they curse God.

 Like the 1st 4 trumpets, these 1st 4 bowls affect the elements of the earth.  The next bowl  poured out on the throne of the beast is darkness.  This could refer to the physical location of the Antichrist.   Like the previous plagues, there is a corresponding plague of darkness that God sent to Pharaoh (Ex. 10:22).  Prophecy about this 5th plague can be found in Joel 2:2, Isaiah 60:2 and Amos 5:18.

Next the 6th angel pours his bowl on the Euphrates River causing it to go dry.  The Euphrates is introduced to us early in the Bible.  We learn in Gen. 2:10-14 that this river has its origin from a river flowing from Eden which then branches into 4 rivers (Pishon, Gihon, Tigris & Euphrates).  The Tigris and Euphrates rivers still exist today with their headwaters in Turkey flowing parallel until they join into one river in Iraq before emptying into the Persian Gulf.  Since the Pishon and Gihon are no longer shown on maps, it is thought that they have long since dried up, perhaps as a result of geological changes after the flood.  Just as God created a dry crossing in the Jordan River for Israel to escape Egypt, God dries up the Euphrates to allow an army from the east to advance to the coming battle.

John then sees a vision of frogs containing evil spirits coming out of the mouths of the dragon (Satan), the beast (Antichrist) and the false prophet.  These spirits lure all the armies of the world to the battle that will occur at Armageddon which is the Hebrew name for the Mount of Megiddo.  The city of Megiddo is located in northern Israel.  What follows next is a message from Jesus that has different interpretations.  There are numerous warnings by Paul, Peter and Jesus himself that he will come without notice like a thief in the night.  Here the warning is a combination of his warnings to the churches in Sardis (3:3) and Laodicea (3:18).  One possible interpretation is that this is a message to Christians who remain on earth during the final days of the tribulation period to stay vigilant.  Another is that this is a message to all Christians who read John’s vision (like us) to be ready for his return at any time.

The chapter is completed with the 7th bowl poured into the air causing an earthquake described as greater than any previous earthquake.  God then declares “It is done” similar to the last words of Jesus on the cross “It is finished”.  This may indicate that chapter 16 is a summary of events that will occur in chapters 17-19 including the fall of Babylon and the Battle of Armageddon.  The great city (Jerusalem) is split into 3 parts fulfilling prophecy in Zech. 13:8.

As we have discussed on several occasions, some believe that events in Revelation are historical and that the fall of Babylon represents the fall of the Roman empire.

Below are links to 2 articles from the web site Blue Letter Bible that describe the different points of view regarding the church in end times and the timing of the events in Revelation.

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/mill.cfm>

<https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/ice_thomas/Mat24-25/Mat24-25_Part16.cfm>