

Revelation 16:1-21

Outline (I am grateful for the Outline Bible for help with this outline)¹:

1. The first judgment bowl/vial (verses 1-2)
 - a. The place (verses 1-2): It is poured out on the earth.
 - b. The punishment (verse 2b): horrible and malignant sores break out on those who have received the mark of the beast.
2. The second judgment bowl/vial (verse 3):
 - a. It is poured on the sea.
 - b. The punishment: the waters become as blood, killing all life in them.
3. the third judgment bowl/vial (verses 4-7)
 - a. the place: rivers and springs (verse 4a)
 - b. the punishment: these fresh water sources also become blood (verse 4b). This is like the sea in verse 3)
 - c. the proclamation: the angels now announce the reason for this, the avenging of the blood of the martyrs (verses 5-7).
4. The fourth judgment bowl/vial (verses 8-9)
 - a. The place: it is poured out on the sun (verse 8a).
 - b. The punishment (the sun now scorches men with fire (verse 8b).
 - c. The perversion: they still do not repent and they curse God (verse 9).
5. The fifth judgment bowl/vial (verses 10-11)
 - a. The place: it is poured out upon the throne of the beast (verse 10a).
 - b. The punishment: his entire kingdom is plunged into darkness (verse 10b).
 - c. The perversion: people still refuse to repent (verse 11).
6. The sixth judgment bowl/vial (verses 12-16)
 - a. The place: It is poured out upon the great river Euphrates, and its waters dry up (verse 12a).²
 - b. The punishment: Demons deceive the kings of the east to march their armies westward across the Euphrates to prepare for Armageddon (**verses 12b-14 and 16**).³
 - c. The Promise: a blessing is promised to those who prepare their hearts for Christ's return (verse 15).
7. The seventh judgment bowl/vial (verses 17-21)
 - a. The place: It is poured out into the air (verse 17a).
 - b. The proclamation: there comes a voice from the temple saying "It is finished" (verse 17b).
 - c. The punishment (verses 18-21a)
 - i. *History's greatest earthquake now occurs (16:18).*
 - ii. *It splits Babylon into three parts (16:19a).*

¹ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16.

² H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:12.

³ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:12–14.

- iii. *The great cities of the world collapse (16:19b).*
 - iv. *Islands vanish, and mountains are flattened (16:20).*
 - v. *Hailstones weighing seventy-five [or 75 pounds] pounds fall from the sky (16:21a).⁴*
- d. The perversion: unrepentant people continue to curse God (verse 21b).

Dr Mulholland shares about God's wrath:

People nowadays seem to have one of two basic perspectives about the "wrath" of God. They either think of it as a punitive, vindictive, retribution on the part of God, or they dismiss it as a vestige of the cruel and darker perspectives of a less enlightened age. The first results in a God who is mean, authoritarian, even cruel; a God who is all too often incarnate in believers who are judgmental, critical, vindictive, punitive, retributive. The second results in a God who overlooks sin, who is not really concerned with the brokenness of people but who "blesses" human bondages as "normal" though "variant" lifestyles. Such a God is also incarnate in believers for whom the primary virtue is "tolerance" and whose values are but one set of relativities in a pluralistic world. It is readily obvious that such extremes have lost the creative tension of the paradox of reality. When the writers of Scripture spoke of the "wrath" of God, they were searching for an image that expressed the fact that God's nature is unalterably and eternally holy. Some of the images that have been used to express this reality are the images of God's steadfastness and God's faithfulness. God's nature is the ultimate "fixed point" of all reality. Another set of images that is used is the pairing of righteous and true. This pair moves beyond the immutability of the first set and wrestles with the fact that God's nature establishes the ultimate values of human existence. Another set of images contains the ideas of holiness and purity. These terms convey the very essence of God's nature as the standard of human wholeness. Yet another set of images focuses upon God's mercy and grace. These images indicate that a God who is steadfast, faithful, righteous, true, holy, and pure still initiates a relationship with persons who are undependable, unfaithful, unrighteous, false, unholy, and impure. The crux of the matter comes in dealing with the impossible tension that exists between these opposites. In human experience, such tensions are resolved in one of three ways. The first person accommodates to the second; the second accommodates to the first; or both accommodate to a compromise position. These options do not operate, however, in our relationship with God and God's relationship with us. This is because our relationship with God is not a relationship between equally fallible persons where neither has complete truth and wholeness. God is the ultimate reality within which we have our being. The nature of God is the context of our wholeness as well as our brokenness. God cannot and will not accommodate or compromise when it comes to sin and unholiness.

The resolution of the impossible tension finds its dynamic in the love of God. God's love enfolds us in our undependability, unfaithfulness, unrighteousness, falsehood, unholiness, and impurity. God's love, however, does not confirm our sinfulness. God's love confronts us with our brokenness, our incompleteness, our woundedness, and calls us to enter into transformation through his love. The confrontation of love can be disruptive to our status quo, disturbing to our structures of control, and painful and even tormenting at the points of our unlikeness to the image of God that is our ultimate wholeness. It is this aspect of the love of God that John describes as the "wrath" of God. It could be said

⁴ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:18–21.

that the “wrath” of God is the love of God that moves astringently, rigorously, unrelentingly against anything in our being that is inconsistent with God’s will for our wholeness in his image. As long as we cling to our unlikeness to God, the love of God will be a constant torment.

Another aspect of what John sees in the bowls of “wrath” is the consequences of rejecting the love of God. Since the love of God is the context of our wholeness, our rejection results in a growing experience of brokenness. Spirit, mind, and even body are adversely affected by our abandonment of the love of God. These come, not as punishment from God, but as the inherent and immutable results of moving against the reality of our being. Whenever we break one of the physical laws of the cosmos, the adverse results are immediate and, often, tragic. Whenever we break the spiritual “laws” of our wholeness, the adverse effects, while not as immediate as with physical laws, begin to move our being toward destruction.⁵

The ESV Study Bible helps us set this up:

Angels Pour Out Seven Bowls. The bowls present varying perspectives on the final destruction of the first heaven and earth. The first four bowls inflict plagues on the same spheres as the first four trumpets (8:7-12): earth, sea, rivers and springs, and sun. The trumpet judgments were limited to one-third of each sphere (see also 9:4-5, 18), but the destruction poured out from the bowls is total. Unlike the seal and trumpet sequences, no interlude (7:1-17; 10:1-11:14) injects delay between the sixth and seventh bowls. The end has come.

The Moody Bible Commentary helps us understand these judgments as different from the Trumpet Judgments:

While the bowl judgments bear similarities to the trumpet judgments there are also significant differences in scope and detail. The trumpet judgments, for instance, impact one-third of the affected entities (8:7-8) while the effect of the bowl judgments is universal (16:3-4, 18). In addition, the response to the bowl judgments is more venomous—blaspheming and satanic opposition are present (16:9, 13-14). An air of finality is also unique to the bowls (16:17). Thus, they are best seen as two separate groups of retributions. They also bear some resemblance to the plagues of the book of Exodus. The brief description of the first six bowls may be intended to accentuate the nearness of the end of time, or the importance of the seventh bowl.⁶

⁵ ¹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., “[Revelation](#),” in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 545–547.

⁶ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83151-83156). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Dr Constable:

The relationship in time of the bowl judgments to the trumpet judgments has been a matter of disagreement among futurist commentators. On the one hand there are some similarities between them, as a side by side comparison reveals.⁵⁰⁷

Tribulation Judgments

	Seals (ch. 6)	Trumpets (chs. 8–9)	Bowls (ch. 16)
1.	Antichrist	Storm	Sores
2.	War	Meteor	Bloody Seas
3.	Famine	Bitterness	Bloody Springs
4.	Death (1/4 of Population)	Darkness	Fire
5.	Imprecations	Locusts	Darkness
6.	Earthquake	Horses (1/3 of Population)	Invasion
7.	7 Trumpets	7 Bowls	Earthquake & Hail ⁷

However the differences make it most difficult to conclude that they are identical judgments.⁵⁰⁸ It seems more likely that the bowls constitute the seventh trumpet as the trumpets constitute the seventh seal. This would make the bowls the last plagues to come on the earth at the end of the Great Tribulation (15:1). Many details in the text, to be pointed out below, support the conclusion that this is the correct interpretation.⁸

1. The first judgment bowl/vial (verses 1-2)

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."

⁵⁰⁷ 507. See Beasley-Murray, pp. 238–39.

⁷ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 16:1.

⁵⁰⁸ 508. See Swete, p. 200; Thomas, *Revelation 8–22*, pp. 525–43.

⁸ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 16:1.

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.

- a. The place (verses 1-2): It is poured out on the earth.
 - i. Notice that we see these seven angels once again and we have seen them in Revelation 15:1 and 15:6-8
 - ii. Notice that a voice from the temple is telling the angels what to do. We saw the temple in Revelation 11:19 but also in the previous few verses. The temple has the glory of God and no one can enter until the seven plagues are finished (Revelation 15:8). It would seem to me that God or Jesus is speaking out of the temple. In Revelation 14:14 we saw one like a Son of Man, most likely Jesus, bringing judgment.
 - iii. There are many cross references about pouring our judgment: Ps 79:6; Jer 10:25; Ezek 22:31; Zeph 3:8; Rev 16:2ff⁹
 - iv. So verse 1 also includes an intro with instructions to the seven angels.
 - v. Seven bowl/vials for the wrath of God.
- b. The punishment (verse 2b): horrible and malignant sores break out on those who have received the mark of the beast.
 - i. The ESV Study Bible: *When the first bowl is poured out on the earth, it will afflict not the land itself (contrast the first trumpet, 8:7) but earth's inhabitants, who bear the beast's mark, with painful sores, like the sixth plague on Egypt (Ex. 9:8-12; Deut. 28:27, 35).*
 - ii. Notice this is on those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.
 - iii. MacArthur Study Bible: *The Septuagint (lxx) uses the same Greek word to describe the boils that plagued the Egyptians (Ex. 9:9-11) and afflicted Job (Job 2:7). In the NT, 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. mark of the beast. Only the worshipers of Antichrist will be afflicted*
 - iv. Moody Bible Commentary: *This series of punishments was initiated by a command from heaven. These were divinely planned and orchestrated events, not natural disasters or haphazard environmental catastrophes. The pouring out of the first vessel resulted in ulcerated sores (Ex 9:9-11) breaking out on the idolaters who had taken the beast's mark (v. 2). Such identification with His enemies was intolerable to the God of heaven.¹⁰*

2. The second judgment bowl/vial (verse 3):

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.

- a. It is poured on the sea.
- b. The punishment: the waters become as blood, killing all life in them.

⁹ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁰ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83157-83160). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- c. We have already seen similar judgments in the Bible: Ex 7:17–21; Rev 8:8f; 11:6¹¹
- d. Think of the consequences of every living thing dying that was in the sea.
- e. This would destroy life on earth.
- f. I like what the ESV Study says: *The second bowl will turn the waters of the sea into blood, and all sea life will die. The first plague on Egypt (Ex. 7:21) is **magnified to universal dimensions.***
- g. Dr Mulholland: *And everything in the sea died. In this case, the image is doubled: The sea doesn't just become like blood in a reprise of the plague in Exodus, it becomes "dead" blood. The holiness of God is death to all that is unholy.*¹²
- h. Moody Bible Commentary: *The second bowl resulted in the obliteration of all sea animals (Ex 7:17-21). The substance poured out by the angel turned the seas into thick, semicoagulated blood, resulting in the death of all marine life (**the second trumpet in 8:8-9 saw only one-third die**).*¹³

3. the third judgment bowl/vial (verses 4-7)

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."

- a. the place: rivers and springs (verse 4a)
- b. the punishment: these fresh water sources also become blood (verse 4b). This is like the sea in verse 3)
 - i. so now there is basically no water left.
 - ii. Revelation 8:10 also had consequences on the rivers.
 - iii. Again cross references: Ex 7:17–20; Ps 78:44; Rev 11:6¹⁴
- c. the proclamation: the angels now announce the reason for this, the avenging of the blood of the martyrs (verses 5-7).
 - i. Notice verse 5: "Righteous are You..." The angel is calling out the Lord as righteous for bringing judgment.
 - ii. The Lord is called the "Holy One."
 - iii. Verse 6 is a direct role reversal. They poured out the blood of the saints so they have blood to drink...We see the common theme in Revelation of the blood of the saints: Rev 17:6; 18:24
 - iv. In verse 7 the alter speaks: I think this is likely the saints under the alter from Revelation 6:9-11.

¹¹ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹² M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 544.

¹³ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83162-83164). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

¹⁴ [*New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update*](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

- d. I like how the ESV Study Bible summarizes this with Old Testament references: *With the third bowl, rivers and springs (sources of drinking water) will be turned to blood. "It is what they deserve," declares the angel ... of the waters, referring to those who shed the blood of saints and prophets (see [17:6](#)). [Isaiah 49:26](#) promises that Israel's bloodthirsty oppressors will be forced to drink their own blood. [The heavenly altar, under which the martyrs' souls pooled like sacrificial blood \(Rev. 6:9\)](#), agrees with the angel's judgment, echoing the song just sung by the victors ([16:7](#); cf. [15:3](#)). People will receive from God exactly what they deserve (see notes on [20:12](#); [20:13](#)).*

Moody Bible Commentary:

The next bowl affected freshwater life (Ex 7:17-21), with a result similar to what happened with the sea. However, John heard impressive words associated with this bowl. God was praised as eternal (who are and who were), holy, and righteous (v. 7). This last attribute was directly related to His decision to judge the persecutors of His people. They had poured out the blood of saints and prophets (v. 6) (Eph 4:11-12) and would thus be destroyed. The penalty would be blood for blood. John also returns to the themes of the altar (6:9-10) and an Almighty God (see 4:4-11) who takes vengeance on the enemies of His loved ones. The phrase they deserve it (v. 6) suggests an important literary and theological point. The perspective of Revelation toward those who resist and rebel against the Lord is not at all sympathetic. They are seldom pictured as the beneficiaries of evangelism, and never of prayer, apparently because their longstanding resistance to God has hardened them to the gospel. Rather, they are consistently presented as rejecting God, and destroying His people. They will therefore be destroyed themselves, and rightly so.¹⁵

4. The fourth judgment bowl/vial (verses 8-9)

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.*

- a. The place: it is poured out on the sun (verse 8a). We saw the sun effected in Revelation 6:12.
- b. MacArthur points out: MacArthur Study Bible
- c. *The scorching heat will melt the polar ice caps, which some estimate would raise the level of the world's oceans by 200 feet, inundating many of the world's major cities and producing further catastrophic loss of life (cf. Amos 9:5-6). The resulting disruption of ocean transportation will make it difficult to distribute the dwindling resources of food and water.*
- d. The punishment (the sun now scorches men with fire (verse 8b)).
- e. The perversion: they still do not repent and they curse God (verse 9).
 - i. They are scorched with fierce heat, but they blaspheme.
 - ii. We have seen before where the people would not repent. In Revelation 2:21 and 9:21 the people would not repent.

¹⁵ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83166-83172). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- iii. We will see it again in this same chapter verses 11 and 21.
- iv. Again the ESV Study Bible summarizes nicely: *Instead of darkening the sun (see [8:12](#)), the fourth bowl will intensify its heat to inflict a terrible foretaste of the coming lake of fire ([20:15](#)) on those who defiantly refuse to repent and give God the glory (cf. [9:20–21](#); [14:7](#)).*

5. The fifth judgment bowl/vial (verses 10-11)

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.

- a. The place: it is poured out upon the throne of the beast (verse 10a).
 - i. I like how the ESV Study Bible points out (see below) that even the throne of the beast is not immune.
 - ii. Dr Mulholland in his differing view writes: ***the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast.*** *In case John's readers haven't realized that the bowls affect only fallen Babylon, it becomes perfectly clear with this bowl.*¹⁶
 - iii. *Remember the beast is the antichrist (see Rev 13).*
- b. The punishment: his entire kingdom is plunged into darkness (verse 10b).
 - i. Obviously this is fitting.
 - ii. Darkness is cross referenced: Ex 10:21f; Is 8:22; Rev 8:12; 9:2¹⁷
 - iii. The people are also in pain.
 - iv. In an article on Desiring God one wrote: *Between gnawing themselves in anguish, they still move their chewed tongues to curse our God. "Immortal horrors," C.S. Lewis rightly called them. Preferring to be scorched than saved, they will share the fate of their father, the devil.*¹⁸
 - v. MacArthur points out: "God of heaven," a frequent OT title for God, appears in the NT only here and in 11:13.
 - vi. About verse 11 Dr Mulholland writes: *This is the same as the "horrible, malignant sores" associated with the first bowl (16:2), suggesting that "pain" may be associated with the scorching of the sun in the fourth bowl (16:8–9). In any case, the citizens of fallen Babylon are in torment in the presence of the holiness ("wrath") of God.*¹⁹

¹⁶ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation,](#)" in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 547.

¹⁷ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

¹⁸ https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-does-hell-say-about-god?utm_campaign=Daily%20Email&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=78384352&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8qHYqqIU57Ry2B;KVZ8g5VgKk0faEAnr8sebkJ1xglLExTnwwQzCSC850xHZq_uCb6npe6ABIHvwT-dcY6KhNnf5qMQ&_hsmi=78384352

¹⁹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation,](#)" in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 548.

- c. The perversion: people still refuse to repent (verse 11).

Again, from the ESV Study Bible:

The fifth bowl shows that the very throne of the beast is not immune to God's just wrath. Darkness was the ninth plague on Egypt, the last before the slaughter of the firstborn compelled a heart-hardened Pharaoh to release Israel (Ex. 10:21–29). It is appropriate that a regime founded on deceit (Rev. 13:5, 13–14) should be plunged into darkness. Although reaping the anguish they have sown in rebellion, hardened people will react by cursing their just Judge rather than forsaking their self-destroying deeds. The refusal to repent (cf. 9:20–21; 16:9, 21) shows the total depravity of those who dwell in the earth, and it shows the justice of eternal punishment (20:3–15).

Moody:

The next bowl afflicted the throne of the beast (2:13), thus darkening his kingdom. **The beast had been granted some temporary authority over the earth (see 2Co 4:4; Col 1:13 on Satan), which was now removed.** John saw God assaulting this domain with darkness. Exactly how this would cause pain is not evident. At the least, it would increase anxiety and fear. Combined with the sores from the previous plague, it would make life miserable.²⁰

6. The sixth judgment bowl/vial (verses 12-16)

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.*

Armageddon

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.*

- a. The place: It is poured out upon the great river Euphrates, and its waters dry up (verse 12a).²¹

Dr Mulholland:

When the Persians attacked Babylon, they captured the impregnable fortress of Babylon by diverting the Euphrates, which flowed under the wall of the city, and marching the troops down the dry riverbed into the heart of the city (Herodotus Histories 1.190–191). The image here recalls that event. "In the OT God is always the one who dries up the water, whether for redemption or judgment" (Beale 1999:827).²²

²⁰ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83181-83184). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

²¹ H. L. Willmington, *The Outline Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:12.

²² M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 548.

Dr Constable:

The final three bowl judgments all have political consequences.

16:12 The problem that this judgment poses for earth-dwellers is not a result of the judgment itself but its consequences, namely, war. It does not inflict a plague on people but serves as a preparation for the final eschatological battle.⁵²⁰ The Euphrates River is the northeastern border of the land God promised to Abraham's descendants (Gen. 15:18; Deut. 1:7; 11:24; Josh. 1:4).⁵²¹ Now God dries up this river that had previously turned into blood (v. 4) so the kings of the East can cross with their armies (cf. Dan. 11:44; Isa. 11:15). God earlier dried up the Red Sea so the Israelites could advance on the Promised Land from the west (Exod. 14:21–22; cf. Isa. 11:16). He also dried up the Jordan River so they could cross over from the east (Josh. 3:13–17; 4:23). Elijah too parted the waters of the Jordan (2 Kings 2:8). Cyrus may have conquered Babylon by draining the Euphrates and marching into the city over the riverbed (cf. Jer. 50:38; 51:36).⁵²² All these previous incidents should help us believe that a literal fulfillment of this prophecy is possible.²³

MacArthur Study Bible

God providentially draws these kings and their armies in order to destroy them in the battle of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14). Their reason for coming may be to rebel against 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 her 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.

- i. So, now this river is hit, but not with blood, but dried up.
- ii. The Euphrates was a major river throughout history and going back to Genesis.
- iii. It is also in Babylon.

⁵²⁰ 520. Ladd, p. 212.

⁵²¹ 521. The Bible calls the Euphrates River (cf. Gen. 2:14), the eastern border of the Promised Land, the great river; and it calls the Mediterranean Sea, the western border of the Promised Land, the great sea.

⁵²² 522. Herodotus, 1:191. Some cuneiform documents have cast doubt on the trustworthiness of Herodotus' account. See Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3:191.

²³ Tom Constable, [*Tom Constable's Expository Notes on the Bible*](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 16:11–12.

- iv. In Rev. 9:14 we saw the River Euphrates effected.
- v. Cross references about the Euphrates: Is 11:15f; 44:27; Jer 51:36²⁴
- b. The punishment: Demons deceive the kings of the east to march their armies westward across the Euphrates to prepare for Armageddon (**verses 12b-14 and 16**).²⁵
 - i. Coming out of the mouth of the dragon, that is the devil.
 - ii. Dr Constable: *It may also be the advancing army from the east that moves these kings to assemble for war.*⁵²⁷ *These kings from all over the world will gather to destroy Israel (cf. Ps. 2:1–3; Joel 2:11; 3:2; Zech. 14:2–3). Satan’s purpose in bringing all these soldiers into Palestine in the first place appears to be to annihilate the Jews. When Jesus Christ returns to earth, specifically to the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:1–4), they will unite in opposing Him. However God’s sovereign hand will be regulating Satan’s activities (Zech. 14:2). This will not be the day of Satan’s triumph but that of the Lord God Almighty. He will show Himself supreme in this climactic battle (cf. Joel 2:31).*⁵²⁸ *The description of this battle follows in 19:11–16.*²⁶
 - iii. false trinity:
 - iv. the dragon is satan ([Rev 12](#))
 - v. the beast is the antichrist ([Rev 13:1ff](#))
 - vi. The false prophet is from [Revelation 13](#) as well (Rev 13:11, 14; 19:20; 20:10)²⁷
 - vii. Three unclean spirits like frogs, that is the best as he can describe them.

Moody:

The sixth bowl caused the Euphrates River to dry up, facilitating the movement of a massive, eastern army. **John saw demons, in the form of frogs, coming from the members of the satanic trinity (16:13). Frogs were symbolically related to the Egyptian goddess Heqt during the bondage, and may be used here to recall those dark days of oppression.** These seducing spirits led military units from around the world to rally at a place called, in Hebrew, Armageddon (Dn 11:40-45). This “mount” and its accompanying plain are an extension of the Great Plain of Esdraelon, an enormous, largely flat fertile area southwest of the Sea of Galilee. The plain encompasses Megiddo and extends from the coast north of Mt. Carmel southeast to the Jordan River. It is the perfect location for staging the armies that will participate in the

²⁴ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

²⁵ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:12–14.

⁵²⁷ 527. Moffatt, 5:447.

⁵²⁸ 528. Gundry, p. 92, believed that the day of the Lord includes the battle of Armageddon but not the Tribulation. Most premillennial interpreters believe this distinction lacks convincing support, and I agree with them.

²⁶ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Re 16:14.

²⁷ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

campaign of Armageddon. Verse 15 is a parenthetical digression that reinforces the argument of the book. Addressed to the seven churches of 2:1–3:22, it urged steadfast perseverance in the face of persecution. If they stayed pure in their devotion to Christ, they would be rewarded.²⁸

- viii. Ex 8:6 had a plague of frogs.
 - ix. Verse 14: this seems to be describing the battle of Armageddon which the deceiving spirits are deceiving kings for. They are performing signs and these go out to the kings of the whole world...
 - x. BUT this is all for the day of the Almighty.
 - xi. Cross reference for verse 16: Judg 5:19; 2 Kin 23:29f; 2 Chr 35:22; Zech 12:11²⁹
- c. The Promise: a blessing is promised to those who prepare their hearts for Christ's return (verse 15). This is an encouraging promise.
- i. Matt 24:43f; Luke 12:39f; Rev 3:3, 11³⁰
 - ii. Dr Mulholland: *This blessing is the third of seven in the vision (cf. 1:3; 14:13; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14). In the Greek structure, the wording is "watching [i.e., staying awake] and keeping their clothing." These are parallel activities. In ch 3, it was mentioned that there were a few in Sardis who had not "soiled their clothes with evil" (3:4); they had kept their clothing pure from defilement by fallen Babylon. It is interesting that it was also the church in Sardis where the rest had fallen asleep and needed to awake (3:2–3), and the conquerors were promised white clothing (3:5). Keeping one's clothing is living a life undefiled by the contaminations of fallen Babylon.*³¹
 - iii. Further: **to walk around naked and ashamed.** *This is an image of captivity in Jewish history. Prisoners of war were stripped and led away naked as a sign of their total defeat and humiliation (see 2 Chr 28:15; Isa 20:2–4; Ezek 16:39; 23:29). The implication is that unless the faithful keep themselves undefiled by fallen Babylon they will participate in her defeat.*³²

ESV Study Bible:

The sixth bowl prepares for the battle on the great day of God the Almighty. The drying up of the great river Euphrates, on which ancient Babylon foolishly relied for defense ([Isa. 44:27–](#)

²⁸ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Location 83193). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

²⁹ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³⁰ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

³¹ M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 548.

³² M. Robert Mulholland Jr., "[Revelation](#)," in *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary: James, 1–2 Peter, Jude, Revelation*, ed. Philip W. Comfort, Cornerstone Biblical Commentary (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2011), 548.

[28](#); [Jer. 50:38](#); [51:36](#)), symbolizes God's removal of restraint on Satan's capacity to assemble a global conspiracy against the church (see [Rev. 20:7-9](#)). The Euphrates was also the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, and it kept the Parthians out (see note on [6:1-2](#)). Unclean spirits emerge as frogs (cf. [Ex. 8:2-11](#)) from the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet in order to deceive world rulers with delusions of victory over "the LORD and ... his Anointed" ([Ps. 2:1-2](#)) and to assemble them for their final defeat and destruction.

[Rev. 16:15](#) *Blessed*. This is Revelation's third of seven benedictions (see [chart](#)). Jesus interjects a summons to spiritual vigilance, echoing his rebukes to the complacent churches of Sardis and Laodicea. Because he is coming like a thief at an unexpected moment (cf. [3:3](#)), his soldiers must stay awake and dressed lest they be caught naked, to their shame (cf. [3:18](#)).

[Rev. 16:16](#) *Armageddon* means "Mount Megiddo" in Hebrew. In ancient Israel, Megiddo was a plain, not a mountain; but it was also the site of some key battles ([Judg. 5:19](#); [2 Kings 23:29](#)), so in the symbolic geography of John's visions it aptly represents the global combat zone (see [Rev. 20:9](#)) in which the final conflict between Christ and Satan will be fought.

7. The seventh judgment bowl/vial (verses 17-21)

Seventh Bowl of Wrath

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.

- a. The place: It is poured out into the air (verse 17a).
- b. The proclamation: there comes a voice from the temple saying "It is finished" (verse 17b).
- c. The punishment (verses 18-21a)
 - i. *History's greatest earthquake now occurs* (16:18).
 - ii. *It splits Babylon into three parts* (16:19a).
 - iii. *The great cities of the world collapse* (16:19b).

Moody:

The words *it is done* (v. 17), associated with the seventh bowl, indicate that there would be no more judgments once this one was complete, and the coming of the kingdom was near. An earthquake of unparalleled magnitude shook the great city (vv. 18-19). **Some understand this to be Babylon, and the words the great may seem to support this view. A better view is to see it as Jerusalem. This fits the exact word order used to describe it in 11:8, as well as the topographical changes described in Zch 14:4. The significance of the division of the city into three parts is not clear.** The words *Babylon the great was remembered* signal a transition to the consideration of that literal city's judgment. God would keep track of her sins and punish them.

God never acts capriciously. His wrath is exercised when His justice is offended. The phrases every island fled away and the mountains were not found (v. 20) are hyperboles for the absolute chaos brought to the city itself, as well as everything associated with it. God would use the forces of nature against the city by hurling down inordinately large hailstones. These phenomena would have no positive effect at all on the rebels who would continue to curse their Maker.³³

- iv. Islands vanish, and mountains are flattened (16:20).
 - v. Hailstones weighing seventy-five [or 75 pounds] pounds fall from the sky (16:21a).³⁴
- d. The perversion: unrepentant people continue to curse God (verse 21b).

ESV Study Bible:

The seventh bowl evokes a pronouncement from God's throne: **"It is done!"** This declaration, repeated in [21:6](#), affirms that God's plan has reached completion ([10:7](#)), his wrath against evil is finished ([15:1, 8](#)), and his kingdom is fully come ([11:15](#)). A great earthquake of unprecedented severity will shatter the great city, the site of Jesus' crucifixion and the murder of his martyrs ([11:7–10](#)). It is Babylon the great, which rules the "kings of the earth" ([17:18](#)). Human civilization will disintegrate when the Lord comes with lightning, rumblings, and peals of thunder ([11:19](#)). **This is the earthquake foreseen in the sixth seal (6:12–17), which darkens sun and moon, shakes stars from their places, rolls up the sky like a scroll, and displaces the mountains and every island (cf. 6:14 with 16:20).** This is the flight of the first heaven and earth before God's terrible presence, giving way to a new heaven and earth, unstained by human sin ([20:11](#); [21:1](#); [22:3](#)).

³³ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 83195-83200). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

³⁴ H. L. Willmington, [The Outline Bible](#) (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1999), Re 16:18–21.