

I. BKGRD.

The book of Revelation was written by the last living apostle, John, while imprisoned on the island of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea off the coast of modern-day Turkey, at the end of the 1st c. AD. There Jesus reveals Himself in His glory to John and reveals to him what the future holds. First 7 letters to 7 churches in Asia are written covering not only the immediate context, but seemingly describing church history from the first century to the present. Chs. 4-5 finds John taken to Heaven where he sees believers of both Old and New Testament surrounding the throne of God with millions of angels in attendance as Jesus begins the process of reclaiming that which He died to redeem!

Three series of increasingly catastrophic judgments (the seal, trumpet [1/3's] and bowl judgments) ensue which covers Rev. 6-19, the so-called Great Tribulation, the time of the outpouring of God's wrath against the willful, rebellious rejection of Jesus Christ by an unbelieving world. They rejected His first appearing; they will reject Him now and in the future.

With this chapter we come to the 3rd and final series of God's end-times judgments, the most cataclysmic of all, the dreaded "**Bowl**" judgments (the Greek is *phi-AL-as*, thus the KJV's "vial" judgments). The patient and gracious hand of God has been withdrawn and His perfect judgment against the sin, greed, corruption, cruelty, rejection and rebellion of Mankind is complete . . .

This is a really bad place to insert a chapter break, Dr. Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury ca. 1227AD! Ch. 15 should run right into ch. 16 w/o a break! The "**seven angels**" of v. 1 refers us back to the previous chapter, vv. 5-7.

II. TEXT

v. 1 "**Then**" indicates chronology.

"**Bowls**" (Gk: *phiale*, thus KJV has 'vial.') refers to the broad, shallow bowls used in the Tabernacle in the wilderness for offerings; cf. Rev. 5:8 they're used to carry the incense into the Lord's presence. The word speaks of how quickly they can be emptied.

"**Wrath**" mentioned 10 times in the NIV of the book of Revelation, ALL between chs. 6-19, the time of the Great Tribulation!!! Again...this is NOT for Christians! "*God has not appointed us unto wrath*" (1 Thess. 5:9). The Greek term here is *thumos*, passion (as if breathing hard, in anger):--fierceness, indignation, wrath.

v. 2 **The 1st Bowl**: ugly and painful sores; the orig. term denotes ulcerous, festering boils; skin abscesses; a deep folliculitis, infection of the hair follicle. It is always caused by infection by the bacterium *Staphylococcus aureus*. Make-up artists in Hollywood will really earn their money trying to keep up the glamorous good looks of their clientele, won't they? The celebrities we admire so much today won't be nearly as attractive in THAT day . . .

Cf. the boils and abscesses which came upon the Egyptians in the 6th plague (Ex. 9:8-11). Should we take this passage literally? The Egyptians sure did! Notice who it's poured out upon: "*those who have the mark of the Beast and worship his image*," NOT Tribulation saints! Just as God had differentiated between Israelites and Egyptians (Ex. 8:22 no flies; Ex. 9:6,7 no plague on livestock; Ex. 9:26 no hail in Goshen; Ex. 12 Passover). This is the same as the 6th Egyptian plague (Ex. 9:9-11)! At an earlier time Satan had put the same plague upon the man of God, Job! Now God returns the favor!

Deut. 28:27,35 "*The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured.... The LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.*" Incurable plagues for disobedience; Moses told them not to worship any images; in Rev. they are worshiping the Beast and his image! In our own culture: AIDS, Ebola, flesh-eating bacteria, new strains of old diseases now resistant to antibiotics (MRSA); staphylococcus ("staph") infections in hospitals, open sores are often seen...

v. 3 **The 2nd Bowl:** sea turns to blood (not *appears like blood*, but actually becomes blood; the literal Greek says, "...the sea, and it became blood..."), thus killing all marine life not destroyed in the 2nd trumpet judgment (Rev. 8:8-9), where 1/3 of the sea turned to blood, 1/3 ocean life killed and 1/3 of the ships were destroyed as something like a huge mountain ablaze fell into the sea.

It resembles the 1st plague leveled against Egypt in Ex. 7:17-21 where the Nile and water supplies were turned to blood, often 'explained away' by a 'red silt' phenomenon, though Pharaoh didn't dismiss it as "red silt." This is not natural pollution due to volcanism or natural cataclysm, but a direct, supernatural judgment of God against the Antichrist and his people who bear his mark.

"Sea" -- limited to Mediterranean? Prob. not inasmuch as these are global judgments... Other OT scriptures take this literally, too (Ps. 105:29; Lev. 17:11); the first plague (Ex. 7) all VERY literal! NOT "red tide!"

vv. 4-7 **The 3rd Bowl:** Fresh water supplies become blood; punishment befitting the crime. All aimed at the beast-worshippers, who have shed the blood of the martyrs (souls under altar in 6:9). Also similar to the plagues Moses evoked on Egypt.

v. 4 Lit., "*and it became blood...*"

v. 5 "**Angel in charge of the waters**" – angels over specific geographical portions of the earth? Possibly: cf. Dan. 10:20 "*Prince of Persia...prince of Greece.*"

v. 6 People sometimes doubt the justice of God: "How could He do such a thing?" And we impugn His justice. The NIVSB rightly points out, "punishment is tailored to fit the crime." We say, "what goes around, comes around."

v. 7 Voices of those Tribulation martyrs under the altar crying out for justice (Rev. 6:9)?

vv. 8-9 **The 4th Bowl:** "Fire" is often associated in Scripture with judgment. 'Global warming'? You ain't seen NOTHING yet! No wind, rain or cloud cover – cf. 7:1 but no water to drink!

Interestingly, sun worship was the earliest form of paganism. God darkened the Egyptian sun (Exodus 10:21f – also worshiped as Ra – a judgment against the Egyptian deities!

- Notice the people's response to the trial (v. 9): they curse God; they blaspheme! Dismiss it as "global warning"? Natural cyclical weather patterns? La Nina? El Nino? They harden their hearts and willfully REFUSE to repent.
- Notice also who has control ultimately over these plagues (God).
- Notice thirdly what God had desired: that they repent and glorify Him. God takes no delight in the death of the wicked: (Ezek 18:23) "'Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?' declares the Sovereign LORD. 'Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?'"
- Peter says, "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

v. 10 **The 5th Bowl:** darkness (similar to the 9th Egyptian plague; Ex. 10:22). Is this secondary to volcanism? Meteorite impacts? Global war? Black heat without relief. Certainly there is a *spiritual* darkness on the earth throughout the Tribulation. That spiritual darkness is growing in America.

"**Throne of the beast**" = Imagine a supernatural tormenting heat, ugly, painful sores on the people, now plunged into a darkness similar to that darkness in which "*there is weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (mentioned by Jesus 6 x's in the gospel of Matthew!) Again, repentance is sought, but not to be seen! God sometimes (but not always) tries to get His creation's attention by calamity when grace is ignored.

Interestingly: JUDGMENT NEVER BRINGS REPENTANCE! Only grace and mercy do that (Rom. 2:4).

v. 11 Painful, festering boils; scorching heat; dead, smelly, bloody oceans, rivers and streams . . . no wind, no cloud cover, bad global economy, and no relief in sight . . . O joy! Really makes you want to be a pagan in the Great Tribulation, doesn't it?!

v. 12 **The 6th Bowl:** Invasion from the east (east of the Euphrates river, obviously! This could be anyone from Iran east, but only China has such vast human resources).

The “**Great river Euphrates is dried up**” -- Euphrates (mentioned 25 x's in Bible – interesting study!) dried up and kings of the East march. The Euphrates is 1,700 miles long, 3 ½ mi. wide, average depth of 30'; flows 35.9 billion cubic meters annually. Drying up the river is not only possible, but has happened in drought conditions already, because of the several dams constructed by Russian engineers along its length.

As of today, there are 12 major dams operational on the Euphrates River. A series of 22 dams and 19 hydroelectric plants are planned for the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Turkey alone! Their headwaters in the 6-10k ft. mountains of eastern Turkey are only 50 miles apart!

“**Kings of the east**” – the literal Greek says, “the kings of the rising sun”, [Japan's national symbol] that is, the east. In Rev. 9:14 a 200 mill.-man army is unleashed; here they move westward into the Middle East. The way for this Oriental invasion has literally been paved by a road constructed back in the early 1970's from China through the Himalayas of Kashmir to Pakistan. India at that time lodged a protest with the United Nations, calling the highway “a threat to peace in Asia.” I'm sure at the time no one realized how great a threat!

Some 2,700 years ago the OT prophet Joel foresaw this day: “*Let the nations be roused; let them advance into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the nations on every side. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision*” (Joel 3:12,14).

v. 13 Lit., “**unclean spirits**” come from the dragon (Satan), the beast (antichrist) and the “false prophet” first introduced in 13:11ff as a “lamb with 2 horns that spoke like a dragon.” Note the unholy trinity.

“**Frogs**” were considered “unclean” animals by the Israelis, Lev. 11:10 (what, no frog's legs...tastes like chicken). Egypt's plague of frogs (Ex. 8). Demonic deception involved; there always is! It's only when we believe the enemy's lies of fulfillment, excitement, etc. that we FALL!

v. 14 The whole world will go to war, ultimately, against GOD! WW I was called the “war to end all wars” – ended Nov. 11, 1918. WW II started Sept. 1, 1939 (when Germany invaded Poland causing France and Great Britain to declare war on Germany) . . . just 21 years later! (Austria had been invaded Mar. 12, 1938...and the world did nothing! Just like Putin with Ukraine and the Crimean Peninsula. WW II ended on Sept. 2, 1945 the nuclear bombs (129,000 Japanese killed) est. by Pres. Truman to have saved 500,000 Allied lives...

v. 15 “**Thief**” – 1 Thess. 5:2,4; Mt. 24:43f.

v. 16 “**Armageddon**” is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew, *Har Mageddon*, Mt. Megiddo. This is the only time the word occurs in the NT, but has become a universal metaphor describing the end of the world. AKA, the Plain of Esdraelon, the Valley of Jezreel, The Valley of Megiddo, etc. A historic battleground biblically and secularly.

v. 17 **The 7th Bowl:** Satan is the prince of the power of the AIR (Eph. 2:2 KJV). Earthquake and hailstones (earthquake in Isa. 24:18-21)

(Isa. 24:18-21) “*Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls--never to rise again. In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.*”

v. 21 **“Hail”** in the 30 x’s it is mentioned in the Bible is ALWAYS a biblical judgment of God (Exodus 9:19-34 for instance). Should we take this LITERALLY? Pharaoh sure did!!!

“Talent” was a unit of weight which varied plus-or-minus of 100 lbs. The Roman general Titus, son the Roman Emperor Vespasian, used talent-sized boulders in his catapults in his siege against Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Nuclear tests in the Pacific against target ships were damaged by huge HAIL!

Largest recorded hail so far in the USA? Vivian, SD in 2010 saw hail measuring 8.0” in dia, 18.62” circum. and weighed nearly 2 lbs! The largest was “volley-ball size” acc. to the NOAA!!! The Old Testament penalty for **“blasphemy”** was STONING! Isn’t that what God is doing here? YES!

III. SUMMARY / APPLICATION

- Revelation is given so no one has to go through these cataclysms; all of these things are AVOIDABLE!
- Judgment never brings repentance... only His grace, mercy and forgiveness do that.
- The purpose of the writing of the Book of Revelation is to PREPARE US FOR WHAT IS AHEAD!!! What should we do?