

Revelation 16

- I. The Seven Vial Judgments – vs. 1-4, 8-10, 12, 17-21
 - a. The Command for these Judgments – vs. 1
The great voice out of the Temple.
This is the voice of God, since no man is permitted to enter the Temple. Rev. 15:8
Note: The use of the word “great!” It occurs 11 times in this chapter (which has aptly been called ‘The Great Chapter’ of the Bible).
The order is issued to the angels.
 - “Go your ways.” – All 7 angels are dispatched at once – unlike the 7 angels which sounded the Trumpet Judgments, in single-file order.
 - “And pour out the vials.” – Here, again, we see angels as the ministers of God’s judgments.
 - b. The First Vial – A Plague of Sores – vs. 2
A universal plague
This was poured out over the whole earth. In contrast, the first Trumpet Judgment was directed upon 1/3 of the earth.
A judgment upon the worshippers of Antichrist.
Cf Rev 13:8; 14:9-10. This indicates the widespread idolatry of the last moments of history.
A noisome plague
This means it will be so painful as to cause men to groan audibly.
A grievous sore
The Greek word used here (helkos) means a ‘boil’ or an open ulcer.
A literal plague
There can be no doubt these are literal painful sores because God has already done this on a smaller scale in Egypt – Ex 9:8-11. He also warned Israel of similar plagues if they disobeyed His Law – Deut. 28:27, 35.
 - c. The Second Vial – A Plague upon the Sea – vs. 3
A universal plague
It may be that “the sea” here refers only to the Mediterranean (as opposed to the ‘seas’ – global). Nevertheless, it is greater in extent than the judgment of the second Trumpet – Rev 8:8.
A judgment upon the sea
The sea is vital to man as a source of food and transportation.
A foul judgment
The language allows an interpretation that this is not literal human blood (“...it becomes AS the blood of a dead man...”), but the second Trumpet Judgment speaks of literal blood – Rev 8:8.
The blood of a dead man would be clotted, putrescent, vile, and utterly destructive of all life.
A literal plague
This plague was also one of the 10 poured out upon Egypt – Ex 7:19-21.
 - d. The Third Vial – A Plague upon All Freshwater – vs. 4
The effects of this plague are seen in the provision of drink. – See vs.6
This was also the effect of the third Trumpet Judgment, Rev 8:11.

Revelation 16

- e. The Fourth Vial – A Plague upon the Sun – vs. 8-9
In contrast to the fourth Trumpet Judgment (Rev 8:12) where the sun darkens, here God turns up the flame.
In our present day, the sun shines upon all. – Matt 5:45
During the Tribulation, the sun becomes a sign and an instrument of judgment.
– Lk 21:25; Deut. 22:24; Is 24:6; 42:25; Mal 4:1
The sun will scorch unregenerate men.
God will protect the believing remnant. – Ps 121:6; Rev 7:3, 16.
- f. The Fifth Vial – A Plague of Darkness – vs. 10
This plague is directed against the Beast
Corresponding to the spiritual and moral darkness engendered by the Man of Sin will be a literal, physical darkness which shall serve to heighten the effects of the preceding plagues.
This plague was previously seen in Egypt. – Ex 10:21-23
The fifth Trumpet Judgment is one of hellish darkness.
See: Rev 9:1-6. Dark fiends are released.
- g. The Sixth Vial – A Plague upon the River Euphrates – vs. 12
Like the sixth Trumpet Judgment, this plague involves the river Euphrates. In the Trumpet Judgment, wicked angels were permitted to lead a vast army which resulted in a carnage.
Now, the great river is dried up, permitting this eastern army to continue its advance into the Holy Land.
This plague from God is preparing for the final battle at the Second Coming of Christ.
- h. The Seventh Vial – The Second Coming of Jesus Christ – vs. 17-21
A Great Voice – vs. 17
“It is done!” – cf. Jn 19:30 “It is finished” – Matt 27:51.
A Great earthquake – vs. 18
This is the earthquake spoken of in Zech 14:4 which splits the Mount of Olives.
See also Isaiah 21:1; Heb 12:25-26.
A Great city divided – vs. 19
This is the City of Jerusalem – Rev 11:8
A Great collapse – vs. 19
This verse speaks of the fall of Babylon, previewed in Rev 14:8, and covered in detail in the parenthetical chapters 17-18.
A Great upheaval – vs. 20
This passage should be read in conjunction with Rev 6:14-17; 11:15; and 14:7.
A Great hail – vs. 21
Giant hail-stones, each weighing about 130 pounds will crash down upon the earth.
- i. A Comparison between the Seal, Trumpet, and Vial Judgments
It has already been noted that the Vial Judgments are somewhat similar to the Trumpet Judgments, though more intense. This has led some commentators to conclude they are the same. However, there are differences.

Revelation 16

It is interesting to notice the similarities between all of the judgments. There is a pattern of increasing intensity.

- II. Angelic Response to the Vial Judgments – vs. 5-7
 - a. A Declaration of the Righteousness of God – vs. 5
This verse gives the lie to the believe that God would never allow anyone to go to hell. The Bible teaches God to be HOLY, and this demands judgment upon sin. If God overlooked sin – He is not HOLY!
See: I Pt 1:16; Rev 4:8; Lk 5:8; Heb 12:14; Is 6:3; Ps 99:9; Hab 1:13
 - b. A Declaration of the Reason for Judgment – vs. 6
God takes as much offense at the mistreatment of his own as He does with sin in general.
See: Deut 32:40-43; Is 49:26
 - c. A Declaration of the Righteousness of God’s Judgments – vs. 7
Even though these judgments seem extremely harsh and cruel, all of God’s judgments are true and just. Nothing will be unfair or unwarranted.
See: Romans 2:2-6; Jn 5:30
- III. Human Response to the Vial Judgments – vs. 9, 11, 21
 - a. Man will blaspheme God.
Such will be the delusion. Instead of crying out to God, they will curse Him. We see this kind of action in many today. In so many cases involving tragedy, God gets the blame.
 - b. Man will not repent.
This was also the case with the Trumpet Judgments – Rev 9:20-21.
Like Pharaoh in Egypt, who first rejected the Lord (Ex 5:1-2) and was subsequently rejected by the Lord and hardened, those who reject Christ now and in the coming Tribulation will not find space to repent.
- IV. Satanic Response to the Vial Judgments – vs. 13-14
Out of the mouth of the Dragon (Satan), the Beast (Antichrist), and the False Prophet come three frog-like spirits. We note that this was one of the plagues that the demon-possessed magicians of Egypt could not duplicate.

This verse reveals something of the kingdom of darkness – Satan is able to command and beckon the host of evil spirits.

These demons are to prepare for Satan’s “show-down” with Almighty God. According to Daniel 10:13, 20, behind the rulers of the world are unseen spirits – some wicked, some good, Daniel 12:1. Evidently Satan believes he can assume full control over the earth and defeat the armies of the Lord.
- V. Divine Response in the Vial Judgments – vs. 15-16
 - a. A Final Word of Encouragement to the Faithful Remnant – vs. 15
“Behold, I come as a thief”

Revelation 16

- This is not the Rapture, because I Thess 5:4 assures the present day believer that the Rapture will not take place in this way.
- The second-coming of Christ will come as a thief – unexpectedly for all those following the Beast. – II Pt 3:10; Matt 24:43; Lk 12:39
- The Lord uses this expression in Rev 3:3 when addressing the dead church in Sardis.

b. A Gathering of the Nations to Armageddon – vs. 16

The “Battle of Armageddon”

It seems from many Scriptures that this ‘battle’ will not be one single event, but rather a “campaign” consisting of several battles. (The word for ‘battle’ in the Greek, *polemos*’ is rendered ‘war’ in James 4:1.)

What is Armageddon?

This is an area in the North of Israel and consists of a large plain called Esdraelon of Jezreel overlooked by Mt Megiddo. (Megiddo and Ar-megeddon are one and the same.)

This has been the site of several notable battles (See: Jdg 4:13-16; 6:33; 7:19-21; I Chron 10:1-7; II Kgs 23:29-30)

The Valley of Jezreel is of immense strategic importance because it forms a pathway from the Mediterranean coast to the river Jordan.

The Valley of Megiddo (Jezreel) is about 20 miles long and 14 miles wide – not enough to accommodate all the armies of the world. However, the Scriptures teach two other locations where the final conflict will take place:

- The Valley of Jehoshaphat – Joel 3:2, 12
This is the valley right at Jerusalem between the City and the Mount of Olives. The brook Kidron flows in this valley.
Zech 14:2 indicates the City of Jerusalem will be surrounded by God’s enemies at the Second Coming of Christ. See: Zech 12:2
- Edom – Is 34:6
Edom is South-East of Jerusalem.

The conclusion we draw is that in this final conflict, all of Palestine will be a battlefield. Armageddon is a part of this, and a logical point to begin an invasion. (Napoleon once said the Plain of Jezreel was the greatest site for warfare in the whole world.)

Note: Much of the Tribulation period will be given over to warfare. See: Dan 11:39-43 (where Antichrist will consolidate his kingdom – Rev 6:4); Ez 38-39 which deals with the great Northern confederacy; and Dan 11:44, which may relate to the events of Rev 9:14-16; 16:12.