

## REVELATION 16:1-21

There are three series of judgments - seal (Revelation 6), trumpet (Revelation 8) and bowl (Revelation 16).

### OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE SEVEN BOWL JUDGMENTS.

- John seems to have in mind the plagues in Egypt.

Bowl Judgments (Rev. 16)	Egyptian Plagues
First bowl: sores on people (16: 2)	Sixth plague: Boils (Exod. 9:10)
Third bowl: water of rivers and springs turned into blood (16:4)	First plague: Water of Egypt into blood (Exod. 7:19)
Fifth bowl: darkness (16:10)	Ninth plague: Darkness all over Egypt (Exod. 10:22)
Sixth bowl: Euphrates dried up and the three evil spirits appearing as frogs (16:13)	Second plague: frogs covered the land of Egypt (Exod. 8:6)
Seventh bowl: hailstones to the earth (16:21)	Seventh plague: Hail to Egypt (Exod. 9:23-24)

### COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE TRUMPET AND THE BOWL JUDGMENTS.

1. Similarities between the trumpet and the bowl judgments

Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8-9)	Seven Bowls (Rev. 16)
Earth (8:7)	Earth (16:2)
Sea (8:8-9)	Sea (16:3)
Rivers, springs (8:10-11)	Rivers, springs (16:4-5)
Sun, moon, stars (8:12)	Sun (16:8)
Pit of the Abyss (9:1)	Throne of the beast (16:10)
River Euphrates (9:13-14)	River Euphrates (16:12)
Lightning, hail (11:15, 19)	Lightning, hail (16:17, 21)

The basic difference between the trumpets series and the bowls series is intensity. The bowl judgments are far more intense than the trumpet judgments.

This becomes plain in comparing the trumpet and bowl scenes individually.

- In the first trumpet judgment, the earth is affected but not the people, but in the first bowl judgment, the people suffer from festering boils.
- The second trumpet judgment involves a third of the sea and its creatures, whereas the outpouring of the second bowl judgment causes death for every living thing in the sea.
- The third trumpet is a warning, while the third bowl is God's judgment.

- The fourth trumpet judgment ushers in partial darkness, but the result of pouring out the fourth bowl judgment is that the people are scorched by the sun.
  - The fifth trumpet judgment releases the hordes of evil angels that torture those people who do not have God's seal on their foreheads, and the fifth bowl judgment brings in darkness in Satan's kingdom and suffering on the people who curse God.
  - The sixth trumpet judgment brings about the death of one-third of the human race in warfare, while in the sixth bowl judgment warfare engages the kings of the whole world.
  - The seventh trumpet and the seventh bowl judgments are almost identical, except that in the bowl scene, the words *It is done* sound forth from the throne to indicate finality.
2. The difference between the trumpet and bowl judgments is that in the bowl judgments, there is no interlude (cf. 7:1-17; 10:1-11:14).
  3. After the outpouring of the sixth and seventh bowls, John shows in detail how the followers of the Antichrist face the severity of their punishment (Rev. 17 and 18).
  4. There is some overlapping in the pouring out of the bowl judgments. This suggests that at the end of time, God hastens His judgments.

In Revelation 15, John saw the seven angels having the seven last plagues, which is a picture of the complete wrath of God (Rev. 15:1). In Revelation 16, John was given a description of the actual pouring of the seven bowls upon the earth below. As each bowl is poured out, those on the earth receive a plague.

The primary purposes of the seven bowl judgments are two-fold:

- First, to pour out God's righteous wrath upon sinners.
- Second, to demonstrate the unrepentant nature of the men who are already doomed by the mark they have taken (Rev. 14:9-11).

## REVELATION 16:1-2

<sup>1</sup> And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

<sup>2</sup> And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image. (Revelation 16:1-2)

- A. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (Revelation 16:1)

The voice from the Temple (see Isa. 66:6) is the voice of God.

**B. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (Revelation 16:1)**

God commands the angels to “Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.” There are several passages in the Bible that describe God’s judgment in terms of pouring out His indignation, fury, and wrath.

God’s plan has been eternally fixed (Gen. 15:16). When the iniquities are not yet full, God would not judge. When the iniquity is full, God will judge. God knew all along that the bowl judgments would be the final in the sequence of judgments (Ps. 79:1-7).

While Israel had suffered more than once under the Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, nothing can be compared to what will befall them in the future (Dan. 9:27; Zech. 14:12; see also Matt. 24:15; 2Thess. 2:4).

As in the Babylonian and Roman desolations of Jerusalem in the past, so shall desolation occur at the time of the end, in the middle of Daniel’s 70th Week (Dan. 9:27). The Prophet Zephaniah spoke concerning Israel’s lack of fear of God indicating a future time when God would judge.

**C. And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. (Revelation 16:1)**

The vials of wrath or the bowls of wrath are God’s final seven judgments that are especially severe and represent the final pouring forth of God’s wrath. The primary recipients of God’s wrath are those who worship the Beast (Rev. 14:10 cf. Rev. 16:2, 10).

Literal Interpretation: Bear in mind that John here is speaking of things which he probably cannot describe with his experiences. However, our failure to understand these things does not mean they should not be interpreted literally.

**D. And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. (Revelation 16:2)**

The first angel pours out the bowl, and “there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image” (16:2).

The sores refer to ulcers (see Luke 16:21; Rev. 16:2, 11).

The word “noisome” is also translated “evil” (2:2). The word “grievous” is also translated “evil” (2John 11) or “wickedness” (1John 5:19).

- “Noisome” describes the effect of the sores; they are harmful.
- “Grievous” describes the nature of the sore; in other words, the nature of the sores marks the people who have these sores as evil.

These sores will come upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image. These are not two categories of people, but two ways of describing the same group. Their worship of the Beast and his image violates the second commandment.

### REVELATION 16:3

<sup>3</sup> And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea. (Revelation 16:3)

The second angel poured out his bowl, and the sea “became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea” (Rev. 16:3). In the judgment of the second trumpet, a third of the sea became blood and a third of the living creatures in the sea died (8:8).

“Every living soul died in the sea.” The reason is that life-supporting mechanisms of the sea, the basis of the food chain, are destroyed.

### REVELATION 16:4-7

<sup>4</sup> And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

<sup>5</sup> And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

<sup>6</sup> For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

<sup>7</sup> And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments. (Revelation 16:4–7)

#### A. **And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. (Revelation 16:4)**

The third bowl parallels the third trumpet (8:10-11) and the plague that changed all the streams, canals, ponds, and reservoirs of Egypt into blood (Exod. 7:19; see Ps. 78:44).

The second and third bowl judgments are similar in nature but different in intensity and scope.

- The trumpet judgment affected one-third of the world’s water supply. The bowl judgment affects the whole world’s water supply. The effects of the trumpet judgment are partial. The effects of the bowl judgment are total.
- In the trumpet judgment the water became wormwood. In the bowl judgment, the water became blood.
- In the trumpet judgment, the purpose is to provoke the people to repentance; in the bowl judgment, it is the pouring out of God’s wrath.
- In the trumpet judgments, the effects upon men are indirect. In the bowl judgments, men are directly affected. Men are the direct target of God’s judgment.

- B. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. (Revelation 16:5)**

In verse 5, John puts in an interlude. The angel proclaims God's righteousness because He has judged. God is righteous in His ways, in His works, in His judgments (Ps. 145:17; 119:137).

- C. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. (Revelation 16:6)**

Note that the word "blood" is mentioned twice.

- The shed blood of the saints and prophets (see 17:6).
- The blood that is now in the rivers and seas which God made the unrepentant to drink as their punishment.

The last part of verse 6 says: "they are worthy." Who are the "they"? Some interpret to be the believers. If that is the case, then saints are interjected into a place where God's judgment is directed against unbelievers. In the context, "they" here refers to the unrepentant sinners who have persecuted the church. They are worthy in the sense that they deserve God's judgment.

- D. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. (Revelation 16:7)**

In verse 7, John heard another voice, but he did not tell us who that voice belongs to. It is probably an angel from the altar. The altar is the altar of incense from which the prayers of the saints ascend to God (Deut. 32:4; Ps. 19:9; 119:137; Dan. 3:27-28).

#### **REVELATION 16:8-9**

<sup>8</sup> And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

<sup>9</sup> And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. (Revelation 16:8-9)

The point of similarity between the fourth bowl and the fourth trumpet judgment is the reference to the sun. In the trumpet judgment, a third of the sun was struck so that darkness ensued (8:12). The fourth trumpet also targeted the moon and stars.

In the fourth bowl judgment, only the sun is affected. But in this case, it was not an eclipse, but the heat and light from the sun would scorch the people in the world.

The sun, as the source of light and the source of heat that causes creation to flourish, is now given power to destroy with high temperatures. The light of the sun normally provides

warmth and comfort to all living beings; now the sun has become a destructive power. Instead of being a blessing, the sun has become a curse.

#### REVELATION 16:10-11

<sup>10</sup> And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

<sup>11</sup> And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. (Revelation 16:10–11)

In the fifth bowl, the judgment is targeted directly at the “seat of the beast.” The word “seat” [*thronos*] is literally the “throne” of the beast. The first four bowl judgments were poured out on God’s creation: the earth, the sea, the rivers, and the sun. But the fifth bowl judgment affects the throne of the beast, namely, the seat of Satan’s spiritual empire. Whereas the first four bowls affected nature, the fifth one acts upon a spiritual realm.

The throne of Satan is mentioned with reference to Pergamum as representative of Rome (2:13; see also 13:2).

It remains to be seen where the throne of the beast is.

We further read that the kingdom of the beast is full of darkness. This judgment is reminiscent of the plague of darkness that covered Egypt (Exod. 10:21-23). This is a supernatural darkness because the people “gnawed their tongues for pain” (16:10). The “pain” denotes “affliction, anguish.” The darkness with which they are afflicted is more than just the absence of light; it also seems to involve other forms of affliction which result in intense pain.

Note the reprobate nature of these people (16:11). They continue to blaspheme the God of heaven. The people would not repent of their works.