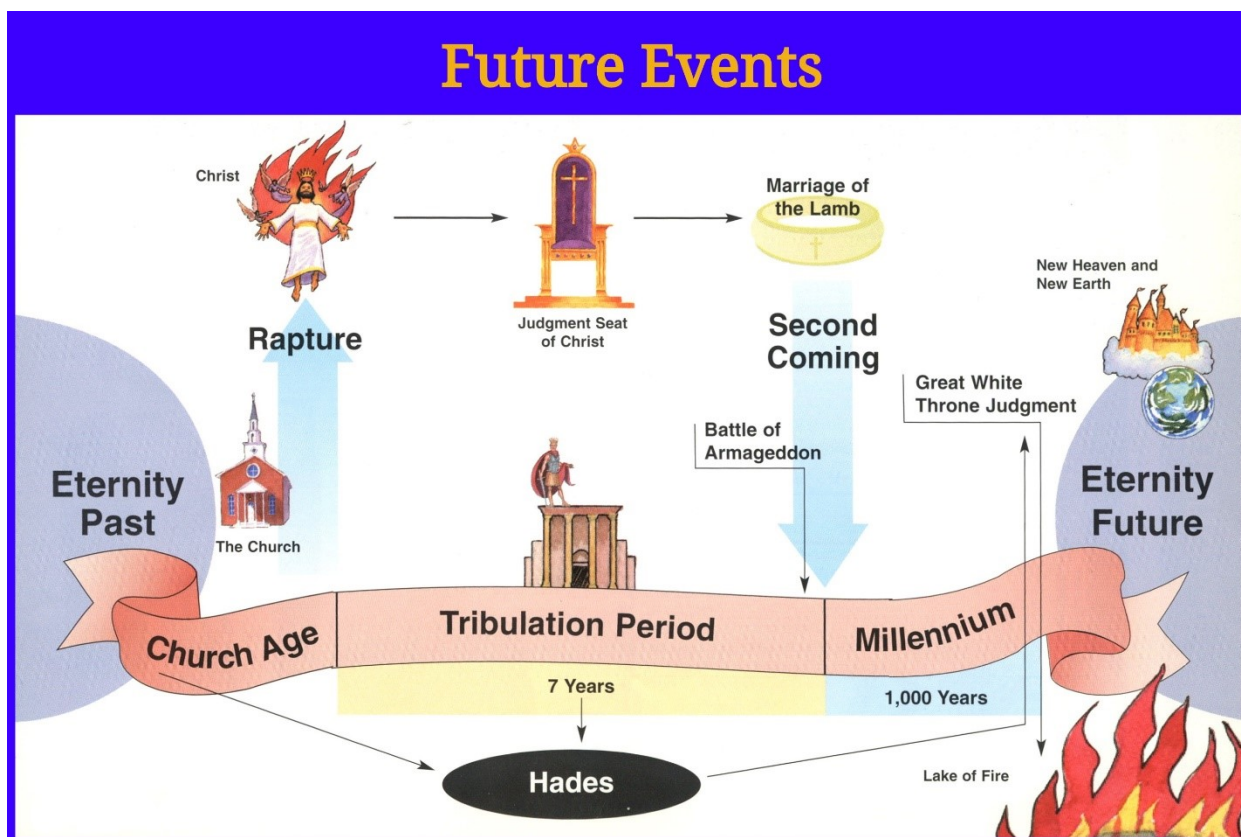


INTRODUCTION:

1. As I mentioned in our study of the final verses of Revelation chapter 15, chapter 15 and chapter 16 are one integral unit.
2. If you will recall, in chapter 15, we found that John recorded the preparations that will be made in heaven for the tremendous and final outpouring of God's wrath on the human race.
3. As we begin considering chapter 16, we will study the fulfillment of that incredible outpouring of wrath. "This chapter unveils the seven final and most severe judgments of the Great Tribulation. This period lasts three and one-half years and prepares the world for the coming of Christ in power to establish His kingdom. The vials that are poured out by these seven angels are literal plagues or catastrophes that will come on the earth."<sup>1</sup>
4. Again, let me point out where we are chronologically on the diagram below. Suppose the Word of God is to be interpreted according to the normal rules of grammar and communication. In that case, this chart represents the basic prophetic events that have occurred and will occur until the end of the 1000-year reign of Christ.



<sup>1</sup> See footnote for Revelation 16.1 from *Tim LaHaye Prophecy Study Bible*, (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), page 1390.

(16.1) 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.

1. In Revelation 15.8, we mentioned that God was so intent on this tremendous outpouring of wrath upon unsaved humanity that no one could enter into His Temple to approach Him.
2. I also mentioned that this will be the only time that the child of God may not boldly approach his Father in heaven. So the truth in Revelation 15.8 makes it necessary for the voice out of the Temple to be God's voice. No one else will be in the Temple at this crucial time.
3. Notice what God says to these seven angels: "Go your ways, and pour out the vials of THE WRATH OF GOD upon the earth." (Emphasis added) "It will be noted that the temple vessels, used as a means of grace, are now to be used here as vessels of wrath."<sup>2</sup>
4. Whose wrath is this? It is God's wrath. Let me ask you another question. Will Christians experience the seven plagues we begin to read about? No. Why?

Romans 5.9: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

First Thessalonians 5.9: "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."

(16.2) 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.

1. Who will receive this sore? Those with the mark of the beast. Those who will worship the beast. Those who are unsaved, since we know that only the saved people living on earth during this time will refuse to worship his image and receive his mark.
2. What happens to them? They get a sore, possibly a boil, ἔλκος is the Greek word, like when God punished Egypt for opposing Him.<sup>3</sup> At any rate, the sore, whatever it is, will be a bad one and extremely painful. "Noisome and grievous sore" refers to a "bad and malignant sore."<sup>4</sup>
3. In Exodus 9.8-12, we are told how God did it once before:

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<sup>2</sup> L. Sale-Harrison, *The Remarkable Revelation*, (New York: Sale-Harrison Publications, 1930), page 158.

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, Jr., Cleon L. and Rogers III, Cleon L., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key To The Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: ZondervanPublishingHouse, 1998), page 641.

<sup>4</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol VI*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), page 420.

- 8 And the LORD said unto Moses and unto Aaron, Take to you handfuls of ashes of the furnace, and let Moses sprinkle it toward the heaven in the sight of Pharaoh.
- 9 And it shall become small dust in all the land of Egypt, and shall be a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast, throughout all the land of Egypt.
- 10 And they took ashes of the furnace, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses sprinkled it up toward heaven; and it became a boil breaking forth *with* blains upon man, and upon beast.
- 11 And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils; for the boil was upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians.
- 12 And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he hearkened not unto them; as the LORD had spoken unto Moses.

4. It is as if God is physically making these fellows as physically diseased and infected as they are spiritually. They stooped to base idolatry to commit spiritual adultery, so they are experiencing the beginning of God's harsh retribution.

(16.3) 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.

1. "The second vial is poured out upon the sea with the result that the sea becomes as blood (literally 'it became blood as of a dead man'), and every living soul in the sea dies. As in the second trumpet in 8:8, the analogy seems to be to the first of the ten plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7:20-25) which killed all the fish in the Nile River and made the water unfit to drink. In all these cases it is possible that the sea does not become literally human blood but that it corresponds to it in appearance and loathsomeness. The area of the judgment is similar to that of the second trumpet where one-third of the sea is turned to blood and one third of the creatures of the sea die. Here the judgment is universal. The reference to the sea may be limited to the Mediterranean, but the same word would be used if the judgment extended to all large bodies of water. In the latter event, a major portion of the earth would be involved in the judgment as most of the earth is covered with water."<sup>5</sup>
2. Can you begin to imagine the amount of death this judgment will bring? Every living thing in the sea will die due to what we would today refer to as some pollutant in the water. Stop here to consider your concept of God as opposed to how He reveals Himself in Scripture.
3. Many today embrace environmentalism as a profoundly spiritual movement that seeks harmony with nature and sees humanity as a polluting environmental threat. But this passage shows God wreaking havoc on the environment, polluting the sea beyond any hope of recovery, and killing untold species in the oceans.

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<sup>5</sup> John Walvoord, *The Revelation Of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1966), page 233.

4. To be sure, humanity is responsible for being environmentally responsible. We are given charge over the earth's resources, but that does not mean we are allowed to waste and ruin. But what about God? Is He sovereign over His creation? Does He have the right, in your conception of what is right and proper, to do what He chooses with His creation, even if it means ruining it with poisonous pollution and annihilating whole species?
5. This portion of Scripture challenges people who have devised a god after their imagination and confronts them with the God Who is sovereign over His creation and Who disposes of it as He wills.

(16.4) And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

1. The same thing that happened to the seas will also happen to the freshwater supplies of the human race. Take note of what is happening here. "Fresh water, already in short supply because of the prolonged drought (11:6), will now suffer the fate of the oceans (cf. Ex. 7:19ff). In addition to suffering from thirst, the worshipers of Antichrist will have no clean water with which to wash their sores."<sup>6</sup>
2. Those who universally reject the Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the living water, will suffer God cutting off their fresh water supply. And not even the Arrowhead or Evian bottled water brands will have clean drinking water for sale. God's judgment on the freshwater supply will result in it becoming blood, just as the vial poured out by the second angel turned the ocean water supply into blood.
3. Verses 5-6 tell us why God does this.

(16.5-6) <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.

1. God has supernatural servants who attend to the details of His physical universe, as we have previously seen evidence of. So, when God turns the water into blood, the angel of the waters will praise God for what He has done. God will be acclaimed righteous for judging rebellious humanity in this way.
2. The reason God does this, according to verse 6, is because He is giving the lost the just payment for their sins against God's servants. They have shed the blood of the saints and the prophets, so God repays them with blood. They wanted the blood of the innocent, so God would give them more than they could stand as just punishment.

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<sup>6</sup> See footnote for Revelation 3.1 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2014.

3. And since we know that the wrath of God poured upon the unsaved will result in their eternal punishment and destruction, what experiences are referred to in this passage are only the beginning of sorrows for the damned.
4. Looking back to verse 5 before continuing, notice how the angel acknowledges God's eternity. "which art, and wast, and shalt be." This One Whose existence spans the breadth of eternity past to eternity future is righteous. And while the angel acknowledges God's eternity, God's righteousness is displayed by the judgments described in this portion of Scripture.
5. Take a moment to reflect if you are an unsaved reader. Should you live through the next prophetic event, what we have termed the Rapture, an astonishing array of disasters will visit you, each one after the other poured out upon you by holy angels dispatched by the righteous God of eternity. There is an absolute right and absolute wrong, and when God begins to judge you in this way for your sins, it will be the right thing to do. Do you ever think about that? When God's judgment begins to fall upon you, it will be the right thing, God's Own righteousness on display for the universe to see ... and you will be one of the objects of His wrath.

(16.7) And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous *are* thy judgments.

1. Is God just and righteous in what He does? According to the Bible, a thing or a truth is established by the mouths of two truthful witnesses.<sup>7</sup> This additional testimony of God's righteousness is both proper and expected. The angel of waters, you will remember, said that God was right for doing this. And now another out of the altar seconds the motion.
2. God is righteous in punishing the wicked and Christ-rejecting of this world ... whether now or in the future during the time we are reading about. You do realize, do you know, that God's judgment upon unsaved people begins in the here and now, during their lifetimes, before they die?
3. Romans 1.18-32 establishes God's judgment of the unsaved during their natural lifetimes:
  - <sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
  - <sup>19</sup> Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them.
  - <sup>20</sup> For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

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<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 19.15; Matthew 18.16; 1 Corinthians 14.29; 2 Corinthians 13.1; 1 Timothy 5.19; Hebrews 10.28

- 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.
- 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools,
- 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.
- 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:
- 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.
- 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:
- 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.
- 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
- 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
- 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
- 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
- 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.
- a. Romans 1.18 declares who God's wrath is poured out on. Notice that Paul writes "is revealed" and not "will be revealed." The present passive indicative form of ἀποκαλύπτω shows us that God's judgment upon the unsaved begins before that person goes to Hell or dies.<sup>8</sup>
- b. Consider Romans 1.24. Because of what men did, detailed in verses 19-23, "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."
- c. In Romans 1.26, we see more of God's judgment: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections."

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<sup>8</sup> Rogers and Rogers, page 316.

- d. Finally, in the last half of Romans 1.28, we see God's third judgment upon the lost: "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient."
  - e. Please understand something: The judgment of God has *already* begun for some of you. His judgment is the beginning of God's wrath, and it is God's response to your sinning and to your refusal to respond to the Gospel of God's grace.
  - f. Back to Revelation 16.7. God does not begin to pour His wrath on the unsaved during the Tribulation. His wrath has been poured out on the unsaved for thousands of years. But after the Rapture, throughout the Tribulation, and especially during the vial judgments, the intensity of God's wrath is severely escalated to a level never before seen on earth.
4. Notice one thing before we move on. From Revelation 15.8, we know that no one is in the heavenly Temple at this time, yet the verse before us indicates that the angel speaking is "out of the altar." How can this be?
- a. It can be in two ways: Either the angel is from the altar but was sent forth before the events of Revelation 15.8, and he is outside the Temple when his words of 16.7 are uttered, or he was sent forth from the Temple and has now returned to the altar, from where he speaks these words.
  - b. The phrase "out of the altar" tells from where the angel originated, but it does not tell us when. Thus, there is no necessary conflict between this verse and the words of Revelation 16.1, having to be the words of God.

(16.8) And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

- 1. My late friend wrote about this strange occurrence: "Earlier under the fourth trumpet (8:12), the heavenly bodies were diminished in brilliance by one third, but here the light, heat and rays of the sun are increased. This is no mere extreme peak of temperature, as might be found in the hottest deserts, but rather a special phenomena, wherein solar rays feel like torches. Isaiah may have foreseen this in 24:5, 6, a chapter dealing with the end times: 'The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse defileth the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.'"<sup>9</sup>
- 2. Did God create the sun? Sure, He did. Then, should it be a great surprise that He somehow uses one of His created beings to alter the state of one of His created

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<sup>9</sup> Jim Combs, *Rainbows From Revelation*, (Springfield, MO: Tribune Publishers, 1994), page 177.

objects? I do not think so. Thus, God authorizes one of His angels to use the sun to scorch men.

3. How were the men scorched with fire? I would suspect radiation burns. And this should not surprise us. After all, when someone gets a sunburn at the beach, or while working around the house on a hot summer day, sunburn is nothing less than low-level nuclear radiation.
4. “The sun that normally provides light, warmth, and energy will become a deadly killer. With no fresh water to drink, earth’s inhabitants will face extreme heat. The scorching heat will melt the polar ice caps, which some estimate would raise the level of the world’s oceans by 200 ft., 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.”<sup>10</sup>

(16.9) 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.

1. There are two observable effects I am aware of that astronomers have seen with other stars, which might explain the impact we read about here. This assumes that other stars are essentially similar to our sun and are at least equal orders of magnitude in size.
  - #1 The sun could have a miniature nova. A nova is when the sun flares up and cools off, usually destroying all its surrounding planets. But conceivably, God could bring a miniature nova that would scorch this planet without destroying it.
  - #2 The kind of light the sun gives off could vary. It could change from mainly yellow light, which gives both heat and visible light, to more ultraviolet light, diminishing the visible light we might see. Still, it would significantly increase the amount of penetrating radiation reaching us, causing people to be scorched. Of course, the depletion of the ozone layer might very well be a prelude to these events, creating an environment in which ultraviolet radiation can more easily penetrate the atmosphere and reach us if ozone depletion occurs.
2. No matter how much or how severe God’s punishment of humanity will be, humanity will not repent. It says so in the verse before us. When God’s wrath rains, humanity will not change their mind and decide to worship God. Rather than do that, they will probably blame God for how their mother raised them, how horrible dad was, or some such nonsense as that, and try to shift the blame for all their troubles to someone else.

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<sup>10</sup> See footnote for Revelation 16.8 from John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible*, (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1997), page 2014.



3. God is going to punish our race because we are responsible. He will not punish men in the hope that they will change their ways because mankind will not. Consider what Jeremiah 13.23 says about being able to alter your nature: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.”
  4. God will punish the wicked because you deserve God’s wrath for rebelling against Him. The only way a person will ever change is if God gives him a new heart, and he becomes a new creature. The old heart will never change.
  5. Would you like to know what you will do instead of repenting of your sins? Fully aware that the scorching heat of the sun is God’s judgment for your sins, you will refuse to repent because you are opposed to giving God glory. And not only that, which is a stubborn, yet passive, obstinacy. You will actively sin against God by cursing His name.
  6. I am reminded of good King Hezekiah, who ruled over the kingdom of Judah in the days when the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel. “... the king of Assyria sent Rabshakeh ... to Jerusalem unto king Hezekiah with a great army.”<sup>11</sup> And Rabshakeh spoke against the LORD, denying He had the power to deliver Hezekiah from the mighty Assyrian army. Hezekiah’s advisers described Rabshakeh’s words as “blasphemy.”<sup>12</sup>
  7. What is blasphemy? Blasphemy, βλασφημέω, is speech that denigrates or defames. It is synonymous with reviling, disrespecting, or slandering someone.<sup>13</sup> It is not the same as swearing or using profanity. Instead, it is talking against someone and putting him down. Thus, should you be alive when this happens, you will become enraged because of God’s wrath poured upon you, and you will rail against Him, shout verbal insults to Him, and deny that as the sovereign of the universe, He has any right to punish you for lawlessness and wrongdoing.
  8. So you see, this punishment will not soften you or bring you to repentance. Instead, it will harden and embitter you, even as you try to escape. Oh, how we underestimate the wickedness of sinful man and gloss over the sinner’s depravity. But God knows, does He not? These plagues are, in part, designed to show sinful people for what they are and to illustrate just how deserving we all are of God’s punishment.
- (16.10) 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,
1. You might remember that the first of the vials was poured out upon Satan’s followers, those with the mark of the beast, because they accompanied him in his rebellion

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<sup>11</sup> Isaiah 36.2

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 37.3

<sup>13</sup> Bauer, Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), page 178.

against God. But the second, third, and fourth vials were poured out upon the physical universe surrounding and on this earth. Why? Because God's creation is cursed. This fifth vial will be poured out on the seat of the beast, or the throne of the antichrist.

2. By the way, what is “the throne of the antichrist”? Albert Barnes writes, “The phrase ‘the seat of the beast’-- τὸν θρόνον τοῦ θήριου --means the seat or throne which the representative of that power occupied; the central point of the Antichristian dominion.”<sup>14</sup> A. T. Robertson concludes, “That is Rome.”<sup>15</sup> More on this in the future.
  3. What is this darkness that covers the antichrist's kingdom? Is it a spiritual darkness only? No, I think it is a physical darkness. Why so? Because the antichrist's kingdom has *always* been in spiritual darkness.
  4. Then how come the darkness? If the sun turned from a yellow sun to an ultraviolet sun when the fourth vial was poured out on it, the darkness is because the naked human eye cannot see ultraviolet light. That would make it dark in the visible spectrum of light. But if the sun flared into a nova of small proportions, as I mentioned previously, scorching would burn very painfully, followed by darkness resulting from the sun cooling off afterward with an accompanying reduction of the light given off. Either scenario would seem to fit John's account.
  5. Whatever the reason for the darkness, considerable pain is involved, and those exposed to all of this will gnaw their tongues for the pain. Think about it. Those who have, in the past, blasphemed God with their tongues will be afflicted on their tongues. Interesting how God repays men for their sins.
- (16.11) And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.
1. Does humanity change? Does humanity ever change? They do not unless God does a saving work in their hearts. Throughout all this, humanity continues to curse and speak against God. And the pain and the sores seem only to make things worse.
  2. What a sad note to write of people dying from God's wrathful judgments “and repented not of their deeds.” What possible reason can men have for being so stubborn, except if we are depraved and wicked of heart?
  3. In First Samuel 15, notice something about King Saul, who had earlier prophesied and caused some to wonder if he had gotten right with God somehow. In First Samuel 10.11, we read these words: “And it came to pass, when all that knew him beforetime saw that, behold, he prophesied among the prophets, then the

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<sup>14</sup> Albert Barnes, *Albert Barnes' NT Commentary*, (Bronson, MI: Online Publishing, Inc., 2002), bible@mail.com

<sup>15</sup> Robertson, page 422.

people said one to another, What *is* this *that* is come unto the son of Kish? *Is* Saul also among the prophets?”

4. First Samuel 15.23 records the words of the prophet Samuel to King Saul, who *almost* did what God’s man directed him to do: “For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from *being* king.”
5. Many decisionists<sup>16</sup> are convinced that King Saul was a converted man, even though he exhibited his stubborn and rebellious streak after his supposed conversion. Jonathan Edwards wrote about genuine conversion in *Religious Affections*:

3. Every true Christian perseveres in this way of universal obedience, and diligent and earnest service of God, through all the various kinds of trials that he meets with, to the end of life. That all true saints, all those that obtain eternal life, do thus persevere in the practice of religion and the service of God, is a doctrine so abundantly taught in the Scripture, that particularly to rehearse all the texts which imply it would be endless; I shall content myself with referring to some given below.\*

But that perseverance in obedience, which is chiefly insisted on in the Scripture as a special note of the truth of grace, is the continuance of professors in the practice of their duty, and being steadfast in a holy walk, through the various trials that they meet with.

By trials here, I mean those things that a professor meets with in his course, that especially render his continuance in his duty and faithfulness to God, difficult to nature. These things are from time to time called in Scripture by the name of trials, or temptations (which are words of the same signification). These are of various kinds: there are many things that render continuance in the way of duty difficult by their tendency to cherish and foment, or to stir up and provoke, their lusts and corruptions. Many things make it hard to continue in the way of duty, by their being of an alluring nature, and having a tendency to entice persons to sin, or by their tendency to take off restraints and embolden them in iniquity. Other things are trials of the soundness and steadfastness of professors, by their tendency to make their duty appear terrible to them, and so to affright and drive them from it; such as the sufferings which their duty will expose them to—pain, ill will, contempt, reproach and loss of

\* Deut. v.29; Deut. xxxii.18, 19, 20; I Chron. xxviii.9; Psal. lxxviii. 7, 8, 10, 11, 35, 36, 37, 41, 42, 56, &c.; Psal. cvi. 3, 12-15; Psal. cxxv. 4.5; Prov. xxvi.11; Isa. lxiv.5; Jer. xvii.13; Ezek. iii.20; and xviii.24, and xxxiii.12, 13; Matt. x.22, and xiii. 4-8, with verses 19-23; and xxv.8, and xxxiii.12, 13; Luke ix.62, and xii.35, &c.; and xxii.28; and xvii.32; John viii.30, 31; and xv. 6, 7, 8, 10, 16; Rom. ii. 7; and xi.22; Col. i.22, 23; Heb. iii.6, 12, 14, and vi. 11, 12, and x.35, &c.; James i.25; Rev. ii.13, 26, and ii.10; 2 Tim. ii.15; 2 Tim. iv.4-8.

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<sup>16</sup> Decisionism is the belief that a person is saved by coming forward, raising the hand, saying a prayer, believing a doctrine, making a Lordship commitment, or some other external, human act, which is taken as the equivalent to, and proof of, the miracle of inward conversion; it is the belief that a person is saved through the agency of a merely external decision; the belief that performing one of these human actions shows that a person is saved.

Conversion is the result of that work of the Holy Spirit which draws a lost sinner to Jesus Christ for justification and regeneration, and changes the sinner’s standing before God from lost to saved, imparting divine life to the depraved soul, thus producing a new direction in the life of the convert. The objective side of salvation is justification. The subjective side of salvation is regeneration. The result is conversion.

outward possessions and comforts. If persons, after they have made a profession of religion, live any considerable time in this world, which is so full of changes and so full of evil, it cannot be otherwise than that they should meet with many trials of their sincerity and steadfastness. And besides, it is God's manner in His providence, to bring trials on His professing friends and servants designedly, that He may manifest them, and may exhibit sufficient matter of conviction of the state which they are in, to their own consciences, and oftentimes to the world; as appears by innumerable Scriptures.

True saints may be guilty of some kinds and degrees of backsliding, may be foiled by particular temptations, and may fall into sin, yea great sins. But they never can fall away so as to grow weary of religion and the service of God, and habitually to dislike it and neglect it, either on its own account, or on account of the difficulties that attend it; as is evident by Gal. vi.9, Rom. ii. 7, Heb. x.36, Isa. xliii.22, Mal. i.13. They can never backslide so as to continue no longer in a way of universal obedience; or so that it shall cease to be their manner to observe all the rules of Christianity, and do all duties required, even in the most difficult circumstances. This is abundantly manifest by the things that have been observed already. Nor can they ever fall away so as habitually to be more engaged in other things than in the business of religion; or so that it should become their way and manner to serve something else more than God; or so as stately to cease to serve God with such earnestness and diligence, as still to be habitually devoted and given up to the business of religion; unless those words of Christ can fall to the ground, "Ye cannot serve two masters," and those of the apostle, "He that will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God;" and unless a saint can change his God and yet be a true saint. Nor can a true saint ever fall away so that it shall come to this, that ordinarily there shall be no remarkable difference in his walk and behaviour since his conversion, from what was before. They that are truly converted are new men, new creatures; new not only within, but without; they are sanctified throughout, in spirit, soul and body; old things are passed away, all things are become new; they have new hearts, and new eyes, new ears, new tongues, new hands, new feet; *i.e.*, a new conversation and practice; and they walk in newness of life, and continue to do to the end of life. And they that fall away show visibly that they never were risen with Christ. And especially when men's opinion of their being converted, and so in a safe estate, is the very cause of their failure, it is a most evident sign of their hypocrisy. And this is the case, whether their falling away be into their former sins or into some new kind of wickedness, having the corruption of nature only turned into a new channel instead of its being mortified. As when persons that think themselves converted, though they do not return to former profaneness and lewdness, yet from the high opinion they have of their experiences, graces, and privileges, gradually settle more and more and more in a self-righteous and spiritually proud temper of mind, and in such a manner of behaviour as naturally arises therefrom. When it is thus with men, however far they may seem to be from their former evil practices. this alone is enough to condemn them, and may render their last state far worse than the first. For this seems to be the very case of the Jews of that generation that Christ speaks of, Matt. xii.43-45. They had been awakened by John the Baptist's preaching, and brought to a reformation of their former licentious courses, whereby the unclean spirit was as it were turned out, and the house swept and garnished; yet, being empty of God and of grace, full of themselves, and exalted in an exceeding high opinion of their own righteousness and eminent holiness, they became habituated to an answerably self-exalting behaviour. They changed the sins of publicans and harlots for those of the Pharisees; and in issue, had seven devils and were worse than at the first.<sup>17</sup>

6. Why have I urged you to read from Edwards? Because so many these days exhibit poor discernment concerning the actual state of a professing Christian's soul,

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<sup>17</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Religious Affections*, (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), pages 312-314.

frequently thinking themselves good judges of their condition. The brilliant Edwards shows how easily and in what ways men are deceived by their pride. King Saul was a lost man, as exhibited by his rebellious spirit and stubborn nature. During the Tribulation, God will make it easier to discern who is lost and who is saved, far more straightforward than now. He will manifest their stubbornness by pouring out His wrath on them. And will it cause them to repent of their sins? Of course not. The chief characteristic of a lost, stubborn individual is stubbornness. No matter the pain, the lost will not repent.

7. Those whom the grace of God has touched, however, are neither stubborn nor rebellious. They are obedient. They can be led. And this makes sense since they are sheep and not goats. After all, God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble; grace to submit, obey, follow spiritual leadership, and exhibit the sweet fruit of the Spirit.<sup>18</sup>

(16.12) And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

1. Consider William R. Newell's comments on this verse:

This is the literal Euphrates. There can be no other real interpretation of this passage. Imagination has very often substituted for exposition, even in such a plain passage as this.

Let us note regarding the Euphrates and its "drying up":

1. It is mentioned twenty-one times in Scripture; and called "the great river" five times, as the Mediterranean was called "the great sea": for the Euphrates was the eastern, as the Mediterranean was the western boundary of God's own people's inheritance.
2. It was a protection to Israel, both because of the difficulty of its passage, and because of the fact that God had placed a wilderness west of it, between it and Canaan. Only at the upper or northern part was it practically passable (so that Babylon is called by the prophets, the enemy "from the north country"). Even the Roman Empire had its eastern bound here.
3. It is nearly two thousand miles long (1,780). It rises in the Armenian Mountains, flowing at first toward Palestine, to within less than 100 miles of the Mediterranean, then turning away southeast to the Persian Gulf, winding upon itself constantly. It is navigable for 1200 miles. It flowed through old Babylon, which was (and may yet be) the commercial center of the whole world (*Revelation 18*).
4. It was first seen just outside Eden in Genesis 2, where human sin begins, and is last seen here in Revelation 16:12, where sin reaches its height. Twice in The Revelation does it appear; in chapter 9:13-15, where "at the great river Euphrates" we saw four angels bound, the loosing of which issued in killing the third of the earth's population. Here in 16:12, its drying up permits countless thousands to rush forward to their doom at Armageddon.
5. The solemnity of the crossing of the Euphrates to invade God's land, by these eastern hosts, is very awful indeed. That the western nations, under the Beast, the last Emperor of the fourth world-power, should invade Palestine does not startle us so much: (the Roman Empire often persecuted the Jews, and ruled them many centuries). But that these recently pagan hosts from the East, who have now heard the gospel of Christ from thousands of faithful missionaries and rejected it, choose the Antichrist and march to Armageddon to help destroy the Jews (since the

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<sup>18</sup> James 4.6; First Peter 5.5; Galatians 5.22-23

## Revelation Chapter 16

Church has been taken up out of their reach) is appalling! That dry bed of Euphrates will be an eastern Rubicon: for all will know whither they are bound, and why, as the sequel shows.<sup>19</sup>

2. For 4,000 years, the Euphrates River has been a barrier that separated the East from the West. If you look at a detailed river map, you will see no real places for fording under combat conditions. This is because where it is narrow, it is quite deep, and where it is shallow, it is very wide, frequently more than a mile wide. It is much easier to invade from the North or the South, so the Euphrates does not have to be crossed, as the United States armed forces did when they entered Iraq from the South and desired to enter Iraq from the North.<sup>20</sup>
3. Years ago, skeptics who looked at this portion of Scripture mocked this prediction of the drying up of the Euphrates. Such a thing would never happen, they maintained. But we can now build dams, can we not? What if you made a dam at the headwaters of the Euphrates? What if you significantly reduced the flow of the main river so a large army could cross it? What if you can stop the flow for a while completely? Then, there are pontoon bridges that can be used to cross the narrower courses of the river.
4. There are currently three dams built on the Euphrates River, “The Keban dam, near Elaziğ, was the first to be completed. It supplies electricity to large cities in western Turkey. The Tabaqa Dam in Syria is both a major power and irrigation project. The Atatürk (Karababa) Dam, near Urfa, is the most ambitious of the three.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, the way is open during the Tribulation for the Asian armies to march out from the East, as the Bible predicts.

(16.13) And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *come* out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

1. John did not see three unclean frogs emerge from the dragon’s mouth, the beast’s, and the false prophet’s. He saw, apparently with spiritual perception God had given to him, three unclean spirits come forth from them. They were likened to frogs.
2. Why does John refer to them as “three unclean spirits like frogs”? I suspect John used frogs as a likeness of the spirits to show their disgusting defilement and filthiness. In John’s day, the frog was seen to be the most filthy and unclean animal, both to Jewish people and Gentiles. The spirits are incredibly foul, showing how foul the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet must be.
3. In this verse, we should not lose sight of the unholy trinity of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The dragon is Satan himself. The beast is the antichrist. The false prophet is that religious figure who entices the religiously inclined to worship

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<sup>19</sup> William R. Newell, *The Book Of The Revelation*, (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1935), pages 254-256.

<sup>20</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order\\_of\\_battle\\_of\\_the\\_Gulf\\_War\\_ground\\_campaign](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_battle_of_the_Gulf_War_ground_campaign)

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/euphrates-dam>

the beast, salving the consciences of the religious crowd so they will feel good about their apostasy.

(16.14) For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, *which* go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

1. This unholy trinity will work miracles through these three foul spirits. This should be no surprise since Second Thessalonians 2.9 indicates that the enemy has supernatural power. The question is, “Do the miracles draw the kings of the earth into Palestine to do battle? Or do the miracles convince the kings that the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet should be listened to?” I do not know the answer to those questions.
2. Notice that the unholy trinity will affect the gathering of the kings into Palestine, obviously with their armies not far behind. But let us not forget that God’s purpose is being realized as this occurs. He is always in control of the situation.
3. As they march into Palestine, perhaps to fight for the riches and the wealth of the Dead Sea, they imagine they will prevail. What they do not realize, however, is that this is going to be God’s day, the great day of God Almighty. This word, translated “almighty,” is the Greek word παντοκράτορος, an adjective that refers to absolute and total power. These men, who think they are powerful, are about to meet in battle with the God of all power and might. Will that not be interesting for them?<sup>22</sup>

(16.15) Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed *is* he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

1. It is the Lord Jesus Christ Who speaks here. When He comes as a thief, we can be sure that reference is being made to His Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation and not when He comes for the Church Age believers. Remember, a thief is someone you try to lock out. When the Lord Jesus comes, He will come as a thief to an unsuspecting world.
2. What does it mean to keep your garments? Alfred Edersheim, the great Jewish Christian scholar of days gone by, sheds light on the last sentence of verse 15. He points out that when the Apostle John was a young man, the Jewish people had temple guards who stood watch around Herod’s Temple in Jerusalem during the evening hours from sundown to sunrise. When the captain of the guards went around to check on his men, he would set fire to the clothes of any man he found asleep.

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<sup>22</sup> Bauer, page 755.

3. The result for the guard was that he would have to serve the rest of his guard time wholly or partly naked. People and his fellow guards would see his nakedness or whatever remained of his burned clothes, and he would be greatly shamed.<sup>23</sup>
4. Additionally, “shame,” translating ἀσχημοσύνη, is likely a euphemism for one’s genitals.<sup>24</sup> Jesus is telling His followers who were saved during the Tribulation that He is coming quickly and that they must be watchful, unlike the unsaved and Hell-bound, who will be caught napping and greatly ashamed. The person who does watch is blessed.

(16.16) And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

1. This verse proves that all the time the three unclean spirits were drawing the kings to Palestine, it was the Lord Jesus Christ Who was gathering them. He was providentially bringing them to the place called Armageddon.
2. Armageddon means “the Mount of Megiddo” and lies in a region of Palestine where many decisive battles of Israelite history were fought. But a battle will not be fought at Armageddon. It will be much more than a mere battle. It will be an entire military campaign.
3. First, the foremost military powers will battle against each other. But when the Lord Jesus Christ comes back again, in response to the cry of His people for salvation, for deliverance, then all of those ungodly forces will unite in their opposition to the King of kings. Then, in that region around Armageddon, they will be slain by the Word of His mouth.
4. Though John does not refer to it here, Hosea 5.15 relates to the events John is dealing with: “I will go *and* return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early.” This prophetic verse shows what will happen from the nation of Israel’s perspective, resulting in the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

(16.17) And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

1. This is the last and will be the most devastating of the vial judgments. The angel pours his vial into the air, perhaps to show that God has complete control of a region over which Satan used to exercise power as “the prince of the power of the air.” This plague is worse than all the others before because you breathe air, but people only tread on the earth, and they only drink water.

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<sup>23</sup> Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple - Its Ministry and Services: Updated Edition*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1994), page 112.

<sup>24</sup> David L. Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook On The Greek Text (BHGNT)*, (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2016), page 218.



2. Then, from the Temple in heaven and the throne of God, a great voice says, “It is done.”
  3. Do you recall any other place in the Bible when a phrase similar to this one was spoken? John 19.30: “When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.”
  4. Just before the Lord Jesus gave up the ghost, died His physical death, and shed His blood for our sins, He declared that all was finished. His pronouncement meant that His working for our salvation was concluded once this was done. All of God’s wrath had been poured upon Him, and He paid the penalty to be exacted for our offenses.
  5. But for those who reject the Gospel or die without Christ, it is as though He never died on the cross. The Lord Jesus Christ did not pay their sin penalty.
  6. In the past, the Lord Jesus Christ cried out that the payment for salvation was finished. In the future, in His role as Judge and not as Savior, He will again make a pronouncement. Then it will be that the final and complete outpouring of God’s wrath upon this earth has begun.
- (16.18) And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, *and* so great.
1. The voices, lightning, and thunders should remind us of God’s righteousness in judgment ... the way He revealed Himself on Mount Sinai. The most tremendous earthquake since the Flood comes with those accouterments of God’s righteousness.
  2. Think of it. A more tremendous earthquake than when God broke up the fountains of the deep to bring on the Flood! So, when you consider what kind of earthquakes those cataclysmic events produced as earth’s topography was established, the mountain ranges were erected, and the great oceans were formed, this coming earthquake must be utterly unimaginable.
- (16.19) And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
1. The great city is very likely the city of Jerusalem since it was also termed “the great city” in Revelation 11.8. Jerusalem will be divided into three parts during this earthquake. What that means, exactly, I do not know. But the cities of the Gentile world will apparently be completely destroyed. They will be wiped out.
  2. It is not good for great Babylon to come in remembrance before God. That can only mean judgment. Some think Babylon is a veiled reference to Rome. Others think that Babylon will be rebuilt and that this verse refers to Babylon’s final destruction.

3. As for “the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath,” ... we will learn what that phrase means in chapters 17 and 18.

(16.20) And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

1. What kind of devastation this greatest of all earthquakes will bring. The result will be the complete alteration of the topography of the earth’s surface.
2. Old Testament prophecy predicts this in several places, as well. Think of it. Islands fleeing. Does that mean they disappear under the water? Where must the mountains go to to be no more found? The human mind can scarcely imagine.
3. How many people live on islands? Do you realize that Indonesia, the largest of all Muslim countries, is a nation of many islands? Would you call Australia an island? New Zealand is a country on two main islands. As well there is Long Island in New York state. And do not forget Great Britain, Ireland, Sicily, Cyprus and Crete. The loss of life will be incredible.

(16.21) And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, *every stone* about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

1. A talent weighs somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 to 100 pounds. This means that actual ice boulders will fall out of the sky, reigning down mass destruction upon everything that survives the monster earthquake.
2. Do you know how hail is formed in thunderclouds? A water droplet is swept up high and frozen. Then it falls and accumulates more water on it and is swept up again by strong updrafts to freeze again. This is repeated until the hail is too heavy to be held up by the updrafts and falls to the ground.
3. Imagine the size and the force of a thundercloud, the velocity of the updraft that would be necessary to hold up an ice boulder weighing 80 to 100 pounds!
4. So, what does unsaved humanity do when this seventh vial is poured out? Do they cry out to God, acknowledging He is the Almighty God, and cry out for deliverance? No. Instead, they curse God because of the severity of the plague.

#### CONCLUSION:

1. We are now at the very end of the Great Tribulation. The end has come for the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. The King of kings is about to appear on the scene and take matters into His Own hands.

*Revelation Chapter 16*

2. But as we look in Revelation 17 and 18, we do not read about the Second Advent of Christ, but about the political and religious system that opposed God during the Tribulation ... Babylon.