

Revelation Chapter Sixteen

The Seven Bowls of Wrath (vv. 1-21)

Command to Commence (v.1)

VERSE 1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels

(Καὶ ἤκουσα μεγάλης φωνῆς ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ λεγούσης τοῖς ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλοις [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.1s. akouo hear + adj.gen.f.s. megale great + noun gen.f.s. phone voice + prep ek from + art.w/noun abl.m.s. naos temple (inner) + pres.act.part.abl.f.s. lego say + art.w/noun dat.m.p. angelos angel + adj.dat.m.p. hepta seven*], **"Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God** [*Ἔπάγετε καὶ ἐκχέετε τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν* [*pres.act.imper.2p. hupago lead, proceed + conj kai + pres.act.imper.2p. ekcheo pour out + art.w/noun acc.f.p. phiale bowl, saucer + adj.acc.f.p. hepta seven + art.w/noun gen.m.s. thumos anger; wrath + art.w/noun gen.m.s. theos God + prep eis + art.w/noun acc.f.s. ge earth*])."

ANALYSIS: VERSES 1-2

1. The position of "great" before "voice" stresses the dynamic of the voice.
2. Elsewhere in the chapter the adjective "great" follows its noun which is customary in John's writings.
3. Also, elsewhere in the Apocalypse when used with "voice," it always follows it (cf. 1:10; 5:2,12; 6:10; 7:2,10; 8:13; 10:3; 11:12,15; 12:10; 14:7,9,15,18; 16:7; 19:1,17; 21:3).
4. "And I heard" begins a chapter in which seven angels with seven bowls receive and carry out their instructions to dispense the contents of their respective bowls.
5. The bowls occur in rapid succession, just before the 2nd Advent, suggesting that each takes place in a very short time (a matter of days at the most).
6. The "loud voice" is the voice of God as 15:8 shows.
7. God's mention of His own name in the directive is no obstacle to this identification.
8. No one else has access to the heavenly temple due to the intense smoke that fills the temple (cf. 15:8).
9. This condition continues until at least the completion of the seven bowls and perhaps longer.
10. This is the same "loud voice" that in 16:17 accompanies the pouring out of the seventh bowl (mystery bowl).
11. The adjective "*meGas*" occurs 11x in this chapter in 8 verses (16:1,9,12,14,17,18,19,21) translated "loud" and "great" (80x in Rev).
12. God commands all seven angels at once to carry out their assignment (Ps. 103:20 "Bless the LORD, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the voice of His word.").
13. Each angel in sequence complies without further instruction.
14. The first imperative "Go" or "Depart" is a present imperative, in effect telling the angels, "Go your way." (cf. Mk. 6:38; 14:13; 16:87; Jam. 2:16).

15. The second imperative “pour out” is an aorist imperative telling them to deposit the contents of their bowls upon the prescribed objects.
16. The plagues contained in the seven vessels are cumulative.
17. The contents of the seven bowls bear some resemblance to the earlier seals and trumpets, but they are not merely a recapitulation.
18. The fourth bowl is entirely new.
19. Personal suffering is the touchstone of these plagues, where no personal suffering is cited in connection with the first four trumpets judgments.
20. Under these bowls humanity is in agony from the very beginning.
21. The bowls are far more intense and universal, showing that this whole series deals with the time of the very end.
22. The fact that the plagues are designated “the last” shows that they are not a recapitulation.

First Bowl (v.2)

VERSE 2 **So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth** (Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν γῆν [*conj kai + aor.act.ind.3s. aperchomai depart; “went” + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. protos first + conj kai + aor.act.ind.3s. ekcheo pour out + art.w/noun acc.f.s. piale bowl + pro.gen.m.s. autos “his” + prep eis + art.w/noun acc.f.s. ge earth*]; **and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people** [καὶ ἐγένετο ἕλκος κακὸν καὶ πονηρὸν ἐπὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους [*conj kai + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai become + noun nom.nt.s. helkos a wound; by meton., ulcer, abcess + adj.nom.nt.s. kakos bad; “loathsome” + conj kai + adj.nom.nt.s. poneros evil; painful + prep epi upon + art.w/noun acc.m.p. anthropos man*] **who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image** [τοὺς ἔχοντας τὸ χάραγμα τοῦ θηρίου καὶ τοὺς προσκυνοῦντας τῇ εἰκόνι αὐτοῦ [*art.w/pres.act.part.acc.m.p. echo have + art.w/noun acc.nt.s. charagma mark + art.w/noun gen.nt.s. therion beast + conj kai + art.w/pres.act.part.acc.m.. proskuneo worship + art.w/noun dat.f.s. eikon image, likeness + pro.gen.nt.s. auto “his”*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. The formula “went away and poured out” appears only with the first angel, but is implied with the other six (vv. 3,4,8,12,17).
2. The brevity of style whereby “the first” stands for “the first angel” contrast with the trumpet series which used “angel” with each in the series except the first (8:8,10,12,12; 11:15).
3. The target of the first bowl is “into the earth.”
4. The first three bowls affect individuals directly either in personal suffering or through environmental calamity, and the last three are more of an international phenomena.
5. The “earth” is more particular than “earth” of verse 1 which is general in inclusion of the objects of all the bowls (land, sea, water, etc.).
6. “The earth” is the first of the four divisions of nature hit by the first four plagues.
7. The others are the sea, the rivers, and the sky.

8. The earth has humans residing upon it so while the plague affects the skin of humans it is directed “on the earth.”
9. The noun “sore” (*helkos*) strictly means “a wound.”
10. The nature of this wound is an inflamed and running sore that refuses to be healed.
11. The language resembles that of Deut. 28:35.
12. This recalls the sixth plague of Egypt where the Egyptian magicians were also the victims (Ex. 9:9-11).
13. Here the followers of the beast receive the plague and not humanity otherwise.
14. Job was similarly afflicted.
15. No precedent in human history can measure up to the future supernatural intervention of God to grasp the nature of this plague.
16. Whatever is in this bowl is a organism that will result in sores that are “pernicious and malignant.”
17. Furthermore, the plague will not harm those who do not have “the mark of the beast.”
18. Those unaffected by these sores recall the Israelites who remained untouched by the sixth plague over Egypt.
19. This plague is also a sign to those who have not, for various reasons, taken the mark and worshipped the beast.
20. People outside the beast’s conquests would tend not to take it (China, Russia, etc.).

Second Bowl (v.3)

VERSE 3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea (Καὶ ὁ δεύτερος ἐξέχεεν τὴν φιάλην αὐτοῦ εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν [*conj kai + art.w/adj.nom.m.s. deuterus second + aor.act.ind.3s. ekcheo pour out + art.w/noun acc.f.s. phiale bowl + pro.gen.m.s. autos + prep eis + art.w/noun acc.f.s. thalassa sea*], **and it became blood like that of a dead man** [καὶ ἐγένετο αἷμα ὡς νεκροῦ [*conj kai + aor.dep.ind.3s. ginomai become + noun nom.nt.s. haima blood + conj hos as, like + adj.gen.m.s. nekros dead*]; **and every living thing in the sea died** [καὶ πᾶσα ψυχὴ ζωῆς ἀπέθανεν τὰ ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ [*conj kai + adj.nom.f.s. pas every + noun nom.f.s. psuche soul; life-principle; breath; natural life + noun gen.f.s. zoe life; descriptive genitive; i.e., every soul marked by life + aor.act.ind.3s. apothnesko die + def.art.nom.nt.p. ta “which”; stands in apposition to the feminine singular psuche which is explainable by noting the neuter plural ktismata for which psuche stands in 8:9 + prep en + art.w/noun acc.f.s. thalassa sea*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. The second bowl judgment is reminiscent of the first Egyptian plague except it affects salt water rather than fresh water (cf. Ex. 7:19-21).
2. Water covers the greater part of the earth’s surface, so this affliction will be worldwide.
3. All earth’s oceans will be affected by this plague.
4. The effect of the bowl’s contents is to leave earth’s oceans totally contaminated with “blood like [that of] a dead person.”

5. This semi-coagulated mess will totally foul the seven seas making them loathsome and foul.
6. Here death will come to “every living thing in the sea.”
7. This will amount to a complete reversal of Gen. 1:21 when God on D+5 of restoration God spoke into existence all aquatic life.
8. This devastating plague constitutes a complete destruction of all marine life, not a partial one as under the second trumpet (Rev. 8:8-9).
9. This plague like the one before it is a miracle or product of the supernatural.
10. It defies all science to explain how the contents of one angel’s bowl could do this, so we take it by faith.