

should be finished (or completed) the seven plagues of the seven angels."

Discussion Questions
Chapter 15

1. Discuss the two other cycles of judgment (chps. 5 thru 8:1; 8:2 thru 11).
2. What was unique about the seven bowls of anger as a series of God's judgments?
3. Read and discuss Exodus 14:31; 15:1-19 - the song of Moses mentioned in vs. 3.
4. Discuss the names used for God in vss. 3 and 4 in view of the situation of the Christians - due to persecution.
5. What does the Bible mean by the term fear when it is applied to God - vs. 4?
6. In what sense was the Old Testament Tabernacle "a tent of witness" (Exodus 40:34) - vs. 5?
7. According to vs. 7 when could men enter again into the temple of God?

SECTION 49

Text 16:1

And I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go ye, and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.

Initial Questions 16:1

1. What was the source of the great voice - vs. 1?
2. What were the angels commanded to do - vs. 1?

Pouring Out of the Seven Bowls
Chapter 16:1-21

Verse 1

A careful restudy of the two previous series of judgment will show that they are less connected than the series of the seven bowls of anger. They follow each other in rapid succession, except for the pause of anticipation while waiting for the last bowl (vs. 17).

The model of all the bowls of anger is the Egyptian plagues described in Exodus 9:10-11. Much of the imagery in the series of seven trumpets was also taken from the plagues of Egypt.

John hears the divine command to pour out the bowls "into the earth." The bowls (*phialas* - these were shallow bowls) were like those used for pouring libations. They were not vials.

SECTION 50

Text 16:2

2 And the first went, and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a noisome and grievous sore upon the men that had the mark of the beast, and that worshipped his image.

Initial Question 16:2

1. What were the results of the first bowl of anger - vs. 2?

Verse 2

The content of the first bowl brought a terrible plight to man's physical comfort. It repeats the picture of the Egyptian plagues discussed in Exodus 9:10-11 - "And came (*egeneto* - 2nd aor. ind. - the judgment came immediately) a bad, (*kakon* - bad - has a moral connotation) evil (*ponēron* - stresses the activity of evil or evil at work - see Paul's "Mystery of Lawlessness" - II Thess. 2:7) sore (*helkos* - a boil, or scab of leprosy) on the men having the mark of the beast" - The sixth Egyptian plague (Exodus 9:8-12) had this same effect on men.

SECTION 51

Text 16:3

3 And the second poured out his bowl into the sea; and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living soul died, even the things that were in the sea.

Initial Questions 16:3

1. What resulted from the second bowl - vs. 3?

2. What happens chemically to "the blood of a dead man" - vs. 3?

Verse 3

The second and third bowls (vss. 3-4) share the imagery of the plagues described in Exodus 7:20-21. The content of the second bowl is like the content of the third trumpet (8:10-11). The first bowl was poured out onto the earth; the second bowl is poured out "into the sea; and it became like (*hōs* - as or like) the blood of a dead man, and every soul of life died in the sea."

SECTION 52

Text 16:4-7

4 And the third poured out his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, Righteous art thou, who art and who wast, thou Holy One, because thou didst thus judge: 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and blood hast thou given them to drink: they are worthy. 7 And I heard the altar saying, Yea, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

Initial Questions 16:4-7

1. What necessity of man was effected by the 3rd bowl - vs. 4?
2. What did "the angel of the waters" say about God - vs. 5?
3. With what did God reward the slayers of the saints and prophets - vs. 6?
4. Who is under the altar according to 6:9? Discuss the statement in vs. 7 in light of it.

Verse 4

The third bowl was poured out into man's water supply, "into the rivers and the fountains of the waters; and it became blood." Man had no water to drink. The anguish caused by a lack of water is one of the most tormenting of human suffering. There was liquid to drink, but it was nothing but sickening blood. The imagery would have been appropriate in the biblical world. Blood played a vital part in the ritual of the mystery religions, and John's readers from Asia minor would have fully understood this symbolism, which is nauseating to most of us.

Verse 5

Immediately following the first three bowls in vss. 5-7 there is heard the voice of "the angel of the waters" who gives approval of God's judgment. The angel declares that God is holy and everlasting, "because you judged (*ekrinas* - 1st aor. ind. active - God's act of judgment was singular and final) these things." God will not permit evil to persist indefinitely. This is a fundamental part of the Christian's hope in Christ. Righteousness shall prevail, not evil!

Verse 6

The angel continues the charges brought against condemned mankind. Those who receive God's judgment deserve it, because they are responsible for the death of the saints and prophets. This imagery probably includes all those who are guilty of this crime against God's people, and His servants. God gave the guilty ones - blood to drink and they deserve it! (Worthy of it means they deserve it.)

This verse receives a marvelous commentary in Christ's lament over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34). "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her!" The words of verse six probably apply to Jews and gentiles alike, and should not be limited to this period of Roman persecution.

Verse 7

Here we note a repetition of vs. 4 of the song of the Lamb.

SECTION 53

Text 16:8-9

8 And the fourth poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given unto it to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat: and they blasphemed the name of God who hath the power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

Initial Questions 16:8-9

1. How important is the sun to human life - vs. 8?
2. Fire is used in the scriptures both as a symbol of judgment and purification. In what sense is it used here - vs. 9?
3. How hard-hearted were those who failed to repent - vs. 9?

Verse 8

This fourth bowl has no parallel in the Egyptian plagues. The symbolism probably comes from Isaiah 49:8-10. The description given here in vs. 8-9 contrasts the destiny of the wicked with the destiny of the just (see also 7:16).

Verse 9

The great heat scorched mankind. Note the instruments of torture - first water was taken from men, now fire is the instrument of their punishment. What was the result of this punishment? Instead of turning to God for healing, "they blasphemed the name of God who hath power over these plagues." Men grew more hostile rather than penitent. They still refused to give God His due glory and honor.

SECTION 54

Text 16:10-11

10 And the fifth poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was darkened; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they repented not of their works.

Initial Questions 16:10-11

1. Discuss the imagery of darkness in vs. 10.
2. What does human pride do to a man before God - vs. 11?
3. What are the works mentioned in vs. 11?

Verse 10

With the fifth bowl John returns to the imagery from Exodus 10:21-22, and the results are like those in vss. 10-11. The light supply was shut off. In order to test the devastating psychological effects of darkness, construct an area where you can sit in total darkness for an hour, then something of this imagery will become real.

Verse 11

Again the results of their punishment brought further and more vehement blasphemy than before - because of their pain and sores. Note that the punishment inflicted would produce the most painful spiritual or psychological effects on the lives of men.

SECTION 55

Text 16:12-16

12 And the sixth poured out his bowl upon the great river, the river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way might be made ready for the kings that come from the sunrising. 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as it were frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 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.) 16 And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon.

Initial Questions 16:12-16

1. What boundary line did the river Euphrates represent - vs. 12?
2. What is the geographical source of the water of the Euphrates? Unless the source is dried up too, would it be literally possible for the mighty river to be absolutely dry?
3. Discuss God's warning in vs. 15.
4. Where is Har-Magedon - vs. 16?

Verse 12

The sixth bowl is in the form of a prediction of the invasion of the diabolical barbarians from the east. This bowl was poured out into the great Euphrates river; and its water was dried (up), in order that (*hina* - purpose clause) the way of the kings from the rising of the sun (the East) might be prepared." The invaders could cross the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire, and visit mighty Babylon (Rome) with the havoc of war. The great natural barrier, the Euphrates, is now gone! There is nothing to hold back Rome's hated eastern enemies.

Verse 13

God's judgments bring forth a counter attack from the strategy room of hell. "Three unclean spirits" are set forth by the evil trinity - the dragon, the beast and the false prophet. In the East, the image of the frog stands for everything low and defiled. In most Eastern Religions, even today, the frog is a symbol for that which is absolutely dirty.

Verse 14

These unclean spirits are the "spirits of demons, working (*poiounta* - present, active, participle, they continually worked signs) miracles (*semeia* - signs - 1 of the 3 basic N.T. words for miracle) which go forth unto the kings of the whole earth, to assemble them together unto the war of the great day of almighty God." The forces of Satan have heard heavens challenge to their control over the universe, and the lives and destinies of men.

Verse 15

Paul makes the same claim in I Thessalonians 5:2 that Christ will come in judgment unexpectedly, "like a thief in the night."

John reverts to the first person, as God begins to speak directly—"Behold, I come as a thief." Only the one that keeps on watching and keeps on keeping his garments spotless will be ready when Christ appears again!

Verse 16

The decisive battle between righteousness and unrighteousness is about to open. The symbolic place of God's judgment is the valley of Megiddo (see Joel 3:1ff, for the prediction of this great day of judgment). The great battle ground of Palestine. The text gives the Hebrew - "Har-Magedon." This means the mountains of Meggido. Some English translations contain an anglosized form of this word - Armagedon. The Hebrew consonant for our *h* was transcribed into Greek (via Septuagint), and Greek has no consonant for our *h*, but uses the rough breathing mark (*h*) for this sound. If the rough breathing mark is not transcribed, then the word would start with our *a*. (Armagedon) This is why we might find these different forms of this word in our English translations. (There are also differences in the spelling of the words, but this is due to faulty transcriptions of sounds).

It was in the valley of Esdraelon that Ahaziah the king of Judah was slain by Jehu (II Kings 9:27). Pharoah Neco of Egypt killed young king Josiah (II Kings 23:29) on this battle field. The memory of this valley had been indelibly written on the minds of everyone who knows the history of the Jewish people. Israel had gained a victory over the Canaanites here, and its memory was recorded in the song of Deborah (Judges 5:1f). (See the discussions

in the standard critical commentaries such as Charles and Swete, but for the best single discussion read I. T. Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*; New York, MacMillan Co., 1919, p. 685.

SECTION 56

Text 16:17-21

17 And the seventh poured out his bowl upon the air; and there came forth a great voice out of the temple, from the throne, saying, It is done: 18 and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunders; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since there were men upon the earth, so great an earthquake, so mighty. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and Babylon the great was remembered in the sight of God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And great hail, every stone about the weight of a talent, cometh down out of heaven upon men: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof is exceeding great.

Initial Questions 16:17-21

1. To what does "It is done" refer to in vs. 17?
2. Note that vs. 18 mentions the earth, then the scene switches to the great city in vs. 19. The city stands for the whole earth. To what city does the name Babylon refer?
3. How extensive was the geological upheaval mentioned in vs. 20?
4. How did men respond to God's judgment - vs. 21?

Verse 17-21

The seventh bowl was reserved for the precious air which men breath. Then "a great voice came out of the temple from the throne." God is speaking directly and says. "It has occurred." John had declared in 15:1 that the time when the seven plagues will finish or complete "the anger of God." The seventh bowl describes the completion of the wrath of God in phrases which we have seen already (see 8:7) and in terms of Exodus 9:23-24.

Babylon's fall was declared in 14:18; but here we have a description of the major events of the fall. The basic difference between the judgments of the bowls and those of the trumpets is that the bowls are far more severe. The Trumpets affect only

one-third of the elements involved, the bowls of anger affect the entire earth. The three series of judgments do not seem to this author to be three chronologically distinct judgment in different periods of history but each seem to be a general description of God's judgment. Each series presents the judgments with greater intensity and severity.

Discussion Questions
Chapter 16:1-21

1. Study carefully the model of the Egyptian plagues in Exodus 9:10-11 and compare the imagery in vs. 1.
2. What kind of sore does John speak of in vs. 2? Study in Bible Dictionary concerning the diseases mentioned in the Bible, and find a clinical description of disease here.
3. How was the sea affected according to vs. 3?
4. Discuss the relationship of God's Holiness and the fact of His judgment in vs. 5.
5. Do you know any who were stoned in the Early Church? Why were they stoned?
6. Study Isaiah 49:8-10 in its context and then discuss vs. 8.
7. What are the extreme temperatures in which the human body can survive - vs. 9?
8. Could plants, animals, and men survive without the light of the sun - vs. 10?
9. Why was the Euphrates River used as important symbolism in vs. 12?
10. Are the forces of evil personal or merely principles at work in the universe, according to vs. 13?
11. What is the relationship between the final overthrow of active evil and the coming again of Jesus Christ according to I Thess. 5:2 and vs. 15.
12. Get a good recent map of the O.T. period involved and locate the valley of Esdraelon; then study the following Bible records of battles: II Kings 9:27ff, II Kings 23:29; Judges 5:1ff. Then does this help you understand John's use of this imagery?
13. Now that you have completed studying this third section of God's judgment, go back and examine the general techniques of the first two series of judgments, the seven seals - chp. 6: - 8:1; and seven trumpets chp. 8:2 - 11:15. Note their differences and similarities and the development of their intensity and severity.

SECTION 57

Text 17:1-5

And there came one of the seven angels that had the seven bowls, and spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters; 2 with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and they that dwell in the earth were made drunken with the wine of her fornication. 3 And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness and I saw a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. 4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and decked with gold and precious stone and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations, even the unclean things of her fornication, 5 and upon her forehead a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF THE HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Initial Questions 17:1-5

1. Discuss the O.T. and N.T. use of the symbol of adultery with respect to faithfulness or lack of faithfulness to God.
2. How extensive was the influence of "the great harlot" - vs. 2?
3. In the N.T. period, what did the color scarlet signify-- vs. 3?
4. Discuss the economic significance of the dress of the woman in vs. 4.
5. What does the word mystery mean - vs. 5?

The Vision of Babylon Seated on the Beast
Chapter 17:1-5

Thus far we have noted that five enemies and the followers of the fifth enemy have been presented. The dragon, the beast from the sea, the beast from the earth, the false prophet, the great harlot, Babylon, and those who wear the mark of the beast. John relays the fate of those who wear this mark in chaps. 15-16. God grants to John an inspired vision in chps. 17-19 in which the ultimate defeat of Babylon, the beast of the sea, and the false prophet are revealed. R. H. Charles erroneously charges that the book under study introduces the subject of the fate of Babylon and then fails to discuss it. First, we must not forget that the original Greek Text had no chapter nor verse divisions. In view of this fact Charles' criticism is