

The Revelation of Jesus Christ

Chapter 16

The Seven Vials (Bowls) of God's Wrath

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Chapter 16 — The Seven Vials

The vials, or literally 'bowls', of God's wrath are seen poured out on the guilty earth. God comes to closer grips with men and the judgments are more severe and wide reaching than before.

First Bowl

Falls on the followers of the Beast, smiting them with moral distemper and misery (Ex. 9:8,9; Isa. 1:5-6).

Second Bowl

Poured out on the unsettled and revolutionary state outside the sphere of the first bowl. Spiritual death, i.e. apostasy from God, is indicated.

Third Bowl

Turns the influences and sources of refreshment to blood, not simply bitterness as in chap. 8:10-11. That is, there will be complete alienation from God produced by that which should have been for good among men.

Fourth Bowl

The supreme authority becomes a persecuting power exercising tyranny over men.

Fifth Bowl

Deals in great severity with the Beast and his kingdom. Men do not repent under these judgments, but blaspheme the more (Rom. 8:7,8). They recognize God's control over these plagues (v.9) but do not repent.

Sixth Bowl

The Euphrates secured the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. The sixth bowl has to do with this security of the revived Roman Empire. Something will happen to expose the West to powers from the East. Armageddon is a mystic name and has reference to the 'Megiddo' of Judg. 5:19. There Israel was triumphant over the Gentile foe. Psalm 83 refers to another association of Gentiles bent on Israel's destruction at the time of the end. Typically then vs.16 of Rev. 16 indicates the final overthrow of Israel's enemies by the Lord.

Chap. 16:17-21 — Seventh Bowl

Reaches all; it is poured out into the air. A divine sigh of relief, as it were, is heard from the throne — 'It is done.' Judgment is God's strange work; He delights in mercy. Then follows the dissolution of civilization both in its center, 'the great city,' and all that was established outside the Roman Empire, 'the cities of the nations'. Great Babylon comes in final remembrance before God. Men yet blaspheme under God's crushing retribution.