

Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.  
Rev. 1:3

# Verse by Verse Through the Book of Revelation

Seminar by Ellie Green

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## REVELATION CHAPTER 16

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The closing verses of chapter 15 unfold one of the most arresting scenes in the whole book of Revelation. When the seven angels go forth with the vials of wrath, the Scripture says that until their work was finished, “no man was able to enter into the temple.” (v. 8)

Before the judgments of God break upon a guilty world, the gospel message of invitation will have been heard by every soul on earth; man’s opportunity for salvation will have passed, and the door of mercy will have been closed forever.

Some commentators try to make this prophecy of the plagues run parallel with the seals and the trumpets. That really cannot be, for the plagues are poured out upon those who have received the mark of the beast, and that mark will not be received until just before Christ appears in glory.

These judgments fall after Christ has finished His ministry on behalf of sinners.

1. **And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels**, In view of the fact that the seven plague-bearing angels had already departed from the temple (ch. 15) and that nobody was able to enter the temple, this would seem to be the voice of God Himself.



**Go your ways and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.**

That is, afflict the earth with the calamities figuratively represented by the seven bowls.

In certain respects the seven last plagues are similar to the ten plagues upon Egypt. Both testify to the superior authority and power of God. Each of the ten plagues upon Egypt was painfully literal, and each was designed to demonstrate how false were the claims of , and how futile was reliance upon, false religion.

**having the seven last plagues;** They are the “last” because Jesus will then come and sin will be wiped out of existence.

**for in them is filled up the wrath of God.** The special punishment reserved for the worshipers of the beast and his image (ch. 16:2) is summed up in the seven last plagues (See ch. 14:10).

Similarly, the seven last plagues will be literal, yet each will strike a telling blow at some aspect of apostate religion and thus have symbolic overtones. It may be observed that the first four or five plagues are, in a sense, of a preliminary nature and lead men to realize that they have been fighting against God (See GC 640). But, instead of repenting they curse Him more bitterly than ever and become even more resolute in their opposition (see Rev. 16:9, 11, 21)

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.** The numerical designation of each angel implies that the plagues are successive. Noisome and grievous means painful and severe.

This first plague falls on those who have failed to heed the message of the second and third angel. They did not come out of Babylon and they are worshipping the beast and his image. This is conclusive proof that the plagues do not begin until after the third angel’s message has been given—because the first plague will fall on those who have the mark of the beast and who worship his image.

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.** It has been suggested that, by obstruction of international travel and trade (see chs. 13:13-17; 16:13, 14; 17:3, 12) this plague may be designed to demonstrate in a signal way God’s displeasure with respect to Satan’s plan to bind the nations of earth together under his control.

The sea may become red, and smelly but not necessarily be actual blood. Every living soul includes animal life as well as human life. The Greek word used is psuche and is translated “creatures.” When the ocean becomes a place of death, the inhabitants of every country in the world will be affected.

God’s people need not fear: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. Isaiah 41:17, 18.

**God’s promise: “...bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.”  
Isaiah 33:16.**

4. **And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.** Whereas the second plague would doubtless result in great inconvenience and perhaps interruption of travel, the effects of the third would be immediate and serious.
5. **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.** The terrible nature of the third plague apparently calls forth a statement in defense of God for authorizing it.
6. **For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.** This plague is stated to be a direct act of God and their punishment is precisely appropriate to the crime.
7. **And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.**
8. **And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and the power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.** Note that every succeeding plague tends to augment the calamity of the previous one and to heighten the anguish of the guilty sufferers. The sun sends forth an excess of heat that tends to torment men and to destroy life. The heat would most likely result in the worst drought and famine the world has ever know.

Throughout the land there is a feverish but vain quest for a means of alleviating the suffering but it is not motivated by godly sorrow. The objective is to escape the plagues, not reconcile with God.

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Satan now begins to convince people that the reason they are suffering is not because they are sinners but that they have erred in tolerating God's chosen people.

It will be at this point that the Marian apparitions will say that "unless the people convert the worst catastrophe in history will come upon the earth." Millions will believe what the virgin Mary is supposedly telling them.

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.** Under the fourth plague men begin to blame God for their misery and to realize, at last, that they are fighting against Him. (see ch. 16:1) They begin to view the plagues as a demonstration of divine power.
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,**
11. **And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.** This would seem to indicate that the plagues don't kill everybody and that many people experience more than one plague. *It would seem that the plagues are literally awful for the wicked of the earth but each plague has spiritual significance. However, we don't understand the exact meaning of each plague.*

Verse 12 is the foundation text for everything that follows in Chapter 16, 17, 18, 19.

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** The most logical interpretation of this prophecy is that the Euphrates represents the people over whom mystical Babylon holds sway: Remember that "waters" represents people. The Euphrates was the only reason why Babylon could survive in the middle of the desert. If Babylon represents the papacy, the drying up of the river Euphrates, which ran right through the center of Babylon, might symbolize those who begin to question the papacy's actions and withdraw their support—which prepares the way of the "Kings of the east" which is generally interpreted to be Jesus.
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.** In ancient Egypt the frog was a symbol of their pagan and spirit gods. The introduction of this frog symbol is interesting. As we know, this little creature hibernates; that is, it disappears for a time, only to return

and disturb us with its croaking. So paganism and spiritualism disappeared for a time but are now reappearing under many disguises.

Pagan thinking has entered our classrooms and our pulpits in the form of teaching about reincarnation, spirit guides, holistic health, the power within, the power of the mind; the belief in the immortality of the soul; the Marian apparitions bringing supposed “messages” directly from Jesus to the people on earth.

In the final scenes of earth’s history, paganism and spiritualism under the cloak of religion are to exercise tremendous influence. We can, of course, expect a bright being to appear pretending to be Jesus. This will be the almost overwhelming delusion and will take the world captive. (See Cor. 11)

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.** Through the centuries many ideas have been expressed concerning Armageddon. The issues are much larger than many have imagined. Note that the “kings of the earth and the whole world” will be involved. It would be physically impossible to gather all the armies of the world on one battlefield. This battle is symbolic of the last great battle between good and evil. Expect very convincing miracles from Satan and his devil spirits.

Who but the spiritually blind could fail to see the shaping of events that will lead to the final battle? So tremendous will be that conflagration that were it not for the fact that God sends down His mighty ones to protect His people, they would be wiped off the earth.

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.** *Coming as a thief* means unexpectedly. *Keepeth his garments* means remain steadfast and wholly loyal to God. *See his shame* means yielding his faith.
16. **And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.** This will be a tremendous conflict of right against wrong. All of our senses will tell us that we might be wrong. All of our families, neighbors and friends might believe we are wrong. We will be considered stubborn and uncompromising! All the disasters coming on the earth will be blamed on the little group of people who refuse to listen and follow what the world believes is Jesus — walking on this earth healing and blessing and seemingly calling the world back to God. It will be said that if only this small group of people would convert all the disasters would go away!
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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.** Some of the plagues are local in their application, but this one is poured out into the air. The atmosphere envelops the whole earth, and it follows that this plague will envelop the whole earth.

The gathering of the nations has taken place under the sixth plague and the grand finale will occur under the seventh. At this time it may be said, "The Lord hath opened His armory and hath brought forth the weapons of His indignation." Jeremiah 50:25

IT IS DONE! The same words are to be uttered a second time—they were spoken by the Lord upon the cross (John 19:30) as He brought His ministry of sacrifice to a close, thereby assuring the success of the plan of redemption. Now, the dramatic announcement marks the moment when sin is to end!

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 and earthquake and so great.** There will most likely be a physical earthquake — perhaps from the literal voice of God declaring IT IS DONE! But there will also be a figurative earthquake which shatters mystical Babylon. This figurative earthquake will leave great Babylon in collapse!
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.** The great city is divided into three parts; that is, the three grand divisions of the false and apostate religions of the world: paganism/spiritualism, Catholicism and apostate Protestantism. **At the voice of God this three-fold union loses its cohesion, unity and power to act.**
20. **And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.**
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.** Keep in mind that the people of God are under his special protection. We may be uncomfortable but we will be sustained and safe by God's grace.

The plagues serve to reveal the spirit of rebellion which fully controls the hearts of men. The plagues perfects the characters of the saints and leads them to trust more confidently in God.

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As willingness to die for another is the supreme manifestation of love (John 15:13), so the intent to take another person's life marks the ultimate hatred.

During the last two plagues a situation develops that makes this distinction fully apparent, even to the participants themselves, and the justice of God in terminating human history is thus made evident to men as well as angels.

It will then be demonstrated before the universe that, to a man, the remnant people would rather die than disobey God, and that those who have chosen the service of Satan would, if permitted, slay all who stand in the way of their purpose to control the earth. Caught in the very act of trying to carry out the death decree, they stand without excuse before God.

Through the unconverted minds of people the devil is permitted to demonstrate what the universe would be like should he be allowed to control it.

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