

Revelation Week 9: Chapter 15-16

Chapter 15:

- Introduced to the final rendition of the judgments.
- Seals were very general and possibly what we as believers will have to endure.
- Trumpets were targeted primarily at the gods of the nations, the powers of darkness, and worship toward them.
- Bowls are targeted at the followers of the beast and the beast. The final warning to the unrighteous and believers whose faith may be straying.

New Song of Moses

- From the previous chapter we are shown the result of those who have conquered the beast, its image, and the number of its name.
- They stand before the throne of God and sing “the song of Moses.”
- The “Song of Moses” is the song Israel sang after Yahweh brought them up out of Egypt. The song recounts the wonders He performed in judgment against Egypt that ultimately brought them out of Egypt and into the Wilderness where they would be with God.
- This song of victory further shows us how non-linear Revelation is.
- This song of Moses is NOT the same words as the song of Moses in Exodus 15, nor the song sung by Moses in Deuteronomy 32. John’s purpose is to keep Exodus in our minds, this is especially clear when the Bowl judgments in Chapter 16 contain clear Exodus imagery.

Chapter 16:

- The bowl judgments continue the pattern of: six judgments; interlude; final judgement, theophany (the appearing of God to man).
- The sixth judgment ends with the assembly of the Antichrist’s army at Har Mageddon, the mount of assembly. Jesus’ statement of His promised return as the interlude, and then the theophany of Christ.

Chapter 17:

- Chapter 17 gives us a more in depth look, as we have seen many times in Revelation John gives us the big picture in the 7 judgments followed by more intricate details of what is going on.
- Chapter 17 portrays Babylon, the world system that many are in love with, as a prostitute. The portrayal of the world as a seductress who seduces God’s people is a common theme in the OT prophets.
- We are also given insight into the conflict between the beast and the world. In the trumpet judgments we saw the release of demonic forces as a judgment.
- Depending on your view of the four riders in the seal judgments you could say the same thing. Some view the horse riders as righteous angels, or possibly the first rider as Christ himself. While others see the white horse as the antichrist and the other horsemen as wicked angels. We cannot be certain of their identity either way, though parallels to righteous angels in Zechariah is our best evidence for interpretation.
- Satan, the antichrist and the powers of darkness are chaotic, while they do have some organization in their chaos it is still chaos. Ultimately the powers of darkness are not for the world, they aren’t friends, it is a means to an end. The goal of the world is to live according to its own terms in its depravity. The goal of the gods of the nations is to stop the spread of the gospel and prolong the period of time before their judgement. Ultimately the world will be so chaotic it essentially destroys itself in a war against itself.

Chapter 18:

- Chapter 18 is the fall of Babylon, the prostitute from the previous chapter. The world will mourn her death. The righteous are warned to come out of the world.

Chapter 19:

- Rejoicing over the defeat of Babylon and the marriage feast of the Lamb.
- Details about the 2nd coming of Christ and the feast of God in which the unrighteous are feasted on by wild animals.

Babylon in Revelation

Throughout much of Revelation, especially the end, John refers to the city of the enemy as Babylon. This is not literal Babylon, which fell in the Second Temple Period. Instead, it is a metaphor for the world system. In John's mind, it is clearly Rome. John will not directly use Rome as doing so would end with another execution for John, who has faced failed execution attempts already. But John having Rome in view is very obvious, from the anti-Zeus and anti-Caesar polemics to the identification of "seven heads that are seven mountains" (Revelation 17:9). Rome was famously known as the city on seven hills; they even inscribed it on the currency of the day.

Craig Keener writes about Revelation 17:9: *As the angel explains the mystery of the woman and the beast (17:7-18), only the purest semblance of subtlety remains; in several different ways, the beast is identified with Rome. The woman sits on seven mountains (17:9); Rome was regularly portrayed in this manner. (2) The leader of Babylon is apparently the new Nero (17:8-11); although Nero was associated also with the Parthians, as a ruler in the series of the seven he will rule Rome. (3) This empire rules over the other kings of the earth (17:18), who rules the nations gathered around the sea as a maritime power (17:15). (4) "Babylon" was a standard Jewish title for Rome by this period (see comment on 14:8; both empires destroyed the temple).* - Craig S. Keener, Revelation, The NIV Application Commentary, 408.

What does this mean for us in a post-Roman world? Should we expect Rome to rise again and the Antichrist to be a Roman leader? What about the Pope? Is the Pope going to be the Antichrist? While anything is technically possible, we need to not focus on the specifics but look at what John is communicating. John has the world power of his day in view—the one who is leading the world in immorality.

[There is a small number of believers who see Revelation as a lawsuit against Israel (see End Times Appendix - Preterist); the problem with this thinking is Israel is not the world power of the time. Israel was poor in the days of the NT. Israel is not seducing anyone into idolatry. In the Preterist view dies quickly with this in mind. Revelation 14:8 has Babylon making all the nations drink the "wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." While Israel has been guilty of drinking the wine (being seduced) of other world powers and their gods, Israel has never been the seducer. There is no evidence, Biblical or otherwise, to suggest that Israel is the seductress in John's Day, even if Revelation was written before its destruction in 70-73 AD. Instead, it is Rome that seduces the nations into worshipping its gods.

Further evidence shows us that Babylon was a common codename for Rome in the 2nd Temple period; there is no evidence anywhere that Babylon was used for Israel. While there may be similarities in the book of Revelation to the siege of Jerusalem by Rome ending in 70 AD, it is clear to me that Israel and the siege of Jerusalem are not in view at all.]

For us, the question we need to ask is: "What world power is leading the nations to spiritual sexual immorality today." The answer is quickly becoming all. There isn't a single nation in view, from Russia, China, Europe, Brazil, The United States, Canada, and everyone in between. The entire world is seducing people to drink the "wine of its sexual immortality." - Revelation 18:3. It is not getting better; in the United States, I have watched Christianity become self-indulgent and political. In Europe, I have seen what is termed "post-Christian." In Asia and the Middle East, Christianity is outlawed, and believers are arrested and even killed. In 2023, it is not be easy to be a Christian anywhere. It is beginning to sound a lot like John's day. This is the reason I believe the return of Christ is imminent, not because of some timeline but because of the seduction of the world on the people, including Christians.

Spiritual Babylon is not an isolated place in the Middle East or Southern Europe; we live in it. We, as Christians, must be "in the world, but not of it" (John 17).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ. You and I must separate ourselves from the world system, from Babylon. This doesn't mean we need to all move out to the mountains; it means we must change our lifestyle; anything that draws us away from Jesus needs to be exposed and removed; if not, we find ourselves in the dangerous situation of the possibility that we will grow to love Babylon more than the Lamb. It will not be easy; it will be the fight of our lives; the Holy Spirit, through John, is asking us if we think Jesus is worth the fight.

Chapter 15: The Song of Moses

1. Trying to read Revelation in a linear fashion is easy to fall in, we are unfamiliar with Jewish writing styles and even our modern fiction writings don't do things this way. John introducing the trumpets during the final seal judgment (Revelation 8:1-5) and the bowls during the closing of the beast section (Revelation 15:1-8) shouldn't make us think in a linear fashion. Rather, we should understand that John is connecting these events together as the same events, the

judgment against the powers of darkness, the judgment of the wicked, and the salvation of those who follow the Lamb.

2. The righteous are those who overcome the beast, its image, and the number of its name. As stated last week this is name theology the question of: “whose name do you carry?” or “who do you represent?”, “who do you follow?” Those who follow Lamb will be with God for eternity.
3. The righteous sing the song of Moses, a call back to Exodus 15. This is the New Song sung by the 144,000 in Revelation 14:2-3.
4. The song contains parallels to Psalm 86:8-10. It is interesting that Psalm 86:8-10 speaks to the battle of Yahweh vs the gods of the nations.
4. The chapter ends with the same language as glory filling the tabernacle in Exodus 40:34–38 and the 1st temple in 1 Kings 8:10–11.
5. Each event was a theophany the reveling of God to man, when the Lord would come to earth in a physical sense.
6. That His glory fills the temple in response to the worship of those who have overcome is a wondrous hope!

Chapter 16: The Bowl Judgments

1. When introduced to the seven angels with the seven bowls John, as he did in Revelation 12, states that these are “signs.” The purpose of this language is to inform us that this is a symbolic portrayal of judgment, we do not have to expect these literally. John will again repurpose the Exodus plagues in these bowl judgments. Keeping in theme of the Exodus and the Song of Moses the plagues of the bowls will be very familiar. The first bowl gives painful boils to those who follow the Beast, see Exodus 9:8-12. The second bowl and third bowl make the sea and rivers turn to blood; see Exodus 7:14-25. The fourth and fifth bowl has to do with the sun and eventually plunges the world into darkness; see Exodus 10:21-29. Very “Exodus-y” and for a reason. The Exodus plagues were aimed at the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12; Numbers 33:4), the bowls will directly have the gods of the nations in view their defeat as prophesied in Psalm 82 is at hand.

2. Rev. 15:8–16:21 also parallels Ezek. 9:1–10:6. In Ezekiel seven angelic beings judge all who do not have a protective mark of God on their foreheads.

3. Bowl judgments parallels to trumpet judgments

Bowl	Judgment	Parallel	Relevant Verses
First Bowl	Sores	Exodus Plague	Exodus 9:9-11
Second/Third Bowl	Sea and rivers are blood	2 nd and 3 rd Trumpet; Exodus	Rev. 8:8-9; Ex 7:14-25
Forth Bowl	Sun, Scorched by fire	1 st and 5 th Trumpet	Rev 8:6, 9:1
Fifth Bowl	Result: cursed God and didn't repent	Sixth Trumpet	Revelation 9:20-21
Sixth Bowl	Euphrates River dries up	Sixth Trumpet	Revelation 9:14
Seventh Bowl	Theophany	Seventh Trumpet	Revelation 11:15-19

4. There is also a polemic against the Roman gods.

Also in view is a polemic against Rome, Rome believed that everything consisted of Earth (16:1-2), Air (16:17), Fire (16:9), and Water (16:3-5). (1) earth (v 2), (2) water (sea, v 3; rivers and springs, v 4; the Euphrates, v 12), (3) fire (sun, v 8), and (4) air (v 17). David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16, vol. 52B, Word Biblical Commentary*, 899.

Yahweh’s judgment upon the “4 elements” is a continued jab at the gods of Rome, showing that Yahweh alone is in control of time, history, chaos, the elements, and all things. The time for the fallen sons of God to “die like men” is upon us (Psalm 82:7). The bowls’ interlude is found in verse 15 and is the shortest interlude of the seals, trumpets, and bowls: “15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)” Revelation 16:15 ESV. These words are spoken by Jesus Himself. He urges us to “stay awake” and remain pure. In Revelation 3:2 the church in Sardis is told to “wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die.” Being awake is being active for the Lord, it contrasts being asleep or dead. Our lives must produce fruit, our lives must be growing in holiness. Jesus isn’t looking for those who believe in mind only, our lives need to reflect our beliefs.

The Battle of Armageddon

The Sixth Bowl sees the Euphrates River drying to prepare for the “kings from the east.” Because of the term “east” and the previous mention of the Euphrates drying up an army of “twice ten thousand times ten thousand” in Chapter 9:14-17, many speculate that this is China. However, that is not what is at play in this text. While China will likely be part of the Antichrist army against the people of God (along with the rest of the world powers), the Euphrates drying up refers to Babylon. As previously discussed, Babylon is the world system, the chaos system of its day. Babylon was separated from the west by the Euphrates River. An army would need to go north before it could come to Israel. This is why the prophets prophesied Babylon and Assyria would come from the north many times in the scriptures, even though geographically they are east of Israel.

Furthermore, there are mountains, valleys, the Jordan River, and a great desert on Israel’s eastern border. The Euphrates River drying up in Chapters 9 and 16 represents unhindered access for the powers of darkness, Babylon, to gather and attack Israel. Verses 13-14 have demonic spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon, beast, and false prophet to make sure we know demonic forces are in view for the bowl judgments.

Satan will gather his troops at a place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. We will discuss this in total length in “Revelation 19-20 - The Final Battle and the Defeat of Evil.” What we will discuss for now is what Armageddon is. John tells us that this is to be understood in its Hebrew meaning. When we read in English, we read “Armageddon.” But it more accurately should be pronounced “Harmageddon” with an “h” at the start. John writes this in Greek as Ἁρμαγεδών. You don’t need Greek to understand this, so don’t worry. If you look at that Greek word, it seems, at first glance, to start with an A, but it doesn’t look to the left. There is a ‘. This ‘ is there for a reason. Greek has no “h” sound, so they put a ‘ for an “h” sound when transliterating for other languages. We, therefore, get “Harmageddon.” Har is Hebrew for mountain. So, to start, we know we are looking for a mountain. Next, we have Mageddon. There is no Hebrew word Mageddon, but we are dealing with transliteration, so there can be some nuance.

The most popular teaching in recent times has been that Mageddon is “Megiddo.” Megiddo is the fortress for a famous valley where many battles in the Bible have been fought, the Jezreel Valley. Jezreel is a strategic and vital valley for Israel as it connects Asia and Europe with Africa. If you wanted to traverse between Egypt and Babylon or Rome, for example, you would have to go through Jezreel and pay your taxes in Megiddo. The theory of the battle taking place in Megiddo has a logic to it. It is a great valley where many battles have taken place over the history of Israel. Why not have the final battle there? That brings us back to the “Har” of “Har Mageddon.” There is no mountain in the Jezreel Valley, and Megiddo is nothing more than a manmade hill. It’s not even close to a mountain. Is there another possibility? Yes, and one that makes more than one connection to the text. As you well know at this point in this book John likes to use the Old Testament, many suggest we look there for answers. Especially when other Old Testament books say the final Battle takes place in Jerusalem (Joel and Zechariah, for example).

I believe our answer is found in Isaiah 14, specifically verse 12-17, which pronounces judgment upon Babylon (the same Babylon John is using as a code for the world system). In this judgment, the Lord compares Babylon to the original divine rebel, the devil, Satan, the dragon. In verse 13, the divine rebel says he will “sit on the mount of assembly, in the far reaches of the north.” Without going too deep into Hebrew grammar, assembly is spelled with the Hebrew letters “mem,” “ayin,” and “dalet.” M - ‘ - D. The -‘- represents a guttural something we don’t have in the English language, but long story short, the ayin (‘) makes a “G” sound. Har Magedon is not Megiddo but the mount of assembly - har mo’ed, the place where God dwells. Where is God’s city? It’s Jerusalem. As Joel 3 and Zechariah 14 say, the Battle of Armageddon will occur in Jerusalem. It is Jerusalem where Jesus will set His feet on the Mount of Olives and defeat the army of the Antichrist.

If you are anything like me you have one glaring question. Why does Har Mageddon end with “-on”? Neither Mo’ed nor Megiddo end with -on. In Hebrew “-on” is a common suffix added on to certain nouns (a person, place, or thing). It doesn’t change the meaning of a word at all, just the sound of it. In fact Megiddo can be called Megiddon, in Zechariah 12:11, while our English versions say “plain of Megiddo” in Hebrew it is more accurately “Megiddon.” Note however that even Zechariah tells us Megiddo is a plain (a flat-land) not a mountain. Another example is Zion, the mount on which the temple was built in Jerusalem. Zion comes from the root: Z - Y - H which means dry. Zion drops the H and adds the “-on” and you get Ziyon (Hebrew) or Zion (English).