

## Revelation 16 Part 2



### 1. Preliminary Considerations (DISCUSSED)

### 2. Contextual Interpretation

#### CHAPTER 16 REPRESENTS THE EVENTS SURROUNDING THE FINAL FIVE MONTH SIEGE OF THE ROMANS LEADING TO HER COMPLETE DESTRUCTION IN SEPTEMBER OF 70 AD.

2.1. (1) "Then I heard" = Indicates progression in the experience of the Apostle John and the visions he is receiving while in heaven (Rev 4:1). In this case it is movement away from heavenly worship (ch. 15) to the execution of those for which the worship is being offered (i.e. judgment against the enemies of Christ and His church—especially her martyrs – Rev 15:1-3, 16:5-6); "telling the angels" = As discussed before, angels are used throughout the book to represent those events which God has ordained/decreed in heaven to take place on earth (e.g. Rev 8:3-12); "Go and pour out on the earth (lit. "the land" as in the land of the Jews) the seven bowls (or "plagues" – 15:1) of the wrath of God" = the commencing of the final five month siege of Jerusalem which would end in her destruction in September of 70 AD (Lev 26:14-28; "pour out" – Psa 69:24; Jer 10:25, 44:6, Lam 2:4-5; Eze 7:1-9). *"Titus began the (final) siege of Jerusalem in April of 70. The defenders held out desperately for five months..." – F.F. Bruce*

2.2. (2-22) = Though there is diversity, there is also astonishingly close similarity between the 7 bowls (Rev 16) and the 7 trumpets (Rev 8-11) and the plagues of Egypt which cannot be simply coincidence. Consider:

<b>Bowls</b>	<b>Trumpets</b>	<b>Plagues of Egypt</b>
<u>Land, sores (16:2)</u>	<u>Land, hail, fire and blood (8:7)</u>	<u>Sores (boils) (Exo 9:8-12) (6<sup>th</sup> plague)</u>
Sea becomes blood (16:3)	Sea becomes blood (8:8-9)	Water becomes blood (Exo 7:17-21) (1 <sup>st</sup> plague)
<u>Rivers become blood (16:4-7)</u>	<u>Rivers become blood (8:10-11)</u>	<u>Water becomes blood (Exo 7:17-21) (1<sup>st</sup> plague)</u>
Sun (16:8-9)	Sun, darkened (8:12)	Darkness (Exo 10:21-23) (9 <sup>th</sup> plague)
<u>Throne of the beast (16:10-11)</u>	<u>Demons (locusts) (9:1-12)</u>	<u>Locusts (Exo 10:4-20) (8<sup>th</sup> plague)</u>
Army on the river (16:12-16)	Army on the river (9:13-21)	Army (of frogs) on the river (Exo 8:2-4) (2 <sup>nd</sup> plague)
<u>Storm of hail (16:17-21)</u>	<u>Storm of hail (11:15-19)</u>	<u>Hail (Exo 9:18-26) (7<sup>th</sup> plague)</u>

2.3. What such diversity as well as close similarity reveals:

2.3.1. The seven bowls are communicating the same time frame as the seven trumpets.

2.3.2. The seven bowls are communicating the same as well as other details associated with this time-frame not communicated in the seven trumpets (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> bowl and trumpet are both associated w/the land but differ in consequences: bowl = "sores"; trumpet = hail, fire and blood).

2.3.3. The seven bowls and trumpets in Revelation do indeed communicate God's judgment against an idolatrous (apostate) Jewish nation since that was/is the purpose of such plagues (and why they are no doubt being alluded to in Revelation's trumpets and bowls).

2.4. (2) "on the earth" = literally "the land" as in (once more) the land of Israel (or more specifically Jerusalem); "harmful and painful sores came upon the people = This, like all the others "plagues" or "bowls" represent part of the fitting punishment which God places on those who persecute His people. In the OT, it was the Egyptians who received such punishment for persecuting the Israelites, now it is the Israelites who are on the receiving end of this punishment for their persecution of Christ and the 1<sup>st</sup> century Christian church—most especially their collusion

w/Nero to bring about empire-wide persecution of Christianity. In this way also (then) they are “the people who bore the mark of the beast” (i.e. Nero/Rome – as discussed prev). Consider also: (Deu 28:27, 35). Most likely this is the result of the disease ridden state in which those behind Jerusalem’s walls not exist (sores/boils are oftentimes an indication of disease or infection). Per the explanation of the First Trumpet (Rev 8:7), bloody corpses are now being catapulted into the city by the Romans with this very purpose in mind: to spread disease and diminish the ranks of those healthy enough to fight. This represented the first form of biological warfare. It is possible also that such sores refer to ulcers or shingles-very painful sores which often manifest themselves due to times of extreme stress – which is what the Jews within the city were now under.

*“It is not hard to imagine the condition of a city filled with dead bodies, restricted in access to clean water, limited in quality and quantity of foods, and afflicted with the ever present threat of death from within and without Jerusalem.” - Ralph Bass*

2.5. (3) “into the sea” = Like the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet which also makes mention of the sea, it stands as a metaphor for the Roman armies who (like the sea) will engulf/swallow/ drown/overtake Jerusalem and its inhabitants (Jer 51:42 – consider the context: “sea” represents the Medo-Persian army who will completely swallow the Babylonians in battle and as a result become the new world super-power – Dan 2:39, 5:25-31, 8:1-4, 15-20); “it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.” = The massive massacre of the Jews by the (“sea”) Roman troops as they breach the walls of Jerusalem allowing none to escape (“every living thing died”). Josephus records the death of over a million Jews with blood flowing through the streets and over the walls of the city in such measure that many of fires (lit by the Romans during the siege) are actually subdued or completely quenched.

*“The number of those that perished during the siege was eleven hundred thousand.” –Josephus (Wars 6.9.3)*  
*“They (the Romans) ran everyone through whom they met with and obstructed the very lanes (of the city) with their dead bodies, and made the whole city run down with blood to such a degree indeed that the fire of many of the houses was quenched with these men’s blood.” –Josephus (Wars 6.8.3)*

2.6. (4) “into the rivers and the springs of water” = Like the 3<sup>rd</sup> trumpet which also makes mention of rivers and springs (Rev 8:10-11), both stand as a metaphor for the judgment and bitter suffering that the Jews will “drink in” as a result of their apostasy against God. This is supported by the fact that:

2.6.1. This is the message communicated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> bowl (8:10-11 – “wormwood” – bitter herb).

2.6.2. Rivers and springs are common metonyms in Scripture for drinking or drinking sources (Deu 8:7; Jos 15:19; 2Ch 32:3; Psa 87:7, 104:10, 107:33-35; Pro 5:15-16).

2.6.3. “blood” is what the rivers and springs turn into (a sign of judgment – e.g. Exo 7:17-21).

2.6.4. We are explicitly told the recipients of this bowl are drinking blood (see verses 5-6).