

Read Revelation!

“Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” (Revelation 1:3)

Chapter 15-16: Seven Vials!

As Chapter 15 opens, John sees “*seven angels having the seven last plagues*” coming out of the heavenly temple (v. 6). These plagues are given to them in “*seven golden vials*” (v. 7) by one of the seraphim. This chapter makes it clear that the heavenly temple is in the throne-room of God. Notice these references in Revelation to the temple, and these elements of temple worship seen by John: candlesticks (Chapter 1), the hidden manna (Chapter 2), a pillar in the temple (Chapter 3), lamps of fire (Chapter 4), golden vials of incense (“*odors*,” Chapter 5), priests (Chapter 5), the altar (Chapter 6), robed persons serving God in the temple before God’s throne (Chapter 7), a golden censer (Chapter 8), and the ark of God’s testament (Chapter 11). The “*vials*” that hold the “*last plagues*” and are “*full of the wrath of God*” (v. 7) are actually cups, according to the original Greek. The pouring out of the seven vials is associated with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, just as the seven trumpets are part of the opening of the seventh seal (8:1-2). Notice that the Kingdom of Christ is announced as the seventh trumpet sounds (11:15), that the wonders of the Tribulation are introduced next (Chapters 12-14), and then the vials come out! It seems that the events of God’s judgment will accelerate as the Tribulation period comes to its close.

I. Plague on the Earth.

Compare the plagues poured out of the vials in Revelation 16 with the judgments announced by the trumpets in Chapters 8 and 9. The first vial is poured on the earth, just as the first trumpet judgment was on the earth (16:2, 8:7). The trumpet judgment will involve “*hail and fire*” falling on the earth. The vial plague will involve “*a noisome and grievous sore*” upon the Beast-worshippers.

II. Plague on the Sea.

The second vial will bring death to the seas: “*every living soul died in the sea*” (16:3).

III. Plague on the Rivers and Fountains.

Of course, several of the vial plagues correspond clearly with the trumpet judgments. After the second trumpet, one-third of the sea-creatures died (8:8). When the second vial is poured, all the sea-creatures will die. After the third trumpet sounded, one-third of the rivers and fountains were poisoned (8:10-11). When the third vial is poured, the rivers and fountains will turn into blood (16:4-7).

IV. Plague on the Sun.

The sounding of the fourth trumpet announced judgment on the heavenly bodies (8:12-13). The pouring of the third vial will bring the scorching of men by the sun (16:8-9). Notice here the refusal of men to repent in spite of these rapidly increasing natural plagues. Surely men will know that God is punishing them, but they will still refuse to turn from their sin!

V. Plague on the Kingdom of Antichrist.

The fifth trumpet and the fifth vial are not so similar. Compare them (9:1-12 and 16:10-11). Both, however, will involve torment and pain among the wicked. Notice again that men will refuse to repent. Furthermore, they will blaspheme God!

VI. Plague on the Euphrates.

The great Euphrates River has traditionally been considered the border between the East and the West. With the pouring of the sixth vial, this river will be *“dried up that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared”* (16:12-16). We notice that the sixth trumpet also related to the Euphrates (9:13-21). After that trumpet sounded, a huge army of 200 million came to kill one-third of all men. It came after four angels were released from *“the great river Euphrates.”* After the sixth vial is poured, devils gather all the armies of the world to fight in the final war at Armageddon.

VII. Plague in the Air.

Chapter 16 ends with the final plague, which will involve thunder and lightning, a mighty earthquake, the destruction of *“Babylon”* and other cities, physical contortions of the earth, and *“a great hail out of heaven”* (16:17-21). At the beginning of the plague, a voice says, *“It is done.”* Finality is the theme, as just before the seventh trumpet (10:5-6). The destruction will be unimaginable! Yet men will not repent; they will continue to blaspheme God (v. 21). Men will harden their hearts to a terrible degree. It will be obvious that God is pouring out His wrath on the world, but men will just get harder in their resistance to Him! We may think that reading the Book of Revelation in those days will make it very clear to people just what is happening, and what is to come. But men will love sin and hate God so much that they will blame Him for His judgments and hope to defeat and dethrone Him. Revelation 19:19 (Read it) says that the armies will gather at Armageddon for the purpose of making war against Christ! But, of course, they will lose. They will be destroyed, as are all men finally who fight Almighty God!