

REVELATION CHAPTER 16

THE OUTPOURING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS CONTAINING THE SEVEN LAST PLAGUES - continued

PART 1. Revelation 16:1-2. THE OUTPOURING OF THE FIRST BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:1 And (then) I heard (*aorist*) a loud voice from the temple saying (*Greek: lego*)(*present*) to the seven angels: "Go (*Greek: hupago*)(*imperative, present*) pour out (*Greek: ekcheo*)(*imperative, present*) the seven bowls (*Greek: phiale*) of God's wrath (*Greek: thumos*) on the earth. This was probably the voice of God himself, giving the order to the final judgement.

16:2 And the first (*Greek: protos*) (angel) went (*Greek: aperchomai*)(*aorist*) and poured out (*Greek: ekcheo*)(*aorist*) his bowl on the earth (land), and it became (broke out)(*Greek: ginomai*)(*aorist*) ugly (*Greek: kakos*) and painful (*Greek: poneros*) sores (boils)(*Greek: helkos*). Sometimes the land calamities are used as instruments of God's judgement (cf. Habakkuk 3:5-6). The first bowl judgement corresponds to the first trumpet judgement: it affected *the earth* (8:7), but instead of burning up a *third* of the vegetation on earth, it smote *all* the non-believers on earth with ugly and painful sores.

In this vision painful sores strike the people on the earth, who have the mark of the beast and worship his image (cf. 16:11; Exodus 9:9-11). This is probably an indication of all kinds of painful sicknesses. At times, God uses vicious and incurable ulcers or any other incurable disease to hurl the wicked into hell (cf. Exodus 9:10; Deuteronomy 28:27-28; Acts 12:23). Throughout the whole period between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming he is again and again executing his final punishment on some wicked and impenitent people. For them, the time of God's patience and grace has passed. However, for believers in Christ the afflictions of the body are *never* bowls of wrath (Romans 8:28). Therefore we read that this plague affected only those who had the mark of the beast.

on the people having (*Greek: echo*)(*present*) the mark (*Greek: charakma*) of the beast (*Greek: therion*) and worshipped (*Greek: proskuneo*)(*present*) his image (*Greek: eikon*). For the people of God (Christians) such a calamity may be the initial warning of God's trumpet judgement, but for the wicked and impenitent the same calamity may be the final execution of God's bowl judgement. The painful sores seem to be judgements affecting non-believing individuals on earth, but the other bowl judgements are communal (collective) judgements. **The present tense emphasises that these people continued in their evil association and evil practices.**

(2) Different views about the first bowl (16:2)

A futurist view. The first bowl judgement is a repetition of the sixth Egyptian plague (festering boils on men and animals) *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period* (Exodus 9:8-12) (Larkin)¹.

The correct explanation. The first bowl judgement smites all non-believers on the whole earth with ugly and painful sores (incurable diseases) *throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.*²

PART 2. Revelation 16:3. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SECOND BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16.3 And the second (*Greek: deuterios*) (angel) poured out (*Greek: ekcheo*)(*aorist*) his bowl on the sea, and it became (it turned into) (*Greek: ginomai*)(*aorist*) blood (*Greek: haima*) like that of a dead man (*Greek: nekros*), and every living (*Greek: zoos*) soul (thing) (*Greek: psuche*) in the sea died (*Greek: apothnesko*)(*aorist*). Sometimes the sea calamities are used as instruments of God's judgement (cf. Exodus 15:1; Psalm 48:7; 78:53; Jonah 1:4,5,11; Habakkuk 3:15). The second bowl judgement corresponds to the second trumpet judgement: it affected *the sea*, but instead of turning a *third* of the sea in to blood and killing a third of the inhabitants of the sea, it turned *the whole* sea into blood and killed all the inhabitants of the sea.

In this vision the sea turned into blood, like that of a dead man, that is, thick, clotted (coagulated) and stinking, causing abhorrence. Every living thing in the sea died. Although the symbol is rooted in Old Testament history, *the sea* is again and again used as an instrument of God's judgement. Throughout the whole New Testament period (from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming) *maritime calamities* are either warnings for all people to repent or the final means of hurling the wicked and impenitent into hell.

(2) Different views about the second bowl (16:3)

A futurist view. The second bowl judgement does not affect all the oceans of the earth, but may affect only the Sea of Galilee or the Mediterranean Sea *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)³.

¹ Larkin, Revelation p. 140

² Hendriksen p. 194

The correct explanation. The second bowl judgement affects all the oceans on earth causing maritime calamities *throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.*⁴ While the Egyptian plagues were *local*, and the trumpet judgements affected a third of the earth, sea, rivers, etc., the bowl judgements will affect *the whole* earth, seas, rivers, just as the sun in Revelation 16:8-9 will affect the whole earth and not just the Mediterranean world.

PART 3. Revelation 16:4-7. THE OUTPOURING OF THE THIRD BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:4 And the third (Greek: *tritos*) (angel) poured out (Greek: *ekcheo*)(aorist) his bowl on the rivers (Greek: *potamos*) and springs (Greek: *pege*) of water, and it became (Greek: *ginomai*) aorist) blood. Sometimes the river and springs calamities are used as instruments of God's judgement (cf. Genesis 6:5,17; 7:11; 1 Kings 17:1; 18:5; Luke 4:25; Habakkuk 3:9-10). The third bowl judgement corresponds to the third trumpet judgement: it affected *the water sources* (8:10-11), but instead of making the drinking water bitter and undrinkable, it turns all drinking water into blood (cf. Ex 7:17-21).

In this vision the people on earth will have no drinking water (cf. Exodus 7:24). Throughout the whole New Testament period (from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming) water calamities are either warnings for all people to repent or the final means of hurling the wicked and impenitent into hell – initially hell on earth and finally hell itself.

16:5 And (then) I heard (aorist) the angel (in charge) of the waters say (present): In Jewish apocalyptic writings, mention is made of angels that have power over certain forces of nature. In the Bible mention is made of angels that have power over the winds (cf. 7:1), an angel who had charge of the fire (cf. 14:18) and an angel in charge of the waters (16:5).

You are (present) just (Greek: *dikaios*) (in these judgements). This angel proclaims that God is just in all his judgements. After these judgements also all believers will proclaim that God is just in all his judgements (15:2-4). God acts according to what justice demands.

you who are (present) and who were (imperfect), the Holy One (Greek: *ho hosios*), because these things you have judged (Greek: *krino*)(aorist). God is “the One who is and who was”, that is, the Unchangeable One. Note, the angel no longer calls God “the One who is to come” (cf. 1:4), because God has finally come unto his final judgement! For the wicked and impenitent, the final coming of the Lord unto final judgement is when God's bowl judgements are poured out on them.

16:6 for they have shed (Greek: *ekcheo*)(aorist) the blood of your saints (Greek: *hagios*) and prophets (Greek: *prophetes*), and you have given (Greek: *didomi*)(perfect or aorist) them blood to drink (Greek: *pino*)(aorist), (as) they are (present) worthy (deserve) (Greek: *axios*). The angel proclaims God as the only Holy One in manner (cf. 15:4), the complete Perfect One, always separated from evil and always dedicated to all his attributes in the manner he acts. God's final judgement for everyone will be absolutely just and fair. He has “so judged” the godless and wicked world. They had persecuted God's saints (cf. 14:12) and prophets (Matthew 5:11-12), those who proclaimed God's Word (cf. 10:11). They had sought to kill them and actually killed them (cf. 6:9-11; 11:7; 17:6). And now “God has given them blood to drink as they deserve”, in order to satisfy their thirst for blood or in order to make their own evil actions abhorrent to themselves!

16:7 And I heard (aorist) the altar (Greek: *thusiassterion*) respond (Greek: *lego*)(present): “Yes, Lord God Almighty (Greek: *pantokrator*), true (Greek: *alethinos*) and just (Greek: *dikaios*) (are) your judgements (Greek: *krisis*). The text represents the altar as responding. The fifth seal revealed that there were souls under the altar. They are the souls of believers who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (6:9-11). They respond with a positive “Yes!” to the angel's praise. God has kept his promise to avenge the blood of the martyrs. Thus also the souls of believers in heaven proclaim: “True and just are your judgements”.

(2) Different views about the third bowl (16:4-7)

A futurist view. The third bowl judgement is a repetition of the first Egyptian plague (blood) *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period* (Exodus 7:19-24) (Larkin)⁵.

The correct explanation. The third bowl judgement affects the water sources on earth *throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.*

PART 4. Revelation 16:8-9. THE OUTPOURING OF THE FOURTH BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:8-9 And the fourth (Greek: *tetartos*)(angel) poured out (Greek: *ekcheo*)(aorist) his bowl on the sun (Greek: *helios*), and it (the sun) was given (Greek: *didomi*)(aorist) (the capability) to scorch (sear, burn)(Greek:

³ Larkin, Revelation p. 142

⁴ Hendriksen p. 194

⁵ Larkin, Revelation p. 142

kaumatizo)(aorist) the people with fire (Greek: pur) and the people were seared (Greek: kaumatizo)(aorist) by the intense (Greek: megos) heat (Greek: kauma). Sometimes the sun calamities are used as instruments of God's judgement (Deuteronomy 28:22-24; Habakkuk 3:11; Malachi 4:1). The fourth bowl judgement corresponds to the fourth trumpet judgement: it affected *the sun* (8:12), but instead of only affecting *the light* of the sun, it affected *the heat* of the sun. In this vision, the sun is the willing instrument in the hands of God. God gives to the sun power to scorch people with fire, that is, to sear them with its intense heat. The heat scorches and roasts them. But it does not destroy them and also does not sanctify them through suffering!

and they cursed (Greek: blasphemeo)(aorist) the name of God, who had (present) authority (control) over these plagues (Greek: plege), but they did not repent (Greek: metanoeo)(aorist) (refused to) (aorist) to give (Greek: didomi)(aorist) glorify (Greek: doxa) to him. Instead of repenting they curse (cf. 13:6; Isaiah 8:21) God who has control over these plagues. The 'name' of God represents God as he has revealed himself in the Bible. The God of the Bible can therefore never be identified with the gods of the other world religions! Although these people are forced onto their knees to confess Christ as the Lord (cf. Philippians 2:9-11), that is, to acknowledge that it is God who has power over these plagues, they do not submit to him or glorify him (cf. Romans 1:18-23).

The bowl judgements of God bring no repentance among people. These people do not acknowledge that God's judgements are just and fair. They also do not confess their sins. They do not and cannot see the benevolent purpose of God's judgements, namely, that God still calls them to repentance (cf. 9:20-21).

The bowl judgements bring no glorification of God (cf. 11:13; 14:7). People refuse to glorify God. They refuse to acknowledge him as God and to acknowledge his majesty, justice, holiness and other divine attributes. The bowl judgements only reveal the utter corruption of their human nature more clearly. This description is true with respect to all the impenitent persecutors of Christ and his Church throughout world history. Throughout the whole period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming, sun calamities are either warnings for all people to repent or the final means of hurling the wicked and impenitent into hell – initially hell on earth and finally hell itself.

(2) Different views about the fourth bowl (16:8-9)

A futurist view. The fourth bowl judgement is the scorching heat of the sun *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period* (Larkin)⁶.

The correct explanation. The fourth bowl judgement is the scorching heat of the sun as judgements *throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time.*

PART 5. Revelation 16:10-11. THE OUTPOURING OF THE FIFTH BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:10 And the fifth (Greek: pemptos) (angel) poured out (Greek: ekcheo)(aorist) his bowl on the throne (Greek: thronos) of the beast (Greek: therion). At times God's wrath is poured out on the throne of the beast. The fifth bowl judgement corresponds to the fifth trumpet judgement: it affected the throne of *the beast* and the Abyss of the beast (9:1-12).

The beast (out of the sea) represents Satan's antichristian governments and its persecutions, especially in the great world empires with their kings that follow one another throughout the New Testament period (from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming). In the present time the throne of the beast (cf. 2:13; 13:20) symbolises the great capital cities of such antichristian governments together with its antichristian rulers and antichristian culture (cf. Nahum 3:1-4). And in the last days the throne of the beast symbolises the final antichristian kingdom with its antichristian government and antichristian culture. At times God's wrath is poured out on antichristian governments together with their wicked capital cities and wicked antichristian cultures. Whenever Assyria, Babylon or Rome falls, the whole universe of the wicked and the impenitent seems to collapse (cf. 17:9-11). Then the evil rulers and their people lose all courage and begin to despair.

and his kingdom (Greek: basileia) became (was plunged into) (Greek: ginomai)(aorist) permanent darkness (Greek: skotoo)(perfect) and they kept on gnawing (chewing)(Greek: masaomai)(imperfect) their tongues (Greek: glossa) in agony (pain)(Greek: ponos). This is more than merely physical darkness as came over Egypt (cf. Exodus 10:21-23; Isaiah 8:22; Revelation 8:12). The antichristian world is plunged into great confusion and gloom, probably by unstoppable military-, economic- and social-wars. The kingdom of antichrist is characterised by darkness of mind and spirit, by ignorance in moral and religious matters and by earthly and demonic enmity against the God of the Bible and his cause (cf. Matthew 4:16; John 1:5; 12:35; Ephesians 4:17-19; 1 John 1:5; 2:11). God executes his judgement on the whole antichristian society and disturbs the kingdom of the world. Think of huge calamities in the physical and social world, in agriculture and industry, in commerce and business, in politics and the military, etc.

This is to be accompanied by many miseries. Their situation is so desperate, fearful and extremely needy that people bite their tongues to pieces. Probably even demonic forces physically and spiritually torment the people of the beast (cf. 9:1-11). Non-Christians often think that it is difficult to be a Christian and live in God's Kingdom. But this vision

⁶ Larkin, Revelation p. 143

clearly reveals that precisely the opposite is true: it is much more difficult to be a non-Christian and live in Satan's kingdom (cf. Colossians 1:13; Isaiah 57:20-21)!

16:11 and they cursed (Greek: *blasphemeo*)(aorist) the God of heaven because of (Greek: *apo*) their pains (Greek: *ponos*) and their sores (boils) (Greek: *helkos*), but they did not (refused to) repent (Greek: *metanoeeo*)(aorist) of their works (deeds). (cf. 16:9; 9:20-21). Also this bowl judgement of God brings no repentance, but instead causes people to sin even more! They do this in response to the pain caused by all the bowl judgements. They know that the God of heaven exists and that he is powerful. They see and experience his reality in nature and in their own hearts (cf. Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15). And yet they deliberately and hatefully dishonour him. Also for antichristian governments, their cities and their antichristian cultures, a time comes when God's patience and grace is irrevocably ended and he executes his final and eventually complete judgement on them. How God does this, is not specified.

Some people think that the sufferings in hell would lead to the conversion and ultimate restoration of the wicked. That is a false hope, because people only responded to God's trumpet judgements (9:20-21) and bowl judgements (16:9-11) by hardening their hearts and by blaspheming more. Their sin and impenitence lasts forever and therefore their punishment lasts forever (Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:47-48; 2 Thessalonians 1:9).

(2) Different views about the fifth bowl (16:10-11)

A futurist view. The fifth bowl judgement is a repetition of the ninth Egyptian plague (darkness) *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period* (Exodus 10:21-23) (Larkin)⁷.

A second view. The fifth bowl judgement plunges the government of *the final antichrist at the end of the New Testament period* in intellectual, moral and spiritual darkness, even demonic darkness (Greijdanus)⁸.

The correct explanation. The fifth bowl judgement is much more than merely physical darkness. It plunges the antichristian governments in the world together with their politics and economics in intellectual, moral and spiritual darkness, even in demonic darkness as judgements *throughout the whole New Testament period and especially in the end-time*.

PART 6. Revelation 16:12-16. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SIXTH BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:12 And the sixth (Greek: *hektos*) (angel) poured out (Greek: *ekcheo*)(aorist) his bowl (Greek: *phiale*) on the great river Euphrates (16:12). At times God's wrath is poured out on the river Euphrates, which sets in motion the battles of Satan, antichrists, the false prophets and the wicked kings of the earth against the Church and in which they are always defeated. In the final battle at the end of the New Testament period they will remain defeated forever. The sixth bowl judgement corresponds to the sixth trumpet judgement: it affects *the river Euphrates*, but instead of resulting in wars between people everywhere in the world (cf. 9:13-21), it culminates in *the final war* between the kingdom of the world and the Church.

The river Euphrates formed the border of the Garden of Eden (paradise) (Genesis 2:14). It also formed the border of the Promised Land (Genesis 15:18; 2 Samuel 8:3). The nations living beyond the river Euphrates were regarded as the enemies of God's people (2 Kings 24:7). Thus, the river Euphrates was regarded as the dividing line between God's people living in the Promised Land and the unknown inimical powers living outside it.

and its waters (Greek: *hudor*) was dried up (Greek: *xeraino*)(aorist) in order to prepare (Greek: *hetoimazo*)(subjunctive, aorist) the way (Greek: *hodos*) for the kings from the rising of the sun (the east)(Greek: *anatoes*). The hindrance that withheld the enemies of God from launching their final attack in the final war had been removed (compare: the binding of Satan)(20:3b).

The kings from the East are a symbolic reference to the enemies of God's people, who throughout the Old Testament period was envisaged as coming from the East via the North (cf. Jeremiah 46:6), that is, from the river Euphrates: the Arameans, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Medes and Persians and finally the Seleucids (Syrians). Their armies are exceedingly great in number (cf. 9:14-16). These armies from the East are symbolically called 'the Gog and Magog' (cf. 19:17-19; 20:7-9; Ezekiel ch. 38-39, especially Ezekiel 38:18-22; 39:4-6,17-20).

During the first century A.D., the people of Rome feared that the Parthians, who lived across the river Euphrates, would invade Rome. There was even a popular belief that Nero would be revived from death and lead these Parthians against Rome. But that would then result in a clash between two non-Christian powers, while Revelation speaks of a clash between the non-Christian powers and Christ's Church. In this vision, the kings from the East living across the river Euphrates are symbolic of *the antichristian world powers that attack and persecute the Church throughout world history and especially at the end of world history*.

⁷ Larkin, Revelation p. 143

⁸ Greijdanus p. 240

16:13 And (then) I saw (*Greek: horao, opsomai, eidon, heoraka*)(*aorist*) out of the mouth (*Greek: stoma*) of the dragon (*Greek: drakon*), out of the mouth of the beast (*Greek: therion*) and out of the mouth of the false prophet (*Greek: pseudoprophetes*) three (*Greek: tria*) evil (unclean)(*Greek: akatharta*) spirits that looked like (*Greek: hos*) frogs (*Greek: batrachos*). They then (*Greek: gar*) are (*present*) spirits of demons (*Greek: daimon*) performing (*Greek: poieo*)(*present*) miraculous signs (*Greek: semaion*). The evil (unclean) spirits looked like frogs (cf. Exodus 8:1-15), to indicate the repulsive, abominable, disgusting nature of their influence. In several religions of that day frogs were regarded as the embodiment of evil powers. Also in Revelation they represent spirits of demons coming out of hell. *Although the beast and the false prophet are people, what they say and do is inspired and controlled by hell.* They can go beyond what ordinary people can do: they again and again perform miraculous signs in order to mislead the people (cf. 13:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:9). Just as an evil spirit enticed king Ahab to make war against the Arameans (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23), so these evil spirits entice the kings of the whole world to gather for the battle on the great day of God.

- The first evil spirit comes out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan). Without any visible means on earth, this evil spirit directly influences the thoughts and deeds of the people of the nations.
- The second evil spirit comes out of the mouth of the beast, that is, *Satan's antichristian governments and persecutions* especially in the great world empires and their kings that follow one another throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. The beast represents all the world empires with their powerful rulers taken together as one monstrous beast (13:2; cf. Daniel 7:2-8,17) and in the very last days, the final antichrist. This evil spirit influences the thoughts and deeds of the people of the nations through every kind of political party and its institutions.
- The third evil spirit comes out of the mouth of the false prophet, that is, *Satan's antichristian knowledge and its different ways of misleading*, especially in the (false) religions, ideologies, philosophies and sciences of the world with their advocates throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. Together, these evil spirits constitute *the satanic, hellish, evil ideas, plans, designs, projects, methods and enterprises concocted and introduced by hell into the sphere of thought and action.*

16:14 that go out (*Greek: ekporeuomai*)(*present*) to the kings of the whole world (*Greek: oikoumene*), to gather (*Greek: sunago*)(*aorist*) them for the battle (*Greek: polemon*) on the great day of God Almighty (*Greek: pantokrator*). Christ reveals the following truth: *Whenever the kings of the earth gather together to oppress, persecute and make war against the Church and believers in Christ, they are inspired by hell itself.* These three evil spirits are the direct causes for misleading humanity on earth (cf. 12:9) and for bringing all people in movement (cf. 3:10) at the final battle (cf. 16:14,16; 19:19; 20:8). Both the Old Testament (cf. Joel 2:11,31; 3:2,12-16; Zechariah 14:2) and the New Testament (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8) speak of this day (the day of the final battle) as the dreadful day of the Lord, because then the Lord God Almighty will reveal all his glory and power and his enemies will dread that day.

16:15 Behold I am coming (*Greek: ercho*)(*present*) like a thief (*Greek: kleptes*)! Blessed (*Greek: makarios*) is he who continually stays awake (*Greek: gregoreo*)(*present*). When these events occur, it will be a fearful time for Christians. Therefore, Christ urges Christians to persevere being faithful. When the final antichrist gathers the kings of the nations for the final battle, then Christ's second coming is very near. Yet, no one can predict that day. Christ will still come like a thief in the night (3:3; cf. Matthew 24:42-44; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10), that is, *suddenly and unexpectedly* for both believers and unbelievers! While the wicked world continues as always, completely unprepared for what is coming (Matthew 24:36-39) and Christians are being persecuted and oppressed, Christ will suddenly and unexpectedly appear and overthrow his enemies (cf. Habakkuk 3:11-13; Matthew 24:29-31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2:8).

The Christians are urged to stay awake continually and to constantly be alert (watchful) (cf. Matthew 24:42). They must keep expecting Christ's second coming and be ready when he comes. The non-Christians do not reckon with Christ's coming at all – instead, they think that they have already gained the complete victory over Christ's Church (cf. 11:7; 13:7) and therefore over Christ himself. They could have known about his coming from the Bible, yet they refused to listen to the Bible.

and continually keep (preserve, protect)(*Greek: tereo*)(*present*) his clothes (*Greek: himation*), so that he may not continue to walk (*Greek: peripateo*)(*subjunctive, present*) naked (*Greek: gumnos*) and they continue to see (*Greek: blepo*)(*subjunctive, present*) his shame (indecency)(*Greek: aschomosune*). This may mean that Christians should be ready for Christ's second coming just as the Israelites were ready for the exodus (cf. Exodus 12:11). But the verb and its tense probably refer to more than just being ready for Christ's second coming. It refers to Christians persevering throughout life to the end.

Non-Christians still have their old clothes on (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:5-9). They do not possess the righteousness of Christ, still live godless and wicked lives and condone and promote evil. But Christians have put on their new clothes (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10-17). They have clothed themselves with Christ and his righteousness (Romans 13:14; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:24).

Now genuine Christians must protect and preserve their most precious treasure. They must keep their righteousness and holiness unspotted. And they will protect and preserve their righteousness in Christ. They will not allow the

materialistic, godless and wicked world to drag them down into worthless clothes and possessions (cf. 3:17-18). They have washed their clothes in the blood of Christ (7:14), all their sins have been forgiven and they are righteous for ever. Christians may be convinced (absolutely sure) that Christ is able to guard what they have entrusted to him, namely, themselves and their complete salvation (2 Timothy 1:12; cf. Philippians 1:6). Genuine Christians must persevere and will persevere!

However, people who call themselves 'Christians', but eventually fall back into unholy and unrighteous living, that is, they do not persevere in Christ, cannot be sure of being born-again and of belonging to Christ. At the final judgement they will be exposed, their masks and camouflage will be ripped off and it will become clear what they always in essence have been. They have always been naked. They had never clothed themselves with Christ. This verse does not speak about genuine Christians losing their reward (1 Corinthians 3:12-15), but about nominal Christians remaining lost (Mt 22:9-13). That is why the apostle Paul urges the people in the congregation of Corinth: "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realise that Christ Jesus is in you – unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5)"

16:16 And (then) they gathered (Greek: sunago)(aorist) them (i.e. the kings) together to the place (Greek: topos) that in Hebrew (Greek: hebraisti) is called (Greek: kaleo)(present) Armageddon.

The word 'Har-Megiddo' literally means 'the mountain or hill country of Megiddo'. However this is not a literal place, because there is no mountain in the vicinity of Megiddo! The word 'Mount Megiddo' is a symbol of the place where the evil world powers will gather together, just as 'Mount Zion' (cf. 14:1) is a symbol of the place where the people of God will gather together.

Megiddo was the place where Israel did not drive away the Canaanites (cf. Judges 1:27). It is the place of calamity and disaster, where their beloved king Josiah was defeated by king Neco of Egypt (2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-25; Zechariah 12:11). But it also became *a symbol of the place of battle and God's victory*. This is based on the place where Barak and Deborah routed the oppressor of Israel (Judges 5:19-20). The Canaanite, king Jabin, cruelly oppressed Israel for twenty years (Judges 4:3) and his spoilers ravaged the fields and plundered the crops of the Israelites. These terrorists were so numerous that the Israelites went into hiding and were even afraid to appear on the roads (Judges 5:6-7). They were utterly helpless to drive these oppressors out, because the Canaanites possessed nine hundred iron chariots (Judg 4:3), while the Israelites did not even possess one spear or shield (Judges 5:8). The situation for God's people was utterly desperate. The prophetess Deborah believed that God could defeat these oppressors (Judges 4:14). The battle was fought at Megiddo! It was there that God defeated Israel's enemies (Judges 5:19-20).

Thus Megiddo became the symbol of every battle in which, when the need is greatest and believers are oppressed, God suddenly reveals his power in the interest of his distressed people and defeats the enemy. It became the symbol of the crushing defeat of God's enemies as in Judges 4:13-15. This is a New Testament prophecy concerning the crushing defeat of the godless and wicked world powers that threaten to destroy Christ's Church throughout world history and finally in the final battle at Christ's second coming (cf. 16:14,16; 19: 19; 20:8). The final battle coincides with the short period of oppression at the end of world history (cf. Matthew 24:21-28; Revelation 11:7-11). When the world under the leadership of Satan, the beast and the false prophet is gathered against the Church for *the* final battle and the need is greatest; when God's people, oppressed on every side, cry for help; then suddenly, dramatically Christ will appear to deliver his people. That final tribulation and that appearance of Christ on the clouds of glory to deliver his people is called Armageddon. For this reason Armageddon is the sixth bowl. The seventh bowl is the final judgement day.

(2) Different views about the sixth bowl (16:12-16).

A futurist view. The sixth bowl judgement is the literal drying up of the river Euphrates *at the end of the second half of the future tribulation period*, which serves three purposes:

- It will permit the remnant of Israel to return from Assyria (cf. Isaiah 11:15-16).
- It will enable the kings of the East (and the West) and their armies to cross over to assemble for the battle of Armageddon. The three spirits of demons gather the nations to the battle of Armageddon in order to crush the effort to establish the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth.
- It will allow the nations of the East to gather for the judgement of the nations, in which they will be judged for how they treated the Jews (Matthew 25:31-46) (Larkin)⁹.

A second view. The sixth bowl judgement represents the final battle of Armageddon *at the end of world history*, which will be a battle between two groups of nations that exist today. Although the evil spirits of Satan, the beast and the false prophet spur these nations on to a self-destructive war, it happens on the Day of the Lord and thus proves that God is in control of events on earth (Groenewald)¹⁰. It is the battle of Gog and Magog (20:8; cf. Ezek ch.38 and 39) and represents the final battle between the kings of the East against the West and Western Christianity (Greijdanus)¹¹. Others say it is the battle of Russia and the Muslim nations against the Anglo-Saxon world. Or Russia, Italy, Japan against England, France and USA. Or Germany, Italy, Japan against France, England and USA.

⁹ Larkin, Revelation p. 144-145

¹⁰ Groenewald p.165-166

¹¹ Greijdanus p. 240

Remarks. This is pure speculation based on contemporary history!

A third view. The sixth bowl judgement represents the battle of Armageddon, which is viewed as a struggle between paganism and the Gospel of Christ *throughout the whole New Testament period*. He interprets the sword proceeding from Christ's mouth (cf. 2:16) to mean the Gospel of *salvation* (dr. A Pieters)¹².

Remarks. However with such a sword Christ will strike down the nations that oppose him (19:15) and kill his enemies in the final battle (19:21). Thus, the double-edged sword symbolises *judgement and destruction* usually executed in war rather than conversion and salvation.

The correct explanation. The sixth bowl of judgement represents the evil plots, methods and battles of Satan, the antichrists, the false prophets and the wicked kings of the earth against God's people (the Church) *throughout the whole New Testament period* that culminate in their final and absolute destruction at the final battle of Armageddon *at Christ's second coming*.

PART 7. Revelation 16:17-21. THE OUTPOURING OF THE SEVENTH BOWL.

(1) Explanation of symbols.

16:17 And the seventh (Greek: hebdomos) (angel) poured out (Greek: ekcheo)(aorist) his bowl (Greek: phiale) into the air (Greek: aer) and out of the temple (Greek: vaos) came (Greek: exerchomai eleusomai, elthon, elelutha))(aorist) a loud voice (Greek: phone) from the throne (Greek: thronos), saying (present), 'It is done!' (Greek: ginomai, genesomai, egenomen, gegona)(perfect). The very last, very final and thereby also complete execution of God's judgement will take place on the final judgement day. The seventh bowl judgement corresponds to the seventh trumpet judgement: it symbolises *Christ's second coming*, the collapse of the kingdom of the world, the destruction of this present earth, the final judgement day and the inauguration of the eternal kingdom (cf. 11:15,18; 16:17-21).

The very final fall of Babylon (cf. ch. 18) will be the final crushing blow for the people bearing the mark of the beast. Everything up to now that has brought them profit and pleasure collapses forever. When the air is struck, all life on earth must cease. With the outpouring of this bowl judgement, *the end of this present created earth and the end of history in the world has arrived*.

The loud voice from the throne is of God. God says: "It is done, it has happened, it has taken place".

- At his first coming, on the cross, Jesus Christ said: "It is finished!" (Greek: tetelestai > teleo, perfect, passive) (John 19:30). Jesus Christ had completed forever everything that was needed for *salvation*!
- At Christ's second coming God will say: "It is done!" (Greek: gegonen > ginomai, perfect, active) (16:17). Then Jesus Christ will have completed forever everything that will be needed for *the final judgement!* *Just as Christ with one word completed his work of salvation, so God with one word will complete his work of judgement!* The final and complete exposure of God's wrath, so long restrained, has come. The final judgement day has arrived. Everything that had to happen within world history has gone into fulfilment. God's eternal plan with regard to this present world has been accomplished. The eternal state is about to begin.

16:18 And (then) there came (Greek: ginomai)(aorist) flashes of lightning (Greek: astrape), rumblings (Greek: phone), peals of thunder (Greek: bronte), and a severe (Greek: megos) earthquake (Greek: seismos) happened (Greek: ginomai)(aorist), such a kind (Greek: hoios) has not occurred (Greek: ginomai)(aorist) since (Greek: aph hou) man has been (aorist) on earth, so huge (tremendous)(Greek: telikoutos) (was) the quake, so (Greek: houto) great. These are the mighty signs of the majestic appearance (cf. 4:5) of the Lord Jesus Christ at his second coming (cf. 6:12; 8:5; 11:13,19; Matthew 24:27).

The present physical universe (sun, moon and stars) and the present physical earth will collapse. The final great earthquake that will remove every mountain and every island from its place announces the great day of the wrath of God and the Lamb (6:12-17). The whole earth collapses as a tall building in a heap of rubble.

- The earthquake at Christ's first coming broke open graves and *temporarily* raised the physically dead (Mt 27:51-52).
- But the earthquake at Christ's second coming will break open the graves forever and *permanently* raise the physically dead (cf. 16:18; 20:11-13; cf. John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:13).

16:19 And the great city (Greek: polis) (Babylon) happened (split)(Greek: ginomai)(aorist) into three (Greek: trios) parts (Greek: meros), and the cities of the nations (Greek: ethne) collapsed (Greek: pipto, epesan)(aorist). Babylon represents *Satan's antichristian world and its seductions*, especially in industry and commerce, business and finance, education and justice, luxuries and pleasures, art and sports, etc. in short, it represents *Satan's antichristian culture* connected to the world empires throughout the period from Christ's first coming to Christ's second coming. It represents the centre of the antichristian kingdom throughout all ages. This great city collapses in three parts, an expression that points to walls collapsing in every direction, thereby completely destroying the city. Likewise, all the cities of the nations represent such national antichristian cultures and they too collapse. This is

¹² Dr A. Pieters

a picture of the total collapse of this present antichristian world together with its antichristian culture and seductions. It represents the final judgement day and destruction of this present world.

The book of Revelation does not describe the history of the first century A.D. in the form of quasi-prophecy, because these events have never happened to the great historic city of Rome. Otherwise, the book of Revelation would never have had any meaning to later Christians.

and Babylon the Great came into remembrance (Greek: mimneskomai)(aorist) before (Greek: enopion) God to give (Greek: didomi)(aorist) her the cup (Greek: poterion) of wine (Greek: oinos) of the fury (Greek: thumos) of his wrath (Greek: orge). God has not forgotten the sins of Babylon. God remembered her, that is, God brought her to trial and judgement for all her misdeeds And God executed her fully deserved punishment by making her drink the cup filled with the fury of God's wrath (cf. 14:10; 19:15). God's fury combined with God's wrath represents the most dreadful punishment. God's anger, so long pent up, now fully explodes. How God judges Babylon is expounded in the next vision (ch 18).

16:20 Every island (Greek: nesos) fled away (Greek: pheugo, ephugen)(aorist) and the mountains (Greek: oros) were not found (Greek: heurisko)(aorist, passive) (cf. 6:14). Isaiah's prophecy concerning the levelling of valleys and mountains in order to prepare the way of the Lord (Isa 40:3-5) is now at the end time executed in apocalyptic proportions (cf. Zechariah 14:1-5). The whole present earth collapsed and changed her appearance. The liberation of this present creation from its bondage to decay (Romans 8:21) had arrived. The day of the Lord, which comes like a thief and in which the heavens will disappear with a roar and the elements will be destroyed by fire and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare (2 Peter 3:10), had arrived. The time for God to restore everything (Acts 3:21) had finally arrived.

16:21 and huge (Greek: megalos) hailstones (Greek: chalaza) as (Greek: hos) talents (Greek: talantiaos)(in size) (about a hundred pounds each) fell down (Greek: katabaino)(present) from the sky upon men. The hailstorm is another picture of the dreadful final judgement day (8:7; 11:19; Exodus 9:22-26; Joshua 10:11; Isaiah 28:17; 32:19; Ezekiel 13:11,13). Hailstones of about fifty kilogram's each will smash everything to bits and pieces. That is exactly God's intention: nothing of this godless and wicked world with its godless and wicked people must remain (21: 27; Matthew 13:41-42). From the sky or out of heaven indicates that this final judgement comes from God. It is not merely a natural calamity, but nothing less than God's final judgement that falls upon the people that refused to repent and turn to the God of the Bible.

And the people cursed (Greek: blasphemo)(aorist) God on account of (Greek: ek) the plague (Greek: plege) of hail, because (Greek: hoti) the plague was (present) extreme (Greek: sphodra). The plague of hail is symbolical for the final judgement day. Even at the last moment of this present world history the godless and wicked people refused to repent, but instead cursed God (cf. 16:9,11). 'To curse God' is to label him as the great evil, an abominable and damnable object. Note Christ's warning about blasphemy of God (cf. Matthew 12:24,32; Mark 3:29). In spite of seeing and hearing everything on the last day, these godless and wicked people will still harden their hearts and remain impenitent! They will see the glorious Christ at his second coming (1:7). They will see the resurrection of all the dead (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Corinthians 15:22-24) and the glorious transformation of the remaining living Christians (1 Cor 15:53). They will see the Christians caught up to welcome Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; Matthew 24:40-41) and later on that same day see themselves gathered by angels to face the final and complete judgement of Christ (20:11-15). And they will hear Christ's irrevocable final and complete condemnation of them on the final judgement day (Matthew 25:31-46). In spite of all they see and hear these godless and wicked people will still harden their hearts and remain impenitent! Even in the place of eternal doom (hell) where they remain lost forever there will be no brokenness of heart. They will despise the consequences of their sin (the physical, spiritual and moral suffering) because it is so despicable, but they will not despise their sin as sin against God! They will not exchange their hatred against God for love (cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5). Their hearts will continue to desire sin, even when they can no longer carry it out.

(2) Different views about the seventh bowl (17-21).

A futurist view. The seventh bowl judgement symbolises *the end of the future tribulation period*. This is followed by the 1000 year millennial kingdom of Christ on this present earth (Larkin)¹³.

The correct explanation. The seventh bowl judgement symbolises the signs at *the end of world history at Christ's second coming*, the collapse of the kingdom of the world, the destruction of this present earth and the final judgement day (Greijdanus, Hendriksen)¹⁴.

(3) What happens to Christians and non-Christians at the second coming of Christ.

The teaching in the Gospel of Matthew.

- The Christians will be gathered together as wheat into Christ's barn, a symbol of God's kingdom, while the non-Christians will be consumed as chaff with unquenchable fire, a symbol of hell (Matthew 3:12).

¹³ Larkin, Revelation p.146-147

¹⁴ Greijdanus p. 242-244; Hendriksen p. 198

- The Christians and non-Christians will grow together until the harvest (Matthew 13:30,41-43. cf. Revelation 14:15). At his second coming, Christ will tell the harvesters (the angels) to first collect (gather, pick) the weeds and tie them into bundles to be burned and then to gather together the wheat and bring it into his barn (Matthew 13:30). Thus, the angels will weed out (collect, gather, pick out) of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil and throw them into the fiery furnace, while the righteous will shine in the kingdom of God (Matthew 13:41-43).
- The Christians (the elect) will be gathered together from the four winds. The Christians will be taken (along with the angels), while the non-Christians will be left (abandoned, given up, sent away) (Matthew 24:31,39-41; cf. Luke 17:30-35).

These passages in Matthew show that these events take place together on the day of the harvest.

The teaching in the Letters of Paul.

- At the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52; cf. Matthew 24:31) the dead will be raised imperishable and the remaining living Christians will be changed. Then death will be swallowed up in victory (cf. 20:12-14; 1 Corinthians 15:50-54).
- At the second coming of the Lord the Lord himself will come down from heaven and together with him the spirits of those who had fallen asleep (died) in Christ. He will come with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel and with the trumpet call of God (thus, very visible and very audible!) The bodies of the dead in Christ will rise first, then the bodies and spirits of the remaining living Christians will be changed (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 John 3:1-3) and will be caught up together with these resurrected saints in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17) and to marvel at him and glorify him (2 Thessalonians 1:10). The word 'to snatch up' means: to seize up, to carry off by force, to swoop up by a force that cannot be resisted (cf. 12:5). And the word 'to meet' had a technical meaning in the Hellenistic world in relation to the visits of dignitaries to cities where the visitor would be formally met by the citizens, or a deputation of them, who had gone out from the city for this purpose and would then be ceremonially escorted back into the city (Acts 28:15). After the second coming of Christ and the last judgement day in the air, Jesus Christ will return together with all Christians (i.e. the new Jerusalem) to the new earth (21:1-2,9-10).
- In 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 nothing is said about what happens to the non-Christians at Christ's second coming. Likewise in Revelation 16:17-21 nothing is said about what happens to the Christians at Christ's second coming. After the second coming of Christ and the last judgement day in the air; Christ returns with all Christians (the New Jerusalem) to the new earth. (21:1-2,9-10).