

Chapter 7

The Vision of The Seven Bowls

(Rev. 15:1 - 16:21)

The Song of Moses and The Seven Angels With The Seven Plagues

15:1 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues - last, because with them God's wrath is completed.

This first verse strikes the keynote of the entire chapter. The final destruction of the world is imminent. Seven angels stand prepared to pour out the seven last plagues. They are called the last, because in them God's wrath comes to completion. The plagues of the seven trumpets in chapter 8 were warning judgments of God; but the plagues of the bowls are final, calling off all opportunities for repentance.

15:2-4 And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God and sang the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

In this vision, John beheld "what looked like a sea of glass." In all likelihood, this was the same crystal sea which he had seen at the beginning of his vision (Rev. 4:6). The sea was mixed with fire, a symbol of the presence and majesty of God.

Standing beside the sea of glass, John saw "those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name." It appears quite evident that the beast here spoken of must be the beast from the sea, - the antichristian civil government. In chapter 13, we were told that the beast was able to overcome the saints by persecuting them and by killing them. But although the Christians seemed to be defeated by the antichristian powers, yet in this vision of John, the Christians definitely are seen as the victors. They had conquered the beast by their refusal to compromise the truth, by their refusal to worship the antichristian civil government, by their refusal to obey men instead of God, and by their refusal to be deceived by the lamb-like speech and actions of the false prophet. Their martyrdom, which at first seemed to spell victory for the beast and defeat for the saints, in reality turned out to be a decisive defeat of the beast and a glorious victory for the saints.

Now the victorious saints are seen standing beside the glassy sea, - the sea smooth as glass, a symbol of the undisturbed calm and peace of heaven. In their hands are harps, gifts of God, with which they accompany their songs of joy to Him who has redeemed them and has brought them safely through trials and tribulations to the eternal bliss and glory of heaven.

The song is described as “the song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb.” As Moses, the servant of God, delivered the Children of Israel from their bondage to Pharaoh and, under God’s direction and guidance, led them safely and miraculously through the Red Sea, so Jesus, the Lamb of God, is pictured as having delivered His saints from bondage to Satan and his allies and as having brought them safely to the shores of eternity. And as Moses and the Children of Israel stood on the shores of the Red Sea and sang their song of triumph, so the redeemed sing a song of praise to Him who went before them into death and who, through death, opened for them the gates to the Promised Land, the heavenly Jerusalem. The Old Testament deliverance from the Egyptians foreshadowed the New Testament deliverance from the beast, his image and his number. In Heb. 3:5-6, we read: “Moses was faithful as a servant in all God’s house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God’s house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and to the hope of which we boast.”

It is significant to note that in this song of triumph, the saints make no mention of their own deeds or of their own sufferings. Their only thought is to give glory to God and the Lamb. “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.” In the face of the terrible power of Satan and the two beasts, the saints of God, by their own power and might, could never have emerged victorious. The victory of God’s people must be attributed solely to God’s great and marvelous deeds.

“Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.” Although in times of trial and persecution it may have appeared to God’s people as if God had forgotten them and that His Word and promises were unreliable, yet as these saints now stood beside the glassy sea, they could see how all the ways of the Lord indeed were “just and true.” True to His promise, God had seen to it that the gates of hell did not prevail against His Church: and He had seen to it also that just punishment was meted out to the wicked and the ungodly.

“Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy.” To be sure, all men will fear the Lord. As far as the enemies of God are concerned, they will be frightened, - and rightly so; for theirs will be the fear of an awakened and terrified conscience. In the case of the children of God, who have the assurance of sins forgiven and whose consciences accordingly no longer are terrified, they will fear God with the awe and respect of a believing and trusting heart. Thus God’s name will be glorified. It will be as St. Paul wrote: “that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

“All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” Universal recognition of God, - whether rendered willingly or unwillingly, - is taught in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. In addition to the New Testament passage which we have just quoted (Phil. 2:10-11), we call your attention to Psalm 86:9-10 and Isaiah 45:23-24. In Psalm 86, David exclaims: “All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God.” And in Isaiah 45, we read these inspired words: “Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are

righteousness and strength.’ All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame.” Yes, indeed; Scripture truly teaches that in the end the entire universe will have to acknowledge that all of God’s acts and verdicts have been righteous. “Just and true are your ways, King of the ages.”

15:5 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened.

The tabernacle of the Testimony was the dwelling place of God during the time that Israel wandered in the wilderness. After Moses had completed the task of setting up the tabernacle, we are told in the closing words of the Book of Exodus: “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out - until the day it lifted. So the cloud of the Lord was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels” (Ex. 40:34-28). What a sight and what an experience this must have been for Moses and the Children of Israel!

And what an awe-inspiring sight it must have been for John when he saw in heaven the *open* temple, which not only indicated the presence of God, but also signified that He, the holy and almighty God, was now ready to act through His messengers.

15:6-7 Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

“The seven angels with the seven plagues” are the same angels that are mentioned in the first verse of this chapter. They are described as holding the seven plagues, but we are not told that they brought these seven plagues out of the temple, They were dressed in clean, shining linen, symbolizing their holiness and purity. Around their chests they wore golden sashes, which perhaps symbolized royal and priestly functions, As these seven angels emerged from the temple, each of them received from one of the four living creatures a golden bowl. These seven bowls, which were “filled with the wrath of God,” represent the complete and final punishments which will be poured out on all the enemies of the eternal and ever-living God.

One commentator has made the observation that the seven seals which were open *revealed* the judgments of God; the seven trumpets *announced* the judgments of God: and now the seven bowls *pour out* the long-restrained anger of God.

15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

After the seven angels had come out of the temple to receive from the living creature the seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, “the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power.” The “glory of the Lord” was the bright light in which God often made His presence known. Thus, for example, when the birth of the Savior was to be announced to the shepherds on Bethlehem’s plains, we read: “An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and *the glory of the Lord shone around them*, and they were terrified” (Luke 2:9).

Or think of how the Lord revealed His presence when the Children of Israel were led out of Egypt. In Exodus 13:21, we read: “By day the Lord went ahead of them in a *pillar of cloud* to guide them on their way and by night in a *pillar of fire* to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.”

In conjunction with verse 5 of this chapter, we quoted the words from Exodus 40:34-38. Here we would just call your attention once again to these particular words: “Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and *the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because *the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (Ex. 40:34-35).

Therefore, it was not something unusual or unheard of that, in this vision, John saw the temple filled with smoke from the glory and power of God.

Amazing and somewhat perplexing, however, is the statement that “no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.” We do know that it was a duty of the priests to enter the temple and make intercession for the people. Therefore, the fact that no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues had been completed seems to imply the end of all intercession. In other words, the period of grace has come to an end; there is no more time or opportunity for repentance; nothing is left for men now except “the seven last plagues - last, because with them God’s wrath is completed” (15:1).

The Seven Bowls of God’s Wrath

*16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels,
“Go, pour out the seven bowls of God’s wrath on the earth,”*

The vision of the seven bowls, like the vision of the seven seals and the vision of the seven trumpets, covers the entire New Testament dispensation until Judgment Day.

As we read and study this vision of the seven bowls, we cannot escape the truth that it is remarkably similar to the vision of the seven trumpets. Therefore, we are inclined to conclude that both visions deal with the same issue, namely, the false religious teachings that are designed to lead immortal souls into the open jaws of hell and perdition.

But why are there two visions to proclaim the same prophetic message? It has been pointed out that in prophetic dreams and visions, this is by no means unusual. As a young man,

Joseph had two very similar dreams, but both conveyed the same message; both pointed to Joseph's elevation to a position of rulership in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh likewise had two similar dreams; but both had the same message, namely, that seven years of plenty would be followed by seven years of famine. So here in Revelation, it is very likely that the two visions of John, which in many ways are very similar, are bringing us the one and the same message.

Accordingly, in the seven last plagues we have presented to us, in a symbolical manner, the tremendous amount of false doctrines, - vicious, soul-destroying doctrines and philosophies, - that will flood the earth in these closing days of the world's history. We are reminded of the prophetic words of the Apostle Paul: "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

The vision begins with a loud voice from the temple, giving the command to the seven angels: "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth." And so, we now have in this vision a portrayal of God's judgment as it is poured out upon an unbelieving, impenitent and corrupt world,

16:2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

When the first angel poured out his bowl on the land, there was an outbreak of ugly and painful sores. That this cannot be a reference to any physical plague is evident from the fact that this plague did not affect or afflict the true believers, but affected only "the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image."

When people deliberately depart from the worship of the true God, or when they wilfully corrupt God's Word by false doctrine and teaching, they automatically become guilty of worshipping false gods. Thus they become people who have the mark of the beast and worship his image. In fact, because of their wilful rejection of the truth, God often punishes them by permitting them to become steeped in false doctrine. This very fact is stressed emphatically by the Apostle Paul when he writes: "They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness" (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

As physical ulcers usually are ugly and painful, so, spiritually speaking, people who are involved in all kinds of false teachings and beliefs endure a great deal of distress and inward pain. They may refuse to admit it, but they have tormenting consciences and, in reality, can experience no rest for their souls. Their false beliefs and idolatrous worship certainly resemble ugly and painful sores, depriving them of inward peace of heart and mind, and filling them with a spiritual poison that ultimately will prove fatal.

16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.

When the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, the water “turned into blood like that of a dead man,” - coagulated blood that soon decays and stinks.

All antichristian teachings and false beliefs not only erupt in ugly and painful sores, but they also envelop everything with the repulsive stench of rotting blood. Just as God’s Word in its truth and purity leads to spiritual and eternal life, so does corrupt and false teaching result in spiritual and eternal death. And is not the odor of death very pronounced in the antichristian world of today?

This second bowl, which turned the sea into blood, is very similar to the plague which accompanied the second trumpet. However, there is this difference: the second trumpet judgment killed only one-third of the sea creatures; here all the sea creatures perish. This indicates that God’s patience has come to an end. By its stubborn and wilful adherence to false doctrine, the unbelieving world is deprived of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the only Gospel that can bring light and life to the souls of men.

16:4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

Going back to chapter 8, we recall that when the third trumpet sounded, a star called Wormwood fell into the rivers and springs and made one-third of the waters bitter and poisonous, causing many people to die. Here, as the third angel pours out his bowl, *all* the rivers and springs turn into blood.

Rivers and springs represent drinkable water. Without it, people die. The Gospel of Jesus and His saving love is the water of life, which alone can quench forever man’s spiritual thirst. But when men deliberately refuse the pure Gospel and persist in their false doctrines and satanic teachings, they pollute the life-giving rivers and springs of salvation to the extent that they no longer refresh the souls of men. Now, as a result of God’s Judgment, these enemies of the Church no longer have the pure and refreshing water of the Gospel. Instead they have blood to drink. How utterly repulsive! Surely, this ought to cause us to appreciate more than ever the inviting words of Jesus: “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him” (John 7:37-38).

16:5-7 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say; “You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve. ”And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments. ”

The “angel in charge of the waters” evidently is the third angel, - the angel who had just poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water. John heard this angel addressing God as

“you who are and who were, the Holy One.” Then the angel declares that this eternal and holy God is absolutely righteous and just in the sentence of punishment which He has pronounced upon the enemies and persecutors of the Church. It is impossible that He should ever judge unjustly. He is perfect in His judgment. Because these enemies not only had rejected and blasphemed the Gospel of Christ, but also had shed the blood of the saints and the prophets and had caused so many followers of the Lamb to suffer martyrdom, they now were given blood to drink. Thus “punishment is tailored to fit the crime.”

Not only does the angel of the waters proclaim God’s judgment to be just, but the altar also agrees that God is true and just in sending this plague. The altar very likely is the incense altar and represents the prayers of the saints, as well as the cries of the martyrs, that God would punish those who had darkened the Gospel light and had tried to suppress the progress of the Gospel by persecuting and killing the children of God.

With the pouring out of the bowls of wrath, those prayers of the saints and martyrs are answered, showing once again that God does not forget and that His judgments, severe as they may be, nevertheless are true and just. The followers of the beast and his image not only are enraged by the pure Gospel message, but they also are confirmed in their self-chosen destruction. God, in His mercy, preserve us from all antichristian heresies!

16:8-9 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.

The sun is the source of light, heat and life. We often speak of the cheering, life-giving rays of the sun. As such, the sun is symbolic of the Word of God, which is the source of spiritual light and life. Nevertheless, as a punishment to the unbelieving and the ungodly, the fourth angel pours out the bowl of God’s wrath on the sun; and we are told that “the sun was given power to scorch people with fire” and that the ungodly “were seared by the intense heat.”

That is precisely what happens when the plague of false doctrine is poured out on this source of spiritual light and life. In the case of the ungodly, the light of God’s Word actually becomes the cause of intense spiritual suffering, scorching them with fire and causing them to be seared by the intense heat. They have no peace, no comfort, no hope. Having rejected the life-giving grace of God, they have nothing to look forward to except the wrath of God and eternal punishment. The very Word of God which they corrupted by their false philosophies and religions is the Word that will sentence them to hell.

Nevertheless, the people who were pained and scorched by this plague entertained no thought whatsoever of repenting and acknowledging the glory of God. Instead, they cursed and blasphemed the name of God, – that same God who had control of all these plagues, four of which had already struck them and the others which were still to come.

We note that every new plague seems to be more severe and more deadly than the

preceding one.

16:10-11 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.

The fifth bowl is directed at the throne of the beast. The beast here spoken of is the beast from the sea, - a symbol of civil government in its antichristian aspect. You will recall that in Rev. 13:2 we were informed that the dragon, namely, Satan, “gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority,” thereby making it the antichristian power that it is. The throne of the dragon and the throne of the beast are the same; and this hellish throne is in opposition to God’s throne.

Here, now, the throne of the beast is struck by the wrath of God, which is poured out on it from the fifth bowl; and the antichristian civil government, already the personification of darkness, is plunged into ever deeper darkness, - the darkness of God’s inescapable judgment.

So that there may be no misunderstanding or unjust criticism, let it be said that Christians truly believe that civil government has been instituted by God for the good of men. Accordingly, as loyal and patriotic citizens, Christians respect their government, they pray for their government, and they stand ready to serve their government. However, when civil government becomes the agent of Satan, when civil government permits itself to be influenced and controlled by false and satanic delusions, when civil government promotes and defends measures and doctrines and practices that definitely are contrary to the Word of God, then, instead of being a blessing and a source of good to men, it becomes a curse and a source of my suffering. It is then that Christians are compelled to say: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). To obey the antichristian demands; policies of civil government rather than God and His Word is tantamount to “worshiping the beast” and wearing “the mark of the beast.”

As God pours out His righteous wrath and punishment upon antichrist civil government, this punishment becomes so severe and painful that it causes those who constitute this kingdom of the beast to “gnaw their tongues in agony” and to rage in blasphemy against the God of heaven because the heavenly Power has interfered with the powers of hell and has plunged the beast and his followers into unspeakable darkness. But even now, instead of repenting, they blame God for their ulcerous sores and intense suffering; and they do not cease to rage against the God of heaven for bringing them to justice. Thus, for them the time of grace has expired and the final bowls must be poured out.

16:12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.

Going back to the vision of the seven trumpets, you will recall that after the sixth trumpet had sounded, a great army was seen coming from the region of the Euphrates River, That army killed a third of mankind. Here, in the vision of the bowls, the sixth angel pours out the bowl of

God's wrath on the river Euphrates; and the river is dried up, preparing a way for the kings from the east. All of this symbolizes the start of the great gathering of all antichristian forces for a final attack, a "show-down" battle against Christ and His Church. Apparently, we are getting close to that time now. Notice that in His anger, God Himself provides a road for these "kings from the east." For the antichristian forces, this dried-up river, as it were, is an invitation to eternal defeat and disaster. God's patience is fast coming to an end. He will deal with His enemies swiftly and justly.

16:13-14 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

John relates that he saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs. (By the way, in Lev. 11:10, frogs are listed as unclean animals). These three evil spirits or demons, came out of the mouth of the dragon (Satan), out of the mouth of the beast from the sea (antichristian civil government) and out of the mouth of the false prophet (the Antichrist). These three form a union of iniquity and often are called the unholy trinity.

Being evil spirits, they share Satan's power, especially the power to perform certain miracles. This need not surprise us. Jesus Himself foretold this when He said: "False Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect - if that were possible" (Matt. 24:24).

By means of these miraculous signs, the "unholy three" seek to enlist the kings and mighty ones of the entire world for the last great and decisive battle, which here is called "the battle on the great day of God Almighty," - the Day of Judgment, - on which day the Lord Himself will bring to nought this last great onslaught of His enemies. Indeed, when the black clouds of deception and the storms of hell-born heresies become so manifold and violent that they become a serious threat even to the elect, behold, the Lord Himself will appear on the scene to terminate, once and for all, the deceptive, soul-destroying works of Satan and his cohorts. This truth of Christ's second and sudden coming is emphasized further in the verse that follows.

16:15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

There can be no doubt that the speaker of these words is Christ Himself. Because the end of all things will occur so suddenly, Jesus here inserts for us a word of warning and encouragement. "Behold," says He, "I come like a thief!" Immediately we are reminded of some words which Jesus spoke during the days of His public ministry, when He said to His disciples: "But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt.

24:43-44). And in 1 Thess. 5:2 we read: “For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.”

Then, in this third beatitude in Revelation, the Savior says: “Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him.” Here, too, we think of similar exhortations given by Jesus. For example, in Matt. 24:42 He says: “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” And in 1 Thess. 5:6 we are told: “So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled.”

“Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.” We have here some beautiful symbolism, frequently used in Christian messages and especially in Christian hymns. We Christians are clothed, not in the disgraceful and filthy garments of our own righteousness, but in garments that have been cleansed in the blood of Christ; and clothed in these garments, the shame of our own nakedness, our disgraceful sin, will not be seen when we shall stand before Him on that great day of God Almighty.

God grant that we may be alert at all times, always looking for the return of our Lord; and soon will come the day when we will join all the redeemed in singing eternal hymns of praise and glory to our great God and King.

16:16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

The three demonic spirits that came forth from the mouths of the dragon and the two beasts were successful in gathering the kings together to a place called Armageddon.

Most Biblical scholars are of the opinion that “Armageddon” comes from two Hebrew words, one meaning “mountain” and the other “Megiddo.” Megiddo was a city in the plain of Esdraelon. Near Megiddo was Mount Carmel, It may be of some significance that on this mount, Elijah, the prophet of God, met the four hundred prophets of the idol Baal and utterly defeated and destroyed them. In that battle, the truth of God triumphed over the falsehood of Satan. So now, all the forces of evil are gathered for a last, desperate battle against Christ. Basically, it is the final great battle between the truth of God and the deception of Satan. Thus Armageddon may well symbolize the final and complete overthrow of evil by God.

16:17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, “It is done!”

With the seventh bowl, we come to the climax of the series of judgments. This is not a description of conditions right before the end of the world. That was given in the preceding bowls. This is the very end, - the final judgment. As the seventh angel pours out his bowl into the air, thereby signifying the end of life on earth, the loud voice of God is heard from the temple, saying, “It is done!” In other words, it is all over, history has run its course, the judgments are now completed; the end of the world has come!

16:18-21 Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath. Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found. From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

Here the disintegration of the world is portrayed, – flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, accompanied by a severe earthquake, an earthquake so great that in all history there has been none like it, a quake that completely destroys the present world,

In this connection, we would call your attention to certain words in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which we feel are very appropriate for us as we journey through life. The exhortation reads: “See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven? At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, ‘Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken - that is, created things – so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Heb. 12:25-29).

The great city, Babylon the Great, the capital of the beast, the seat of antichristian power, is shattered into three parts, indicating total destruction. All the cities of the nations likewise collapse. In the vision of the three angels (14:6-12), Babylon was warned that she would be given the cup of God’s anger and that she would be compelled to drink the wine of God’s wrath. With the coming of the last day, this threat is finalized. God had not forgotten the cries and prayers of the persecuted saints and martyrs. Now those prayers are answered; now God’s honor is avenged; now the followers of the beast must drain the cup of the fury of God’s wrath to its very last dregs. Their power has come to an end. No longer will they be able to harm the flock of Christ.

Continuing the description of his vision pertaining to the end of the world, John relates that “every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.” They disappeared completely from sight, once again indicating the total destruction of the world.

Awesome, indeed, is the final scene of this vision: “From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.” In the plague of hail that the Lord sent upon Egypt, described in Ex. 9:19, we are told that the hailstones killed all men and animals in the open field.

Now try and imagine hailstones, each weighing up to a hundred pounds, falling down from the sky. And all the cities of the earth had collapsed in the great earthquake, - and every island had fled away, - and the mountains had disappeared. Consequently, there was no protection for the people that made up the unbelieving world. It is the end of all things. With their lips uttering horrible curses, they now must face the verdict of a righteous Judge, who, as we shall see in the coming chapters, will consign them to an eternity in hell and everlasting damnation.

As a concluding remark to this chapter, we note that while the true believers may have to endure many trials and tribulations here on earth, the bowls of God's wrath are not poured out on them. These bowls of wrath are intended solely for the enemies of God. It is all summed up very nicely in John 3:36: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."