

## Revelation Chapter 16

Now we will look at what the Lord ultimately has in store for those who murder the Saints, and remain unrepentant. Here, in Chapter 16, St. John the Theologian depicts God's judgments upon his enemies through the pouring out of seven bowls of His wrath upon them. These plagues remind us of the plagues sent upon Pharaoh and the of kingdom Egypt. They prefigure the similar future defeat of the Antichrist and his kingdom. Here are 2 verses of Scripture which will put us in the right frame of mind for this chapter:

*Revelation 1:3 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.***

*Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, "**Vengeance is mine. I will repay,**" saith the Lord.*

*Revelation Chapter 16: KJV [Constantinople 1904] Text:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials [bowls] of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial [bowl] upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3 And the second poured out his vial [bowl] upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4 And the third poured out his vial [bowl] upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, which art, and wast, the Holy One, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy. 7 And I heard the altar crying, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments. 8 And the fourth poured out his vial [bowl] upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10 And the fifth poured out his vial [bowl] upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds. 12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial [bowl] upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. 17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial [bowl] into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations*

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*fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*



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**Revelation Chapter 16:1** *And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the ~~vials~~ [bowls] of the wrath of God upon the earth.*

According to St. Andrew of Caesarea, the bowl is nothing more than an image of God's punishment.

Averky: In this chapter there is depicted God's judgment upon the enemies of the Church under the symbol of the seven vials or seven cups of the wrath of God poured out by the seven angels. The symbol of these plagues is taken from the plagues which struck ancient Egypt, whose defeat was the prefiguration of the defeat of the false Christian kingdom, which has been called Egypt (see Rev. 11:8) and then Babylon.

**The First Plague: Revelation Chapter 16:2** *And the first went, and poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.*

This reminds us of the 6th plague on Pharaoh and the Egyptians at the hand of Moses as he took ashes from the furnace and cast them into the air and the ashes became a fine dust that caused the plague of boils/sores upon man and beast (Exodus 9), but not on the Israelites in Goshen -- it differentiated between them. And of course the ungodly here receive no help from the Antichrist whom they have deified and worshiped, since the plagues are sent by God.

Archimandrite Athanasios: Just before the children of God were to enter into the promised land, the Lord said to His people, through Moses; Deut. 28:15 *"if you will not hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day; then all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. I will give you the plagues that I gave to the Egyptians. Specifically regarding this plague: Deuteronomy 28:35 The Lord smite thee with an evil sore, on the knees and the legs, so that thou shalt not be able to be healed from the sole of thy foot to the crown of thy head.* The specificity and descriptiveness in this verse does not leave any room for allegory. It is physical and has to do with an actual bodily plague, which befalls only on those who have the mark of the Beast, the mark of the Antichrist."

**The Second Plague: Revelation 16:3** *And the second poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.*

St Andrew of Caesarea: It is not surprising that to expose the weakness of the false christ and the light-mindedness of the deceived, the divine power would through the holy prophets, Enoch and Elijah, change the sea into *blood as of a dead person*, that is, as of one who had been slain, and would effect the corruption of all in it, just as long ago in Egypt God worked through Moses to expose the hardheartedness of Pharaoh and to demonstrate His own power. And therefore, those who were of secure faith were strengthened and the unstable were made fearful,

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seeing the creation arrayed against those who fought for the honor of the destroyer. It is also possible that rough these words the slaughters that will happen in wars at the coming [of the antichrist] are indicated. For when Gog and Magog will move against each other in the four parts of the world and, in addition, the kings who had not obeyed Him will be annihilated with their whole armies and there will be slaughter in every place, then the sea will be defiled by sea-battles, and the rivers will be mingled with the blood of those who were killed there.

**The Third Plague: Revelation 16:4** *And the third poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, which art, and wast, the Holy One, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; they are worthy. 7 And I heard ~~another out of the altar say~~ [the altar crying], Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.*

[Note: 1/3 had died in the sea in the second trumpet judgment earlier in Revelation, but here all. In the 3rd trumpet judgment only 1/3 of the water was affected, here all.]. These two plaques together also remind us of the 2nd plague on Pharaoh and the Egyptians (Exodus 7) in which the waters turned to blood. Here, all living creatures in the sea die fish, shellfish, mammals, reptiles, etc. The bloodthirsty followers of the Antichrist defile their hands with the blood of the saints. Those who kill the Christians during the reign of the Antichrist, who have received his name, sign, or number, as punishment, God gives them blood to drink as recompense for their evil.

St. Andrew of Caesarea additionally suggests this could be related to bloody global warfare ... defiling the seas and the rivers from those killed there. Others, massive poisoning (radiation, chemicals, etc.) of the oceans and rivers. Note the source of the waters, the fountains, were also affected, so again it is most likely the hand of God as opposed to the hands of men just as the waters in Egypt turned to blood before Pharaoh and all Egypt in the time of Moses.

We also see the angel with authority over the waters praising the righteous judgment of the Lord. Responding to those martyred saints throughout the ages whose souls reside under the altar in Heaven, the altar itself cries out here and praises the righteous judgment of the Lord.

In verse 16:7 the altar is personified, *I heard the altar crying "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments,* in contrast to the KJV which reads, *I heard another out of the altar say.*

Averký: Thus he says from this altar was heard a voice praising the righteousness of God's judgment, which surpasses every mind in word. From the Gospels we know that the mental powers are glad and rejoice over the salvation of those who are converted through repentance, while they grieve over the seduction from the true path and give thanks to God for the punishment of those who have transgressed the Divine commandments, so that at least in part they may receive the forgiveness of sins (St. Andrew, chapter 48).

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St. Andrew of Caesarea: Sometimes the altar signifies Christ, for in Him and through him are brought to the Father our spiritual offerings and living sacrifices, which the apostle has taught us to render. At other times the altar signifies the angelic powers who, we read *are sent forth to serve for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation* (Heb. 1:14), and so they carry upward our intercessions and spiritual sacrifices. From this ministering altar, it says, a voice proceeded commending as just all the judgments of God that surpass both thought and expression.

We have learned from the Gospels that the intellectual powers are glad and rejoice over the salvation of those who turn through repentance but grieve over those who leave the straight way and yet give thanks to God for the punishment of those who transgress the divine commandments (*cf.* Lk.15:7, 10). So let us hasten to bestow on them joy and gladness for our repentance, recognizing that a divine angel attends each one of us and by a certain unutterable word implants in us what must be done, in as much as his mind imperceptibly converses with our mind and he intends to rejoice over that which is heeded, but like God to grieve over that which is disregarded. And so from this converse that profits the soul we should understand that the angel, sad and from afar, follows a person who has been darkened by many sins and enters into the church. But if that person has been made contrite and confesses from the heart to him who delights in mercy that he has rejected his former life and has converted to a better one, when he departs (from the church), the angel leads the way cheerfully and joyfully, while the wicked demon, having been shamed, follows behind at a distance. May it be, then,, that our holy manner of life gives causer for dejection to the demons but cause for joy to the angels, so that together with them, rejoicing with a shout of gladness and the sound of confession (Ps. 44:4), we might give thank to Christ, our God, for His victory over the evil powers, with whom glory is due to the Father together with the Holy spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.

**The Fourth Plague: *Revelation 16:8*** *And the fourth poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.*

Here is the true “global warming”, a plague not seen before in Egypt. But following on the 3rd plague on the waters, the lack of drinking or washing water combined with the increased heat of the sun to burn the unrepentant, they continue to curse God by saying that He is the cause of all their problems rather than Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, who have deceived them and led them down the broad and easy path that leads to destruction.

St. Andrew of Caesarea: Perhaps humankind will literally be burned by the fierce heat of the sun.

**The Fifth Plague: *Revelation 16:10*** *And the fifth poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their*

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*deeds.*

Pouring the bowl on the throne of the beast signifies the pouring out of a great wrath on the kingdom of the Antichrist. St. Andrew of Caesarea interprets this to be more of a noetic darkness, characteristic of the great confusion reigning in the spiritually dark kingdom of the Antichrist. On the other hand it may be a literal palpable and thick darkness like the 3 day-long 9th plague of darkness on Pharaoh and the Egyptians, or both. There is great pain because the other plagues continue, so consequently they chew on their tongues. That they repented not of their deeds indicates that repentance is still open for some. Again the Antichrist, who walked into the Temple and declared himself “God” and caused the multitude to bow down and worship him, is absolutely powerless in the face of this darkness, proving that he is not God, is not all-powerful, and is no savior to anyone. Moreover, it is of great significance and consolation that the righteous who are still alive at this time will not be affected by these plagues since they are not part of his kingdom. They are spectators, like the Israelites in Goshen, in Pharaoh’s Egypt who were unaffected by the plagues there, including the plague of darkness.

*Deuteronomy 32:35 To me belongeth vengeance, and recompence.*

*Deuteronomy 32:46 And he [Moses] said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. 47 For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life: and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.*

And so it is today, for us to obey the Word of the Lord, to believe in Him, to walk in His commandments, to take His yoke upon us.

**The Sixth Plague: Revelation 16:12** *And the sixth angel poured out his vial [bowl] upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*

St. Andrew of Caesarea: Perhaps by divine providence the Euphrates River will diminish in size and provide passage to the kings of the nations for their wars of destruction against each other and the rest of humankind. According to what is adduced in subsequent portions of Revelation, we think that the mention of Gog and Magog suggests that these kings will arise out of the region of the Scythians. But it is also possible that the antichrist, coming out of the eastern regions of Persia, where the Hebrew tribe of Dan resides, will cross the Euphrates with other kings or with strong men who have received a royal name, and will inflict on humankind either bodily death to some on account of their faith and perseverance or spiritual death to others because of their cowardice and faintheartedness.

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This passage mentions individually the devil as a dragon, the antichrist as a beast, and the false prophet as another figure distinct from the other two. It says that spirits similar to frogs come out from these [see detail of these spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon in the bottom figure, shown above, of the previous fresco of the pouring out of the seven bowl judgments], for they are characterized by a poisonous and filthy nature, and these evil powers love the mud and creep toward foul and moist pleasure. By the commands of the devil and of the antichrist and of the false prophet, they will use their mouths to show false signs and wonders to humankind, as we learn in what follows. The false signs produced by the demons will cause those who follow them to make war on the *great and terrible day of God, the judge of the living and the dead* (Joel 2:11, Mal. 4:5, 3:2 Lxx). On that day, those who fight against God will be

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utterly defeated and, although they lament over their former deception, they will weep in vain.

**Revelation 16:15** *Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

Ecumenius: *Lo, I am coming like a thief*, says the Lord. He says *like a thief* because of the suddenness and unexpectedness of His second coming. *Blessed is he who is awake and keeps his garments that he man not go naked*. He continues the image of the thief. Therefore, he said that it is necessary to preserve one's garments that they not be lost. By the term *garments* he refers either to the virtuous and decent life through which we become worthy of God's protection, or he refers to the body that it be pure and holy. For he who does not keep his garments will be ashamed in front of the divine throne of the angels and of people, harried by the judgment at that time and left naked of divine succor.

The demons, it says, gathered the kings of the earth *at the place that is called in Hebrew Maggido*. *Meggido* means *deep wound* or *being severely wounded* and is named this because of the mayhem and slaughter of those gathered there.

St. Andrew of Caesarea: *To be awake and to keep one's garments* means to remain vigilant and always concerned with good works. For good works are the garments of the saints, and were one to be without these, one would necessarily be made ashamed as one naked and full of shamefulness. *Armageddon* is translated as *cutting* or *being thoroughly cut up*. And therefore we are led to think that the nations that the devil gathers and leads to battle there will be slaughtered, since the devil rejoices in human blood.

We are taught in this passage that it is a terrible thing to be naked of the garments of virtue, and we have learned from the Gospel parable that he who is without this is thrown out of the bridal chamber (Mt. 22:11-13), and we have learned from the apostolic saying that speaks of incorruptibility, *that the putting this on, we shall not be found naked* (2 Cor. 5:3), clearly referring to good works. Therefore let us earnestly beseech the Lord that he wash the robes of our souls, so that, as the word of the psalm says, *they may be made whiter than snow* (Ps. 50:7), lest we hear, *Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment? And having our hands and feet bound, be cast into outer darkness* (Mt. 22:12-13). Rather, as the wise Solomon says, let us *always have our garments white* (Eccl. 9:8) and wear robes bright and white from a virtuous life, decorated with sympathy. And so let us enter into the bridal chamber with the pure and blameless Bridegroom of holy souls, Christ our God, with whom glory might and honor is due to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, now and always, and forever and ever. Amen.

**The Seventh Plague: Revelation 16:17** *And the seventh angel poured out his ~~vial~~ [bowl] into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon*



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*came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

**Revelation 16:18** *And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.*

Ecumenius: By *earthquake* he means either the turmoil of the earth, since this also is included in the signs of the end, or he means the transformation of the visible world, as it is said in Haggai, *Once again I will shake, not only the heavens, but also the earth and the sea and the dry land; and I will sake all nations* (Hag. 2:6-7, Heb. 12:26) ...

**Revelation 16:19** *And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.*

Ecumenius: *And God remembered Great Babylon, to give to her the cup of the wine of the wrath of His anger.* In a foregoing passage it says, *And a second angel followed, saying, Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great* (Rev. 14:8). But in this present passage, he intends for us to think of another Babylon, not that one, and he assigns to it another sense. I think that he is speaking of Rome and of those who will capture it at that time, as the narrative will teach further on. And, therefore, he says, *God remembered great Babylon*, that is, God remembered its former sins, when they persecuted and killed the saints. *The cup of the wine of the wrath of God* has already been discussed (Rev. 14:9-12), so it is not necessary to repeat ourselves.

St. Andrew of Caesarea: We understand Jerusalem to be this great city, not because of the number and size of its buildings, but as that which is the most ancient and greatest in regard to godliness, in as much as it was made great by the sufferings of Christ and is to be distinguished from the cities of the nations. We think that the division of this city into three parts suggests the division between Christians and the Jews and the Samaritans who live in it. Or, the division is of those who are steadfast in faith and those who have defiled their baptism with filthy works and the Jews who have in no way received the proclamation.

Averky: The division of the city into three parts indicates, we suppose, the Christians Jews, and Samaritans living in it ... There will occur their division into three parts: the pious, the impious, and sinners; and all will go to those one in mind with themselves. The falling of the cities of the nations signifies either their destruction or decrease and the ceasing of pagan life with the coming of the Divine Kingdom. Great Babylon, as if forgotten by reason of (God's) long-suffering, will come into remembrance, and for trampling on the righteous and her impious words and deeds, will drink the cup of God's wrath (St. Andrew, chapter 52).

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**Revelation 16:20** *And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

St. Andrew of Caesarea: The holy Scriptures have taught us that islands refer to the churches and mountains refer to those who are leaders in them ... At that time some will be tormented for their sins, and others will endure misfortunes for the testing of their virtue. Such misfortunes will not only be those from the antichrist that they suffer for the sake of Christ, but also their flights and their sufferings among the mountains and caves. For they will prefer the mountains and caves to living in the cities for the sake of preserving their piety.

**Revelation 16:21** *And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.*

St. Andrew of Caesarea: We think that the hail that comes down from heaven is the wrath from God, which also comes from above. That this hail weighs a hundredweight<sup>1</sup> indicates its completeness (or its fearful torment) on account of the extremity and seriousness of the sins, which the image of the talent suggests and as Zechariah saw (Zech. 5:7-8). That those who are struck by his hail are moved to blasphemy rather than to repentance reveals the unyielding hardness of their hearts. And so they will be like Pharaoh, or rather they will be even more intransigent than he was. For he at least to some extent was softened by the plagues sent from God and confessed his own ungodliness, but these persons will blaspheme even in the midst of being tormented.

Averky: If one is to understand these words in a literal sense, this will be a picture of frightful destruction which in our times -- when atomic and hydrogen bombs have been discovered -- is not difficult to imagine.

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1. The **Old Testament** Hebrew for a talent is כִּכָּר *kikkar*, a round weight (*talent*). The early Babylonian standard was 58.944 kilograms = 129.97 pounds  
Later standards reduced this weight to 49.11 kilograms = 108.29 pounds

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