

## THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The Seven Last Plagues" (1)

Revelation 16:1-7

### Introduction

1. The temple previously mentioned (15:5, 8) is also the sanctuary where the redeemed multitude serve the Lord day and night (7:15). Now that place intended as a place of prayer becomes the court of judgment upon God's enemies.

2. That the temple is mentioned shows that when grace and mercy are refused, judgment is justified. Think of it, God's holiness has been aroused into action. His infinite holiness will burn with intensity against apostasy and sin.

3. The "great voice" is evidently that of God (16:1). How astonishing that Almighty God gives His angels power over natural resources and they execute the judgment written (cf. 7 angels 15:1, 6-8). Remarkably, these angels are commanded to act. "Go your way" is a present tense imperative while "pour out" is an aorist imperative. Sovereignty uses angelic messengers!

4. God having issued His divine directive, the bowls hallowed by use in the temple of heaven are now devoted to awful divine wrath (v. 1). Note it is "upon the earth" which is guilty before God. Consider with deep burden this solemn apocalyptic judgment (cf. Ps. 79:12).

### 1. FIRST VIAL V. 2

While the verb "poured" is used of every vial, only in the first one is the verb "go out" (ὑπάγετε hupagete) used (cf. v. 1). Apparently the use of the original number suggests the rapid succession of the first three plagues. The fifth vial actually has sores from the first vial. Beasts may be excluded from the first vial since the generic term "men" (ἄνθρωπος anthropos) is used. The plague is upon those who: 1) Have the mark of the beast (cf. 13:17, 18). 2) Exercise worship of the beast (13:4, 8, 12, 15). The actual plague "upon the earth" "becomes" (ἐγένετο egeneto) a bad (κακόν kakon) and "wicked" (πονηρόν poneron) sore which is hideous and dreadful (cf. Luke 16:21; Deut. 28:27, 35; Ex. 9:8-12).

### 2. SECOND VIAL v, 3

This is also a plague like one in Egypt (Ex. 7:14-25) and similar to the second trumpet (8:8, 9). While the first plague came "upon" the earth, the second is poured "into" the sea. As a result, the waters are universally affected. They "become" blood and the picture is of a man murdered and wallowing in his own blood. The coagulated blood is absolutely fatal to every soul marked by life. Hence the things in the sea are completely destroyed. The trillions of sea creatures will die and float in horrible rotteness in the water (cf. Isa. 13:12; 17:6; 24:1-13). Based on this event alone during the Great Tribulation, following the Rapture of the Church, it is clear that few will go on to enter the Millennium. Moreover, in this environment of violence and blood, life itself will be a most precious commodity.

### 3. THIRD VIAL vv. 4-7

Two additional water systems are affected by this plague: 1) the rivers (ποταμοὺς potamous) and 2) the fountains (πηγάς pegas). Both of these represent the fresh water supply. These two systems, like the sea, "become blood." There is no legitimate reason to consider all anything but literal. How spectacular and significant this entire scene.

In response to the angel assigned to deal the blow to the waters (presumably those under the third vial), an incredible defense of God is given. The fact that the judgment is sustained is suggested by the perfect tense of the verb "given" (δέδωκας dedokas, Majority Text. ἔδωκας edokas, TR). Hear the words of gratitude:

1) Thou art Righteous The noun employed here notes God as "correct," performing duties which are in accordance with what is "right." A matter of doing justice is implied.

2) Thou art Lord In concert with other applications of the Infinite One in the context, this name refers to the tetragrammaton ( ). He is the Holy One of Israel, the only true God!

3) Thou art Eternal This is explicated by the phrase "which art, and wast, and shalt be (cf. 1:4). This clearly states He is ever the same. He changes not (Ps. 102:24-27); Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). What an admission in the midst of such drastic judgment!

4) Thou art God Consistent with our view of "Lord" (above) this name concerns God as the Creator ( ). There is no diminishing of the Eternal One. There is but one God in the O.T. and N.T. The Creator will not compromise when judgment is required.

5) Thou art Almighty God's Name used here is elsewhere (cf. 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 15:3; 16:7, 14; 19:6, 15; 21:22). The reference is clearly to the Almighty as "El Shaddai" (cf. Gen. 17:1). Obviously, as such an One, the pouring out of the plagues does not suggest the Holy One has lost control of affairs.

6) Thou art Holy Some MSS (Majority Text) add the term "holy" to the aggregate of praise to God.

The judgments of God, therefore, are declared to be in total consistency with the character of God. Scripture here states the sinful persons involved are "worthy" of the judgment meted out to them. What a contrast with the saints (cf. 3:4). The crime listed for these ungodly people is: They have shed the blood of saints and prophets. That action causes God to make the blood of the martyrs to be paid for by blood. God have mercy!

Conclusion What a fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31). The eternal infinite God of holiness ultimately will not allow that holiness to be tarnished by those who reject His unchanging Word. So be it, Lord God Almighty. Amen.