

Revelation

18

Chapter 16

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The result was festering sores breaking out on the people who worshipped the beast (emperor). The sores would be symbolic of all types of diseases, plagues, and pestilence. Recall from earlier lessons that the trading ships brought in many diseases and plagues along with their cargo. These came from the wrath of God.

This is similar to the symbols of the “pale horse” in Rev 6:8 or to the ‘locusts’ in Rev 9:3-5.

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The angel poured out of the first bowl on the land and festering sores breaking out on the people who worshipped the beast (emperor). Similar things are described in the Old Testament:

Exodus 9:8-10

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, “Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. ⁹ It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on people and animals throughout the land.” ¹⁰ So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on people and animals.

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Job 2:7-8 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the crown of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

It was Satan who afflicted Job with sores, now this is turned back on those who follow Satan. In Egypt, the plagues were directed against the Egyptian gods – now a similar plague is directed against those who would worship the false god of the emperor. Satan was behind this false worship too – (the dragon giving his power to the beast – Rev 13:2)

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

⁴ The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵ Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: “You are just in these judgments, O Holy One, you who are and who were; ⁶ for they have shed the blood of your holy people and your prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.” ⁷ And I heard the altar respond: “Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

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Sounds like one of the plagues sent against Egypt -

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Exodus 7:19-21 The LORD said to Moses, “Tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt—over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs—and they will turn to blood.’ Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in vessels of wood and stone.” ²⁰ Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. ²¹ The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt.

These are similar symbolism to that already seen in Rev 8:8-11 (waters turning to blood, sea creatures dying, water becoming undrinkable)

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The angels and others in heaven recognize the righteousness of the judgments of God – these people had killed God’s followers and now they were receiving what they deserved. (Perhaps symbolically this represented their own blood being shed- remember the blood flowing from the winepress of God’s wrath – Rev 14:19-20)

The water becoming blood also means it is unusable – perhaps symbolic of droughts (like the black horse in Rev 6:5 or of lead poisoning mentioned earlier in Rev 8:11)

⁸ The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was allowed to scorch people with fire. ⁹ 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 fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun – and the sun grows hotter – intense heat. Symbolically the ‘sun’ would represent the leader of the nation becoming ‘hotter’ –out of control. The Emperor Domitian became so obsessed with hatred and was so out-of-control that he not only increased the persecution of the Christians, but he was so paranoid about being assassinated that he had several Roman Senators killed, taxed the foreigners heavily for the ‘right to live’, had a reputation among all for his cruelty and his insistence on being addressed as “Master and god”. He even had two months of the year renamed after him. His paranoia led him to take extreme measures such as employing informers. As a means to obtain information on possible plots or rebels, he ordered interrogators to cut off the hands of prisoners. He lined the gallery where he took his daily walks with highly-polished moonstone so that it reflected everything behind him. The army finally forced him to adopt a general named Nerva as his heir. He was then killed in a plot by his own palace officials.

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On hearing of his death, the Roman Senate was overjoyed. The Senators were delighted and denounced Domitian with bitter and insulting cries. Then they had his images and the shields engraved with his likeness, brought smashing down....”

Immediately, Nerva was hailed as the new emperor. In the months that followed, the city celebrated the death of the old emperor by turning over his statues and ceremonial arches.

Although things were going wrong all over the Roman empire during the reign of Domitian and Rome was losing power, the people still refused to recognize God.

God wants everyone to repent (even those who rejected him and had been caught up in emperor worship)

2 Peter 3:9

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But some will refuse to repent – their hearts have become so hard -

Hebrews 6:4-6

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, ⁵ who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age ⁶ and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance. To their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

¹⁰ The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in agony ¹¹ 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 angel's bowl was poured out on the throne of the beast and the result is darkness over the land.

Again this reminds us of a plague on the Egyptians -

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Exodus 10:21-23

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness spreads over Egypt—darkness that can be felt.” ²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. ²³ No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.

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The darkness in Egypt caused the people to not be able to move or see what was going on.

In a symbolic way, the fifth angel’s bowl on the throne of the beast (emperor) bringing darkness indicates the Roman empire being ruled by an emperor who has lost guidance. The people feel the pain and curse God (blame the Christians for their problems) – rather than repenting themselves.

This is similar symbolically to the fourth trumpet in Rev 8:12.

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. 13 Then I saw three impure 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. 14 They are demonic spirits that perform 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. 15 "Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed." 16 Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

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The sixth angel’s bowl is poured out on the Euphrates River (the Eastern edge of the Roman empire). In the scriptures – ‘drying up’ of a body of water is to let someone cross.-

Exodus 14:21-22

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and all that night the LORD drove the sea back with a strong east wind and turned it into dry land. The waters were divided, 22 and the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left.

Joshua 3:15-17

Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, ¹⁶ the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho. ¹⁷ The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stopped in the middle of the Jordan and stood on dry ground, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground.

2 Kings 2:8, 13-14

Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴ He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. "Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?" he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over.

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Three unclean spirits come from the mouth of the dragon (Satan) and go out to gather the kings of the world together.

The number of the spirits – three - indicates that even though the spirits come from Satan, the beast, and the false prophet, that they are part of God’s plan.

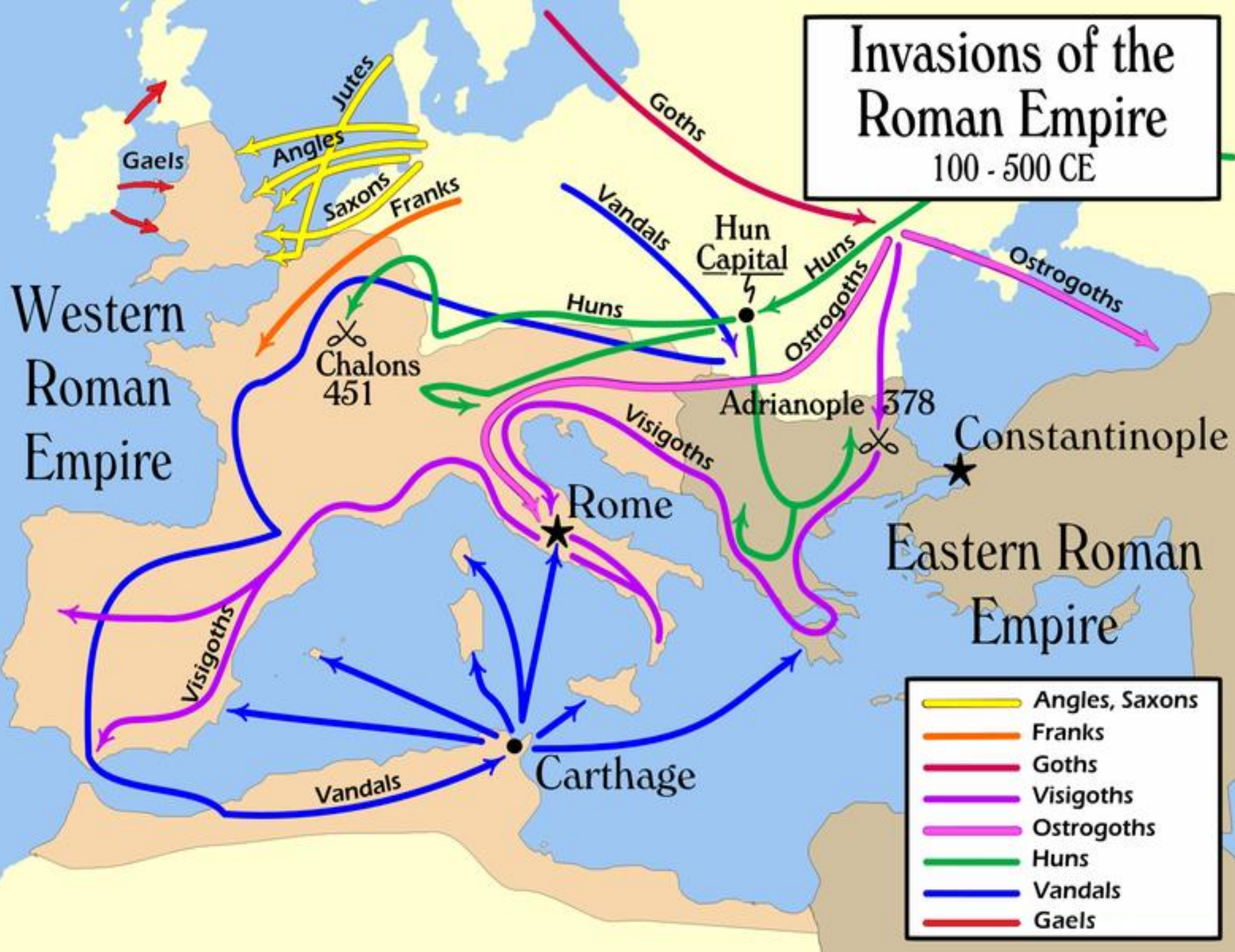
Satan brings the kings (various nations) against Rome from the east. The Eastern border (Euphrates River) border no longer holds as invaders come against the empire. **Similar symbolically to Rev 9:13-19**

Invasions of the Roman Empire

100 - 500 CE

Western Roman Empire

Eastern Roman Empire



- Angles, Saxons
- Franks
- Goths
- Visigoths
- Ostrogoths
- Huns
- Vandals
- Gaels

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Armageddon means ‘mountain of Megiddo’ – Megiddo is the name of the city near the mountain. It is the area in Israel where the most decisive, history changing battles were fought.

Judges 5:19 (Israel vs Canaanites)

**“Kings came, they fought,
the kings of Canaan fought.
At Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo,
they took no plunder of silver.**

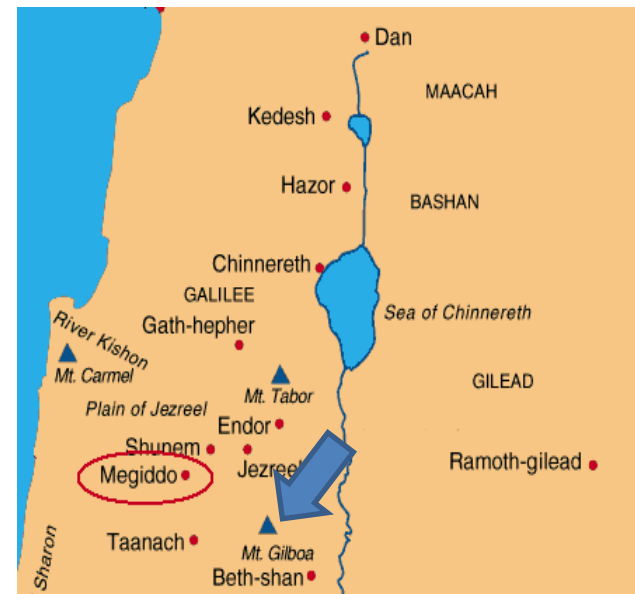


2 Chronicles 35:22 (Israel vs Egypt)

Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Necho had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo.

1 Samuel 31:1-6 (Israel vs Philistia)

Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³ The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. ⁴ Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me." But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵ When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. ⁶ So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.



Note that the kings are only said to be gathered together at the mountain of Megiddo. There is no mention of a 'battle' there – we will see in chapter 19 that there is no mention of a 'battle' at all – just the victory of the Lord. Also remember – this is a symbolic book, not a record of physical things to come. The 'gathering together' would be symbolic of a unified opposition to the Roman empire by the nations of the world.

The term 'Armageddon' is used symbolically to show that this unified opposition would be the final thing that would change the world order and bring about the fall of Rome. (The 'Day of the Lord's Judgment' on them)

15 “Look, I come like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake and remains clothed, so as not to go naked and be shamefully exposed.”

These events are said to ‘come like a thief’. This is similar to a reference in **1 Thessalonians 5:1-2** **Now, brothers and sisters, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, ² for you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.**

The ‘day of the Lord’ is a way of saying the day of God’s judgment. The things that will happen will come unexpectedly, but should not take those who are prepared (Christians) by surprise because they have been warned by this revelation of the tribulation and testing of their faith to come.

Revelation 16:17-21

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!"¹⁸ Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since mankind has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.¹⁹ 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.²⁰ Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.²¹ From the sky huge hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell on people. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.

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With the pouring out of the seventh, final bowl – the words “it is done” The lightning, thunder, earthquake, and even the hailstones (compare to Rev 8:7) are all symbolic of God’s judgment and punishment being released on the those who have rejected God and persecuted His people on the earth.

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The great city , Rome, symbolically split into three parts (the three showing the hand of God in this**). God's full fury is released on the city and on all (cities of the nations) who have rejected God.**

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The hailstones are reminiscent of the plague of hail in Egypt.

Exodus 9:18-25 Therefore, at this time tomorrow I will send the worst hailstorm that has ever fallen on Egypt, from the day it was founded till now. ¹⁹ Give an order now to bring your livestock and everything you have in the field to a place of shelter, because the hail will fall on every person and animal that has not been brought in and is still out in the field, and they will die.’’ ²⁰ Those officials of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD hurried to bring their slaves and their livestock inside. ²¹ But those who ignored the word of the LORD left their slaves and livestock in the field..... So the LORD rained hail on the land of Egypt; ²⁴ hail fell and lightning flashed back and forth. It was the worst storm in all the land of Egypt since it had become a nation. ²⁵ Throughout Egypt hail struck everything in the fields—both people and animals; it beat down everything growing in the fields and stripped every tree.

When Joshua was fighting the Amorites in Canaan -

Joshua 10:11

As they fled before Israel on the road down from Beth Horon to Azekah, the LORD hurled large hailstones down on them, and more of them died from the hail than were killed by the swords of the Israelites.

Ezekiel prophesies that when God's people are attacked, God will fight for them-

Ezekiel 38:18-22

This is what will happen in that day: When Gog attacks the land of Israel, my hot anger will be aroused, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁹ In my zeal and fiery wrath I declare that at that time there shall be a great earthquake in the land of Israel.The mountains will be overturned, the cliffs will crumble and every wall will fall to the ground. ²¹ I will summon a sword against Gog on all my mountains, declares the Sovereign LORD. Every man's sword will be against his brother. ²² I will execute judgment on him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstones and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him.

Note that these ‘plagues’ do not just affect the city of Rome, but the ‘whole earth’ – symbolic of the whole Roman empire.

The next few chapters now give additional details on the fall of the ‘great city’ Rome as a result of the bowls of wrath being poured out.