

Revelation

Lesson 19

Revelation Chapter 16, 17, 18

Arlington Church of Christ

In Revelation Chapter 16, John's vision involves 7 angels who were given seven bowls of God's wrath to be poured out on the persecutors of His people. We saw that these bowls of wrath were symbolic of some of the same punishments described in earlier chapters of Revelation and repeated here in different symbolic form. Many of them were reminiscent of the plagues sent against the Egyptians who had earlier persecuted and mistreated God's people.

The bowls of wrath poured out by the first six angels included:

1 => sores breaking out (diseases and plagues)

(Rev 6:8, 9:3-5)

**2,3 => sea and water sources turned to blood,
creatures dying (Rev 8:8-11)**

4 => Sun scorches people (emperor out-of-control, causes problems for all in empire, hated by all)

5 => Darkness on throne of beast (lack of guidance for empire) (Rev 8:12)

6 => Euphrates River dries up and kings from East cross and gather together to oppose Rome (Rev 9:13-19)

Now it is time for the seventh angel to pour out the final bowl of wrath:

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.

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.**

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.

The pouring out into the air indicates that this will affect the whole world (a drastic change)

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.

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.

. 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.

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.

Revelation

19

Chapter 17

Revelation 17

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ² With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Revelation 17

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ***⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries.*** ***⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.*** ***⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.***

The woman is in the wilderness (symbolic of being banished, defeated) and is sitting on a scarlet beast with blasphemous names and seven heads and 10 horns.

Symbolism:

Scarlet beast => scarlet = Satan (red dragon), beast = Roman emperor

Blasphemous names => the emperor claimed divinity and demanded worship

Seven heads and ten horns are explained later in this chapter.

Revelation 17

One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, “Come, I will show you the punishment of the great prostitute, who sits by many waters. ² With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.”

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God’s holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Dressed in purple (royalty), and scarlet (evil, Satan), and gold, precious stones, pearls – (riches)

Revelation 17

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

The golden cup in her hand is filled with filth and abominable things – she uses her wealth on evil pursuits.

Jeremiah 51:7

Babylon was a gold cup in the LORD's hand; she made the whole earth drunk. The nations drank her wine; therefore they have now gone mad.

Revelation 17

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

On her forehead was “Babylon the Great, The Mother of Prostitutes and of the Abominations of the earth.” This was her identifying mark – so everyone would know who she was.

**(Prostitutes in Rome wore a forehead frontlet with their name on it)
The woman is symbolic of Rome and the Roman empire.**

Revelation 17

³ Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was dressed in purple and scarlet, and was glittering with gold, precious stones and pearls. She held a golden cup in her hand, filled with abominable things and the filth of her adulteries. ⁵ The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. ⁶ I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.

Drunk with the blood of God's holy people, those who bore testimony to Jesus. As an alcoholic's goal is to keep drinking, her goal was to kill as many Christians as she could.

When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. ⁷ Then the angel said to me: “Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns. ⁸ The beast, which you saw, once was, now is not, and yet will come up out of the Abyss and go to its destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

The angel explains that the seven heads are symbolic of seven hills on which she sits (**Rome was known as the city of seven hills**), and also symbolic of seven kings. Then the angel explained that at the time of John’s vision, five kings had fallen , one was in power now, and the seventh would be king only a short time.

According to history, the Roman emperors were **Augustus Caesar, Tiberius**, (the persecution of Christians began in his reign) **Gaius (Caligula), Claudius, Nero** (promoted the persecution of Christians in Rome empire, blaming them for the problems of the empire) then civil war broke out and there were three 'rulers' within a two year period, but no emperor – then the emperors **Vespasian, Titus, Domitian**.

We are told that five have fallen – Augustus Caesar to Nero

One is – Vespasian (69-79 AD)

One is yet to come who will remain only a short time – Titus (was emperor for only two years) (79-81 AD)

So it would seem that the book of Revelation was written sometime between 70 and 79 AD – most likely shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem.

⁹ “This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. ¹⁰ They are also seven kings. Five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; but when he does come, he must remain for only a little while. ¹¹ The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.

The beast ‘who was, is not’, is the eighth king – Emperor Domitian. He initiated mandatory emperor worship, and dramatically increased the persecution of Christians and oversaw the death of many who would not acknowledge him as ‘god’. He was so adamant against Christians that he was considered ‘Nero come back to life’. (Nero had been so brutal that the Roman Senate actually ‘deposed’ him and sent him into banishment. He was rumored to have died and been resurrected in the form of Domitian)

Revelation 17:12-14

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Revelation 17:12-14

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

The horns are symbolic of kings who do not have much power at this time – but will join with the beast (Domitian) and will receive authority from him. The number 10 is symbolic of ‘human completeness’ – so this could be the complete number of those nations under the control of Rome who now are working for the Emperor, but:

It is also interesting that there were 10 Parthian groups that each had their own leader (warlords), who were, according to history, ‘hired’ by Domitian to fight his battles and carry out his persecutions of Christians.

Revelation 17:12-14

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

Their purpose is to wage war against the followers of Christ – they are given authority to do this by the beast (Domitian).

Revelation 17:12-14

“The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. ¹³ They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast. ¹⁴ They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will triumph over them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers.”

They will not be successful in their attempts to destroy Christianity – the followers of Jesus will remain chosen and faithful.

1 Peter 2:9

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Revelation 2:10

Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.

¹⁵ Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages.” ¹⁶ The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. ¹⁷ For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. ¹⁸ The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

The waters are identified as symbolic of peoples and multitudes and nations and languages. This represents all those over who the Roman empire holds power.

15 Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

The result will be destruction of the Roman empire brought about by those rebelling against her rule – the very ones that were ‘hired’ to protect her and fight her battles. They will break up the empire and burn the city with fire.

15 Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

God is in control of all these events – His words will be fulfilled. Nebuchadnezzar learned this after seven years of madness:

Daniel 4:34-35 At the end of that time, I, Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. 35 All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: “What have you done?”

15 Then the angel said to me, “The waters you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, multitudes, nations and languages. 16 The beast and the ten horns you saw will hate the prostitute. They will bring her to ruin and leave her naked; they will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. 17 For God has put it into their hearts to accomplish his purpose by agreeing to hand over to the beast their royal authority, until God’s words are fulfilled. 18 The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.”

**The great city is the city of Rome
(the empire’s capital)**