

E.M. Zerr Commentary On Revelation Chapter Sixteen

Verse 1. *The great voice was out of the temple.* That means it was from God, for we have learned in the preceding chapter that no man was able to be in the temple at this time. The seven angels have been given the vials of divine wrath, now the voice bids them empty their contents in the places deserving such treatment.

Verse 2. *Noisome and grievous* indicates something extremely objectionable and damaging. It should be remarked that the judgments against the wicked leaders in the corrupt institution were suffered immediately. They felt it through the humiliation of seeing their places of evil rulership brought down through the effects of the Reformation. But this was destined to be only a foretaste of the final judgment that will be pronounced upon them at the last day. The mark and image of the beast have been explained at **chapter 13:14**.

Verse 3. *Blood of a dead man.* When a man dies his blood dies with him and becomes poisonous. That which would come in contact with it would be killed. The blood of Christ was dead when it was poured out, hence it will kill the sins of the world if brought into contact with them. (See **1 John 1:7**.)

Verse 4. The mention of the earth and other parts of the creation are to represent them as symbols, denoting the completeness of God's judgments against evil men. That is why rivers and water fountains are named in this verse.

Verse 5. *Angel of the waters* is the one in the preceding verse. These angels form a unit (seven) and hence any principle held by one goes for all of them. The angel commended the action of the Lord for the righteous judgments inflicted upon the servants of the beast. *Art, and wast and shall be* is the same as saying that God had no beginning and will have no end. Such a Being cannot do wrong hence his judgments against His enemies are bound to be just.

Verse 6. The first part of this verse is literal, for the agencies of both Pagan and Papal Rome caused man (righteous servants of God) to shed their

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blood. ***Given them blood to drink*** is figurative and refers to the legal executions imposed on the wicked.

Verse 7. This angel repeated the same commendation of God's judgments that was expressed by the one in verses 5 and 6.

Verse 8. The sun is a part of the creation which was commented upon at verse 4. It is specified in the present group of symbols because of the particular item it contributes to the welfare of humanity when it is used normally. It is the source of light and heat without which man could not live, but it is now used as a symbol of torment of fire by increasing the volume of the rays upon men. In **Malachi 2:2** the Lord was making threats against some of His ancient people following their wickedness in which he says "I will curse your blessing." The thought is similar to the one of our verse. The sun is normally a blessing to the people of the earth, but it is used as a symbol of cursing.

Verse 9. The intense heat caused men to blaspheme the name of God because of their suffering; that was because they recognized Him as being the cause of the affliction. But the very motive that caused them to blaspheme Him, should have had the effect of making them repent, for they must have known that a Being who could bring such tremendous revolutions on the universe is worthy to be feared and served.

Verse 10. ***The seat of the beast*** means his throne or headquarters. The darkness is figurative and refers to some confusion or disarrangement of the affairs of the government. To gnaw the tongues for pain would be a natural or literal performance, but it is another one of the many symbols used in this book, and represents the intense disappointment and humiliation of the leaders in Rome when they see their structure of oppressive power tumbling about them.

Verse 11. This is similar to **verse 9** and shows the effect that pride can have upon men. ***Repented not*** can be accounted for only by thinking of their stubbornness which is a form or manifestation of pride.

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Verse 12. The great river Euphrates has played an important part in God's dealing with his people in their relation with the nations. The city of Babylon was situated upon its banks. When the time came for the overthrow of the first of the "four world empires" (the Babylonian), it was accomplished by diverting the stream from its regular channel. When that was done the water was lowered (was dried up) so that the soldiers of Cyrus (kings of the east) could march into the city and slay the man on the throne. All of this describes a literal event in history, but it is used to form the phraseology for the overthrow of another Babylon ("Mystery Babylon the Great"), which had been brought into existence by the union of church and state.

Verse 13. *Frogs* are slimy, loathsome creatures and are used to represent three very loathsome powers and individuals. They are the *dragon* (Satan, **chapter 12:9**), the *beast* (Rome) and the *false prophet*. The last phrase is singular in grammatical form but does not refer to any particular one of the false prophets. It means the group of evil workers who used their deceptive tactics to mislead the people all over the domain or the dominions of Rome.

Verse 14. *Devils* means the demons by which the apostate church imposed upon the victims of their treachery. *Working miracles* is explained at **chapter 13:14**, and it is the same that Paul predicts in **2 Thessalonians 2:9** as follows: "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders." *Gather them to the battle* means the battle will continue until the great day.

Verse 15. This verse is in the nature of a parenthesis because it speaks of the coming of Christ, at which time all things on the earth will end. But the preceding verse mentions a battle that is to continue until that event, and the verse following our present one will go back to the beginning of that battle as to its coverage of time.

Verse 16. *Armageddon* is the Greek word of the original text spelled with English letters. The literal meaning of the word as defined in Thayer's lexicon is "destruction." It is the action referred to by "**battle**" in **verse 14** which means war in general, not merely a single fight. This will be commented upon at length at **chapter 20**.

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Verse 17. The *seventh angel* was the last of the group that was to pour the vials out upon the earth. The *voice* came out of the temple which signifies that it was a voice of authority. The voice made the brief announcement that it is done, meaning that the revolution signified by the “seven last plagues” was accomplished. The great revolution thus symbolized was the Reformation of Luther and his fellow workers that resulted in breaking up the union of church and state. .

Verse 18. *Thunder, lightnings and earthquake* in symbolic language refers to great commotions in the public affairs. Such a mighty movement as the dissolving of church and state was enough to bring forth these demonstrations about the temple, for it meant so much to the interests of the cause of God who occupies the temple.

Verse 19. The *great city* means the institution composed of the union of church and state, as it is used here and some other places, not merely church or state singly. It is in that sense that the name Babylon is used in this verse, because the literal city of Babylon had been destroyed centuries before (**Isaiah 13:19-22**), and the apostate church of Rome as a religious institution is not to be destroyed until Jesus comes again (**2 Thess. 2:8**). But Babylon as the union of church and state was dissolved by the Reformation never to be restored. Divided into three parts.

This partial destruction has been indicated a number of times and has been explained to mean that God does not completely extinguish every institution He condemns. *Came in remembrance before God* means he remembered the evils that city had done to His people. *Give unto her the cap*, etc., is the same figurative sense of wine that has been commented upon in **chapter 14:19, 20**.

Verse 20. *Island* in symbolic language means inhabited spots and mountains denotes units of government. John saw these *flee away* in the vision which was symbolical, and the meaning is on the same subject that has been under consideration through many of the passages, namely, the downfall of the political power of Rome.

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Verse 21. Weight of *talents* varied according to the different standards and they were at least fifty pounds on an average. To drop a hail stone of that weight as a symbol of God's wrath would give some impression of the greatness of that wrath. ***Blasphemed God*** means they spoke very evil words against Him, because of their disappointment and humiliation over the loss of their political power.