

• *The sixth bowl of God's anger*

God's judgements will intensify as the end of the world draws near

• *'Crossing the Euphrates' – a symbolic way of speaking of attacking the church*

• *God allows a demon's miracle to happen*

• *The 'kings of the east' are God's enemies*

• *The church's protection taken away*

Intense Satanic opposition

• *Satan*
 • *State persecution*
 • *False religion*
 • *Evil spirits*
 • *Spiritual warfare*

The anger of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness^{☞1} shows itself on the earth^{☞2}, at sea^{☞3}, in the rivers^{☞4}, in the sky^{☞5}. Society brings judgement upon itself; the wrath of God is at work in the beast's kingdom^{☞6}. Now Revelation 16:12–16 brings us to the sixth bowl of God's anger.

God's judgements will intensify as the end of the world draws near. In the case of the sixth trumpet we had a difficult section which seemed to describe intensified chaos one stage back from the end of the world^{☞1}. Now in the case of the sixth bowl of God's anger there is a description of a fearful conflict coming to its highpoint in 'Armageddon'^{☞2}. It is surely the same period of intense conflict that has already been mentioned.

What happens is again the judgement of God. ¹²*The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.* The river Euphrates was the border of Israel according to the promise first given to Abraham^{☞1}. In Old Testament picture-language 'crossing the Euphrates' is a symbolic way of speaking of attacking the church. In John's prophecy the river dries up. This was the one thing that could not happen. The Euphrates was and still is the largest river in south-west Asia. Its waters never run dry. For the river Euphrates to dry up a miracle must take place. It is like the crossing of the Red Sea in the Old Testament story of the beginning of the nation of Israel. Only this time it is a demonic miracle – although an angel allows it to happen and it is the anger of God. When God's anger is at its height he allows sinners to do what they want to do. Sin brings its own judgement.

When the Euphrates dries up it is easy to cross into Israel. This is picture language and symbolism. It pictures a time when the church is violently attacked and the entire world is caught up in some great conflict. The 'kings of the east' refers to the enemies of God. We remember that invaders and conquerors of Israel and its neighbours were thought of as coming from the east (see, for example, Isaiah 41:2). The Philistines, Arameans, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks and Romans had all attacked Israel in Old Testament times and in the following centuries. Now the prophecy sees the church's protection taken away (Euphrates dried up) and all the possible invaders of Israel's history coming to destroy God's people. It is picture language. There are no longer 'kings' in the old way; Israel's border no longer reaches the Euphrates. God's **restructured** 'Israel' now has gentiles in it and is now the international people of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The picture is of something that has a lot of the miraculous in it. ¹³*And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs.* The dragon is Satan. The beast is state-persecution. The false prophet is false religion. In the Old Testament frogs were unclean animals. Satanic opposition, persecution and false religion all join together to attack God's people. *For they are demonic spirits, performing miraculous signs.* Miracles can be satanic. Help from evil spirits is given to the persecutors. The world becomes so confident it makes a mammoth effort to destroy the people of God. ¹⁴*They go out to the kings of the whole earth, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.* It is like a warfare – only it is spiritual warfare.

☞1 Romans 1:18
 ☞2 16:2
 ☞3 16:3
 ☞4 16:4-7
 ☞5 16:8-9
 ☞6 16:10-11

☞1 9:13-19
 ☞2 16:12-16

☞1 Genesis 15:18

God's help can come suddenly

- Like a thief
- Satan will do his worst
- But not for long
- Jesus will destroy him

Verse 15 says: 'Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed.' Again and again the Bible speaks of a day when the church of the Lord Jesus Christ will face massive opposition. Jesus will go on reigning until his enemies are defeated but at some point there will come a period of great difficulty. Yet when opposition is at its height God's help can come very suddenly. 'Behold, I come like a thief!' We remember Paul's teaching that at some stage in the gospel-age there will arise a great rebellion against God. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 speaks of 'the man of lawlessness'. 'The lawless one will be revealed'¹. There is to be a wicked 'revelation' of the worst that Satan is able to do. But this enemy of God will not last long. The Lord will slay him 'with the breath of his mouth and bring him to an end by the appearance of his coming', says 2 Thessalonians 2:8. The enemies of God's people will be destroyed suddenly and easily. The Man of Lawlessness does not last long. It does not seem that there is a long period between his appearing and his destruction. The breath of Jesus' mouth will soon destroy him.

¹ 2 Thessalonians 2:8

Revelation 16:15 tells us the enemies of God will be quickly defeated. Meanwhile, we have to be careful not to give in to the opposition to God's gospel that may become intense at any moment.

- Armageddon
- We must be ever watchful and ready

The great period of conflict against God's people is a battle at 'Armageddon'. Revelation 16:16 says: *Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.* This is John's way – and Jesus' way – of picturing a time when there will be very fierce conflict between the world and the church. Blessed is he who stays awake! We have to be ever watchful to prevent the gospel being corrupted and to prevent ourselves from being corrupted. Blessed is the person who 'keeps his clothes with him'. That means: 'who lives the life that ought to be lived, clothed with righteousness, ready for the day when God comes with judgements and rewards for everyone'.

	<p>Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His <i>Preaching Through The Bible (PTTB)</i> books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.</p>	
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