

Review

1:9 – 3:22

The glorified Jesus; messages for the churches – view on Patmos

4:1 – 8:1

Jesus the Lord of history – view from heaven

11:19 – 15:4

Jesus and Satan in a mighty conflict – view from the heavenly temple

15:5 – 16:21

More from the heavenly tabernacle – the wrath of God outpoured

• *Bowls of anger – the cup of wrath drained to the end*

1. History will run to a climax and to an end-point

• *Final judgement*

2. God appears in majesty

The book of Revelation is like a play in a theatre with several ‘acts’ and several sets of scenery. In **Revelation 1:1–8** we had an introduction to the revelation, but the book really started in Revelation 1:9. At that point John is on the island of Patmos. Everything in **Revelation 1:9–3:22** takes place in one piece of ‘scenery’. John sees the glorified Lord Jesus Christ and from the lips of Jesus come messages for the churches.

Then in Revelation 4:1 John becomes ‘in the Spirit’ and he changes location. Suddenly he is not on the island of Patmos any more. He is (in his vision) in heaven, and he is seeing various things that are happening in heaven. This is the second scene, the second piece of scenery, in the book of Revelation. There is no change of scene throughout **Revelation 4:1–8:1**, which speaks of Jesus as the Lord of history.

Then in Revelation 8:2 things change again. After a pause of half an hour, John suddenly sees something new. He is seeing a temple and things happen according to what takes place in the temple. It leads to a new series of items for him to hear and see. They continue throughout **Revelation 8:2–11:18**, which presents trumpets of warning.

Then in 11:19 the same thing happens again. Once again there is a new scene and once again it begins with the sight of what is happening inside the heavenly temple. The section continues from **Revelation 11:19 to 15:4**. It tells us of a mighty conflict between Jesus and Satan, the Lamb and the Dragon.

In Revelation 15:5 there is once again an opening of the tabernacle in heaven. In **Revelation 15:5–16:21** we have another section of the book of Revelation and (as we look at 16:17–21) we are looking at the end of it. The ‘bowls of wrath’ that we find in this section are a symbolic way of speaking of the occasions when God pours out his anger against sin. It is not a matter of warning so much as of actual experience of anger when it can no longer be held back. In Revelation 15:5–16:21 we see Christ pouring out bowls of anger upon the ungodly. The first bowl spoke of plagues of ugly diseases^{☒1}. The second is the ruination of the environment^{☒2}. The third and fourth ‘bowls of anger’ are again environmental and touch the rivers^{☒3} and the sky^{☒4}. The fifth ‘bowl of anger’ shows us the wrath of God is at work in the beast’s kingdom^{☒5}. The sixth bowl of God’s anger concerns a fearful conflict coming to its highpoint in ‘Armageddon’^{☒6}. It is the same period of intense conflict that is mentioned from time to time in the book of Revelation. We could entitle Revelation 16:17–21 ‘Draining the cup of wrath to the end’.

1. **History will run to a climax and to an end-point.** ¹⁷*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!’* Just as Jesus said, ‘It is finished’ when he completed his atoning work on the cross, there will come a point in the history of the world when a voice says, ‘It is done!’ The long course of history in which the gospel has been preached is finished and it is time for the final judgement.

2. **God appears in majesty.** ¹⁸*Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous*

- ☒1 16:2
- ☒2 16:3
- ☒3 16:4-7
- ☒4 16:8-9
- ☒5 16:10-11
- ☒6 16:12-16

like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake. The judgement takes place as God's character is revealed. In the Bible thunderstorms and earthquakes are used to

• *Echoes of Sinai*

picture the majestic presence of God. The language here echoes the descriptions of God's appearing to the people at the time of the giving of his law to Moses at Mount Sinai.

3. Worldliness is ruined for ever

• *Nothing is forgotten*

3. **Worldliness is ruined for ever.** 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.* The kingdom of this world falls apart. All that 'Babylon' had done for many years has been remembered by God. Nothing is forgotten. Now comes a time for justice and repayment. The licentiousness and worldliness of the human race feels the fury of God's anger against sin.



4. The immovable is moved

• *Yet the judgements of God do not in themselves produce repentance*

4. **The immovable is moved.** ²⁰*Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.* Places that one might consider inaccessible (the islands) come under judgement. Places that one might think would never move (the mountains) will move. ²¹*From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.* In the Mosaic law adultery was punished by stoning to death. The nations have all been unfaithful to God. At the last day God 'stones to death' the adulterous nations. Spiritual adultery is punished by stoning. We notice at this point that the judgements of God do not in themselves produce repentance. Even while being stoned Babylon dies with curses upon its lips.

• *Finally the world must drink the cup of God's anger to the very bottom*

So Revelation 16:17–21 is describing in picture-language the 'bottom of the cup'. God gives the world 'the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath'. This final unit of Revelation 15:5–16:21 describes the great and last outpouring of God's anger against a world which has persistently blasphemed him. However successful the gospel may be – and its success is to be expected – it will not bring heaven on earth until Jesus comes. Finally the world must drink the cup of God's anger to the very bottom.

	<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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