

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended. ² And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. ³ And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages! ⁴ Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed." ⁵ After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, ⁶ and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles. ⁷ And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever; ⁸ and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

John states emphatically that these judgments are the last. The God's people have been separated out from those on whom these plagues are to be poured, and so they are reserved for the ungodly. The judgment imagery increases again from the opening of a scroll, to the startling blast of a trumpet, to having something poured out on you. This final layer is the judgment upon the world because of the witness of God's people: remember, first we had natural signs—correlating perhaps to the world before Abraham, then we had supernatural signs—correlating to the wonders God had done for the Israelites, and now in this most intense level, we have pure wrath, for God has already come in the person of Jesus Christ and made them a people for himself. In the previous two layers, John precedes his final sign with a message of the security of God's people, and shows them worshipping Him in heaven. Here in the final layer, this image precedes the whole cycle, which will be uninterrupted. No more gaps in the punishment, this is final, and the bowls are poured out swiftly. However, once they are empty, that's it; there's nothing more in them—God's wrath is empty. Once again, the image is from the OT: think of the verse of the psalm, "O Lord, thou hast poured out a bowl of spiced and foaming wine, and the wicked of the earth shall drink it and drain the dregs thereof."

16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." ² So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. ³ The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea. ⁴ The third angel poured his bowl

Here we have the actual description of the cycle of seven bowls: Note that the plagues fall only on those who worship the beast. And they act to take away water and light and breath: three of John's most central images of God, and it is done in direct balance to the evil deeds that have been done. Ultimately, these people are being given what they want: life in the absence of God.

into the rivers and the fountains of water, and they became blood. ⁵ And I heard the angel of water say, "Just art thou in these thy judgments, thou who art and wast, O Holy One. ⁶ For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!" ⁷ And I heard the altar cry, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments!" ⁸ The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire; ⁹ men were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory. ¹⁰ The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish ¹¹ and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds. 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. 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 foul spirits like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. ¹⁵ ("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!") ¹⁶ And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armageddon. ¹⁷ The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" ¹⁸ And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake. ¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and

The River Euphrates is mentioned again: signifying the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire. There are several messages in this. First that worldly empires, especially the Romans, will meet their end, they will be conquered by other earthly powers like the Parthians. The east may also be significant, because it is the direction of Jerusalem, and also the direction of the rising Sun: with the Resurrection of Christ, a new day dawns that spells doom for the empires of the world.

The frog-spirits are the subject of a lot of speculation: they seem to be a sort of means of propaganda for the forces of darkness, spreading their lies and inciting people to war. Perhaps they represent all the words of the Satanic trinity, which are the Devil and his earthly agents.

Armageddon is an interesting word. Nobody is quite sure what it means. It is spelled differently in each different manuscript tradition. Probably the closest thing to it is the Hebrew "Har-Meggido", lit. the mountain of Meggido. The trouble here is that there is no Mount Meggido, it is a desert plain, and a site of a famous battle in early Hebrew history, and now a place of desolation. In any event, this is the place to which the forces of darkness are gathered for the last battle. The curious thing is, that when the time for battle comes, there isn't one—God simply wipes them all away with the seventh and final plague. The last plague is the removal of air, or breath, or spirit—all equivalent terms in Hebrew and somewhat in Greek.

The splitting of the city into three parts has often been interpreted as the division of Jerusalem into Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sections, but the mention of 'the city' refers to

<p>the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath. ²⁰ And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found; ²¹ and great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.</p>	<p>Babylon. The division shows that it is at war with itself, calling up the image from the OT and the gospel 'a house that is divided against itself cannot stand' Jesus refers to Satan's kingdom with that phrase, and that is the better interpretation here.</p>
<p>Revelation 17:1 Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters, ² with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk." ³ And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns. ⁴ The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication; ⁵ and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations." ⁶ And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her I marveled greatly. ⁷ But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her. ⁸ The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come. ⁹ This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated; ¹⁰ they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while. ¹¹ As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition. ¹² And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together</p>	<p>And so we come to the 'Last Judgment' section. This happens in two layers: First, Babylon, the symbol of earthly empire opposed to God, is judged and doomed, purifying the earth of its influence. Then, Satan, the representative of the spiritual powers that rebel against God, meets his doom, and so heaven is free of him. These happen in preparation for the joining of earth and heaven, and the Great Marriage Feast of the Lamb, when God and his people shall at last be one forever.</p> <p>Babylon is presented here as a whore, calling forth all of the OT imagery of worshipping idols as fornication, and failure to be faithful in our covenant with God, which is likened to a marriage. It also calls forth all of the imagery, so fresh in John's reader's minds, of the amoral society that Rome had become, full of orgies, and lavish banquets, and human sacrifice, and gladiatorial combat, etc. As we remember, Rome's chief sin, and that of all worldly empires, is that of idolatry, that is blaspheming by taking the place of God</p>

with the beast. ¹³ These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast; ¹⁴ they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." ¹⁵ And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues. ¹⁶ And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire, ¹⁷ for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. ¹⁸ And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth."

for one's self.

The reference to the seven mountains is undoubtedly a reference to the seven hills of Rome, as are the rest of the references in this chapter. All are given to show that Rome will eventually be divided against itself and collapse from within, and then be destroyed from without—just as is the case with every power of Satan.

18:1 After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor. ² And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird; ³ for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness." ⁴ Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; ⁵ for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. ⁶ Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed. ⁷ As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning. Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,' ⁸ so shall her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her." ⁹ And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and were wanton with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning; ¹⁰ they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! alas! thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come." ¹¹ And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more, ¹² cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, ¹³ cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. ¹⁴ "The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee, and all thy dainties and thy splendor are lost to thee, never to be found again!" ¹⁵ The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, ¹⁶ "Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! ¹⁷ In one hour all this wealth has been

laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off ¹⁸ and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?" ¹⁹ And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she has been laid waste. ²⁰ Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!" ²¹ Then a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone and threw it into the sea, saying, "So shall Babylon the great city be thrown down with violence, and shall be found no more; ²² and the sound of harpers and minstrels, of flute players and trumpeters, shall be heard in thee no more; and a craftsman of any craft shall be found in thee no more; and the sound of the millstone shall be heard in thee no more; ²³ and the light of a lamp shall shine in thee no more; and the voice of bridegroom and bride shall be heard in thee no more; for thy merchants were the great men of the earth, and all nations were deceived by thy sorcery. ²⁴ And in her was found the blood of prophets and of saints, and of all who have been slain on earth."