

# Bowl 7 - Where These Judgments Began

Revelation 16:17-21

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Phillip G. Kayser

### Text

Revelation 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a great voice came out of the sanctuary of heaven, from the Throne, saying, "It has begun!" 18 and there were lightnings and thunders and noises. And there was a tremendous earthquake, a terribly severe earthquake such as had not occurred since mankind existed on the land. 19 So the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath. 20 And every island fled, and mountains were not found. 21 And huge hailstones, weighing about a talent, fell out of the sky on the people; and the people blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail, because its plague was exceedingly severe.<sup>1</sup>

### **I. Introduction - how each bowl is symbolized by one of the seven festivals**

Just by way of a quick review of chapter 6, we saw that the first three bowls related to the end of Israel in AD 136. The Jewish rabbis who witnessed the Bar Kochba rebellion said that the blood flowed so deep at Bethar that horses sank in the blood up to their noses and the whole Sea of Galilee was coagulated blood and even the Mediterranean was red as far Northwest as the Island of Cypress. It was an unbelievably gross judgment and it spelled the end of Israel as a nation in the land of Palestine. The Jewish rabbis who survived were no doubt exaggerating, but they claim that 80,000,000 Jews were killed in Israel and throughout the empire. So that was one of the two major persecutors of the church that received God's retribution.

The second enemy was Rome, and the next three bowls were poured out on the seven-headed Beast, with the seventh head being Vespasian, and the eighth ruler being Titus. We saw that Vesuvius' eruption darkened all of Israel, Egypt, much of Africa, and all of Rome. And the second eruption spewed a pyroclastic blast of heat that was 100,000 times more thermal energy than the Hiroshima-Nagasaki bombings. We also saw that this was followed five months later with Rome burning down once again. And all of the accompanying details were fulfilled to a "t." We also looked at the historical evidence for the Euphrates River drying up completely up, enabling the armies east of it to cross in a remarkably short period of time to

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1 Translation based on the Greek text of Wilbur Pickering's [The The Greek New Testament According to Family 35](#) .

destroy Israel. And the lessons on demonology from that period are enduring lessons for today. The demonic realm tends to repeat itself, so we can expect the same demonic strategies today, and God is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so we can apply the principles learned in this book to modern events as well.

But one of the things that I just brushed over and did not adequately address was the symbolism of the seven festivals and how they related to the seven bowl judgments. We saw that these were temple bowls. We saw that each judgment landed on a historical festival day. And so there were seven temple bowls for seven temple festivals. But the question is, "Why? Why did God make those things fall in specific festival days?" And why did He do it twice? He did it once in the days leading up to AD 70 and He did it again before the end of the nation. It was a double witness in His covenant lawsuit. I believe that there was also prophetic symbolism involved. And I just want to give you a small insight into the symbolism by summarizing each festival.

### ***A. Bowl 7 - Passover***

And we will start with today's bowl, which landed (or depending on your interpretation, at least started to occur) on Passover of AD 66. I don't think that was by coincidence. This bowl began the pouring out of God's wrath upon Israel. And it sums up why all seven bowls needed to fall. There is a deliberate comparison with Egypt in all of these bowl plagues.

In the first Passover in Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to take the blood of the Passover Lamb and to wipe it on the lintels of their doorways. When the angel of death saw the blood, he would pass over that household. And any Israelites who failed to do so would be treated like the Egyptians and would receive the plague of the death angel. In Exodus God made a distinction between true Israelites and the Egyptians by who received the plagues. And the same is true with these plagues. They symbolize a reversal. Israel is walking back into Egypt, and as chapter 11:8 states, Israel was now being treated as spiritually being Sodom and Egypt. So it is explaining why unbelieving Israel would even receive the plagues of Egypt - water turning to blood, hail, boils, etc.

And how appropriate that the very events that warned Christians to flee from Jerusalem (and not even go down into their houses to take their clothing) and to flee to Pella happened on Passover, the very day that Israel fled from Egypt in the book of Exodus. And an Israelite under Moses who did not personally believe in the blood and did not personally apply the blood to his

household automatically received the plague because spiritually he was no different than an unbelieving Egyptian. So this first Passover plague introduces why Israel is being treated as if they are Egypt. It is God's call to a new Exodus of His people out of Egypt, so to speak. So that's the symbolic connection to Passover.

### ***B. Bowl 6 - Unleavened Bread***

We saw that Bowl Six landed on the day of Unleavened Bread. That too is not by accident. In Egypt, Israelites were to symbolically remove every crumb of leavened bread out of their houses and out of their clothes. They were to take candles and make sure nothing remained. Leaven symbolizes the spread of sin. Sin would give the demons of Egypt legal ground over them, and on that first Passover-Unleavened Bread-Firstfruits period, the removal of leaven symbolized who was devoted to Yehovah and who was going to remain with the demons of Egypt. And really, God's Egyptian plagues were directed against the gods of Egypt - the demons of Egypt.

But now, because Israel rejected the final Passover, Jesus, they had no way to cover or remove their sin, and therefore they had no protection from demons. So the sixth bowl shows the demons taking over, which in turn leads to Armageddon. Of course, we saw that in history, this was literally fulfilled. But symbolically, only judgment can be expected for those who do not have Jesus removing the leaven of sin from their lives. They either submit to the true God of Israel or they end up subject to the gods of Egypt, who are demons.

### ***C. Bowl 5 - Firstfruits***

Bowl five landed on Firstfruits, or resurrection day. This was the day that Israel crossed the Red Sea. On Israel's side was light from the fiery side of the Shekinah Glory Cloud and on Egypt's side was darkness given by that same Shekinah cloud of God. And all of that symbolized that when the dawning light of Resurrection Day is rejected, all that is left is darkness. And bowl five speaks of deep darkness on all the empire, and instead of the Sun of Righteousness rising with healing in His wings, He inflicts sores and disease in the midst of that darkness - He inflicts the diseases of Egypt. And we saw that the literal darkness was caused by Vesuvius. It was deep darkness. But even though it was literal history, it symbolized something spiritual.

#### ***D. Bowl 4 - Pentecost***

Bowl four landed on Pentecost. There is nothing accidental about God's prophecies. They are fulfilled in such a perfect manner. Anyway, in terms of symbolism, Pentecost symbolized two baptisms - you are either baptized with the Holy Spirit or you are baptized with fire. Let me read you what John the Baptizer predicted about the Baptism of the Spirit on Pentecost. Matthew 3 says,

But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath that is about come?... 11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire: 12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. (Matt. 3:11-12)

So Pentecost guaranteed either the receiving of the Holy Spirit or the receiving of unquenchable fire. There was no in between. And the literal historical fires that we looked at in bowl four were great symbols of that unquenchable fire - and they interestingly burned for three days and three nights. And don't even think that detail was accidental. Verses 8-9 speaks of the literal historical events that were symbols:

Rev. 16:8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was granted to him to burn the people with fire. 9 So the people were burned with severe burns, and they blasphemed the name of God, who has authority over these plagues. And they did not repent to give Him glory.

And we looked at that in detail.

#### ***E. Bowl 3 - Trumpets***

Bowl three was poured out on the Day of Trumpets, or Ab 1 of AD 136. Those who shed the blood of saints and prophets would have their own blood shed. Trumpets was God's call to angels to prepare for battle. In the Old Testament it was pagans who were God's enemies, but in this case, it was Israel who had become God's enemy and whose blood flowed.

#### ***F. Bowl 2 - Atonement***

Bowl two was poured out on the Day of Atonement, or Ab 9 of AD 136. The Day of Atonement pointed to the blood of Jesus providing cleansing for the nation of Israel. But when Israel trampled under foot the blood of Christ, their own blood flowed so deep that three early Jewish rabbis and their historians say that there were horses who sank up to their nostrils in the blood. As I already mentioned, one rabbi said that 80,000,000 Jews were killed. Most historians think that is a gross exaggeration, but it is undeniable

that this was one of the worst massacres in history. And we looked at that in detail. Judgment is inescapable - if you reject Christ who received God's judgment as a substitute, then you must receive God's judgment yourself. So it was so appropriate that this judgment was said by Jewish historians themselves to have landed on the Day of Atonement.

### **G. Bowl 1 - Tabernacles**

Bowl one was poured out on the Day of Tabernacles, which speaks to the end of Israel as a nation and disease upon all who reject the message of Tabernacles - which is exactly what Zechariah 14 promised would happen in connection with Festival of Tabernacles in New Covenant times. And Tabernacles also symbolizes Israel in exile (living in temporary booths) and the Gentiles becoming Christianized.

At least in summary form, that is the logic behind why God had each judgment land on a festival day. But let's dig into the details of bowl seven.

## **II. Note that bowl seven begins the judgments ("It has begun" = "Γέγονεν!" v. 17)**

The first thing that I want to remind you of is that this bowl begins the judgments, it does not finish them. Most partial Preterists think this finished the judgments. But not so. Chapter 15 came to the point of the chiasm and chapter 16 then is moving backwards - at least through chapter 17, and then it explicitly says that it is moving forward again off into our distant future. Now, some translations translate the last phrase of verse 17 as, "It is done." My viewpoint could account for that, if that was what it really did mean. It would then mean that starting with bowl seven, it was over for Israel; there was no turning back. But the literal meaning of this word is listed in dictionaries as an antonym or an opposite of "it is done" or "it is finished."

This is not the word, Τετέλεσται or any of the other words that indicates an ending. It is the Greek word, γεγονεν. As mentioned when I gave my first overview and then preached on verse 1, this Greek word would have been a huge clue to a Greek reader that there is a reversal going on. The last bowl of the vision begins the judgments in actual history, and it's a hint that they should read the judgments that way. Let me read you the definitions in a few Greek dictionaries:

This word is defined by one large dictionary as, "To begin to be, to come into existence as implying origin...In the aor. and perf., to have begun to be, to have come into existence" (CWSD), [Another dictionary says,] to be

born...origin...to grow...genesis of something..." (NIDNTT),[another dictionary says] "to come into being...point of origin...entry into a new condition, become..." (BDAG), [Another dictionary says] "birth, genesis". And I dealt with the meaning of that term extensively when I preached on verse 1, so I won't say more here.

But when bowl seven was poured out, it was the start of the historical judgments that would spell the doom of Israel and the seven-headed monster. So it appears that this prophecy was fulfilled shortly after John wrote this book. And the events I will document were so amazing that anyone with eyes to see would have immediately recognized that judgments were indeed beginning. Something serious was about to begin. Josephus certainly saw those historical events as indicators that God must be about to judge Israel.

### **III. It is poured out into the air (εἰς τὸν ἄερα) because that was where the judgments began (cf. 6:12-17; 12:7-9)**

Verse 17 says, "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air..." Now, we are going to be seeing lots of effects on the earth, but it starts in the air. And the reason for this is that the judgments against Israel started with massive battles between angels and demons in the air, as shown in Revelation 6:12-16 (which happened on this exact same day) and as shown in Revelation 12:7-12 (which looks back again to that day - sort of as a reminder). Satan and his hosts themselves began to be judged as they were kicked out of heaven. This was not just a judgment on the earth; this was a judgment on the prince of the power of the air. In three and a half years, Satan would be bound. The other beasts would continue for an epoch and a season, but Satan himself would be bound.

## **IV. The effects on earth**

### **A. Lightnings, thunders, and noises (v. 18a)**

And it is not surprising that the events in the air would produce lightnings, thunders, and noises, as verse 18 words it. Matthew 24:27 speaks of lightning in connection with Christ's coming in judgment and with the coming of the Roman standards under the Roman General Cestius. Because he uses the Greek word of comparison, ὡσπερ, Jesus is likely saying that His coming in judgment on Israel was what was symbolized by lightning, and

not the lightning itself. His coming would be like the lightning. So the remarkable lightning, thunder, and other noises that terrified people on that day were simply symbols of Christ's spiritual coming in the skies that we looked at in chapter 6:12-16. This was not Christ's Second Coming (which is future to us and will be far more than just an appearing, but will be a tangible coming to the earth). This is speaking of a very unique coming in judgment on Israel and temple.

Back then I quoted quite a number of ancient histories that spoke of an incredibly beautiful and transfixing man in the sky who was leading armies of angels and chariots. Roman, Jewish, and ancient Christian historians speak of this appearing in the sky. Tacitus records both the sounds of angelic beings as well as giving a possible reference to this lightning when he says, "Then the sun was suddenly darkened and the fourteen districts of the city were struck by lightning."<sup>2</sup> After referring to natural and supernatural heavenly signs, Josephus says, "they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise..." So this phrase was literally fulfilled in the Spring of AD 66.

***B. An earthquake more severe than any previously in recorded history (v. 18); indeed, so severe that it resulted in every single island moving rapidly (v. 20) and at least some mountains completely disappearing (v. 20)***

But some of the noises may have come from the massive earthquake that followed. My next point says that an earthquake more severe than any earthquake previously recorded in history was prophesied to happen in AD 66, and that it would be so severe that verse 20 says that every island would move rapidly enough that it would be like it was fleeing, and at least some mountains would disappear. Can this be taken literally? Yes it can. Too many commentaries think that because these are symbolic that they don't have to be taken literally in history. But my interpretation of this book has been far more literal than a Dispensational interpretation. This has been perhaps the most difficult section in Revelation for me to document, but even this section is there in history.

Look at the text. Verse 18 says, "And there was a tremendous earthquake, a terribly severe earthquake such as had not occurred since mankind existed on the land." Verse 20 adds, "And every island fled, and mountains were not found." Some of your versions might say "the mountains," as if all of the mountains disappeared, but even futurists don't take it that way. In any case,

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<sup>2</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, Annals, Book XIV, 13. A. J. Church and W. J. Brodribb (translators), Annals of Tacitus, (London: MacMillan & Co, 1876), p. 262.

there is no "the" in the Greek. It's just mountains. There were some mountains that disappeared, but certainly not all mountains. But the Greek is just as clear that every island had sufficient movement that it could be said to flee - the Greek word ἔφυγεν. What on earth is that talking about? Certainly the spiritual shaking was that profound, but what about the literal physical shaking?

Since in past weeks we have clearly documented the timing of this event to the first century, we can know with a certainty that it did happen, because God said it would happen. And in my searches last year, I ran across even more evidences of a massive earthquake that literally fulfills every detail of these verses. There is more and more evidence coming out all the time.

Josephus wasn't much help. He only mentions a terrible noise as the earth shook Israel. He doesn't say how hard the earth shook. It was just significant enough that he mentions the noise that the earth made and the movement of the earth. But back in chapter 6 I documented that this happened all over the Mediterranean. Let me give a tiny summary of what I documented back then. I have about a dozen books and numerous technical journals that document what I am about to describe. And if you want more details, you will have to look at my exposition of chapter 6:12-17, which is the portion of the first half of the book that lines up date-wise with this one.

The first article I stumbled upon was a technical article by George Pararas-Carayannis, and it was published in a journal called, Science of Tsunami Hazards. And it presents the results of numerous interdisciplinary studies showing that of the 613 historically documented earthquakes in the Mediterranean region from the time of Christ to the present, the four biggest earthquakes were in the years AD 66, 365, 800, and 1303. And this one in AD 66 was massive. Let me summarize in point form some of the conclusions that he and other colleagues came to when they studied this super-earthquake. And I won't give nearly the same amount of detail that I gave before.

- First of all, it was massive enough to be felt all over the Mediterranean. And we looked at a lot of evidence of that.
- Second, a 30 foot high tsunami hit Crete, and the tsunami was higher in some parts of the Mediterranean. But these studies show evidences of tsunamis in AD 66 all over the Mediterranean.
- Third, some island mountains disappeared under water due to buckling that happened from the impact of the Aegean and Anatolian micro-plates hitting up against the African and Eurasian tectonic plates. There were some places where land masses went up and other places where they buckled and went down. And they have recently started excavating some cities that are now completely under

- the water. There is some fascinating underwater archeology going on.
- Fourth, cities like Colossae<sup>3</sup> and Laodicea were leveled by this earthquake,<sup>4</sup> with Laodicea itself not being rebuilt for another 160 years.<sup>5</sup> This is one of many proofs that the book of Revelation could not have been written any later than the first quarter of AD 66. I've got a lot of other proofs, but the evidence shows there simply wouldn't have been any city of Laodicea to write to in chapter 3 if it had been written in AD 90 or after, as some people believe. And we will be seeing in verse 19 that many cities of the nations fell down. They were flattened.
  - Fifth, based on the evidence that we have, every portion of the Mediterranean map was impacted in some way, including every island in the Ionian and Aegean Seas, the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Mediterranean Basin.<sup>6</sup> Papadopoulos and Vassilopoulou say that the cities on the island of Crete were totally destroyed - all of them.<sup>7</sup> There is also evidence that the earthquake affected

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- 3 Eusebius says that Colossae and Hierapolis were also ruined by that earthquake, though I haven't been able to verify to what extent. See J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Lightfoot's Commentaries on the Epistles; Accordance electronic ed. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), n.p. See Thayer's dictionary under *Λαοδικαία*. See Karen ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality*, p. 155.
- 4 Though many scholars cite Tacitus to prove that the earthquake in Laodicea happened in 60 AD, Bishop Lightfoot shows how that was a different earthquake. J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Lightfoot's Commentaries on the Epistles; Accordance electronic ed. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), n.p. The same debate can be seen among historians of seismology, with men like Gutenberg and Sieberg arguing strongly for an AD 66 date. (See notes to seismological studies in my sermon on Revelation 6:12-17.) As will be seen by our converging exegetical evidence, the AD 66 date is quite strong. There are a number of scholars who see this earthquake as having occurred in AD 66 based on an ancient reference to the tomb of Dictys being opened by the earthquake in the 13th year of Nero's reign (AD 66). See Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy, Irene S. Lemos, *Ancient Greed: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 337. See also the numerous references in footnote 8 which all date the earthquake to AD 66, via the solid reference to Dictys' tomb being opened by that earthquake.
- 5 What is significant about Laodicea is that it had been ruined by a massive earthquake six years earlier in AD 60, and yet was sufficiently wealthy that it was able to rebuild itself within four years. So there is a major contrast between the previous huge earthquake that we looked at in chapter 3 and that the city recovered from in four years and this earthquake that it didn't fully recover from till the reign of Marcus Aurelius. (It started to be half-heartedly rebuilt under Hadrian, who ruled from 117-138, but it was not fully rebuilt until some time in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, who ruled from AD 161-180.) So that is just one of many hints of the magnitude of this earthquake.
- 6 <http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Tsunami365ADeEastMedSea.html>
- 7 G. A. Papadopoulos, A. Vassilopoulou, "Historical and Archaeological Evidence of Earthquakes and Tsunamis Felt in the Kythira Strait, Greece," in *Tsunami Research at the End of a Critical Decade*, Volume 18 of the series *Advances in Natural and Technological Hazards Research*, pp 119-138. This is available for \$29.95 at [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-94-017-3618-3\\_10](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-94-017-3618-3_10) For more details on the story of Dictys and the dating of the earthquake in AD 66, see Sigrid Deger-Jalkotzy, Irene S. Lemos, *Ancient Greed: From the Mycenaean Palaces to the Age of Homer*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 337. Yoel L. Arbeitman, Allan R. Bomhard (eds.), *Bono Homini Donum: Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory*, (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1981), p. 764. Sir Arthur Evans and Joan Evans, *The Palace of Minos: A Comparative Account of the Successive Stages of the Early Cretan Civilization as Illustrated by the Discoveries at Knossos*, volume 4, issue 2, (MacMillan and Company, 1935), p. 673. John Robert Morgan, Meriel Jones (eds.), *Philosophical Presences in the Ancient Novel*, (Groningen: Groningen University Library, 2007), p. 138. See *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, (Boston: Ginn & Co, 1893), p. 151ff. *New International Encyclopedia*, volume 6,\* article under "Dictys" (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co, 1914). Karen ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality*, p. 155.

many cities in Greece and Italy.<sup>8</sup> So there were cities all over the Roman empire that were affected to one degree or another. This was not a minor earthquake. Let me read a couple of quotes from George Pararas Carrayanis on what exactly was going on in terms of tectonics and seismology. He says, Tectonic collisions and Alpine Orogenesis resulted in further complex geotectonic deformations that created the Hellenic Orogenic Tectonic Belt, the long range of mountains that traverse the western side of the Aegean microplate. These tectonic processes continued to stress and fold the earth's upper crust in the region, thus forming more islands, more mainland mass and lifting the mountains of Greece to greater heights. The active tectonic interaction and collision of the converging African and Eurasian plates along the entire eastern Mediterranean margin resulted in multiple subduction zones, post-orogenic basins, accretionary margins, Neogenic crust shortening and extreme seismicity and volcanism - processes that continue to the present...  
 ...there have been numerous scientific and archaeological field investigations of raised shorelines and submerged ancient harbors of the Eastern Mediterranean that are indicative of major crustal displacements associated with significant earthquakes...  
 ... Field studies of salt deposition and of erosional features indicate that the upward crustal displacements raised the land by as much as 6.66 meters on the average above the ancient sea level (corrected for eustatic sea level variation). Maximum uplift in one area was as much as 9.9 meters.<sup>9</sup>

9.9 meters is 32.48 feet. Can you imagine going through an earthquake that raised this building up thirty two and a half feet in a matter of minutes? It would be terrifying. That would be a moving of islands and mountains on a scale that had not been seen by men before. Very literally, "a terribly severe earthquake such as had not occurred since mankind existed on the land" occurred on the Festival of Passover of AD 66. For many more details about this earthquake, I would refer you to my sermon on chapter 6:12-17.

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Harrassowitz, Near Eastern Studies: Dedicated to H.I.H Prince Takahito Mikasa on the Occasion of His Seventy-fifth Birthday, (1991), p. 57. Miriam T. Griffin, Nero: The End of a Dynasty, (New York: Routledge, 1984), pp. 147ff. G. A. Papadopoulos, A. Vassilopoulou, "Historical and Archaeological Evidence of Earthquakes and Tsunamis Felt in the Kythira Strait, Greece," in Tsunami Research at the End of a Critical Decade, Volume 18 of the series Advances in Natural and Technological Hazards Research, pp 119-138. This is available for \$29.95 at [http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-94-017-3618-3\\_10](http://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-94-017-3618-3_10) Sergey L. Soloviev, Olga N. Solovieva, Chan N. Go, Khen S. Kim, Nikolay A. Shchetnikov, Tsunamis in the Mediterranean Sea 2000 B.C.-2000 A.D., p. 26. <http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Tsunami365ADeEastMedSea.html> In a 1980 study on seismic activity, Antonopoulos said,

According to Philostratus, when Apollonius of Tyana visited Leben near Phaestos in Crete, a strong earthquake shook the island and the sea at Leben retreated about one mile. A few days later, he says, the news arrived that on the very same day of the earthquake and just at the same hour of midday an island rose out of the sea between the islands of Thera (Santorini) and Crete (Vita Apollonii, lib. iv, cf. 34).

> J. ANTONOPOULOS, "Data from investigation on seismic Sea-waves events in the Eastern Mediterranean from the Birth of Christ to 500 A.D. Part 1," Dept. of Civil Engineering, University of Patras, Patras (Greece), p. 146. Received on July 1st, 1980.

<sup>8</sup> and Hyperreality, p. 155.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.drgeorgepc.com/Tsunami365ADeEastMedSea.html>

### **C. Followed by three political divisions within Jerusalem (v. 19a)**

But verse 19 goes on to say that the great city, which chapter 11:8 has already defined as Jerusalem, was divided into three parts. So we would expect some kind of division to have happened after Passover of AD 66, and perhaps precipitated by these signs.

And that is exactly what we find in history. There was a huge power struggle between three factions who fought for control of the city. Initially it was the Saducees versus two other factions, but eventually it was three rebel factions. On Passover Day they were united because they were fighting against Cestius. He came to try to destroy Jerusalem. And you will remember that as soon as his armies came, the Christians fled and were able to escape Jerusalem. But amazingly, the unbelieving Jews were able to slaughter Cestius' army, Cestius barely escaped with his life, and as soon as Cestius fled, the Jews fell apart into three factions who tried to control different parts of the city. Josephus words it this way: Jerusalem was "parted into three factions, and that one faction fought against the other" (Wars 5.1.1) Tacitus said of the Jews at Jerusalem, "there were three generals and three armies, and between these three there was constant fighting, treachery, and arson" (Histories 5.12.3). Very literally, Jerusalem was divided into three parts after Passover of AD 66.

### **D. Falling of cities of nations (v. 19b)**

John moves from Jerusalem to the cities of the Roman empire and says, "and the cities of the nations fell." And I've already dealt with this earlier in terms of my interpretation. Every one of the cities of Crete fell and many of the cities of Greece and Italy were destroyed. Laodicea was completely demolished. Eusebius says that Colossae and Hierapolis were also ruined by that earthquake, though I haven't been able to verify to what extent.<sup>10</sup> So if this is a reference to what the earthquake did, there is ample evidence that this was fulfilled. And that is my view.

But there are others who think that this fall of cities refers to the next three years in which multiplied millions of Romans died all over the empire in a civil war, with some cities being completely annihilated. That puts it off a little far for my comfort; it puts it off to AD 69. It is true that in AD 66 riots alone made a death toll of over 100,000 citizens in various cities. For

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<sup>10</sup> See J. B. Lightfoot, *Saint Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (Lightfoot's Commentaries on the Epistles; Accordance electronic ed. Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006). See Thayer's dictionary under *Λαοδικεία*. See Karen ní Mheallaigh, *Reading Fiction with Lucian: Fakes, Freaks and Hyperreality*, p. 155.

example, 20,000 Jews were killed in Caesarea by the Graeco-Syrian population and Caesarea was completely emptied of Jews. Now, that was not war; that was the result of citizen riots - like the LA riots, only worse. The next two weeks resulted in more riots between Jews and non-Jews in many cities in Palestine and throughout the empire. Jews in numerous cities and districts retaliated by killing massive numbers of non-Jews. The Syrians retaliated and killed all the Jewish inhabitants within their cities. Some of the cities worst hit were, Scythopolis, Ashkelon, Ptolemais, Tyre, Hippos, Gadara, Alexandria (where 50,000 Jews were killed), Damascus (where 10,000 were killed in one hour), and Joppa. The region of Pella was completely emptied. That's why the 144,000 Christians were able to move there for the duration of the war. So anyway, that is how some people take it. But I think its referring to the immediate time around Passover of AD 66, so it has to refer to cities being destroyed by the earthquake.

### ***E. Huge hailstones weighing a talent (v. 21a)***

Verse 21 predicted another astounding thing that happened in AD 66. It says, "And huge hailstones, weighing about a talent, fell out of the sky on the people." I have quite a number of commentators who say that this refers to the stones being thrown into the city by the Roman ballista machines. They point out that the Romans painted the stones white during the day and dark at night so that people wouldn't see them as easily and be able to dodge them. Josephus says that these stones weighed a talent, which is over 100 pounds. And some people claim that they looked like hail. I guess that is a possibility, but I personally don't buy that explanation. There were three perfectly good Greek words for the projectiles thrown by the Roman ballista machines (καταπέλτης πετροβόλος or λιθοβόλον) and this wasn't one of those three words. χαλάζης means hail - frozen stones of ice. I think we need to take it literally just like we have been taking the rest of the book. There was literal hail that fell in AD 66. And by the way, it fell again in AD 70.

But anyway, a literal interpretation makes virtually all commentaries exceedingly queezy. Many people think this defies physics. Sure there was hail that fell on Israel. Anybody can prove that. But commentators are skeptical that it is even possible to have hail stones that weigh a talent. In fact, some liberals scoff and make this one more mistake in the Bible. So, no matter what your eschatology is (even if you think this refers to something in the future), it is worth thinking about the possibility of hail that weighs a talent. We have to believe it because God says it.

Anyway, let's think about this a bit. Commentaries are all over the map on

how much a talent is. Beckwith is non-committal, saying it is between 60 and 130 pounds.<sup>11</sup> Wow! That's quite a variation. Robert Thomas says that it is between 108 and 130 pounds.<sup>12</sup> Mounce says that it is between 60 and more than 100 pounds.<sup>13</sup> Louw and Nida say that it is 90 pounds.<sup>14</sup> George Eldon Ladd said that it is a bit over 100 pounds.<sup>15</sup> Beale says that in ancient times it ranged from 45 pounds to 130 pounds.<sup>16</sup> I think the ancients needed to get their act together on weights and measures, or at least archaeologists need to quit guessing. But for the sake of argument, let's take the most outrageously large estimate of 130 pounds and work from there. Is that even possible? We know it is not necessary to be that big to kill people because even the 2 pound hailstones that fell in Bangladesh back in 1986 killed 92 people. But is it possible for there to be 130 pound hailstones?

And the answer is, "Of course. God says it is possible." I have some interesting modern examples of massive hail, including one ice ball in Brazil that weighed 110 pounds and another that weighed an astounding 440 pounds. The biggest I have run across that fits the criteria of hail that I will be discussing here fell in a public area of Toledo, Spain. In fact, it almost hit the niece of the Justice of Peace of Maqueda, and it weighed an astonishing 881.8 pounds (400 kg).<sup>17</sup> That makes the one talent hailstones small by comparison. Guinness Book of World Records records a 20 foot long mass of ice that fell in Ord, Scotland in 1849, but it didn't list a weight.

Now, initially scientists have claimed that these were not actually hailstones, and most continue to say that. There is a lot of controversy on the origin of these massive ice balls that have fallen so frequently in the last two decades. They have coined a word for them. They call them megacryometeors. But the makeup of these huge megacryometeors have all the features of hail.<sup>18</sup>

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11 Beckwith, Isbon T. *The Apocalypse of John*. New York: MacMillan, 1919; reprinted, Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001.

12 Thomas, Robert L. *Revelation 8–22 An Exegetical Commentary*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1995.

13 Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. Revised ed. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, edited by F. F. Bruce and Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.

14 Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988.

15 Ladd, George Eldon. *A Commentary of the Revelation of John*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972.

16 G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, *New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, Cumbria: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1999), 845.

17 Peter T. Bobrowsky, Hans Rickman (eds), *Coment/Asteroid Impacts and Human Society: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, (Berlin: Springer, 2007), p. 346.

18 <http://rsta.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/368/1922/3145>

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6561843\\_Megacryometeors\\_Distribution\\_on\\_Earth\\_and\\_Current\\_Research](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/6561843_Megacryometeors_Distribution_on_Earth_and_Current_Research) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megacryometeor> <http://tierra.rediris.es/megacryometeors/> [http://hyperion.cc.uregina.ca/~astro/Ice\\_Mets.pdf](http://hyperion.cc.uregina.ca/~astro/Ice_Mets.pdf) <http://discovermagazine.com/2009/jan/073> <http://www.damninteresting.com/the-peculiar-phenomenon-of-megacryometeors/>

Scientists have been very puzzled by this phenomenon and they have rushed to study numerous ice-balls that have fallen in Europe, North and South America, and recently in Africa. The reason it is now assumed that these can't be genuine meteors is that they would probably completely evaporate on entry through the atmosphere, and secondly, because of the structure and chemical makeup of the ice. The reason they can't just be explained due to storms is that some of the ice balls have fallen without there being a cloud in the sky. The reason these can't be water leaking from airplanes is that they have no urine or feces or chemicals in them - laboratory containers being the main place where the leak would come from. And there have been big blue iceblocks that have fallen from the sky due to waste leakage from planes. That's a totally different story. But the megacyrometeors that have been examined in the last two decades have no bacteria or chemicals in them. If they were clean water from an airplane (which is extremely unlikely), they should still have traces of chlorine or chloramine in them, but they don't. So others have theorized that water spouts have taken water from a lake up into the atmosphere and the frozen water gets dropped as ice chunks. The problem with that theory is that scientists have analyzed these megacryometeors and they have found none of the chemical or molecular structure of lake water and indeed, none of the bacteria or algae that would be expected. In fact, Jesus Martinez-Frias, a planetary geologist at the Center for Astrobiology in Madrid, Spain, says that the chemical and molecular composition is identical to hail formed during storms. And they can tell what temperatures they freeze at through ice bores, and it rules out anything beyond our troposphere. He studied the structure of a much smaller 20-pound hail ball that crashed through the roof of an industrial warehouse, and one article summarizes his findings of that one. It says,

Like other megacryometeors, the ice chunk had a chemical and molecular composition identical to that of rainwater derived from the troposphere, the lowest layer of the atmosphere. Martínez-Frías believes that megacryometeors form when an ice crystal is driven repeatedly through cold water vapor by atmospheric turbulence, acquiring coat after coat of frozen water.

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<http://www.weatherimagery.com/blog/chunks-ice-fall-sky/>  
<http://cosmology.com/Megacryometeors1.pdf> <http://at.yorku.ca/c/a/j/i/24.htm>  
<http://web.b.ebscohost.com/abstract?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=00113891&AN=87094662&h=7yLeqrCoAO5tdvNHymuGGn%2bY4C8vj5s6zRhvYY6F%2f9k%2fZjROkk4NEfOoR%2fZ4yQIHVKfjZWBVcB7povbwCxHncQ%3d%3d&crl=c&resultNs=AdminWebAuth&resultLocal=ErrCrlNotAuth&crlhashurl=login.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26profile%3dehost%26scope%3dsite%26authtype%3dcrawler%26jrnl%3d00113891%26AN%3d87094662> <http://www.abc-7.com/story/30848944/basketball-sized-ice-ball-smashes-through-naples-roof> See Peter T. Bobrowsky, Hans Rickman (eds), *Comet/Asteroid Impacts and Human Society: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2007); Ashton Acton (ed), *Issues in General Science and Scientific Theory and Method*, (Atlanta: Scholarly Editions, 2012), chapter 13.

If he is right, these monster hails are indeed true hail even though some of them are not formed in clouds. And in my footnotes I reference a number of articles and books on the subject. We don't know how big the hail was in Josephus' storm, because Josephus didn't go out and measure it. But he interpreted one event as so astounding that he thought that this was a divine foreshadowing of calamities to come. So this was not an ordinary storm. He said,

...they lay all night before the wall, though in a very bad encampment; for there broke out a prodigious storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightnings, terrible thunderings, and amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake. These things were a manifest indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put into this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshowed some grand calamities that were coming.

And by the way, these Idumeans blasphemed; they were so upset. It was dark, so Josephus didn't know where the amazing concussions came from, but when megacryometeors hit, they shake houses nearby and make a deafening noise that would perfectly fit the evidence of this text. Of course, that event happened later than on this day, but there does seem to be a progress of time from when the bowl is poured into the air and when the effects are experienced on the earth. In any case, there is no reason to doubt that hail stones that big can fall. Once again the liberals have egg on their faces.

## **V. The reason - God was bringing to remembrance things He had against Jerusalem, and pouring out His fury (v. 19)**

Verse 19 has a clause that explains why all of this was brought - God was upset with Jerusalem's sins. We already identified Babylon with Jerusalem a number of times starting in chapter 14, and God will do so again in chapter 17 where we will dig into that metaphor more. But far from being the people of God as she claimed to be, God has identified her in this book as Sodom, Egypt, Babylon, the harlot, the Beast from the Land, and the great persecutor of the church.

And though God is slow to anger and though He is patient, there comes a time when a nation's sins will be brought to remembrance. When verse 19 says, "And Babylon the great was remembered before God," it is not implying that God forgets. He is not the one remembering anyway. It is the saints remembering to bring evidence to God's courtroom - something we should do. This is a metaphor used over and over in the Old Testament for

legal or judicial cases where the character and acts of a person are brought before a court so that they can be judged.

And the outcome of being brought before God is "to give her the cup of the wine of the fury of His wrath." This is not talking about hellfire, though that too is a manifestation of God's wrath. God brings hell up in other places in this book. But this is affirming that God's wrath is poured out on nations in history. And by the way, not just on Israel. We saw that the judgments of these bowls progress from Israel to Rome to Rome and back to Israel. It doesn't matter what nation it is, it cannot escape from God's judgments. Psalm 2 guarantees that in the New Covenant, any nation that refuses to kiss the Son will face God's wrath and eventually be smashed with Christ's rod of iron. Nations cannot get away with their rebellion forever. And interestingly, God's wrath comes at times when that nation is least expecting it. Annas, Caiaphas, and the rest of that trillionaire family had ruled Israel for a long time, and they controlled every facet of politics so effectively that it looked like they were unseatable. Things were swimmingly good for them. But the leadership of Jerusalem was in for a rude awakening. All nations get a reckoning in history as well as in eternity if they do not repent. You may be frustrated at how thoroughly entrenched evil has become in America. But that is no problem for God.

And I also want you to notice that God is not as nice as postmodern man tries to make him out to be. He is only a gentle Father to those who put their trust in Jesus. Outside of Christ there is no safety. Romans 8 tells us that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. God's love resides in the Son, and therefore it is lavished on those who are in the Son. But outside of Jesus there is wrath, and there comes a time when the fury of His wrath is poured out. This is not the God of the postmodern church, but it is the God of the Bible. It is a strong warning to flee for safety to Jesus. He alone is our fortress and strong tower on judgment day. And God urges us to apply the blood of the Passover Lamb, Jesus, not only to ourselves as individuals, but to our homes; our families.

## **VI. The result - most people did not repent, but blasphemed (v. 21b)**

Now, despite physical judgments, verse 21 says that these people did not believe. Despite the hailstones falling on them in such a miraculous fashion, verse 21 says, "the people blasphemed God on account of the plague of the hail, because its plague was exceedingly severe." Both the goodness and

severity of God lead the elect to Christ, but apart from God changing hearts, this is the result. People blaspheme in many different ways. Some blaspheme with filthy speech directed against God. Others blaspheme by attributing judgments to chance rather than to God. Others blaspheme simply by rejecting the message of Scripture. But when Christ has given you His free offer to be your Passover Lamb - your substitute; when He has offered to bear God's judgment in our place and you still refuse to apply the blood to the lintels of your houses, you deserve God's wrath, and you will receive it. But sadly, because of total depravity, Jesus said that even if someone were to see the greatest miracle - to see someone rise from the dead, people would not believe. He said, "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'" (Luke 16:31). No matter how many prophecies are fulfilled, how many miracles are done, apart from grace, people will not believe.

## **VII. But since this is a temple "bowl" it is a redemptive judgment and God did indeed draw many to himself**

But praise God, He is stronger than our stubborn hearts. When the dating of this bowl is placed with the same date in the first half of the book, it becomes clear that God was not finished with Israel. There was a remnant of people being saved over the next sixty-six years and there never has been a time when God has not saved a remnant from apostate Israel. One day He will save the nation as a whole. But the fact that this is a temple bowl shows that this is a redemptive judgment. Redemptive judgments are judgments God uses to bring some to Christ; to grow the church. Never lose hope for any nation. God's hand is not too short that it cannot save. And when judgments fall, we need to be ready to pick up the pieces and offer the mercies of Jesus.

## **VIII. What was symbolized by these events (Hag. 2:6-7,21-22; Heb. 12:18-29)**

The last question that I want to answer is, "What does this earthquake and these cataclysmic events symbolize?" We saw in Revelation 1:1 that even though this book is filled with symbols, that the symbols are rooted in history. In other words, just as the Rock that Moses struck in the wilderness was a symbol of Christ does not mean that it was not a historical event. It was a symbol rooted in literal history. And we have been seeing that every detail of this book, including this difficult passage, is rooted in history.

But if each of these bowls are symbols, we need to understand what they symbolize. We've seen what temple bowls symbolize several times. They are symbols of God's redemptive judgments in history. But what about the other cataclysmic events? I think in part they symbolized coming judgment - and even Josephus saw that. I think in part they symbolize the change from 40 years in the wilderness to actually crossing the Jordan River into Canaan, and the transition to the church inheriting the nations. Prior to AD 70 it was still primarily the times of the Jews. But after AD 70 it became the times of the Gentiles.

But there is more. Haggai 2:6-7 and verses 21-22 predicted a spiritual earthquake that would happen in the first century just before the times of the Gentiles (which began in AD 70) and that would begin the process of removing all the old creation and gradually bringing in the new creation. Well, Hebrews 12 quotes that passage from Haggai and using the present tense and the word "now" says that the spiritual shaking of the Old Covenant is happening now and we are receiving the kingdom now and this process of shaking will eventually leave nothing except that which cannot be shaken. Praise God!

Hebrews 12 was written in AD 66, just before this event. And in the next chapter Hebrews tells the Jewish Christians to not cling to Jerusalem, but to be willing to go outside the camp and receive the kingdom of Christ. He says, "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one which is about to come" (Heb. 13:14). It's the Greek word μέλλω - about to happen. He's warning the Jewish Christians that they better flee Jerusalem (representing Judaism) because Christ's coming in judgment was imminent. There was a convergence of things about to happen in the book of Hebrews and in the book of Revelation that speaks of the definitive passing away of the Old Covenant so that the New Covenant that Jesus set up with His blood might remain forever. But Hebrews 12 symbolizes all of that with an earthquake. The literal physical earthquake symbolized the spiritual earthquake.

But how extensive is that shaking that places all things under Christ's feet? Hebrews 12 says that it shakes heaven and earth. That's universally extensive. It shakes everything lost in Adam and replaces it with everything purchased by the Second Adam. And 1 Corinthians 15 picks up the phrase of all things under Christ's feet and includes the subduing of all enemies.

And the timing of 1 Corinthians 15 is interesting. According to the Premillennialist interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives a three-fold

order for resurrection. They rightly see Christ as the firstfruits in AD 30, they see the next one at Christ's Second Coming in our future, and they see the next one after the millennium. I agree with their exegesis, but not with their timing. I see the order as Christ the firstfruits (that's AD 30), those who are Christ's at His appearing (not coming, but appearing in the sky) in AD 70 (a very well documented event), and the rest at the end of history when there is a General Resurrection. And we looked at that passage in depth before. And chapter 20 gives the same order - the first resurrection is the barley harvest in the first century and the rest of the dead do not rise till the thousand years are finished (that's the wheat harvest).

But for purposes of this symbolism from Hebrews, its not just the Old Covenant ceremonial laws which must be shaken and removed. It is everything connected to the Old broken covenant of Adam. 1 Corinthians says that anything in rebellion to Christ must be removed before He can come back. That completely rules out Full Preterism. Paul says that Jesus must remain at the right hand of the Father until all things are placed under His feet, every enemy is either reconciled or taken out, and all of planet earth is in total submission to Jesus. That hasn't happened yet. Only at His coming will the last enemy, death, be destroyed, and it will be destroyed while He comes and we are caught up in an instant to meet Him in the air. Well, that means that every other enemy must be put under Christ's feet before the last enemy, death, is put under His feet. In other words it has to happen before the Second Coming. And then He turn the kingdom over the Father.

In the meantime we pray that God's kingdom would come more and more and that His will would be done more and more until it is being done as thoroughly on earth as it is done in heaven. That too is a shaking of the old sinful order and a bringing of the kingdom of heaven to earth. The Great Commission will not be complete until all nations are Christian nations obeying everything Christ has said in His Word. That powerful earthquake symbolized this beginning of the shaking of everything until only that which cannot be shaken is left.

May we not be part of what is shaken out of planet earth, but be part of that which inherits planet earth in eternity. The only way we can be part of what cannot be shaken is by being united to the Shaker Himself - Jesus Christ - trusting Him alone for salvation. May it be true of all of us. Amen.