Revelation 16: Summary and Highlights

A Preterist Commentary on Revelation 16: Summary and Highlights

*In this **Preterist commentary on Revelation 16**the reader will see that **the seven plagues** of Revelation 16 **are a very accurate description of** several notable **events throughout** the course of **the Jewish War**. The pouring out of the seven bowls of Revelation 16 is a reflection of the pouring out of drink offerings during Pentecost. During Pentecost in A.D. 66, Josephus and Tacitus record what appears to be the departure from the Temple of the seven angels with the seven bowls. Immediately thereafter, the Jewish War began. During this war the **seas and rivers turned red with blood** as predicted in the second and third bowls. **A multitude of miraculous signs were witnessed in A.D. 69**, one year before the climactic siege of Jerusalem in fulfillment of Revelation 16:14: "They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle . . . ." Amidst these miraculous signs, **the kings of the east, Sohaemus and Antiochus, crossed the Euphrates to meet the other Roman forces near Mt. Megiddo (Armageddon)** as indicated in Revelation 16:12 and 16. During this time a great thunderstorm and earthquake simultaneously rocked Jerusalem while **both Rome and Jerusalem** were divided by separate and **concurrent three-way civil wars** as predicted in the seventh bowl in Revelation 16:18-19: "Then there came flashes of lightening, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. . . . [and; T]he **great city split into three parts**." When the Romans arrived in Jerusalem in A.D.*

70, Roman catapults hurled boulders into the city. ***These stones were white and weighed about one hundred pounds*** *as predicted in Revelation 16: 21: "****From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men.****" In the following preterist* ***commentary on Revelation 16****, the reader will be exposed to the evidence.*

Martin, John. The Seventh Plague. 1823.

The following may seem unbelievable. However, most information is taken from *unbiased* historical records and all information is easily verifiable. Sources listed at the end.

Orchestrated Pandemonium

Preterism, A Commentary of Revelation 16: The Seven Bowls Mirror the Plagues of Exodus.

In **Deuteronomy 28** God promised abundant blessings to his people if they kept the Law of Moses. But if they failed to keep the Law, Israel would be afflicted with the plagues of Egypt (Deuteronomy 28:60). Earlier we saw how each of the seven trumpets represented a different plague of Egypt. We also saw repeated Exodus references throughout Revelation as a whole including the fact that the mark of the beast is a dark reminder of the plague of the firstborn (see the commentary on Revelation 13). Revelation 16 continues this theme by also presenting each bowl as a different plague of Exodus. The first bowl is the plague of boils. The second and third bowls represent the plague of blood. The fifth bowl is the plague of darkness. The sixth bowl calls to mind the plague of frogs and the parting of the Red Sea. And the seventh bowl is the plague of hail.

Revelation Fulfilled, An Exposition, Interpretation and Commentary of Revelation 16: The Seven Bowls are the Seven Trumpets.

Milton S. Terry notes that apocalyptic literature often presents the same matter two or more times using different symbols. This fact is illustrated in Genesis 37:5-11. Here Joseph dreams two different dreams which both symbolize his impending exaltation. Genesis 41:14-30 is another example. Here Pharaoh dreams two distinct dreams each signifying the coming famine. The dream of the statue in Daniel 2 and the dream of the four beasts in Daniel 7 is another example.[1]

This pattern is repeated in the seven bowls of Revelation 16. This vision is essentially a restatement of **Revelation 8** and **Revelation 9**; therefore, the consequence of each bowl in this chapter matches that of each trumpet in **Revelation 8** and **Revelation 9**. The first bowl represents the first trumpet, the second bowl the second trumpet and so on. Revelation 16 is basically an elaboration of events previously described in **Revelation 8** and **Revelation 9**.

Preterist View, Interpretation and Commentary of the End Times and Revelation 16: The Historical Fulfillment of the Seven Bowls Took Place Largely in the Order Dictated in the Text.

Because the Roman offensive under Cestius began in A.D. 66 in the month of Tishri, a month which opens with the Feast of

Trumpets, I believe the seven angels each blew their trumpets during this holiday but poured out their bowls during Pentecost, three and a half months earlier. If all the bowls were emptied on this day, that is not to say that the chain of events that each bowl set in motion also transpired in exactly the same order. That being said, it is interesting to note that the consequence and historical fulfillment of each bowl and trumpet did, in fact, unfold in the sequence described in this chapter, with few exceptions. All the plagues of this chapter afflicted Israel and Rome during the first four years of the Jewish War.

> [1]*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."*

Revelation 16:1 Preterist Commentary: The Pouring Out of the Seven Bowls is a Reflection of the Pouring Out of Drink Offerings during Pentecost.

In this verse, a mighty voice commands the seven angels to leave the Temple and pour out the seven bowls. Though it seems likely that the seven bowls of Revelation 16 began as incense-bowls carrying the prayers of the saints (Revelation 5:8; 6:9-11; 8:3-5),[2] the contents of these bowls appear to quickly change into blood (Revelation 16:3-7). Thus these incense bowls appear to transform into heavenly drink offerings. During a drink offering, Jewish priests pour out bowls to the Lord. Inside each bowl is usually wine representing blood. During the last supper Jesus referred to wine as His blood (Matthew 26:27-28). Furthermore, wine is called the blood of

the grape in Genesis 49:11 and Deuteronomy 32:14. The wine in the drink offerings of Pentecost like the wine in the last supper symbolizes the blood of Christ and His people.

Why might blood pour out of the bowls of Revelation 16? When Jesus was presented to the people before His crucifixion, the Israelites took credit for His death shouting, "His blood is on us and on our children!" (Matthew 27:23-25). The pouring out of these seven bowls may be a symbolic pouring out of the blood of Christ on the people responsible for His death and the deaths of His followers. In this transformation from incense to blood which is poured out on Israel one might also appreciate the fulfillment of Revelation 14:10 and Matthew 23:35-36:

> *"[T]hey, too, will drink the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath (Revelation 14:10)."*
>
> *"And so upon you [people of Jerusalem] will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation (Matthew 23:35-36)."*

I believe the pouring out of these seven bowls began in A.D. 66 during Pentecost, the Feast of Weeks, when during the prescribed sacrifices, customary drink offerings were poured out of bowls as sacrifices to the Lord (Numbers 28:7; 28:31).

Preterist Theology, A Commentary of Revelation 16:1: **During Pentecost in A.D. 66, Josephus and Tacitus**

Record what May be the Departure from the Temple of the Seven Angels with the Seven Bowls.

The pouring out of the seven bowls causing the seven plagues of Revelation 16 is a heavenly reflection of the pouring out of the drink offerings performed by Jewish priests during the celebration of Pentecost—the very same holiday in which the following is said to have occurred in A.D. 66: "The doors of the holy place [the temple in Jerusalem] abruptly opened, a superhuman voice was heard to declare that the gods were leaving it, and in the same instant came the rushing tumult of their departure."[3] Tacitus is not the only historian to record this supernatural phenomenon. Josephus writes, "Moreover, at that feast which we call Pentecost, as the priests were going by night into the inner [court of the temple,] as their custom was, to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that, in the first place, they felt a quaking, and heard a great noise, and after that they heard a sound as of a great multitude, saying, 'Let us remove hence.'"[4] Here both Josephus and Tacitus may unknowingly describe what seems to be the flight of the seven angels ***from the Temple*** with the seven bowls of Revelation 16 in A.D. 66, three and a half months before the arrival of the Roman military literally fulfilling Revelation 15:6: "***Out of the temple*** came the seven angels with the seven plagues." In the next verse, the first angel from the temple pours out his drink offering; and John describes the outcome.

> [2]*The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.*

The people of Jerusalem did not bury the dead during the Roman siege. Hayez, Francesco. The Destruction of the Temple of

Jerusalem. 1867. Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Venice.

Preterist Eschatology and Commentary of Revelation 16:2: **The Israelites did not bury the Dead. Did this cause a Plague of Boils?**

Amidst the siege of Jerusalem the people of the city did not bury their dead. During a siege when food and water become scarce and dead bodies litter the streets, an epidemic, like the one mentioned in Revelation 16:2,would appear almost inevitable. George Holford writes,

> *After Jerusalem was surrounded by the army of Titus, pestilential diseases soon made their appearance there, to aggravate the miseries, and deepen the horrors of the siege. They were partly occasioned by the immense multitudes which were crowded together in the city, partly by the putrid effluvia which arose from the unburied dead, and partly from the prevalence of the famine.*[5]

Interestingly, Josephus says that a "pestilential destruction" came upon Jerusalem during the siege of A.D. 70.[6] Thus in fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28:27, 35 Judea is afflicted with the sixth plague of Exodus, the plague of boils. In the next bowl, Israel is about to experience another disaster, the plague of blood. See **Deuteronomy 28:15-68: A Preterist Commentary**.

Preterist Bible Commentary on Revelation 16:2: **As is the Case in**

Jeremiah 30, The Sores of v. 2 may Also be Symbolic.

There also may be another way in which to understand the sores of v. 2 that compliments the above interpretation. The painful sores of v. 2 may also be a generic metaphor for divine punishment as is the case in Jeremiah 30:13. In Jeremiah 30 Israel is said to be afflicted with a sore which appears to symbolize Judah's divine punishment that resulted in her desolation and exile at the hands of Babylon in the sixth century B.C. Interestingly, Josephus uses similar language to describe the situation in Israel during its first century revolt against Rome.[7] In *Wars of the Jews*, Josephus refers to the corpus of Israel as a body suffering from inflammation as a symbol of the fact that the wealthy Jews of Israel who were sympathetic to Rome were persecuted and killed during the Jewish revolt by the Jewish rebels who sought political sovereignty:

> *Now when these were quieted, it happened, **as it does in a diseased body, that another part was subject to an inflammation**; for a company of deceivers and robbers got together, and persuaded the Jews to revolt, and exhorted them to assert their liberty, inflicting death on those that continued in obedience to the Roman government, and saying, that such as willingly chose slavery ought to be forced from such their desired inclinations; for they parted themselves into different bodies, and lay in wait up and down the country, and plundered the houses of the great men, and slew the men themselves, and set the villages on fire; and this till all Judea was filled with the effects of their madness [emphasis mine].*[8]

In his account of the war with Rome, Josephus seems to unknowingly echo Revelation 16:2 by referring to those wealthy

Jews who were sympathetic to Rome as a diseased body suffering from sores or "inflammation." As implied in v. 2 it was those Jews who were sympathetic and loyal to Rome who received these sores. These wealthy Jews loyal to Rome were punished by this plague of boils because according to v. 2 they "had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image."

Before addressing how the Jewish elite who were loyal to Rome had the mark of the beast, let us continue to look further into the potential literal and symbolic significance of the sores mentioned in v. 2. The word translated *sores* in v. 2 is *plege* which means "a blow, wound (Strong's)". Thus the sores of v. 2 need not have been fulfilled in a literal disease. It is perhaps more likely that these sores were wounds caused by various blows inflicted upon the Jewish elite by their enemies the Zealots during the Jewish War. This physical molestation of the rich by their Zealot enemies appears to have occurred with some regularity from A.D. 66 to A.D. 70.

Though the *plege* or wounds of v. 2 were likely literal, there also may be symbolic significance or meaning to these wounds. In the commentary on Revelation 22:2 I cite 1 Peter 2:24 and Mark 2:1-12 to illustrate the fact that healing sometimes symbolizes forgiveness of sins in the Bible. If it is true that healing symbolizes forgiveness, then it follows that *plege* or *wounds* would thus appear to symbolize sin. Perhaps the literal wounds or sores of Revelation 16:2 were also metaphors of sin?

A Preterist View and Commentary of Revelation 16:2: **If Israel was in War with Rome, How is it that Israel "had the Mark of the Beast**

[Rome] and worshiped His Image”?

Having explained the fulfillment of Revelation 16:2, let us now turn our attention to how the wealthy Jewish elite “had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.” If Israel was affected by the plague of boils and was in war with Rome, how is it that some of the people of Israel “had the mark of the beast [Rome] and worshiped his image”? The answer lies in the two faces of first century Israel mentioned by Josephus. One side wanted peace with Rome and the other, the zealots, wanted war and independence. Those Israelites who wanted peace consisted to a large extent of the religious and political elite who owed their positions of authority to Rome and did not wish to risk their wealth and status with the establishment of a new, radical government. In fact, it was for this reason; the preservation of their wealth, position and status; that the religious authorities sought to have Jesus and His followers killed as is implied in Matthew 21:43-46 and James 5:1-5. Then during Jesus’ trial before Pilate, these people chanted, “We have no king but Caesar.” (John 19:15) This chant at the crucifixion illustrates this large contingent of Israelites who chose Caesar, the beast, over the Messiah. It is these Israelites who are punished in v. 2. For a detailed explanation of the mark of the beast and how and why the wealthy Jews of Jerusalem who were loyal to Rome had this mark and worshipped the image of the beast on it see the commentary on **Revelation 13**.

> *3The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.*

A Full Preterist View and

Commentary of Revelation 16:3: A Great Slaughter Turned the Sea of Galilee Red with Blood.

The fact that the sea "turned into blood like that of a dead man" may suggest that the sea had turned red from the blood of the dead floating on the water's surface. Describing the slaughter of the people of Joppa by the Mediterranean Sea, Josephus writes, "[T]he ***sea was bloody a long way***, and the maritime parts were full of dead bodies."[9] The sea of Galilee was also bloodied during this war when many Jews from Taricheae were killed there. Regarding this slaughter Josephus says, "***[O]ne might then see the lake all bloody***, and full of dead bodies, for not one of them escaped."[10] In describing the tragedy at Taricheae, Josephus echoes the point made in v. 3 that everyone in the sea died.[11]

> [4]*The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.*

A Realized Eschatological View and Commentary of Revelation 16:4: The Massacre at the Jordan River

The Jordan River also turned red with blood. Many Jews fleeing from Gadara were cornered by the Romans at the Jordan River. Here a great massacre ensued. Regarding the aftermath, Josephus writes that the "Jordan could not be passed over, by reason of the dead bodies that were in it, but because the lake Asphatitis [the Dead Sea] was also full of dead bodies, that were carried down into it by the river."[12]

***A Preterist Interpretation, Exposition and Commentary of Revelation 16:4-6*: Revelation 16:6 says that These Jews were Given Blood to Drink. The Drowning of these Jewish Rebels in the Bloody Jordan Literally Fulfills This Verse.**

In v. 6 cited below John goes on to predict that those afflicted with the third bowl were given "blood to drink" because they "shed the blood" of the saints and prophets. David D. Gates points out that when describing the flagrant way in which the leaders of the zealots indiscriminately killed the people of Jerusalem in their quest for power during Israel's first-century war with Rome, Josephus says these murderers "drank the blood of the populace."[13]

Adam Maarschalk also points out an interesting way in which vs. 4-6 were fulfilled during the slaughter at the Jordan River mentioned above. Maarschalk says that many of the Jews slaughtered by the Romans were pushed into the water by their enemies and presumably drowned. When someone drowns the desire to breathe underwater becomes so strong that they end up swallowing water into their lungs. In the drowning of the Jewish rebels in the bloody water of the Jordan River one can see how these people literally drank blood in explicit fulfillment of vs. 4-6. In the following vs. John explains why the Jews were given blood to drink.

> *[5]Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the*

> *Holy One, because you have so judged; [6]for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." [7]And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."*

Preterism, A Commentary of Revelation 16:6: **Jesus Declared, "No Prophet can Die outside of Jerusalem!" Because the People Afflicted with the Plagues of Revelation are charged with killing the Prophets in v. 6, these Plagues Must have Afflicted Israel.**

In these verses, John echoes the words of Jesus in **Matthew 23**. Accusing the people of Jerusalem, Jesus proclaims the following in Matthew 23:34-36:

> *I am sending you prophets and wise men and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. I tell you the truth, all this will come upon* ***this generation****. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you. . ."*

Adding greater detail to this discourse, Luke records Jesus saying, "[N]o prophet can die outside of Jerusalem!"

According to the words of Jesus, if the people afflicted with the second and third plagues had killed the prophets then they must have been present in Jerusalem. Therefore, the people affected by these plagues must have been Jews. The Jewish persecution of the early church spoken of here by Jesus in Matthew 23:34-36 is recorded in Acts 8:1-3. And as predicted, the Jews of Jesus' generation had suffered. A little over thirty years after Jesus' death began the most tragic war in Jewish history, the war with Rome. John recorded the fulfillment of Jesus' curse issued in Matthew 23:34-36 in the second and third plagues. Here the Israelites were given blood to drink in Revelation 16:6 in retribution for the deaths of the saints. The fact that the Israelites of the first century were given blood to drink in this v. is depicted again in Revelation 17:6. In Revelation 17:6 the Whore of Babylon is seen drinking the blood of the martyrs. As will be explained below, the Whore of Babylon is Jerusalem.

Preterism Explained and Interpreted, A Commentary of Revelation 16:7: **The Voice from the Altar in v. 7 is the Voice of the Martyrs Mentioned Above. These Martyrs are seen under the Altar in Revelation 6:9-11.**

In v. 7 a voice from the altar approves of this judgment from God saying, "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments." The voice from the altar is the voice of the martyrs who had been slain by the persecution mentioned above. The martyrs were seen under the altar in Revelation 6:9. These martyrs under the altar were the saints and prophets mentioned in Matthew 23:34-36 above who eagerly awaited justice for

their unjust deaths as is explicitly stated in Revelation 6:9-11:

> *When he opened the fifth seal, **I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"** Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been [emphasis mine].*
>
> *[8]The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. [9]They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control of these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.*

A Preterist Exposition and Commentary of Revelation 16:8: **The Fourth Plague is a Natural Consequence of the First.**

In Deuteronomy 28:22, God threatened to punish the Israelites with scorching heat if they ever turned away from him. See **Deuteronomy 28:15-68: A Preterist Commentary**. In the fourth bowl, God stays true to his word. Recall that the plagues of the trumpets and bowls record the same events. In the first trumpet of Revelation 8:7 "a third of the trees were burned up[.]" Trees provide shade and relief from the scorching heat of summer. Thus the fourth plague in which the sun is said to scorch the people is a natural consequence of the first plague. Interestingly, Josephus records people being killed by

the heat of summer during the war with Rome.

A Covenant Eschatology Exposition and Commentary of Revelation 16:8: Josephus says that many Jews Died from Intense Heat during the Summer.

During the Jewish War, many Samaritans escaped to the mountain of Gerizzim where they were besieged by the Romans at the base of the mountain. Concerning the fate of these Samaritans, Josephus says the following in *Wars of the Jews* 3.7.32: "Now it happened that the Samaritans, who were destitute of water, were **inflamed with a violent heat** (for it was summertime, and the multitude had not provided themselves with necessaries), insomuch that some of them **died that very day with heat** . . . ."[14] Here one can see the literal fulfillment of Revelation 16:9: "They were seared by the intense heat . . . ." That having been said, there appears to be more to the searing heat of v. 8 than just the heat of the sun.

A Covenant Eschatology Interpretation and Commentary of Revelation 16:8: Israel was burned by the Romans as Part of Rome's Scorched Earth Policy.

During the Jewish War, Rome followed a scorched-earth policy. In his history of the Jewish War, Josephus records how the Romans set fire to the cities of Israel and the surrounding suburbs and countryside.[15] The punishing heat of v. 8 might

also have been induced and aggravated by the many fires ignited by the Romans throughout the course of the Jewish War. In light of Rome's scorched earth policy, one can see how the people were truly scorched "with fire" in v. 8.

The siege of Jerusalem. As a consequence of this siege, Jerusalem was burned to the ground much like the rest of Israel during the Jewish War. Roberts, David. The Siege and Destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans Under the Command of Titus, A.D. 70 . 1850. Yeshiva University Museum, New York.

> *[10]The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony [11]and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.*

A Realized Eschatology Interpretation and Commentary of Revelation 16:10: **The Fact that Rome is cast into Darkness signifies the Death of the Beast.**

In v. 10, the Beast is cast into the Outer Darkness of the Abyss.

The Resurrection of the Beast is foreseen in Revelation 9:1-12 when the Beast rises out of the Abyss

Representing the Rise of the Flavian Dynasty.

As is the case in Isaiah 13:9-10, Ezekiel 32:7-8 and Amos 8:9, darkness signifies political upheaval and the fall or death of a king. The darkness of Revelation 16:10 is no exception. In A.D. 69, Rome experienced unprecedented strife. This darkness is a perfect metaphor for what may have been Rome's darkest hour. This chaos began with the death of Nero Caesar. After Nero's death, Rome collapsed into civil war and is pictured here dying with Nero. The fact that the beast, Nero, and his kingdom, Rome, are "plunged into darkness" is a Biblical metaphor of the beast being cast into the dark underworld of the dead.[16] Describing the dark afterlife realm of the dead prior to the resurrection, Job 10:19-22 reads,

> *If only I had never come into being, or had been carried straight from the womb to the grave! Are not my few days almost over? Turn away from me so I can have a moment's joy before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and* ***utter darkness****, to* ***the land of deepest night****, of* ***utter darkness*** *and disorder, where* ***even the light is like darkness****.*

The fact that the beast is "plunged into darkness" is a symbolic expression of the death of the beast of Revelation. Similar imagery is found in Matthew 22:13: "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, ***into the darkness***, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." In v. 10 the beast and his kingdom are "plunged into darkness." "Plunged into darkness" and "cast into darkness" are identical Biblical expressions.

As previously explained, the seven trumpets of Revelation 8-11 and seven bowls of Revelation 16 describe the same events. The fifth trumpet and bowl span the year of the four emperors between the death of Nero, the sixth wounded head of

Revelation 13:3, and the rise of Vespasian and the Flavian Dynasty. As a result of its wounded head representing the death of its king Nero, the Roman leviathan suffers a fatal injury, an injury in which Rome did not revive until the fall of Jerusalem and the rise of Vespasian. The rise of Vespasian and the Flavians represents the resurrection of the beast. The resurrection of the beast is depicted in the fifth trumpet of Revelation 9:1-12. Upon Vespasian's coronation, both Vespasian and Titus were simultaneously granted the title Caesar. Immediately after Vespasian and Titus' coronation as Caesar, Apollyon representing Titus, the second Caesar of the Flavian Dynasty and the general of the 15th Apollonian Legion, rises out of the Abyss in Revelation 9:11. See **Revelation 9: A Preterist Commentary—Who is Apollyon?**

The Abyss is the realm of outer darkness in which the beast is cast in v. 10. The fact that the beast rises out of the Abyss in the fifth trumpet of Revelation 9:1-12 is resurrection imagery symbolizing the rise of the Flavian Dynasty. Upon Vespasian's coronation peace and order was quickly restored to Rome and the empire was saved from permanent collapse. During the chaotic year between the death of Nero and the rise of Vespasian, the Roman Empire collapsed from civil war. This year of "darkness" is eloquently described by Tacitus:

> *The story upon which I embark is one full of incident, marked by bitter fighting, rent by treason, and even in peace sisnister [sic]. Four emperors perished violently. There were three civil wars, still more campaigns fought against the foreigner, and often conflicts which combined elements of both. Success in the East [the Jewish War] was balanced by failure in the West. The Balkans were in turmoil, the Gallic provinces wavered in their allegiance, and Britain was left to fend for itself no sooner than its conquest had been completed. The Sarmatian and Suebian peoples rose upon us, the Dacian distinguished himself in desperate battles won and lost, and thanks to the activities of a charlatan*

> *masquerading as Nero, even Parthia was on the brink of declaring war. Finally, Italy itself fell victim to disasters which were quite unprecedented or had not occurred for many centuries. Whole towns were burnt down or buried throughout the richest part of the coast of Campania, and Rome suffered severely from fires that destroyed its most venerable temples, the very Capitol being set alight by Roman hands. Things holy were desecrated, there was adultery in high places. The Mediterranean swarmed with exiles and its rocky islets ran with blood. . . . In addition to manifold tragedy on the human plane, signs and wonders occurred in heaven and earth, premonitory lightnings and tokens of things to come, auspicious or ominous, doubtful or manifest. In short, Rome's unparalleled sufferings supplied ample proof that the gods are indifferent to our tranquility, but eager for our punishment.*[17]

See **If Israel was to be Punished Seven Times Over for its Sins (Leviticus 26:18), How is it that the Beast is Afflicted with One of the Seven Bowls?**, **Does Revelation 16:1 Imply that the Beast is Not Rome?** and **Was Revelation 9:4-6 and Revelation 16:10-11 Fulfilled in the Eruption of Vesuvius?**[18]

> [12]*The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East.*

Revelation 16:12 Preterist Commentary: Jerusalem is called Egypt, Sodom and Babylon in the Apocalypse.

Jerusalem is given three names throughout the text of the

Apocalypse. In **Revelation 11:8**, Jerusalem is called Egypt because it had been afflicted with the plagues of Exodus in **Revelation 8**, **Revelation 9** and Revelation 16. In **Revelation 11:8**, it is also called Sodom because, as stated in **Revelation 13:13**, it was punished by fire from heaven and later burned to the ground. Jerusalem is also called Babylon beginning in **Revelation 14:8**. This verse, corresponding with **Revelation 9:14**, indicates one reason why.

Preterism, A Commentary of Revelation 16:12: **The Kings of the East are Sohaemus and Antiochus. Both Men Ruled Kingdoms along the Euphrates to the East of Patmos and the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. They aided Titus' Army in the Siege of Jerusalem.**

The Euphrates River ran under the walls of Babylon. When the Persians attacked the city, they diverted the flow of water out of the river bed allowing them to march under the wall and take the city. Therefore, the fall of Babylon was a direct result of the drying-up of the Euphrates to allow for the passage of the kings of the east, the Persians, in 539 B.C.

Patmos is an island off the west coast of Asia Minor. The seven churches of Asia Minor to which Revelation was addressed were cities in Western Asia Minor.

John envisions a similar circumstance resulting in the fall of Jerusalem, spiritual Babylon. In this verse, the Euphrates is again dried up to allow the passage of the kings of the east. During the first century, Rome was the center of the known

world, hence the saying, “All roads lead to Rome.” To a Roman audience like the seven churches addressed in Revelation the term “kings of the east” implies kings or rulers of Rome’s eastern provinces which were distinct from the rest of the Roman Empire as the eastern provinces worshiped the living emperor. Thus the kings of the east mentioned here appear to be Sohaemus and Antiochus who ruled on the fringes of Rome’s eastern provinces.

Furthermore, John penned Revelation on the island of Patmos, an island on the west coast of Asia Minor or what is now modern Turkey. And the Book of Revelation was a letter written and addressed specifically to seven churches in western Turkey. Because Revelation was written by a person on an island off the west coast of Turkey and was addressed to people in western Turkey, Patmos and western Turkey would seem to be the reference points of this book. Thus it should also be noted from the perspective of John and the seven churches to whom he wrote the kings of the east is also an appropriate title as these are kings also ruled over kingdoms east of Patmos and the seven churches of Asia Minor.

King Sohaemus ruled the kingdom of Sophene on the east bank of the Euphrates between Cappadocia and Armenia. Antiochus was the king of Commagene on the west bank of the Euphrates.[19] These kings of the east offered their military and leadership to aid in the defeat of Jerusalem.[20] In addition to the two kings mentioned above, three thousand Roman soldiers drawn from the legions guarding the Euphrates also reinforced Titus’ army on its road to Jerusalem.[21] Thus the fall of Jerusalem, spiritual Babylon, mirrored the fall of ancient, historical Babylon: both cities having been conquered, at least in part, by the crossing of their enemies over the Euphrates.

King Sohaemus ruled the kingdom of Sophene on the east bank of the Euphrates. Antiochus ruled Commagene on the west bank of

the Euphrates.

Revelation 16:12 Preterist Commentary: **"The Kings of the East" Label appears to Also Point to the Babylonian Epithet since Ancient Babylon was Directly East of Jerusalem.**

Though it is likely that the kings of the east are kings who ruled east of the seven churches addressed in Revelation, there seems to be more to this label. The title "kings of the east" also appears to be an implicit reference to Babylon, the empire directly east of Israel that conquered Judah in the sixth century B.C.

There is also more to the Babylonian epithet than what has been stated above. Jerusalem is called Babylon in Revelation because she had an adulterous affair with Rome. This affair is symbolized in Revelation 17 as a prostitute sitting on a seven-headed beast. The seven-headed beast is Rome. The prostitute sitting on the beast is Jerusalem. The woman is depicted sitting on the beast in Revelation 17 in order to portray Jerusalem, the whore of Babylon, in the act of sexual intercourse with the beast which is Rome. For an explanation of how exactly Jerusalem committed adultery with Rome see the preterist commentary on **Revelation 17**.

Because of this adulterous affair between Rome and Jerusalem, Jerusalem is called Babylon. In the first century Babylon was the Jews' nickname for Rome. Though likely present long before the war with Rome, this nickname became especially appropriate after the Jewish War because both Rome and Babylon literally destroyed the physical temple in Jerusalem (6th

century B.C. and A.D. 70) and exiled Jews throughout their respective empires. However, Jerusalem is also called Babylon, Rome's epithet, in Revelation because both cities became one just as do a man and his whore according to 1 Corinthians 6:16: "[T]he one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her[.] For He says, "The two shall become one flesh." Thus Jerusalem, the whore or prostitute of Babylon (Rome), is spiritually called Babylon, Rome's epithet, throughout Revelation because these two cities became one flesh as a result of their adulterous affair depicted in Revelation 17. Thus Jerusalem acquires the title Babylon, Rome's symbolic title, in Revelation in the same way as does a wife who in becoming one flesh with her husband takes on her husband's name.

Babylon is directly east of Jerusalem.

As stated above, Babylon is Rome's symbolic name, a name that Jerusalem also adopts in Revelation because the two cities had become one flesh as a consequence of their adulterous affair (1 Corinthians 6:16). Thus both Rome and Jerusalem are called Babylon in Revelation. Though Rome is west of Israel, Rome is never directly named in Revelation. Rather, Rome is called the beast and is also given the symbolic name *Babylon*. As stated above, the ancient city of Babylon once resided directly east of Jerusalem. The "kings of the east" mentioned in v. 12 also appears to be a spiritual or symbolic name for the kings of Rome which is also spiritual or symbolic Babylon. Thus in keeping with this theme of calling Rome *Babylon*, an ancient city that once resided directly east of Jerusalem, the kings of the east in v. 12 are actually Roman kings since Rome is also spiritual Babylon throughout the Apocalypse.[23] Thus the drying of the Euphrates to allow the passage of the kings of the east in Revelation 16:12 seems to poetically point to both cities called "Babylon" in Revelation.

> *[13]Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. [14]They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.*

Revelation 16:13-14 Preterist Commentary: Many People Predicted that Vespasian would become Emperor.

After Nero's death, Vespasian postponed his assault on Israel and contemplated the risk inherent in ascending to the throne. During this time of uncertainty, Rome was torn by civil war resulting in the deaths of three Caesars. During this tumultuous year described by John in Revelation 16:10, many people prophesied that Vespasian would become emperor.[24] In addition, an ancient Jewish prophecy also bolstered his hope: Out of Judea would come the future king of the world. Stationed in Israel at the time, Vespasian believed himself to be the fulfillment of this age-old prophecy. This and many other signs not mentioned here gave Vespasian the resolution he needed.[25] With his mind made up, the future emperor patiently awaited his opportunity. Then when the moment was right, he proved the predictions true and seized the crown. Immediately after Vespasian's rise to power, the war in Israel which paused sometime after Nero's death immediately resumed by Vespasian's command. Thus these signs and miracles performed by the spirits of demons in vs. 13 and 14 pointing to Vespasian's future rule indirectly guaranteed that the war in v. 14 would resume.

Revelation 16:14 Preterist Commentary: **“The Coming of the Lawless One will be in accordance with the Work of Satan Displayed in all kinds of Counterfeit Miracles, Signs and Wonders.”**

In the same way that the real Egypt was afflicted with a plague of frogs during the exodus, spiritual Egypt, representing Jerusalem (Revelation 11:8), was afflicted with spiritual frogs. These frogs are the spirits of demons performing miracles to gather together the kings for battle. 2Thessalonians 2:9 says, “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders.”

The man in the forefront is Vespasian. Immediately behind him is Titus, his son. Alma-Tadema, Lawrence. The Triumph of Titus. 1885.

Revelation 16:14 Preterist Commentary: **Vespasian healed a Blind Man and a Man with a Withered Hand.**

After the civil war following Nero’s death described in the fifth plague, Vespasian seized control of the empire and restored the peace. Upon claiming the throne, Vespasian spent some time in Alexandria before making his triumphal entry into Rome. At this time, the time of the “coming of the lawless one,” in explicit fulfillment of 2 Thessalonians 2:9 and Revelation 16:14, Tacitus says that many miracles occurred:

"In the course of the months which Vespasian spent at Alexandria, waiting for the regular season of summer winds when the sea could be relied upon,[so he could sail to Rome to assume his seat as emperor] **many miracles occurred**."[26] According to the Roman historians Tacitus and Cassius Dio during Vespasian's stay in Alexandria, a blind man and a man with a withered hand fell at the emperor's feet begging to be healed. They claimed to have been told to do so by the god Serapis. Initially reluctant, Vespasian gave in to the fervent pleas of the surrounding crowd. Then according to these historians, Vespasian spit on the eyes of the blind man and stepped on the hand of the cripple, healing both men. Recording this miracle, Tacitus writes:

> *With a smiling expression and surrounded by an expectant crowd of bystanders, he [Vespasian] did what was asked. Instantly the cripple recovered the use of his hand and the light of day dawned again upon his blind companion. Both incidents are still vouched for by eye-witnesses, though there is now nothing to be gained by lying.*[27]

This event is also recorded by the first century historian Suetonius in *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 10.7. After healing these two men, Vespasian visited the temple of Serapis, the god who allegedly had sent these men to be healed. Tacitus records his experience at the temple:

> *He [Vespasian] had everyone else excluded from the temple, and went in alone, fixing his mind on the deity. Happening to glance round, he caught sight of a leading Egyptian named Basilides standing behind him. Now he knew that this man was detained by illness far from Alexandria at a place several days' journey distant. He inquired of the priests whether Basilides had entered the temple that day. He also inquired of those he met whether he had been seen in the city. Finally he sent off a party on horse, and ascertained that at*

> *the relevant time he had been eighty miles away. Thereupon he guessed that it was the god whom he had seen and that the reply to his query lay in the meaning of the name Basilides.*[28]

After healing the blind man and the cripple, Vespasian visited the temple of Serapis. Fearing a short reign ending with assassination, Vespasian arrived at the temple where he petitioned the god as to the length of his reign. Upon turning around to leave, he saw what appeared to be the priest Basilides. And with that, his question was answered: Basilides means "king's son." This vision calmed his fears. Perhaps he would not be assassinated but would live out his reign being succeeded in the natural way by his son?[29] Interestingly, Vespasian did seemingly die of natural causes and was, in fact, succeeded by his son Titus.

Revelation 16:14 Preterist Commentary: **The Following Miracles Occurred around the Time of Vespasian's Ascension.**

These were, by no means, the only miracles that had occurred from the death of Nero until Vespasian's ascension, the time of the sixth plague. During this period, called the year of the four Caesars, there were a multitude of recorded signs and miracles. Describing the signs preceding Nero's death, Cassius Dio writes:

> *And little did he [Nero] reck [sic] that both sets of doors, those of the mausoleum of Augustus and those of his own bedchamber, opened of their own accord on one and the same night, or that in the Alban territory it rained so much blood that rivers of it flowed over the land . . . .*[30]



Mausoleum of Augustus

> *With Nero the line of the Caesars became extinct. Among the many prophetic indications of this event two were outstanding. As Livia, years before, was returning to her home near Veii immediately after marrying Augustus, an eagle flew by and dropped into her lap a white pullet which it had pounced upon. Noticing a laurel twig in its beak she decided to keep the pullet for breeding and to plant the twig. Soon the pullet raised such a brood of chickens that the house is still known as 'The Poultry'; moreover the twig took root and grew so luxuriously that the Caesars always plucked laurels from it to wear at their triumphs. It also became an imperial custom to cut new slips and plant these close by. Remarkably enough, the death of each Emperor was anticipated by the premonitory wilting of his laurel; and in the last year of Nero's reign not only did every tree wither at the root, but the whole flock of poultry died. And, as if that were insufficient warning, a thunderbolt presently struck the Temple of the Caesars, decapitating all the statues at a stroke and dashed Augustus's scepter from his hands."*[31]

Other examples of signs and miracles presumably performed by the demons in vs. 13 and 14 include:

> *There were alarming prodigies, too. News of these flowed from a number of independent sources. At the entrance to the Capitol, it was said, the reins of the chariot in which Victory rides had slipped from her grasp; an apparition of*

superhuman size had suddenly emerged from the Chapel of Juno; on a sunny, windless day the statue of Julius Caesar on the Tiber Island had turned round so as to face east instead of west [symbolizing the fact that Vespasian who was in Judea to the east would supplant Vitellius from the west]; an ox had spoken in Etruria; there had been monstrous animal births and numerous signs and wonders[.][32]

Thus Galba was declared emperor, just as Tiberius had foretold when he said to him that he also should have a taste of the sovereignty. The event was likewise foretold by unmistakable omens. For it seemed to him in a vision that Fortune told him that she had now remained by him for a long time, yet no one would grant her admission into his house, and that, if she should be barred out much longer, she would take up her abode with somebody else. At about this very time, also, ships full of weapons under the guidance of no human hand came to anchor off the coast of Spain. And a mule brought forth young, an event which, as had been foretold, was to be a sign to him of the supreme power. Again, the hair of a boy who was offering a sacrifice turned white, whereupon the seers declared that the sovereignty held by the younger man [Galba's predecessor, Nero] should be transferred to the old age of Galba.[33]



During a lunar eclipse the moon can turn blood red.

While he was behaving in this way, evil omens occurred. A comet was seen, and the moon, contrary to precedent, appeared

to suffer two eclipses, being obscured on the fourth and on the seventh day. Also people saw two suns at once, one in the west weak and pale, and one in the east brilliant and powerful. On the Capitol many huge footprints were seen, presumably of some spirits that had descended from it. The soldiers who slept there on the night in question said that the temple of Jupiter had opened of itself with great clangour [sic] and that some of the guards had been so terrified that they fainted. At the same time that this happened Vespasian, who was engaged in warfare with the Jews, learned of the rebellion of Vitellis and of Otho and was deliberating what he should do."[34]

[15]"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." [16]Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

Revelation 16:16 Preterist Commentary: **The Roman Kings, Generals and their Armies Assembled Near Mt. Megiddo before Attacking Jerusalem. There is No Mention of a Battle of Armageddon anywhere in the Bible.**

The word Armageddon, *Har-Mageddon*, is commonly supposed to represent the Mountain of Megiddo better known as Mt. Carmel. The Roman kings, generals and their armies gathered in the coastal city of Caesarea immediately before marching south to attack Jerusalem in A.D. 70.[35] Caesarea is about eight miles east of Mt. Carmel, and Mt. Carmel is clearly visible from

Caearea. Through this region ran a highway where goods were traded between Egypt, Asia Minor and the Middle East. This highway passed near Caesarea and continued northeast along the edge of Mt. Carmel through the Valley of Jezreel.[36] Given the close proximity of the city of Caesarea and the valley of Megiddo, perhaps the mountain of Megiddo is the city of Caesarea itself? After all mountains often denote cities in the Bible. See **In the Bible Mountains Represent Cities or Kingdoms**. It is interesting to note that Jezreel Valley where Mt. Megiddo is located and the Roman army met before beginning their siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was called "the great plain of *Legio* (meaning Legion)" after the second Jewish revolt (A.D. 132-35)."[37]

This verse indicates that the kings would meet at Armageddon though it is important to notice that no explicit mention is made in this verse or elsewhere of a battle at Mt. Megiddo itself. Therefore, the popular notion of the Battle of Armageddon at Mt. Megiddo is a teaching without meaningful Biblical support.

Caesarea and Mt. Megiddo are 15 miles apart.

Revelation 16:16 Preterist Commentary: The Hebrew for Armageddon Literally Means "Mountain of [Gathering] Troops." Since "Mountains" Signify Kingdoms in the Bible, this "Mountain" appears to be Spiritual Babylon.

That being said, the derivation of *Megiddo* from *Armageddon* comes from the similarity between the common transliteration

of Megiddo, *Μαγεδών*, and Armageddon, *Ἁρμαγεδών,* in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Bible.[38] But John says that the kings will gather together in a place that "in Hebrew is called Armageddon." In other words, the true etymology of the term *Armageddon* must be derived from the Hebrew language, not a Greek transliteration. The *Har-* of *Har-Mageddon* is the Hebrew word for *mountain*. The *Ma* of *–Mageddon* is a "pre-formative *mem* used here in the locative sense, i.e, 'Mountain-which-is-a-**place of** _____'."[39] The *–geddon* portion of *Har-Mageddon* means "attack, cut, go in troops or throngs."[40] Thus the most likely meaning of Armageddon is "Mountain of Troops" or "Mountain of [mustering] Troops."[41] Keep in mind that *mountain* is a Biblical symbol for a city or kingdom (Psalms 2:6; 48:1; Isaiah 66:20; Jeremiah 51:25; Joel 3:17; etc). See **In the Bible Mountains Represent Cities or Kingdoms**. Skipping ahead to the following verses, one can see that the battle actually takes place in Babylon. Thus this "City of [mustering] Troops" appears to be spiritual Babylon which is Jerusalem. In light of this etymological evidence, many Christian scholars have now dismissed the notion of a battle at Mt. Megiddo in favor of a battle at Jerusalem. This belief is becoming increasingly more and more common even among dispensationalists. The fact that Jerusalem, called many things throughout this prophetic series of visions, is given this title is not surprising since it is at Jerusalem that the Roman army and the remaining Jewish rebels converged to face one another during the climax of the Jewish War. Perhaps this term has an intentionally ambiguous etymology in order to allude to both the vicinity of Megiddo, where the Romans met before their attack on Jerusalem, and Jerusalem itself, their final destination?

The rest of this chapter describes the seventh bowl. After the contents of this bowl are released into the sky, a thunderstorm and earthquake hit the city of Jerusalem, and shortly thereafter Rome began its attack. As stated earlier,

Jerusalem is prophetically called Babylon throughout much of Revelation. The fall of this great city begins in the following verses:

> *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!" 18 Then there came flashes of lightening, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on the earth, so tremendous was the quake [emphasis mine].*



Revelation 16:17-18 Preterist Commentary: **The Lightening, Rumblings, Thunder and Earthquake Mentioned in v. 18 Occurred in Jerusalem just Prior to the Arrival of the Roman Army.**

Josephus describes an almost supernatural thunderstorm and earthquake that hit Jerusalem simultaneously before the arrival of Titus' army. Concerning this event Josephus writes:

> *[F]or 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 foreshadowed some grand calamities that were coming [emphasis mine].[42]

[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.

***Revelation 16 Preterist Commentary*: Babylon is both Rome and Jerusalem.**

As stated above, through the illicit sexual union depicted in Revelation 17 between Jerusalem and Rome, the two cities became one in the same way that when a man has relations with a whore the two become one flesh: "[T]he one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her[.] For He says, "The two shall become one flesh (1 Corinthians 6:16)." Thus both Jerusalem and Rome are called Babylon, Rome's first century Jewish nickname, throughout Revelation. This is because as indicated in 1 Corinthians 6:16 both cities became one flesh as a result of the adulterous affair between Jerusalem and Rome pictured in Revelation 17. See the preterist commentary on **Revelation 17** for a more thorough explanation.

First century Jerusalem

Revelation 16:19 Preterist Commentary: There was a Three-Way Civil War in both Rome and Jerusalem in A.D. 69 before the Roman Army Arrived at Jerusalem.

Revelation 16:19 says that Babylon split into three parts. In A.D. 69, Jewish refugees from the surrounding cities that had been destroyed during Vespasian's campaign fled to Jerusalem to make their last stand. Shortly after the thunderstorm mentioned above a three-way civil war erupted. The Jewish rebels were split into three factions led by three aspiring Messiahs—John, Simon and Eleazar.[43] Eleazar and his men were stationed in the inner court of the temple.[44] Simon the son of Gioras controlled the upper city and much of the lower. John controlled the rest of Jerusalem. From here John and his men were attacked above and below by their two enemies.[45]

It is also worth noting that with the exception of the walls surrounding the Temple complex, first century Jerusalem, outside of the Temple fortress, was literally divided into three parts by fortified walls just prior to the Jewish War. These walls were built to progressively encapsulate a city that continually grew over the centuries.

While Jerusalem was torn in three parts by civil war, the rest of Rome suffered the same fate. In A.D. 69, Rome underwent a similar three-way civil war in which Galba, Otho and Vitellius pitted the Roman legions against each other. When one Caesar seized the throne, his rule was contested by a rival aristocrat who also declared himself Caesar. During that year, Rome was ruled by four Caesars leaving three Caesars dead. Like a wildfire, civil war spread throughout Rome destroying many cities and threatening to collapse the empire.

Hence, the cities of the nations also collapsed, as indicated in v. 19. The fact that the cities of the nations are said to collapse in v. 19 may also refer to all the cities of Judaea which fell to the Romans during the Jewish War prior to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The fall of some of these cities were mentioned specifically by the previous plagues.

[20]Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.

In Genesis 1 the earth was a water world—formless and void.

Revelation 16 Already Happened: **Verse 20 hints at a Metaphorical Flood in which Israel, the Earth, is destroyed by Rome, the Sea.**

This is flood imagery. The conquest of Israel, the earth, by Rome, the sea, is frequently metaphorically depicted in the Apocalypse as a flood. See **In the Bible "Earth" Signifies the Specific Land Addressed While "Sea" Symbolizes Foreign Nations** and **The Poetic Biblical Link Between "Sea" and "Abyss**. Furthermore, as has also been stated previously *mountains* often denote cities in the Bible.[46] See **In the Bible Mountains Represent Cities or Kingdoms**. Echoing the point made in v. 19, John again emphasizes in this verse that many of the mountains or cities of Israel and Rome would be entirely demolished. Josephus describes cities so thoroughly destroyed by the Romans that virtually nothing remained. Concerning the destruction of Idumea, Josephus writes, "[T]here was no sign remaining of those places that had been laid waste, that ever they had had a being."[47] The purpose of v. 20 is to illustrate the fact that after the war, the land, left desolate, would resemble the earth at its creation in Genesis

1:2, a water world without form, void and barren—thus, setting the stage for its renewal in Revelation 21:1 as the new Jerusalem.

> *[21]From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds [one talent] each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.*

Revelation 16 Has Been Fulfilled:

The Hundred Pound Hailstones of v. 21 were the Hundred Pound Boulders Launched by Roman Catapults during the Siege of Jerusalem. These Stones were White like Hail.

First century Roman catapult.

In this verse, Jerusalem is under attack. Having assembled multiple catapults, Titus' army hurled giant stones at the city walls hoping to breach the city's defenses. V. 21 describes this assault as a plague of hail. In the original Greek, each hailstone in Revelation 16:21 is said to weigh a talent, which is approximately one hundred pounds. Regarding this plague of hail, Josephus writes:

> *Now, the stones that were cast were of **the weight of a talent**, and were carried two furlongs and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space. As for the Jews, they at first watched the coming of the stone, for it was a white color [emphasis mine] . . . .*[48]

Boulders believed to be used in Roman catapults.

The parallels between this verse and Josephus' description above are startling. Not only were these stones white like hail, they were also said to have weighed a talent—the precise weight of each hailstone in v. 21. As one might imagine, Jerusalem did eventually fall. But before John describes the fall of Babylon in the next chapter, an angel reveals the crime for which she is being punished—a crime that leaves John astonished.

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Also see **Historical Evidence that Jesus was LITERALLY SEEN in the Clouds in the First Century**. For an explanation of how the end of the age and its fulfillment during the Jewish War mirror Genesis 1-3; how the Bible teaches that the resurrection of the dead is a resurrection of heavenly bodies to heaven, not a resurrection of perfected earthly bodies; and how the resurrection is a mirror opposite of the fall see **How the Jewish War and Resurrection to Heaven Mirror Genesis and the Fall; and How Preterism fixes the Age of the Earth Problem and unravels the Mysteries in Genesis**.

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Preterism Explained and Interpreted, A Commentary of Revelation 16: Conclusion

As has been abundantly shown in this preterist ***commentary on Revelation 16****, the seven bowls of Revelation 16 highlight several notable events throughout the course of the Jewish War each of which unfolded with uncanny accuracy.*

Previous

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A Preterist Commentary on Revelation 16

1. Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalyptics: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 21-22.
2. David Chilton, *The Great Tribulation,* (Fort Worth, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), 124.
3. Tacitus *The Histories* 5.13.
4. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 6.5.3.
5. George Holford, *The Destruction of Jerusalem*, (Frankford, PA: First Rate Publishers, 1812), 15.
6. Ibid., 6.9.3.
7. Arthur M. Ogden, *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets: Commentary on Revelation*, (Pinson, AL: Ogden Publications, 2006), 308-310.
8. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 2.13.6.
9. Ibid., 3.9.3.
10. Ibid., 3.10.9.
11. Because the sea represents Rome, the fact that the sea turned to blood and every living thing in the sea died may be an omen pointing to the civil war soon to affect

Rome. See **In the Bible "Earth" Signifies the Specific Land Addressed While "Sea" Symbolizes Foreign Nations**.

12. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 4.7.6.
13. Ibid., 5.10.4.
14. Ibid., 3.7.32.
15. Ibid.,5.6.2; 4.8.3; 4.9.7; 6.1.1.
16. This description of the underworld as a realm of darkness is also widely attested to by survivors of clinical death. The virtual consensus seems to be that there are many afterlife realms, the lowest are the darkest and gloomiest and the highest are the brightest and most beautiful.
17. Tacitus *The Histories* 1.2-3.
18. Having addressed the symbolic fulfillment of Revelation 16:10 at the rise of Vespasian, I believe that Revelation 16:10-11 was also fulfilled shockingly literally in A.D. 79 at the death of Vespasian. At this time a famous volcanic eruption occurred which darkened the skies over Rome as thick as night and later caused one of the worst plagues mentioned in Roman history. Almost immediately after Vespasian died, Mt. Vesuvius erupted in August of A.D. 79. When Vesuvius erupted the ash from the volcano darkened the sky over Rome as dark as night. Historians also mention that the ashes of this volcano later brought "one of the worst outbreaks of plague that had ever been known" upon the Romans probably as a result of the caustic effects of acid rain which often follows volcanic eruptions. (Suetonius *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 10.8.) Could the literal darkness and plague of boils that followed the eruption of Vesuvius signify a later, literal fulfillment of the darkness and plague of boils mentioned in Revelation 16:10-11? See **The Historical Appearance of Christ at the Death of the Beast Fulfills 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 19:19-20**.
19. Tacitus *The Histories* 2.81.
20. Ibid., 5.1.

21. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 5.1.6.
23. Though not mentioned above, I believe the kings of v. 12 may also be Jewish kings. Remember that Israel is also east of eastern Turkey. And recall that Jerusalem because of her adulterous affair with Rome is also spiritual Babylon. Thus I believe that there may also be a Jewish component to the kings of v. 12. I believe that the kings of the east may also refer to Agrippa II and Queen Berenice who both accompanied Titus during the siege of Jerusalem hoping to reacquire the Israeli kingdoms they had lost as a result of the Jewish revolt. (Tacitus *The Histories* 5.1.) Thus the kings of the east; Sohaemus, Antiochus, Agrippa II and Berenice; are "the kings of east" not just because they each ruled kingdoms east of the seven churches but because they were kings of the eastern spiritual kingdom of Babylon which signifies Rome and Jerusalem throughout the Apocalypse.[22]Before wrapping up this explanation of v. 12, I believe there is another interpretation that may be worth brief mention. Arthur Ogden believes that the kings of the east mentioned in v. 12 are the Parthians, Rome's eastern rival. As stated above, in order to provide soldiers necessary for the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 Vespasian withdrew the legions and auxiliary troops guarding the Euphrates. These troops stationed at the Euphrates were responsible for guarding Roman territory against its eastern rival, the Parthians. The fact that these border guards stationed at the Euphrates were moved to take part in the siege of Jerusalem left the Euphrates vulnerable to Parthian invasion. Thus through the mobilization of these soldiers the way was made open for the Parthians, the kings of the east, to come fulfilling v. 12. However, despite this open invitation, the Parthians never came. (Arthur M. Ogden, *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets: Commentary on Revelation*, (Pinson, AL: Ogden Publications, 2006),

316.)

24. Tacitus *The Histories* 2.78; Cassius Dio *Roman History* 66.1; *Gospel of Apollonius of Tyana: His Life and Deeds According to Philostratos*, trans. Kenneth s. Guthrie (Kessinger Publishing , 1900), 36.
25. For a description of the signs preceding Vespasian's rise to power see Suetonius *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 10.5-7.
26. Tacitus *The Histories* 4.81.
27. Ibid., 4.81.
28. Ibid., 4.82.
29. Suetonius *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 10.7; Tacitus *The Histories* 4. 81-82.
30. Cassius Dio *Roman History* 63.26.
31. Suetonius *Lives of the Twelve Caesars* 7.1.
32. Tacitus *The Histories* 1.86. Julius Caesar was the first Caesar of Rome. When his statue turned from west to east, this was seen as an omen that Vitellius—the current Caesar and former general stationed in Germany, in the west—was to be supplanted by Vespasian—the general stationed in Israel, in the east. The omen was proven correct: Vespasian ultimately killed Vitellius, becoming the next emperor of Rome. Concerning the "monstrous animal births," one such example of this is found in Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 6.5.3: "At the same festival also [Passover, the holiday corresponding with Jesus' crucifixion], a heifer, as she was led by the high priest to be sacrificed, brought forth a lamb in the midst of the temple."
33. Cassius Dio *Roman History* 64.1. Galba was the governor of Spain. So when these ships inexplicably arrived with weapons, it was an unmistakable sign to Galba that he should via for control over the empire. The mule giving birth is one of the "monstrous animal births" described in Tacitus *The Histories* 1.86. Mules are generally sterile, so this is certainly an unusual event.
34. Cassius Dio *Roman History* 65.8. When the moon is

eclipsed it turns red. One example of a lunar eclipse is found in Revelation 6:12. The miracle of the two suns, like the moving of the statue of Julius Caesar in the footnote above, also appear to point to Vespasian's defeat of Vitellius.

35. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 4.11.5.
36. Arthur M. Ogden, *The Avenging of the Apostles and Prophets: Commentary on Revelation*, (Pinson, AL: Ogden Publications, 2006), 319.
37. Eusebius *Onomasticon* [ed. E. Klostermann] 14.31; 28:26; 58.1; 70:10; 90.12; 100.10, 108,6, 13; 110.21; 140.1, cited in Ralph P. Martin and Lynn Allan Losie, gen. eds., *Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B, Revelation 6-16*, by David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 898.
38. Though there are a number of other transliterations of Megiddo found throughout the Septuagint: *Μεγεδδω, Μαγεδδων, Μαγεδδω, Μαγεδω, Μαγεδωρ, Μακεδω, Μαγδω, Μαγεδαων, Μαγεδδωδ, Μακεδδω, Μαγεδει.*
39. http://ichthys.com/mail-Armageddon.htm (12/15/12).
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 4.4.5.
43. Ibid., 5.1.1.
44. Ibid., 5.1.2.
45. Ibid., 5.1.3.
46. Steve Gregg, ed., *Revelation: Four Views a Parallel Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1997), 154. The city of Jerusalem is often called the "Mountain of the Lord" throughout the Bible.
47. Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 4.9.7.
48. Ibid., 5.6.3.