

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE BOOK OF REVELATION: Thoughts on the fourth and fifth vial (bowl) judgments of Revelation 16

Dennis E. Johnson, in his commentary on Revelation, *Triumph of the Lamb*, when introducing the bowl judgments, says, “As the bowls belong to the symbolic dialect in which John’s visions bring their message, so also the effects of the outpoured bowls are conveyed in symbolic impressions, not photographic reproductions.” (p 224)

The Scripture on the fourth vial reads,

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory (Rev 16:8, 9).

I must admit I am not clear about the issues of climate change and global warming, the conflicting reports confusing, so I take no sides in the matter. What I do know is that many agree the earth’s climate *is* warming, though whether due to human actions or apart from them, or a mixture of the two, I do not know, and many scientists are not clear either. And from John’s words we are to understand it will increase *greatly*—though through what *causes* we are in the dark about, *save that God will see to it*.

We see that John prophesies in the passage above the heat of the sun will become very intense upon the earth. Yet it must also be remembered that the images depicted in Revelation are “conveyed in symbolic impressions, not photographic reproductions”, so we do not know exactly what to expect. Only hindsight will tell us clearly. Still, it does seem that painfully increasing heat will be our lot. We will all be observing what happens as the months and years go by.

Then we have the fifth vial:

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds (Rev 16:10, 11).

As I noted in [the chapter of *A Great and Terrible Love*] The Fate of Babylon, G.B. Caird, in his commentary, *The Revelation of Saint John*, says of the fifth vial of wrath,

“The **darkness** was not the three days’ visitation of Exodus x. 21 ff., nor even the paralysing terror so vividly described in Wisdom xvii, but *the total eclipse of the monster’s imperial power*” (p 204) [italicized bold emphasis added].

What is especially interesting about this is that for the destruction of Babylon the mighty Beast-nation that she rides and by whose power she prevails upon the nations, must be suddenly made defenseless (the spirit and power of the Beast—which is from the dragon—is evidently transferred then to another nation or nations), leaving harlot Babylon herself defenseless and vulnerable—to attack and destruction.

Dennis Johnson says in *Triumph of the Lamb*,

The beast's reign has always been shrouded in spiritual darkness . . . This palpable [present bowl's] darkness thus exposes the beast's rule for what it is, a domain of delusion and confusion. John has noted elsewhere that guilty people love darkness for the cover it offers for their evil deeds . . . Yet the beast's followers find no comfort in the darkness of his domain, but only a disorienting anguish that makes them chew their tongues in despair . . .

. . . The world system's center of power, the beast's Oval Office, cannot be insulated from the wrath of God, who will expose the devil's darkness for all to see. (p 230)

The fourth vial seems to foretell a world overheating to a lethal degree. Are the world's recent extreme heat-waves a precursor of worse to come? The fifth vial talks of darkness overwhelming the seat—or throne—of the beast. The ancient city of Pergamos was once—because of its political-spiritual associations—called by Jesus “Satan's seat” (Rev 2:13). The Beast's headquarters in the end time is given the same designation—Greek, *thronos*, throne, seat.

It may very well be the “darkness” of the vial is not merely symbolic of demonically induced psychological anguish and socio-political chaos, but could also be speaking of that which many hands are striving to accomplish: the taking down of America's power grid. This sort of darkness—whether it come from “natural” (solar?) causes or man-made (cyber?) activity—in conjunction with extreme heat would literally fry us, especially in summer.

And not just fry, but—as so many fictional scenarios of the chaos resulting from a loss of electricity have envisioned—a descent into a nation-wide madness and agony hard to imagine. What kind of relief hard-pressed government forces could muster—if any—is unknown. It would probably make Cormac McCarthy's horror story, *The Road*, look tame.

As Babylon's doom was falling, a voice from heaven said, “How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her” (Rev 18:7). And how much grief and suffering she has inflicted upon the nations of the earth, render that to her as well. So Babylon will suffer before her end, and the nations' “tumultuous peoples that have served the beast and lusted after his whore” (Johnson, p 236) with her, though less than she who allured and seduced them.

Such prophetic vision will not be taken seriously—even by many who believe the Scriptures!—until it comes to pass. What protection can there be? These two bowl visions would seem to be poundings that fall upon Babylon before her finale. The only protection I know—so unforeseeable will things on earth be—is to walk closely with Christ. Seek Him, friends who read this book, for He may be found in these days of grace, which is His undeserved favor.

Nor can it be told how long till such things come to pass. Consider, it took around 50 years from the time of the dimensional gateway opening between the demonic and the human realms through the widening use of sorcery—the psychedelic potions of the sixties counterculture—for the spiritual darkness of Revelation 9's fifth trumpet judgment to reach the level of psychological devastation it now has. We presently see the next “woe”: the spirit of murder or of death otherwise—unrestrained

killing—presently at work in wars, terrorists, or other killings the world around. For the sixth trumpet of Rev 9 to reach fulfillment one third of the world’s population must die, most likely in the conflagrations of war, though pandemics of lethal disease could do the job as well.

It may be that the destruction of Babylon, and possibly the Jewish State along with her, could be that “one third”, in which case these words would subsequently be read only in other parts of the world. But Babylon and the State of Israel may not be those wiped out—it may be others, and possibly through disease.

In any case, the half century it took for the fifth trumpet to be well-realized did accelerate the madness possessing the leaders of the world—just look at the U.S. elections for president in 2016 and 2020, and the doings of other leaders around the world since then!—as well as the people, for the descent into moral evil has moved rapidly, even in just a few years. Things may happen—may change—more quickly than we expect. So who is to say that it will be soon—a few years—for whom Babylon to morph into the blood-drinking murderess of Christians (Rev 17:6), or long—a few or more decades—of dystopian oppression for her to reach her apex of iniquity? But when she does, that will be the sign her destruction is imminent, and our full redemption near.

As the Lord Jesus said, “Watch and pray.” Be alert, vigilant, aware of the times—and stay near to Him, communing with Him intimately, that you not be taken unawares when “Men’s hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). Be sure you are knit closely into a Bible-believing church, under the life-giving word and Spirit of God—even if that exposes you as being one of the despised “Christians”, for they only shall survive the wrath that shall be loosed from Heaven. The resurrection will prove the promise that not a hair of your heads shall be harmed (Luke 21:18). The just shall *live* by faith.

The sixth bowl—Revelation 16:12-14, 16—is also of great interest, but I have spoken of it above and below, and in the section Armageddon, in the brief chapter named, “Images of Armageddon”, so I will not speak of it here.

Excerpted from the chapter, “Thoughts on the fourth and fifth vial (bowl) judgments of Revelation 16”, in the section, BABYLON, in the larger book, *A Great and Terrible Love: A Visionary Journey from Woodstock’s Sorceries to God’s Paradise*. Free digital copies: <https://bit.ly/3nQHBrB>.
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