

Revelation 15 And 16:1-12, The Seventh Trumpet, The Vials



This is the continuation of [The Last Prophecy: An Abridgment of Elliott's Horae Apocalypticæ.](#)

Era Of The French Revolution, A.D. 1789-1830

- [1] ¶ And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.
- [2] And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.
- [3] And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.
- [4] Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.
- [5] ¶ And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:
- [6] And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.
- [7] And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.
- [8] And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled. (Rev 15:1-8)
- [1] ¶ And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.
- [2] And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.
- [3] And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.
- [4] And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.
- [5] And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord,

which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

[6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy.

[7] And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

[8] ¶ And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

[9] 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.

[10] 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,

[11] And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

[12] ¶ And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. (Rev 16:1-12)

IT WILL BE REMEMBERED that the several visions, which have intervened between the end of chap. xi. and this chap. xv. now before us, have been regarded as supplemental – added, as it were, on the back or outside of the Apocalyptic seven-sealed scroll. The original and direct within written series is now about to be resumed at the historic point at which it had been broken off, i.e., the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Before entering, however, on the explanation of that vision and the eventful accompaniments therein portended, our attention is directed to the position occupied by God's "elect and faithful" people during the destructive action of the seven vials. "A sea as it were of glass" is seen "mingled with fire;" appearing probably like vitrified lava, such as would be the effect of a volcano. It is doubtful what locality is represented; but as the Babylon of the Apocalypse is shown to be destroyed by fire, it may designate some part of the territory of "the Beast." Moreover, it is intended to show the safety of the Church of God during the political eruptions of the French Revolution, – that great event which, in its several developments, presents the solution of the symbol of the seven vials. The harpers, standing upon the margin of the sea and singing thanksgiving to God, would seem to represent the spiritual Israel upon their escape from the figurative Egypt, as the literal Israel did of old when delivered from the judgment plagues and from the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh. And the songs of confidence and triumph which they sung, under the guidance and direction of Moses, are here taken to express the faith in which the true believers repose in the strength of Christ, their Paschal Lamb, and the hope in which they anticipate their speedy establishment in the Heavenly Canaan – the land of his promise – when "all nations shall come and worship before him."

And now, as was also depicted in Rev. 11:19, the "temple" is visibly "opened" in heaven, and the ark of the covenant appears, indicating that at the time there would be a manifestation of the true Church of Christ before the world as to character, principles, expectations, and influence, so as it had never before been exhibited; yet was the confluence of the nations into it, in the full extent of the promise, to be yet deferred till the vial-plagues had been

first poured out. For this purpose "seven angels came forth from the temple," denoting that all the approaching political convulsions of Christendom were ordered by the Lord's providence; and inasmuch as the "vials of wrath" were put into the angels' hands by one of the "living creatures," i.e., the beatified saints, it is implied that the vindication of their wrongs and injuries is the design and intent of these judgments.

The "vial" or cup is often introduced in Scripture to represent God's judicial inflictions upon his enemies. Thus, "In the hand of the Lord is a cup, and the wine is red. It is full of mixture, and he poureth out of the same; but the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out." (Ps. 75:8) Again, "Behold, I have taken out of thy hand the cup of trembling; I will put it into the hand of them that afflict thee." (Isa. 51:22)

The similarity of the four first vials to the four first trumpets cannot escape observation. The localities, as well as other figures, are almost identical. The earth, the land division of Western Roman Christendom; the sea, its maritime colonies; the rivers, those two boundaries, the Rhine and Danube, and their valleys; the sun, the ruling emperor of one-third of the Roman earth, – all these symbols and their significations remain pretty much the same.

The time to which the prophecy appears to point as the period of the seventh trumpet's sounding is at the outbreak of the FRENCH REVOLUTION in the year 1789. This was preceded by a short interval of warning, from the passing away of the Turkish woe about A.D. 1774, marked out by the prophetic notice, "The second woe is past; behold, the third woe cometh quickly."

The general tranquility of Europe in that interval indicated to ordinary view no sign of approaching disturbance. Russia, although it comprehended those wilds whence long since the barbarian scourge of Christendom had poured forth, was now a civilized empire. Modern Germany, with its 2300 walled towns, presented obstacles to invasion unknown in earlier ages. The rancor of religious differences had all but subsided; and a balance of power forbade the idea of either party being strong for aggression. The late democratic revolt of America would have, it was thought, no effect on European principles; and the peace of Versailles in 1783 was supposed to augur a long repose to Europe.

There were, however, two opposite classes who watched the tendencies of events with interest. The one was that of the Infidel philosophers in France, headed by Voltaire, men who, aided by wit and science, left no means untried to effect the object for which they conspired – the overthrow of Christianity. Republican clubs and infidel cheap revolutionary publications served under their direction to undermine the principles of the different ranks of society; and, without religion to control them, the mass of the people were ready for any outbreak against government and social order. The Christian philosopher also foresaw an outbreak, not such as the former looked for, but one of wrath and judgment. The abounding iniquity must needs meet with punishment.

“He heard the wheels of an avenging God
Groan heavily along the distant road.”

The unwonted convulsion of the elements which just then occurred drew the notice of thoughtful observers, and filled them with fearful forebodings. Tempests and volcanoes, earthquakes and hurricanes, were long, destructive, and frequent.⁴ It was in allusion to this unnatural state of the elements, and Specially with reference to an earthquake which lasted three years,⁵ from 1783 to 1786, that Cowper writes –

“The world appears
To toll the death-bell of its own decease,
And by the voice of all its elements
To preach the general doom.”

Thus, as in some other parts of Sacred Scripture, the literal and figurative seemed alike joined in the prediction: – when the seventh trumpet sounded, “there were lightnings, thunderings, an earthquake and great hail.” Then the French Revolution broke out. In the meeting of the National Assembly the Republican party gained the ascendancy, and at once proceeded to abolish the laws, rights, and customs of the French nation. The privileges and titles of the nobility, the tithes of the clergy, and the supremacy of the king were sacrificed to popular power and caprice. All that might have appeared most stable in Church and State was overthrown. It is at this period the vial judgments may have been supposed to begin.

FIRST VIAL. – “And the first (angel) went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the Beast,” etc.

One of the plagues of Egypt was a noisome ulcer. Here then of the spiritual Egypt the same expression is used. The angel of the first trumpet sounded, and fire fell on the earth on the same locality. The “sore” indicates the outbreak of some corruption which had been festering within, and which, breaking out, would spread its infection and produce great distress. And so it was. A tremendous outbreak of social and moral evil, democratic and popular fury, atheism and vice, characterized the French Revolution. From France, as a center, the plague rapidly spread through its affiliated clubs, and the whole of Papal Christendom soon imbibed the poison and shared the punishment.

At the first its character was by many mistaken, and the movement was hailed as the harbinger of liberty and the overthrow of despotism. But it quickly unfolded itself. First came the atrocious assault upon the palace of Versailles and the forcible abduction of the monarch. Then the National Assembly’s declaration of the rights of man, a code of open rebellion against all order and rule; followed by the confiscation of the Church estates and the ascendancy of the Jacobin clubs to power. Then another and more ferocious attack on the palace, the dethronement of the king, the massacre of the Swiss guards and of five hundred Royalists! Soon followed the trial and execution of both king and queen, with that of other royal persons, and the avowed declaration of war against all authority. Then came the reign of terror under

Robespierre; the Revolutionary Tribunal; the horrid massacres at La Vendée and Lyons, – men and women drowned in couples, and vessels filled with captives and then sunk; which atrocities they termed republican baptisms and marriages; – to say nothing of the innumerable multitude shot down, roasted alive, and drowned in the mass. Lastly, as the acme of iniquity, the threat of dethroning the King of Heaven; the public renunciation of Christianity; the worship of an abandoned woman as the Goddess of Reason; the abolition of the Sabbath and all other institutions connected with religion; the sacraments profanely travestied, – a sacramental cup with wine being brought into the street, and an ass made openly to drink of it! Such was the development of the real character of the Revolution. Surely, “the whole head was sick, the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head, there was no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores.” It was as if God had said of it, as of Ephraim, “He is joined to idols; let him alone.”

It was upon “men having the mark of the Beast” that this vial was poured out. The clergy were Romanists, and suffered fearfully, as did the Romish laity. But independently of this, the conduct of these Republicans was but the following up the example of what they had learnt to esteem of Popish tyranny; and it was now turned against those who had long and diligently sowed the seeds of oppression.

SECOND VIAL. – “And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea,” etc. Again, the second trumpet gives the clue to the local scene of this judgment. There was destruction of the maritime power and commerce of the colonies of Papal Christendom. The democratic revolutionary spirit of France and the naval force of England contributed to effect the purpose of Divine Providence. First, the Isle of Haiti or St. Domingo, the most flourishing of the French colonies, being infected by the like infidel principles, was lost after a servile war of twelve years, in which 60,000 blacks were slaughtered. Then, for twenty years, the fleet of England (preserved and directed by the same good providence of God) wasted in all directions the ships, commerce, and maritime colonies of France, and of her allies, Holland and Spain. Their fleet was destroyed in 1793, at Toulon, by Lord Hood; by whom also Corsica, and nearly all the Spanish and West Indian Islands were taken in 1794. In 1795 followed the naval victory off L’Orient, and the capture of the Cape of Good Hope. The victory in 1797 off Cape St. Vincent was quickly succeeded by that of Camperdown over the Dutch fleet. Then followed Lord Nelson’s three mighty victories of the Nile in 1798, of Copenhagen in 1801, and in 1805 of Trafalgar. Viewing the losses suffered by France from 1793 to the end of 1815, we find that near 600 vessels of war, besides numerous ships of commerce, were destroyed, together with a large proportion of their officers and men. The world’s history does not furnish such a period of naval war and bloodshed. “The sea became as the blood of a dead man.” Finally, when the maritime power of the Papal nations had been swept away by English victories, the Spanish colonies of South America threw off their allegiance, after another scene of carnage, only paralleled by those before described; the Brazils also were separated from Portugal, and so the prediction was complete: as regarded the Papal European colonies, they became “dead.” Doubtless the judgments on many of these colonies might be considered as

being retributive for the cruelties practiced in their exercise of the slave trade.

THIRD VIAL. – When the third trumpet sounded we found that the locality described was “the rivers and fountains of waters,” i.e., the Alpine fountains and streams, and the boundary rivers, the Rhine and Upper Danube. We have the same locality specified in this third vial – “And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood.” According, therefore, to the analogy of the former explanation, this judgment was to take place on those countries watered by the Rhine and Danube, as well as upon Northern Italy. Even so it fell out. During the year 1792 war was declared by France against Germany, and the next year against Sardinia; consequently all these towns watered by the Rhine and Alpine streams became scenes of carnage. Metz, Worms, Spire, the towns formerly desolated by Attila, suffered. Another French army entered upon the countries situated on the Moselle, a branch of the Rhine; a third advanced into Piedmont, the Alpine frontier. In 1793 and 1794 war still raged in the same quarters. The French advanced to Holland. In many places the success fluctuated, but in most instances they were victorious. At last Charles of Austria drove their generals, Moreau and Jourdan, and their armies back to the Rhine.

In A.D. 1797 Buonaparte attacked the Sardinians and Austrians. The course he tracked was from Alpine river to river through Northern Italy, till he reached Venice. Every river was a scene of carnage, and he crossed seven in succession. The Alpine rivers were turned to “blood.” It was in 1797 that Buonaparte uttered the remarkable threat, “I will prove an Attila to Venice.” Before peace could be restored Austria was forced to submit; and the treaty of Campo Formio stipulated that the valley of the Rhine, one part of the prophetic scene, together with the Austrian Netherlands and Palatinate on one side of the Rhine, and Wurtemberg, Bavaria, Baden, and Westphalia on the other, should all be made over to France.

Again in 1799 the “fountains of waters” were dyed with blood, the French having suffered reverse and been driven out of all the places they occupied in North Italy with much bloodshed.

The war soon recommenced. In 1800 that terrible and decisive battle of Marengo was fought, and the Danube became the scene of judgment. One victory after another succeeded, till the memorable battle of Austerlitz completed the overthrow of the Austrian power.

The reason given by the angel for the judgment is remarkable, – “They are worthy, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink.” Was it not so that the cruelties – of the French and Piedmontese and the rulers of Savoy against the Waldenses and Albigenses, the Huguenots and Calvinists, from the end of the thirteenth to the end of the eighteenth century, and of Austria against the Hussites, the Waldenses and Lutherans in Lombardy, Moravia, and the Netherlands already related – did call out for retributive justice? “How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?”

FOURTH VIAL. – “And the fourth angel poured out his vial on the sun,” etc. The fourth trumpet again helps us to the meaning of the symbols. “The sun, moon, and stars” were on that occasion represented as being smitten by the judgment, and the Roman emperor and the subordinate authorities were the real sufferers. Even so at this time. In 1806, the year after the battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon required the sovereign of Austria to renounce his title of Emperor of Rome and Germany. So the imperial sun of Papal Christendom was darkened. Most of the independent sovereignties of Europe were revolutionized, and their light eclipsed in the political heaven. Buonaparte exercised his assumed office of king-maker to the no small distress of nations. The king of Prussia was shorn of half his dominions, which was assigned to a new-made king of Saxony. Westphalia, Holland, Spain, and Portugal, and Naples were apportioned, the three former to his brothers, the latter to his general Murat. Never had there been such a subversion of old dynasties – such a shaking of the powers of heaven. And when in 1809 the Austrian emperor made a desperate effort to regain his lost honors, he signally failed; and only purchased peace by giving his own daughter, Maria Louisa, in marriage to the oppressor, and thereby his implied acquiescence in his tyranny.

The “scorching with fire” we may refer to the sufferings of the countries which were exposed to these fearful troubles. The accounts which we have received enable us to appreciate the point and truth of Napoleon’s own observation, – “The genius of conquest can only be regarded as the genius of destruction.” Conscriptions, taxation, loss of life, pillage of property, devastation and ruin, marked his course and sullied the glory of his exploits. Men were “scorched with great heat.”

THE FIFTH VIAL. – “And the fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the Beast.” We have already seen how in the Revolution the Romish clergy suffered. Their means of support was withdrawn by the abolition of tithes, the confiscation of the Church lands, and the destruction of monastic houses. This was followed by the national abolition of the Romish religion and the razing the churches to the ground. So was the whole French ecclesiastical establishment broken up. Twenty-four thousand of the clergy were massacred with horrid atrocities; the terrified remnant fled.

So much had the anti-Papal spirit increased, that the French army urged their march against Rome itself, and the Pope only saved himself by the surrender of several towns and the payment of a large sum of money and the best treasures of the Vatican.

At length the decree went forth for the humbling of the Beast himself. In 1809 Napoleon declared the Pope’s temporal dominion at an end. The estates of the Church were annexed to France; and Rome was degraded to be the second city of the French Empire. Surely on “the seat of the Beast” the vial of wrath had been poured out.

Subsequently the Pope was brought prisoner to France, and there, as a pensioner, he received a stated salary. True he afterwards gained back the privilege of fixing his seat at Rome. But the world had seen his weakness, and a precedent was established for the benefit of future generations.

In France the Romish religion continued only to be tolerated on an equality with other religions; in Portugal and Spain church property has been lately confiscated; and in Italy still later events have shown that the Papal authority, if unsupported by temporal power, has not any longer in itself that which can maintain its supremacy.

"They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and repented not of their deeds." Here, too, history shows the truth of the prediction. Neither in Rome, Spain, France, or Italy has there been any national return to the true God. They felt the bitterness of revolution and bloodshed, but felt it only as coming from man. They soon revived the old superstition. The reinstated governments of Southern Europe proceeded to restore the power of the Pope, agreed again to give him support, and to consider him as their ally. To regain his favor the Bourbons dedicated the kingdom to the Virgin Mary, the Jesuits were reintroduced, and Protestants again oppressed.

In Spain the Inquisition was re-established, and the blood of heretics flowed afresh at the stake. In Austria the Jesuits were again active, and in all the other countries the mummeries and lying wonders of Romanism once more had place. The desecration of the Sabbath was continued, and no improvement appeared either in devotion or morality.

THE SIXTH VIAL. – " And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates," etc. The introduction again of this symbol⁷ directs us at once to the Turkman empire as the subject of this visitation. The Turks had long ceased to be a terror to the nations; the woe had passed. During the revolutionary wars they had been comparatively uninjured, but now their time of judgment was come.

The first appearance of trouble was in the revolt of Ali, pasha of Yanina, who, asserting independence, opened the way for the Greek insurrection of 1820. Its successful issue is well known. The annihilation of the Turkish army in the Morea and the uniform superiority of the insurgents over the Turks by sea had nearly completed their freedom, when the tide was turned against them by the Egyptian armament of Ibrahim Pasha. The battle of Navarino, however, in 1827, in which the fleets of England, France, and Russia were combined, destroyed the Turco-Egyptian fleet and saved Greece.

The revolt of the Janizaries followed, which led to the massacre of 30,000 of those ancient troops and the consequent weakening of its power. Yet was it just then that, in its infatuation, Turkey hurried into a disastrous war with Russia. The armies of the Czar were everywhere victorious, and Constantinople was threatened with investment, when ambassadors interposed and peace was made. In the same year, 1829, the French landed 40,000 men in Africa, took Algiers, and, by converting that province into a colony of France, dried up another of the sources of Turkish power.

Then came the rebellion of the Egyptian pasha, Mehemet Ali, who attacked and conquered Syria, thrice defeating the Sultan's armies at Hems, Nezib, and Iconium. The union of the great powers of Europe, it is true, soon drove the Egyptians out of Syria, took Acre, and forced back the pasha to a nominal

dependence upon his former master. Yet is the allegiance little more than nominal: the Euphrates flood is there too fast drying up.

But there were other causes of the waning of the Turkman empire, and which marked the judgment as from God himself. Earthquake, pestilence, and famine, even more than the wars we have mentioned, served to depopulate the empire. Conflagrations, too, did their part. One writes from Bagdad, "Surely every principle of desolation is operating." Another, the chaplain of the British Embassy, says, "Within twenty years Constantinople has lost more than half its inhabitants." On every side the process of internal decay goes on. What may yet remain to be accomplished before the Turkish nation be wholly dried up and annihilated, is only known to Him "who doeth as he will in the armies of heaven. and among the inhabitants of earth." For the present, her only support is the favor of the princes of Christendom. A selfish policy on their part is her safety.

Who "the kings of or from the East" may prove, whose way is to be prepared by this drying up of the symbolic Euphrates, – whether, as some believe, the Jews, upon the fall of the Turkish empire; or, as others affirm, the Gentile nations, which it is promised "shall come and worship Christ;" – "kings of Sheba and Seba," who, like the wise men from the East, shall offer gifts; or whether the way made easy for communication with the great empire of India, – is a consideration we must not attempt to solve. The question, though full of interest at this time, has reference to events still future, and therefore is beyond our limits of fulfilled prophecy.

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