

I take it that Mount Megiddo (aka Armageddon) is also a symbolic title. Megiddo was one of Solomon's cities and a well known battlefield. (See especially Zechariah 11:11.) It is now the place where the nations come together to destroy Rome.

The word translated 'deserve' in verse 6 is the word 'worthy' which was used 5 times in chapters four and five referring to Jesus. If Jesus is worthy of everything we can give, Rome is worthy of pain and bloodshed. The first four bowls are about Rome getting what it deserves. God's judgement will prevail.

The fifth bowl directly attacks the emperor. The sixth prepares the way for the battle. The seventh changes the whole atmosphere. And it will come suddenly.

There is no repentance, but don't despair. Remember chapter 15.

How literally should we take the visions in this chapter, and in Revelation generally? Some thoughts:

1. Remember chapter 15 - this is about all the nations coming to worship God, and the end of the Empire that stands against this. It may have a wider meaning, but this is the first meaning.
2. As often in Revelation, it doesn't make sense if you take it literally, How can the Euphrates still be water if the rivers have turned into blood?
3. The key is to look at bits that are not symbolical, such as 'the blood of the martyrs.' (see verses 5 and 6)
4. Jesus isn't a thief. But as he warned about the destruction of Jerusalem, he may come when you don't expect.

## Revelation 15-16 the bowls

June 25th 2023



Let's pause for a moment or two and see what has happened so far ...

Chapter 1: John meets the risen Lord Jesus and is overwhelmed by the experience.

Chapters 2 and 3: John is given letters for each of the seven churches. They are going to face huge challenges, but they can overcome / be victorious if they are ready.

Chapters 4 and 5: John has a vision of God., who has a plan written and sealed in a scroll. No one deserves to implement it. Eventually the angel announces that Jesus is worthy, and the angels cry that he is worthy of everything that can be offered.

Chapters 6 and 7: The first six seals are broken and humans wreak havoc on the earth. God's people are sealed to protect them so they will be ultimately safe. On the seventh seal, everything goes quiet.

Chapters 8 to 11: There is a new series of seven, this time announced by seven trumpet blasts. The emphasis here is that God is working in answer to prayer. Still, people go through intense suffering, but they do not repent. John's

message, which seemed sweet has now turned sour. The church is portrayed as two 'witnesses' who appear to be killed but spring back to life. The seventh trumpet sounds and it is time for God to judge the earth.

Chapter 12: The people of God are symbolised by a woman who gives birth to a son. A dragon/serpent, standing for the devil tries to destroy the child but fails. The devil/dragon is thrown out of heaven; for the martyrs have followed the way of Jesus and there are no grounds on which to accuse them. The devil then goes after all who follow Jesus.

Chapters 13-14: The dragon gives his power to a monster, who gives its power to a second monster. This stands, at least in its first meaning, for the Roman Empire, which is now symbolised as Babylon. A gospel goes out to the world, announcing that Jesus is King, under God the creator. Rome is now symbolised as Babylon.

Wine now appears as a symbol of judgement, symbolising blood. God is preparing his wine for the judgement of the world. The blood of the martyrs is going to win.

Now on to today's chapters ...

#### Revelation 15

It's time for another series of seven, but let's start with verses 3 and 4. The song of the angels is linked to Moses, reminding us of the Exodus, and of the Lamb, reminding us of Jesus' death and resurrection. We already know that the Lamb / Jesus is worthy to receive everything that anyone can offer. The striking feature of the song is its optimism: all nations are going to wor-

ship God. The power of the Roman Empire is going to be broken. God will bring his justice and people will fear/respect him and glorify him.

Verse 2 backs up the optimism. John sees those who have overcome (remember the seven letters in chapters 2 and 3.) The martyrs will be victorious over the monster. The Sea in Revelation is usually the source of evil, but here the sea is 'like glass,' clear and still.

The angels have seven bowls, filled with the wrath of God. It is this wrath that will bring Rome down. God is in his heavenly dwelling, described as both temple and tabernacle, and he is going to act.

Verse 8 reminds us of the glory of God in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:34-35) and the temple (1 Kings 8:10-11, Ezekiel 44:4.)

#### Revelation 16

Let's start with verse 19. This is about the downfall of 'Babylon the Great,' a city already described in chapter 11 as Sodom, Egypt and the city where their Lord was crucified.' It's as if every evil city has been bundled together as one, and all evil has come together in the Roman Empire. We will see more of this in the next chapter.

How is this going to happen? Again, we must wait for the next chapter, but note verse 12. This is about armies invading from the east, leading to deadly defeat. Remember the sixth trumpet. This invasion will lead to one almighty battle.