

Tribulation: Beasts, Bowl Judgements and Babylon Revealed (Rev 12-18)

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Introduction

- Symbolism in the Bible
 - Throughout the bible often uses colorful, symbolism to “paint pictures”
 - WHY? Because pictures are worth... ?
 - To do this it uses numbers, parables, similes and metaphors
 - According to John E. Ziolkowski, who, in 2022, wrote a 384 page book on the subject, there are over 1000 symbolic references in the bible.
 - By most estimates, Revelation contains about 10% of all symbolic references
 - **A number** may have symbolic meaning apart from the actual number itself
 - This is typically understood from its repeated use in various contexts
 - Examples: 3, 7, 12, 40
 - **A parable** is a story that paints a picture either to *obscure* or *convict*, or *both!*
 - Depending on how you count, Jesus spoke over forty parables in the New Testament
 - Another 60 parables are given in the Old Testament
 - Example: Naaman speaking a parable to David (2 Samuel 12)
 - **A simile** is a comparison using: What? (like or as).
 - These are relatively easy to understand
 - QUESTION: Why? Because they are explained within themselves
 - Example: *Psa 42:1, As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.*
 - QUESTION: What’s a **metaphor**?
 - *Oxford Dictionary*:
 - *a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.*
 - *A thing regarded as representative or symbolic of something else, especially something abstract.*
 - Example: *John 8:12, I am the light of the world.*
 - *Il Postino*, Italian film about the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, in exile in Italy
 - Neruda teaches his postman to use “metaforas” to woo the love of his life.
 - QUESTIONS: What is it about symbolism that is so powerful and appealing?
 - QUESTIONS:
 - Which is more powerful, a simile or a metaphor?
 - Which is harder to understand? Why?
 - Class exercise. Find the similes and metaphors!
 - *Rev 1:12, Then I turned to see the voice that was speaking with me. And after turning I saw seven golden lampstands; 13 and in the middle of the lampstands I saw one like a son of man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and wrapped around the chest with a golden sash. 14 His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. 15 His feet were like burnished bronze when it has been heated to a glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters. 16 In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.*

- QUESTION: So how are we supposed to know if the language is literal or symbolic?
 - *A literal interpretation of the Bible allows for figurative language. Here's a simple rule: if the literal meaning of a passage leads to obvious absurdity, but a figurative meaning yields clarity, then the passage is probably using symbols. – gotquestions.org*
- QUESTION: Why does Jesus make some things hard to understand on purpose?
 - *Mat 13:10-11, the disciples came up and said to Him, "Why do You speak to them in parables?" 11 And Jesus answered them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*
 - *1 Cor 2:10-14 (NLT), But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets. 11 No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. 12 And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. 13 When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. 14 But people who aren't spiritual[c] can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.*
- Ever wonder why so many struggle with Revelation? It's not intended for unbelievers!
 - *Rev 1:1 (NLT), This is a revelation from Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants the events that must soon take place.*

Rev 12:1-2, A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; 2 and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth.

- *A great sign appeared in heaven*, a sign is symbolic of something else, so we know this is a metaphor.
- This then is symbolic of who or what? Verses 5-6 may help us with the understanding.
- The four symbolic women of Revelation
 - Jezebel (2:20), worldliness in the church (an actual woman, but also a spirit)
 - Woman clothed with the sun (12:1), clothed with splendor, dignity, honor.
 - Woman clothed in scarlet (17:3-6), a harlot.
 - The Bride of the Lamb (19:7)

Rev 12:3-4, Then another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems. 4 And his tail *swept away a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child.

- A dragon is described as being Satan, see 12:9, 20:2
- 7 Heads, 10 horns, 10 diadems
 - Heads command the body, so are typically representative of successive earthy kingdoms
 - At John's writing, 5 passed, 1 is now (Rome), and 1 (Antichrist) is yet to come
 - Rev 17:9-10
 - Horns, diadems, are kings who have power given to them as explained in 17:12, Dan 7
- 1/3 of the "stars", how many might that have been? We saw 200 million released at the Euphrates
- Devour the child? Who is this child?

Rev 12:5-6, 5 And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne. 6 Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

- Israel flees to the mountains when the abomination appears, Mat 24:15-21

Rev 12:7-9, And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. The dragon and his angels waged war, 8 and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

- QUESTION: How many “good” angels are there vs “bad” angels? Is it a fair fight?

Next events

- A loud voice in heaven praises God for the victory (12:10-12)
- The dragon is mad and persecutes the woman [Israel] who flees to the wilderness (12:13-14)
- God protects her, despite a second attack by Satan (12:15-16)
- The dragon is even more upset and turns his wrath against “the rest of her children” (12:17)

Rev 13:1, And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

- This verse actually belongs at the end of Chapter 12
- I like the imagery here. He’s contemplating his next move.
 - I got kicked out of heaven, what now? ... bring a demon up from the abyss!
- Antichrist is a man empowered by a demon. But he also represents a kingdom.
- He conquers with the character of preceding kingdoms, leopard, bear, lion, also Dan 7:3-7
 - The order of kingdoms is listed in reverse looking backward. Daniel was looking forward.
- I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed, (13:3) **A simile?**
- The dragon is worshipped because he gave his authority to the beast (13:4). *Who is like the beast?*
- He speaks blasphemies against God, and has authority to act for 42 months (13:5-6)
- He makes war with the saints (13:7)
- “All who dwell on the earth will worship him”, those whose name has NOT been written (13:8-10)
- Another beast (of the same kind - a demon powered person) comes up from the earth. (13:11)
 - The sea beast (from the Abyss) is terrible, mysterious and foreboding. Who holds the keys?
 - The earth beast (from Sheol) is perhaps more winsome, persuasive, and deceptive.
- This person makes all the earth worship the first beast [Antichrist]. (13:12-14)
 - This person is considered to be the “False Prophet”, pointing everyone to Antichrist.

Rev 13:15-18, And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. 16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the

number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.

- QUESTION: What does it mean to “give breath” to the image?
- Those who don’t worship the image will be killed.
- He “marks” the faithful worshippers of the image to protect them from the wrath of Antichrist.
- Unmarked individuals cannot participate in the society or the economy.
- QUESTION: What does the phrase “here is wisdom” mean (v18)?
- QUESTION: How should we handle the “666” issue”? Can we predict exactly what this means?

Rev 14:1, Then I looked, and behold, the Lamb was standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.

- QUESTION: Who are these people?
- We find out they sing a new song that only they can learn (14:2-3)
- They are chaste, follow the lamb everywhere He goes, and have been purchased as first fruits.
- They don’t lie and are “blameless”. Their lives are characterized by purity (14:4-5)
- Then, we see three angels traverse the sky to preach to “those who live on the earth.” (14:6-11)
 - The first one proclaims, “Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of judgement has come”.
 - The second one says, “Fallen, fallen, is Babylon the Great” (condemning the world system)
 - The third one warns that the wrath of God will fall on those who receive the mark.
- Then, perseverance of the saints is praised during this time. Those who keep the faith!
 - *Rev 14:12-13, Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, “Write, ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on!’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “so that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow with them.”*
 - QUESTION: Follow with them where?
 - This is one of the “beatitudes of Revelation.” (others: 1:3, 16:15, 19:9, 22:7, 22:14)
- Then we see “The son of man” holding a sickle, ready to reap the earth. (14:14)
 - *Rev 14:14, Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand.*
 - QUESTION: How is the “Reaper” typically depicted? Here Jesus is the Reaper!
- We then see a fourth angel who brings the word to start the harvest:
 - *Rev 14:15, And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.”*
 - The Gr word here for “is ripe” means dried up and withered! It’s way past ripe!
 - *Mat 13:40-42, So just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. 41 The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, 42 and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*
 - *Rev 14:16, He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped.*
 - Another angel (fifth) comes out with a sickle. (14:17-20)
 - Another angel (sixth) comes out and announces reaping the grape clusters (blood symbol)
 - So the angel swung the sickle, and so many died that the blood was 4’ deep for 200 miles.
 - Notice “outside the city”. Jerusalem will be spared the bloodbath!

The Bowl Judgements are Coming (Rev 15)

Rev 15:1, Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished. And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious [a]over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.

- God proclaims these are the last judgements on the planet. God's wrath will finish with these.
- Those victorious are standing before the throne of God singing the song of Moses (15:3-4)
- The tabernacle is opened and the seven angels with the seven plagues come out (15:5-8)
- The four living beings around the throne present to them golden bowls full of God's wrath.

The Bowl Judgements (Rev 16)

- These are seven more judgements that are contained within the timeframe of the seventh trumpet
- Bowl judgements are sequential, but also seem to be cumulative, coming one right after the other

Rev 16:1-2, Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." 2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

- QUESTION: Where did the loud voice come from? God commands these plagues.
- QUESTION: Do you think these judgements have a natural cause?
- QUESTION: Do the malignant sores affect believers? No!

Rev 16:3, The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

- The second trumpet poisoned 1/3 of the oceans. This one finishes the work!
- This could be a global "Red Tide" (show pictures)
- But worse than a red tide. QUESTION: What do you suppose happens to blood after death?
 - Darkens, coagulates and becomes thick, starts to smell.
- Everything in all the oceans dies.
- The oceans basically turn into "putrid dark red pools of stinking death".

Rev 16:4-7, Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

- The Third trumpet poisoned 1/3 of the fresh water. This poisons all the rest!
- The two prophets can keep it from raining, and turn water into blood!
 - Drinking water will be in very short supply.
- QUESTION: How can God of love pour out such devastation on the planet? Is it just?
 - The angel answers the question! It is the correct response for has been done to saints.
 - "They deserve it".

Rev 16:8-9, The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

- This bowl gets poured out on the sun, scorching people with fire and fierce heat.
- QUESTION: They are blaspheming God, so are they believers? Nope.
- QUESTION: Do you think this will have an impact on the climate? Polar ice caps? Ocean levels?
 - Now the putrid ocean waters overrun the coastlands.
- QUESTION: Is there any indication that anyone is repenting now?
 - During the great earthquake of the sixth trumpet, some repented, but no more.
- Notice they blasphemed the name of God
 - Until now, only Antichrist is said to blaspheme God (13:5-6). Now everyone does!

Rev 16:10-11, Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

- This is a plague of darkness, somehow causing intolerable pain.
- Chewing their tongues for relief?
- QUESTION: In Exodus, God used a plague of darkness effectively, when was it?
 - Exo 10:21-23, Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.” 22 So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. 23 They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.
 - This was the plague just before the plague of the firstborn, also called... The Passover.

Rev 16:12-16, The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

- The last two plagues confirmed that no one is left who will repent and turn to God.
- The is bowl has no specific assault on humanity, but prepares for what is to come.
- QUESTION: What’s the purpose of the Euphrates drying up?
- QUESTION: What do the “frog-like” spirits do? And why do they do it?
- What is the Dragon collecting the kings of the world for?
- In the midst of all this, God offers an encouraging word to the saints.
 - 1Thes 5:2, For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord [a]will come just like a thief in the night.
 - QUESTION: How do we know this message is for the church?
- Har-Magedon (the mountains of Megiddo), or the Hills of Megiddo
 - Megiddo is a plain, West of the Sea of Galilee, where more than 200 battles have been fought.

Rev 16:17-21, Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

- Prior judgements were on water, earth, humanity, and now the air is being judged.
- Where have we heard that phrase before, "It is done." (Gr: *ginomai*)
 - Middle voice meaning: It is being done. A completed action with ongoing results.
- On the cross Jesus said (John 19:3) "It is finished." (similar, but not the same word)
 - Here the Gr: *teleo*, means completed, or used when cancelling a debt: "paid in full"
 - The atmosphere was affected, but so were the tectonic plates
 - There was a great (mega) earthquake, so great (telik-outos), and so mighty (outos-mega)
 - A mega earthquake, so incredibly vast, and so enormous (words failed him)
 - QUESTION: What does the earthquake do?
 - It reshapes the entire surface of the planet.
 - Mountains and islands (undersea mountains) are flattened
 - The completes the process begun at the sixth seal in 6:12-14
 - It splits "the Great City" into three parts, QUESTION: What city is this?
 - Jerusalem, (see 11:8)
 - This is perhaps in preparation for the Millennial Kingdom
 - *Zech 14:4-10, In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. 5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! 6 In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. 7 For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. 8 And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. 9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one. 10 All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.*
 - This earthquake will not judge Jerusalem, but enhance it.
 - Jerusalem is lifted up with a river of living waters flowing out of it to the Mediterranean and the Dead Sea
 - 100 pound hailstones. The largest ever recorded to date are about 2 pounds.

Babylon (Chapters 17-18)

1. Chronology stops here, as the Antichrist's world empire is described.
 - The tower of Babel was the first attempt at a world empire. God stopped it.
2. We now have a vision of a great harlot, dressed in red, and seated on the beast.
 - She gets her power, influence and authority from the Antichrist
3. and on her forehead is written:
 - *"Babylon the Great, The Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth"*
4. The harlot is a metaphor for false religion.
5. She's drunk, QUESTION: with what?
6. This harlot is representative of the corrupt, greedy world system. Worshipping things.
 - The more we see in politics and commerce, the more we can see the love of money.
 - People will do anything to acquire more of it. The love of money is the root of all evil.
7. The ten horns of the beast are described as ten kings, perhaps administrative districts.
 - The kings of the east crossing the Euphrates as they join the beast against Christ.
8. In 17:16-17, the beast devours the harlot, probably meaning his eventual disassociation and violent domination of the current false religious and economic system, so then the Antichrist sets himself up to be worshipped instead.
9. Chap 18, Judgement is pronounced on Babylon because, *"the kings of the earth have drunk the wine of the passion of her immorality ... and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality."*
 - Money and power, and the sensual appeal of riches and things
 - Acts of immorality
10. Then a voice from heaven commands, *"come out of her my people!"*
11. *"Pay her back double according to her deeds"*
12. *"She will be burned up with fire."*
13. The kings of the earth and the merchants weep and mourn because no one buys anything from her anymore.
14. Heaven is told to rejoice over her downfall (18:20)
15. A strong angel throws something like a huge millstone into the sea as a symbol of how she is cast down.
 - QUESTION: How long does it take for a millstone to disappear under the waves?
16. The entire world system is destroyed (burned up) "in one hour". Hard to know it is to be taken literally, but the point is the system has been built over millennia, and it is brought to ruin almost instantly.
17. Why is Babylon judged? Three main reasons:
 - Her merchants were the great men of the earth. Wealth allows them to ascend to power.
 - Amazing how the super-wealthy can basically do whatever they want.
 - Her "sorcery" deceived the nations, drugs and/or occult practices, deceptions.
 - False advertising, drug commercials, companies getting rich by the hardship of others.
 - *Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna, and Sinovac made an extraordinary USD 90 billion in **profits** on their COVID-19 vaccines and medicines in 2021 and 2022.*
 - That's well over \$1500 every second, or \$5.4 million per hour, every hour
 - Her slaughter of God's people
 - We know this escalates during the Great tribulation, but this is over all time!

In Chapter 19 next time we will see great rejoicing in heaven at the downfall of Babylon.