

Revelation 16  
Exodus 8:1-15  
Psalm 105

“The Three Frogs of the Apocalypse”

November 10, 2019

The plague of frogs was largely a nuisance.

Having frogs in your ovens and kneading bowls –  
frogs in your beds...

I have only a very small acquaintance with this sort of nuisance.

When I was in Eritrea, in East Africa,

I used to have to get my water from a cistern.

The missionary doctor told me to make sure that I boiled it.

I never forgot to boil it.

Because every time I went to get water,

I dipped my bucket into the cistern,

and there, floating in my bucket,

were frogs –

some living and some dead.

When your drinking water is filled with frogs...

*you don't forget to boil it!!!*

But Pharaoh, on the other hand, forgot really fast.

No sooner did the frogs die –

and their stinking corpses start to fill the land –

then he hardened his heart and would not listen to them.

Did Pharaoh ever repent?

In the next chapter – chapter 9, verse 27, after the hail and fire had rained down on Egypt,  
we hear [read 9:27-35]

At first, verses 27-28 sounds like repentance!

But repentance unto life does not fall short.

Repentance unto life *turns away from sin* – to God –

with full purpose of and endeavor after new obedience.

We sing Psalm 105 as a way of reminding ourselves of the story.

Psalm 105 takes us from Abraham through Joshua –

reminding us of the story of our salvation.

When we sing these longer Psalms, I like to encourage you to let the tune sink in –

Focus on the story – pay attention to the *words!*

Sing Psalm 105A (TPH)

Read Revelation 16

In 1995 the sixth angel poured out his bowl.

How do I know?

Because that January, before the face of all nations,  
the three frogs of the apocalypse were unleashed!

Coming out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet,  
these three frogs summoned the nations for battle against the Lord.

Millions of people heard the fateful croaks...

“Bud...weis...er”

“Bud...weis...er”

I know – most of you were not watching the Super Bowl in 1995!

But the Budweiser frogs

were one of the most famous Super Bowl commercials of all time.

You may laugh,

but I would suggest that the Budweiser frogs are one of many fulfillments of the pattern.

In Revelation 16,

the frogs come out of the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet.

The Dragon represents Satan and his war against the saints.

The Beast represents the kingdoms of the earth.

The False Prophets represents the economic system that supports the Beast.

A Super Bowl commercial embodies the sort of dynamic  
that the three frogs of the apocalypse represent.

How does Satan make war against the saints?

Oh sure, sometimes it is with a direct attack – like Nero using Christians as torches.

But more commonly it is through seeking to lure us away from Jesus.

If your allegiance is captivated by a sports team –

if your time is devoted to hours and hours of entertainment every day –

if your world revolves around seeking my own happiness and pleasure –

well, then the three frogs of the apocalypse have done their job!

You love Babylon.

In contrast, verse 1 starts with a voice from the temple.

### **Introduction: The Seven Bowls**

Whose voice do we hear in verse 1?

*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”*

This is the voice of our Lord Jesus Christ –  
the one who is coming to judge the living and the dead!

Why do I say that?

Because we have just heard in chapter 15, verse 7, that “the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.”

If no one can enter the sanctuary, then who is in the temple?  
Only the Triune God.

Many have noticed that there are lots of parallels  
between the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Bowls.

The Trumpets and Bowls follow the same basic pattern:

The first one affects the earth,  
the second affects the sea,  
the third affects the rivers and fountains,  
the fourth affects the sun,  
the fifth brings darkness,  
the sixth is focused particularly on the Euphrates River,  
and the seventh brings the final judgment –  
with lightning, rumblings, thunder, earthquake, and great hail.

Each of these Sevens are also organized around the plagues of Egypt.

The plagues of Egypt were God’s judgment against Pharaoh  
for how he had treated God’s people.

Deuteronomy 7:15 had said that God would send the “harmful diseases of Egypt”  
on those who hate you.

In other words, the plagues of Egypt were a picture – a type –  
of the final judgment.

In the trumpets a third of everything is affected.

In the Bowls *everything and everyone* is affected.

### **1<sup>st</sup> – Poured Out into the Earth – Sores on Beast-Worshippers (v2)**

*<sup>2</sup> So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.*

The first bowl reminds us of the boils of Egypt – the painful sores.

But the translation here is important.

The Greek says “a bad and evil sore.”

Now, it is certainly true that “harmful and painful” is bad – and perhaps even evil!

But you just say “harmful and painful sores”

then you are inclined to think of this in physical terms.

But if you say “bad and evil sores” – you may see what is going on here.

This is not just talking about physical pain.

It is talking about the pains that come upon those who rebel against God.

When you live in a manner that opposes God,

then you are living out of harmony with his creation.

And the result is torment.

The language of the sores of Egypt is now applied to all those who worship idols –

all those who bear the mark of the beast and worship his image.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> – Poured Out into the Sea – Death to the Sea Creatures (v3)**

*<sup>3</sup> The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.*

In Exodus 7 we heard about the Nile being turned to blood –

and all the fish died.

In the second trumpet, a third of the seas became blood and a third of the sea creatures died –

and a third of the ships were destroyed.

In other words, there was a serious economic crisis that resulted from the 2<sup>nd</sup> trumpet.

Now the second bowl brings a cataclysmic plague on the seas.

And every living creature died that was in the sea.

Or perhaps it is every living *soul* that was at sea...

You could translate it either way

(and usually in Revelation, “soul” means a person).

Why should we take this to mean people?

Remember that the mark of the beast has an economic focus:

You can only buy or sell if you have the mark of the beast.

When we come to the fall of Babylon next time –

we will see how the merchants respond to the fall of Babylon.

They see that their trade is wiped out –

they see that their financial power is ruined.

The things that they most long for are gone!

### **3<sup>rd</sup> – Poured Out into the Rivers and Springs – Water Turned to Blood (v4)**

*<sup>4</sup> The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.*

The third bowl also turns water to blood – but this time it is the rivers and springs of water.  
This is the drinking water.

When the Nile was turned to blood,  
it affected both the commerce of Egypt (fishing, irrigation),  
and the drinking water.

Even so the second and third bowls combine against all the waters of the earth.

And in verse 5 we get some commentary from the angel of the waters.

#### **The Angel and the Altar Respond (v5-7)**

*<sup>5</sup> And I heard the angel in charge of the waters<sup>[a]</sup> say,  
“Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,  
for you brought these judgments.*

*<sup>6</sup> For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
and you have given them blood to drink.  
It is what they deserve!”*

God’s justice is a sort of poetic justice.

God gives to people what they deserve.

With the same measure that you judge others, God will judge you!

Or, perhaps to say it another way –

“through what things anyone sins, through these he is punished.”

We have the saying,

“If you live by the sword, you will die by the sword” (based on Matt 26:52).

But how often we see this happen!

The one who uses words to manipulate and control  
will often find his words come back to bite him!

When someone “gets a taste of their own medicine” –  
no one is surprised!

Those who shed the blood of saints and prophets will receive blood to drink.

We heard back in chapter 6 the cry of the souls under the altar –

“O Sovereign Lord, holy and true,  
how long before you will judge and avenge our blood  
on those who dwell on the earth?” (6:10)

Now the altar speaks on their behalf:

<sup>7</sup> *And I heard the altar saying,  
“Yes, Lord God the Almighty,  
true and just are your judgments!”*

Just think for a moment what is happening!  
The altar is talking.

Now, if you are trying to take everything in Revelation literally,  
I hope this will help to cure you!  
Why is the altar talking?!

Remember that *no one* is able to enter the sanctuary right now (15:7).  
We need to keep the picture clear before us!

The sanctuary is empty.  
What did Jesus say would happen if his disciples kept quiet?  
Even the stones would cry out.

Now – with the heavenly sanctuary emptied of disciples –  
the stones cry out!

And not just any stones –  
but the consecrated stones of the heavenly altar!  
The altar under which the souls of the martyrs had taken refuge!  
The altar at which Jesus – our great high priest –  
presented his own blood as the perfect sacrifice –  
that paid the price for our sins!  
*That* altar now bears witness – when there is no one else to speak!  
“Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments.”

He is faithful – and he is just – to forgive the sins of those who repent!  
And he faithful – and he is just – to condemn those who refuse to repent!

The fourth bowl then turns to the heavens:

**4<sup>th</sup> – Poured Out on the Sun – People Scorched with Fire (v8-9)**  
**They Cursed God and Did Not Repent**

<sup>8</sup> *The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.*

<sup>9</sup> *They were scorched by the fierce heat, ...*

The fourth angels pours his bowl out on the sun –  
with the result that people are scorched with fire – scorched by the fierce heat.

Global warming – with a vengeance!

I know nothing about the science of global warming.

But it would be entirely consistent with how God deals with humanity  
for *our foolishness* to result in catastrophic destruction.

I grew up on the coast of California.

We'd go to the beach and see these beautiful homes built along the coast.  
They were well-designed – with plenty of room between the house and the cliffs.

If the shore went along at its normal pace, it would take hundreds of years –  
maybe thousands of years –  
before those houses would be in danger.

Then, one winter, there was a terrible storm...  
one storm did what five hundred years could not have done.  
And when the storm passed,  
those houses had fallen into the sea.

In our folly, we think that everything will go along just as it always has!  
We build houses on cliffs and in flood plains –  
and think that we have the power to hold back the waters!  
Perhaps closer to home –  
we come up with all sorts of ways to increase our comfort:  
air conditioning, insulation, indoor plumbing! –  
and we create an environment for mold to destroy us!

All of these “natural disasters” can be seen as God’s judgments against rebellious humanity.

The first four bowls are poured out on the earth, the waters, and the heavens.

It's also important to remember chapter 7, verse 16 –  
speaking of those who have made their robes white in the blood of the Lamb:  
“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore;  
the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.  
For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd,  
and he will guide them to springs of living water,  
and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

How do you respond to the heat – to the trials of life?

Listen to the response of the wicked in verse 9:

<sup>9</sup> *They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed<sup>[b]</sup> the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.*

How do you respond when plagues come your way?  
Because *yes*, God *does* have power over these plagues!  
Do you repent and give him glory?  
John is not saying that all bad things happen because *you did something wrong!*  
But we are *always* in need of repentance!

Have you loved God perfectly this week?  
No?  
Well, then, you need to repent of that!  
Have you been rude? Harsh? Unloving? Unforgiving?  
Well, then, you need to repent of that!

When bad stuff happens, it is God's way of reminding us  
that we need to turn around and remember him!

And at the very heart of rebellion is the refusal to repent.  
Repentance is hard.  
We don't like to admit that we were wrong.  
And if we admit that we are wrong,  
then we will have to do something about it.  
We will have to endeavor to *make it right*.

And we are proud.  
Repentance requires humility.

But humility is signally lacking in the kingdom of the Beast!

And so the fifth angel...

### **5<sup>th</sup> – Poured Out on the Throne of the Beast – His Kingdom Plunged into Darkness (v10-11)**

#### **They Cursed God and Did Not Repent**

*<sup>10</sup> The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish <sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.*

The kingdom of the Beast is plunged into darkness –  
like the kingdom of Pharaoh so many years ago!

We saw in chapter 13 that the kingdom of the Beast was Rome –  
and yet was more than Rome.

The kingdom of the Beast is that kingdom that sets itself up against God.  
When Rome fell, Constantinople took over.  
When Constantinople fell, it was followed by Moscow and Paris,  
London and Berlin,

New York and Tokyo and Beijing.

Any city – any nation – that refuses to repent of their deeds  
becomes the kingdom of the Beast.  
And especially when they realize that *God* is the one who brings affliction –  
and yet they prefer to curse God and die...

We heard after the sixth trumpet about their sins (in chapter 9, verse 20):  
“The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues,  
did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons  
and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood,  
which cannot see or hear or walk,  
nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries  
or their sexual immorality or their thefts.”

If they would repent – God would forgive.  
But they refuse to repent.

And so the sixth bowl is poured out:

**6<sup>th</sup> – Poured Out on the Great River – The Unholy Trinity Prepares for Battle (v12-16)  
But Stay Awake – Don’t Get Drowsy!  
They Assembled at Armageddon**

*<sup>12</sup> The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. <sup>13</sup> 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. <sup>14</sup> For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.*

When the sixth trumpet was blown in chapter 9, verse 13,  
a voice from the horns of the golden altar before God  
called for the sixth angel to release the four angels  
who are bound at the great river Euphrates.  
So the Euphrates River plays a central role in the sixth trumpet *and* the sixth bowl.

But here we have the *drying up* of the Euphrates –  
just as God parted the Red Sea to bring the people through on dry land...  
Isaiah and Jeremiah had both spoken of the drying up of the Euphrates  
as a judgment against Babylon –  
when God raised up Cyrus to bring Israel back from their captivity.

The Euphrates River is the great River of the Babylonian world.  
Some have tried to figure out how to make this work *literally*.  
But our text itself points in a different direction.  
The drying up of the river is to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

But then John sees the three frogs – the three unclean spirits –  
going forth to the kings of the *whole world* to assemble them for battle  
on the great day of God the Almighty.

The kings from the east *are* the kings of the whole world.  
And they are incited by the three frogs – the three unclean spirits –  
that go forth from the mouths of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet.

#### Why Frogs?

As amphibians, frogs are "unclean" (to use the language of Leviticus).  
They are neither sea creatures nor land animals.  
They are "mixed" -- they cross boundaries between land and sea.  
And further, frogs chirp at night –  
they are associated with the coming of darkness.  
In Revelation 16, they are "unclean spirits"  
who gather the kings of the earth together for battle  
on the great day of God the Almighty.  
So these boundary-crossing creatures of darkness  
are uniting the nations together against God.

Where do you hear the croaking of the three frogs?  
Where do you hear unclean spirits calling you  
to assemble against God and against his Messiah?

As we saw in chapter 13 – the first beast is all about political power;  
the second beast – the false prophet – focuses on economic power –  
luring you into the worship of the first beast.

The three frogs also perform signs –  
like the beast and the false prophet.  
Just because someone can perform miraculous signs  
that does *not* mean that they are from God!!

And then – the midst of the gathering darkness –  
as we hear the croaking of the frogs get louder! –  
we hear the voice of Jesus over the din!!

<sup>15</sup> (“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”)

“Behold, I am coming like a thief!  
Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on,  
that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”

In other words, Jesus says to you that he is coming when you least expect him!  
And when he comes, you won't have time to get dressed –  
so keep your garments on!

What does that mean?

Well, if you are fooling around with Babylon –  
if you are engaging in sinful behavior – when Jesus shows up,  
that's going to be embarrassing!

I heard about a man once who died of a heart attack while he was with a prostitute.  
Jesus showed up – and he wasn't wearing any clothes!

Do not surrender to the beast!  
Do not yield to Babylon.

But think about where this exhortation comes from:

back in the Seven Letters, Jesus had said to the church in Sardis,  
“The one who conquers will be clothed thus in white garments,  
and I will never blot his name out of the book of life.” (3:5)  
and to the church in Laodicea, he said,  
“I counsel you to buy from me...white garments  
so that you may clothe yourself  
and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen...” (3:18)

The image here is that *you have* new garments.  
You have white garments.  
You have been clothed with Christ!  
So don't take off your garments!  
Don't take off Christ!

Hold fast!  
Hold on!  
Hold on to Jesus!!

<sup>16</sup> *And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.*

Armageddon represents “Har-megiddo” in Hebrew,  
which means “mount Megiddo.”

Megiddo is a plain –  
so those who want to take this literally generally have some challenges here!

But let's understand the picture –  
because there are a couple of key OT background stories that explain what is going on.  
In Judges 5:19 – in the Song of Deborah –

we are told that “by the waters of Megiddo” the kings came and fought.  
And the LORD arose and fought for his people –  
destroying Sisera and his army.  
“From heaven the stars fought, from their courses they fought against Sisera” (5:20)

Another key battle happened in the plain of Megiddo in the days of Josiah  
(the last good king of Judah) – in 2 Chronicles 35:20-22.  
Pharaoh Neco sends word to Josiah that he is passing by to go to the Euphrates  
to fight against Babylon.  
Neco says that God is with him – and so warns Josiah not to hinder him.  
But Josiah will not let him pass –  
so he goes to battle against Egypt – and dies in battle.

In other words,  
Megiddo is a place where you win battles – when God is with you.  
And you lose battles – when God is not.

More particularly, what was Josiah doing by going to battle against Neco?  
Who was Neco going to fight?  
Babylon.  
So what was Josiah doing?  
Fighting to help Babylon.

What is the whole point of the book of Revelation?!!  
Don't fight for Babylon!  
Don't side with the Beast!  
Don't join yourself to those who are hostile to Jesus!

**7<sup>th</sup> – Poured Out on the Air – “It Is Done!” (v17-21)**  
**Lightning, Rumbings, Thunder, Earthquake – the Cup of God's Wrath**  
**They Cursed God**

*<sup>17</sup> The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”*

On the cross Jesus had said, “It is finished” –  
the work of redemption had been completed!  
Now – our Lord Jesus cries out from the temple – from the throne –  
“It is done!”  
It is time for Judgment Day.

In every prior sequence of sevens,  
there was now a response from the people of God!  
But as we saw at the end of chapter 15,  
the people of God have left the sanctuary.

The Seven Bowls are so awful –  
the Wrath of God is so complete –  
that there is no place for the voices of the saints.

And so here there is no response from the cherubim, from the 24 elders, or anyone else.

But there *is* the usual fire from heaven:

*<sup>18</sup> And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings,<sup>[c]</sup> peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. <sup>19</sup> The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. <sup>20</sup> And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. <sup>21</sup> And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds<sup>[d]</sup> each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.*

And this time, the fire from heaven is entirely a fire of judgment!

We keep seeing that the “sevens” of Revelation are God’s sermon –  
the declaration of God’s purposes for history –  
what life will be like between the first and second comings of Christ.

At first, the language of Revelation 16 might make you think that this is all future.  
These are – after all – the seven *last plagues* (15:1),  
and with them, the wrath of God is *finished*.  
And quite frankly, it wouldn’t surprise me at all if there is a future fulfillment  
of these things.

But as we’ve gone through the various “sevens” of the book of Revelation,  
you may have noticed that we are living at the edge of the *sixth*.

Throughout history, we keep seeing all the one through fives.  
We keep seeing the “signs of the times” –  
the judgments on the earth, on the seas, on the rivers, on the heavenly bodies –  
we keep seeing the judgments on the throne of the beast –  
and we keep thinking that *just maybe* we are seeing the sixth.

But in the face of all the sixes –  
summed up in the number of the beast – 6 6 6 –  
remember that our Lord Jesus has triumphed!

And he calls you to repent – to humble yourself before him,  
and to just walk each day, moment by moment, listening to *his voice* –  
not to the frogs that call you away from Jesus!