

Revelation 12–16

“Chapter 55: Revelation 12–16,” **New Testament Student Manual (2014)**

Introduction and Timeline for Revelation 12–16

In Revelation 12–16, John described in some detail the war that Satan wages against God and His faithful Saints, which began in the premortal world and continues in mortality. In spite of the fearful events described in these chapters, there are great reasons to hope and rejoice. John the Revelator assured his readers that although Satan makes war with the Saints of God, they can be victorious. We can overcome Satan by relying on the Atonement of Jesus Christ, living so that our names are written in the Lamb’s book of life, and keeping the covenants we make with God. As we are faithful in these ways, we will also receive protection from the plagues to be poured out upon the earth. We also learn in these chapters that God restored the gospel of Jesus Christ to the earth in order to help His children withstand and overcome these tribulations in the last days.

lesson 55 timeline

Commentary for Revelation 12–16

Revelation 12–14. “Interludes” in the Book of Revelation

Many of the events described in Revelation 6–11 seem to be chronological in order. This can lead the reader to expect this pattern to continue. However, Gerald N. Lund, who later became a member of the Seventy, explained that there are several “interludes,” during which the book of Revelation briefly diverts from its chronological sequence:

“As one studies the book, it becomes clear that there are places in the chronological flow where the Lord pauses to teach us important information before moving on. A teacher may do this as he moves through a lecture, pausing in his logical development to say, ‘Now, before we go further, I need to make sure you understand something.’ Such teaching interludes seem to apply to John’s vision. For example:

“1. The joy of those who are saved. (Rev. 7:9–17.) Before launching into a grim description of the judgments, John sees an innumerable company of the righteous—a powerful reminder that not all on earth will be wicked and will suffer God’s judgments.

“2. The ‘little book’ interlude. (Rev. 10:1–11.) In the midst of a vivid description of the great battle of Armageddon, there is another pause. An angel gives John a little book to eat, which we learn is a symbol of John’s ministry. (See D&C 77:14.) Since the Apostle was translated and was to live through all the events he saw, the Lord seems to pause to show him what part he will have in all of it.

“3. The ‘kingdoms’ interlude. (Rev. 12–14.) This is the longest and perhaps the most difficult interlude to understand. The three chapters seem to comprise an overview of mankind’s history from the premortal existence to the Second Coming, as it pertains to the kingdoms of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) and the dragon (Satan). When John hears that the kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of Christ (see 11:15), it is as though the Lord stops to teach more about these two different classes of kingdoms.
...

“4. Another interlude that recounts the joy of those who are saved, similar to the first. (Rev. 15.)”
 (“Seeing the Book of Revelation as a Book of Revelation,” Ensign, Dec. 1987, 52).

dragon with woman, child, and stars

Dragon with woman, child, and stars

Revelation 12:1–2, 5, 7. The Woman “Brought Forth a Man Child”

In Revelation 12:1–2, 5, 7, John saw in vision a woman who gave birth to a child. The Joseph Smith Translation reads as follows (note that verse 5 becomes verse 3 in the Joseph Smith Translation):

“And there appeared a great sign in heaven, in the likeness of things on the earth; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

“And the woman being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

“And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and his throne. ...

“And the dragon prevailed not against Michael, neither the child, nor the woman which was the church of God, who had been delivered of her pains, and brought forth the kingdom of our God and his Christ” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:1–3, 7 [in the Bible appendix]).

These clarifications confirm that Satan will not prevail in his war against God’s kingdom on earth. They also teach that the woman represents the “church of God” and that the child she gives birth to is the “kingdom of our God and his Christ” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:7 [in the Bible appendix]). The Church of God is at this time an ecclesiastical organization only, but when the Savior comes again

and makes “a full end of all nations” (D&C 87:6), the kingdom of God will also have political jurisdiction over all people on the earth. “The purpose of the Church is to prepare its members to live forever in the celestial kingdom or kingdom of heaven. ... During the Millennium, the kingdom of God will be both political and ecclesiastical” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven”; scriptures.lds.org).

Revelation 12:1. The Sun, the Moon, and Twelve Stars

We learn from latter-day scripture that those who inherit the celestial kingdom will receive glory like unto that of the sun (see D&C 76:70). The image of “a woman clothed with the sun” may symbolize the Church’s role in preparing its members for the future glory of the celestial kingdom (Revelation 12:1). The “crown of twelve stars” upon the head of the woman likely refers to the Twelve Apostles who preside over the affairs of the Church under Jesus Christ’s direction (Revelation 12:1).

John also saw “the moon under [the woman’s] feet” (Revelation 12:1). Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles explained a possible meaning of this image: “As the moon shines by reflected light, so do all earthly churches and kingdoms. They are under, beneath and lower than the true Church. The highest eternal reward they can offer is the terrestrial kingdom, whose glory is like the moon. (1 Cor. 15:40–41.)” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3 vols. [1966–73], 3:517).

Revelation 12:3–4, 7–10. War in Heaven

These verses in Revelation 12 are a parenthetical reference to the War in Heaven. The dragon is a representation of Satan, who with his followers waged the War in Heaven against Heavenly Father and His faithful children (see D&C 29:36–38; Moses 4:1–4). “The third part of the stars of heaven” (Revelation 12:4) are that portion of the hosts of heaven who followed Satan in the premortal war in heaven and were cast out (see Isaiah 14:12–17; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6; D&C 29:37; Abraham 3:27–28). Elder Bruce R. McConkie described the conflict that occurred in heaven: “What kind of war? The same kind that prevails on earth; the only kind Satan and spirit beings can wage—a war of words, a tumult of opinions, a conflict of ideologies; a war between truth and error, between light and darkness. ... And the battle lines are still drawn. It is now on earth as it was then in heaven; every man must choose which general he will follow” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:518).

President Boyd K. Packer of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles elaborated on how we can find protection during this spiritual war:

“[Satan] is determined to disrupt our Heavenly Father’s plan and seeks to control the minds and actions of all. This influence is spiritual, and he ‘is abroad in the land’ [D&C 52:14].

“But despite the opposition, trials, and temptations, you need not fail or fear. ...

“... Youth today are being raised in enemy territory with a declining standard of morality. But as a servant of the Lord, I promise that you will be protected and shielded from the attacks of the adversary if you will heed the promptings that come from the Holy Spirit” (“Counsel to Youth,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 16, 18).

Revelation 12:6, 14. What Is the Meaning of the Woman Going into the Wilderness?

The woman fleeing into the wilderness is symbolic of Satan driving the ancient Church into the period of the Great Apostasy, when the authority of the priesthood was taken from the earth following the deaths of Jesus Christ and His Apostles (see D&C 86:1–3). The Joseph Smith Translation of Revelation 12:6 changes the term “days” to “years” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:5 [in the Bible appendix]). For insight on the three and a half “times” the Church remains in the wilderness (see Revelation 12:14), see the commentary for Revelation 11:2–3, 9–11.

flying eagle

John saw the Church being delivered from the serpent by flying into the wilderness with eagle’s wings (see Revelation 12:14). In Israel’s history, eagles’ wings are a symbol of divine deliverance (see Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 32:11–12; Isaiah 40:31).

Revelation 12:8–10. Satan Accuses Day and Night

Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:8 reads: “Neither was there place found in heaven for the great dragon who was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and also called Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he who was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”

The name-title “Satan” comes from a Hebrew verb meaning “to accuse,” “to slander,” or “to be an adversary.” Thus, the title “accuser” (Revelation 12:10) reflects Satan’s efforts as the adversary of the human family, charging people with sin. On the other hand, Jesus Christ is our advocate, pleading to God on behalf of those who believe in Him (see D&C 45:3–5). President Dieter F. Uchtdorf of the First Presidency discussed Satan’s title of “accuser”: “The scriptures call him the ‘accuser’ because he wants us to feel that we are beyond forgiveness (see Revelation 12:10). Satan wants us to think that when we have sinned we have gone past a ‘point of no return’—that it is too late to change our course” (“Point of Safe Return,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2007, 99). The phrase “day and night” (Revelation 12:10) reinforces that Satan does not cease his effort to destroy the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12:11

What details in this verse can give you hope as you defend yourself against evil? What can you do so the statement in verse 11 could describe your victory over Satan?

Revelation 12:11; 13:8. By Blood and Testimony

In Revelation 12:11, an angel declared that Christ's followers overcame Satan and his followers "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony." One truth we learn from the scriptures is that the saving power of the Atonement was already in place in the premortal world, for Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8; see also 1 Peter 1:18–20; Mosiah 3:13; 4:7; D&C 93:38). Because we are here on earth, we know that in the premortal world we trusted in Heavenly Father's plan for our redemption and drew upon the blessings of the Atonement and our testimonies to overcome Satan.

In mortality we continue to overcome Satan in the same manner—by the atoning blood of Jesus Christ and by the word of our testimonies. Elder Richard G. Scott of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles described the power of testimony:

"A strong testimony gives peace, comfort, and assurance. It generates the conviction that as the teachings of the Savior are consistently obeyed, life will be beautiful, the future secure, and there will be capacity to overcome the challenges that cross our path. A testimony grows from understanding truth, distilled from prayer and the pondering of scriptural doctrine. It is nurtured by living those truths in faith and the secure confidence that the promised results will be obtained. ...

"... Your personal security and happiness depend upon the strength of your testimony, for it will guide your actions in times of trial and uncertainty" ("The Power of a Strong Testimony," Ensign, Nov. 2001, 87).

The Crucifixion

The effects of the Atonement were in place "from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8). Even at the foundation of the world, it was a certainty that Jesus Christ would perform the Atonement; thus, the effects of the Atonement began in the premortal world.

Revelation 12:11–12. They "Kept the Testimony Even unto Death"

The Joseph Smith Translation adds several words to Revelation 12:11: "They loved not their own lives, but kept the testimony even unto death" (in the Bible appendix). This addition suggests that Christ's followers valued and loved their testimonies of the Lord and His gospel more than their own lives. There

are multiple references in the book of Revelation to individuals who were tested and tried in the war against evil, even unto death (see Revelation 2:10, 13; 6:9–11; 11:7; 16:6; 17:6; 20:4).

The “loud voice” from heaven continued to speak to John by declaring that the heavens and “ye that dwell in them” should rejoice because of the righteousness of the Saints (Revelation 12:10, 12). The Joseph Smith Translation then adds these further insights:

“And after these things I heard another voice saying, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth, yea, and they who dwell upon the islands of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath” (Joseph Smith Translation, Revelation 12:12 [in the Bible appendix]).

The phrase “after these things” may indicate that the righteous had a period of rejoicing after the war in heaven, for good had triumphed over evil. However, after this period, there came a time of woe on the earth because Satan and his followers came down to earth with “great wrath.”

Revelation 12:17. “The Remnant of Her Seed”

As recorded in Revelation 12:17, the remnant of the woman’s seed that Satan and his followers war against includes the latter-day Church restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith (see Revelation 13:7; 1 Nephi 14:12–14; D&C 76:28–29). Satan wages his fiercest battles against the Saints of the true and living Church.

Revelation 13:1–7. John “Saw a Beast Rise Out of the Sea”

After seeing that Satan went to make war against the remnant of the seed of the woman, John saw a beast rise out of the sea (see Revelation 13:1). The Joseph Smith Translation indicates that the beast is “in the likeness of the kingdoms of the earth” (in Revelation 13:1, footnote a). The beast’s many heads, crowns, and horns suggest many different kingdoms and rulers with great power. The Prophet Joseph Smith (1805–44) taught: “When God made use of the figure of a beast in visions to the prophets He did it to represent those kingdoms which had degenerated and become corrupt, savage and beast-like in their dispositions, even the degenerate kingdoms of the wicked world” (in History of the Church, 5:341).

Rather than attempting to specify an exact identity of the beast, it may be more profitable to note the following general characteristics about the beast: It had power over many nations (see Revelation 13:1, 7); it opposed God and blasphemed against Him (see verses 5–6); the power it wielded was like the power that predatory animals have over their prey (see verse 2); Satan gave it power (see verses 2, 4); people of the world worshipped or followed the beast (see verse 4); and it was able to overpower many, including the Saints (see verse 7). It could be said that any kingdom or government that exhibits these

characteristics manifests the spirit of the beast. Revelation 17:8–12 contains additional information about the beast, including its ultimate destruction.

Revelation 13:7. “War with the Saints”

John recorded that it was given to the beast from the sea to “make war with the saints, and to overcome them” (Revelation 13:7). Though the intended meaning of much of the symbolism in Revelation 13 is uncertain, one message seems clear: Satan and those who uphold his work will be at war against the Saints of God (see also 1 Nephi 14:12–14). President Ezra Taft Benson (1899–1994) taught: “Satan is waging war against the members of the Church who have testimonies and are trying to keep the commandments. And while many of our members are remaining faithful and strong, some are wavering. Some are falling. Some are fulfilling John’s prophecy that in the war with Satan, some Saints would be overcome. (See Rev. 13:7.)” (“The Power of the Word,” *Ensign*, May 1986, 79).

Revelation 13:8. “The Book of Life”

John saw that the beast would be worshipped by those “whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb” (Revelation 13:8). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained that “the book of life, or Lamb’s book of Life, is the record kept in heaven which contains the names of the faithful and an account of their righteous covenants and deeds. (D. & C. 128:6–7; Ps. 69:28; Rev. 3:5; 21:27.)” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 3:455). President Joseph Fielding Smith (1876–1972) taught: “We are not going to be saved in the kingdom of God just because our names are on the records of the Church. It will require more than that. We will have to have our names written in the Lamb’s Book of Life, and if they are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life then it is an evidence we have kept the commandments. Every soul who will not keep those commandments shall have his name blotted out of that book” (in *Conference Report*, Oct. 1950, 10; see also Alma 5:57–58).

Revelation 13:10; 14:12. “The Patience and the Faith of the Saints”

The righteous will need patience and faith in Jesus Christ in order to withstand the evil that will prevail in the last days. President Dieter F. Uchtdorf explained:

video icon“Patience is not passive resignation, nor is it failing to act because of our fears. Patience means active waiting and enduring. It means staying with something and doing all that we can—working, hoping, and exercising faith; bearing hardship with fortitude, even when the desires of our hearts are delayed. Patience is not simply enduring; it is enduring well! ...

“Patience is a godly attribute that can heal souls, unlock treasures of knowledge and understanding, and transform ordinary men and women into saints and angels. Patience is truly a fruit of the Spirit.

“Patience means ... delaying immediate gratification for future blessings. It means reigning in anger and holding back the unkind word. It means resisting evil, even when it appears to be making others rich.

“Patience means accepting that which cannot be changed and facing it with courage, grace, and faith. It means being ‘willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon [us], even as a child doth submit to his father’ [Mosiah 3:19]. Ultimately, patience means being ‘firm and steadfast, and immovable in keeping the commandments of the Lord’ [1 Nephi 2:10] every hour of every day, even when it is hard to do so. In the words of John the Revelator, ‘Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and ... faith [in] Jesus’ [Revelation 14:12]” (“Continue in Patience,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2010, 57–59).

Revelation 13:11–17. A Second Beast “Spake as a Dragon”

Revelation 13:11 tells of a second beast that John saw; he later identified this beast as “the false prophet” (Revelation 19:20). This second beast “had two horns like a lamb” but “spake as a dragon” (Revelation 13:11). This description suggests that the second beast will seek to appear to represent Christ while actually teaching the false doctrines of Satan. The description of the second beast is also reminiscent of the Savior’s warning to “beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

President James E. Faust (1920–2007) of the First Presidency noted: “Satan is the greatest imitator, the master deceiver, the arch counterfeiter, and the greatest forger ever in the history of the world. He comes into our lives as a thief in the night. His disguise is so perfect that it is hard to recognize him or his methods” (“The Devil’s Throat,” *Ensign or Liahona*, May 2003, 51). “One of the major techniques of the devil is to cause human beings to think they are following God’s ways, when in reality they are deceived by the devil to follow other paths” (Bible Dictionary, “Devil”).

Revelation 13:16–17. The Mark of the Beast

In contrast to the righteous, who keep their covenants with God and receive His protecting seal on their foreheads (see Revelation 7:2–3; 14:1; 22:4; the commentary for Revelation 7:3; 9:4), the wicked who worship the beast “receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads” (Revelation 13:16). This may symbolize that the wicked show by their actions (hands) and beliefs (heads) that they do the will of the beast and accept his ideology. However, the precise meaning of “the mark” has not been revealed.

Revelation 13:17–18. “Six Hundred Threescore and Six”

John wrote that “the number of the beast ... is Six hundred threescore and six” (Revelation 13:18). Over the centuries, the number of the beast, 666, has intrigued countless individuals and led to many speculative interpretations. The Lord has not revealed the meaning of this symbolic number. Some

commentators have noted that since 6 is one less than 7 (a number representing divine perfection and completeness), 666 may emphasize the imperfect and counterfeit character of Satan and his followers.

Revelation 14:1–5. The Hundred and Forty-Four Thousand

In contrast to the depictions of Satan’s widespread influence and power recorded in Revelation 13, chapter 14 offers hope. The opening verses of Revelation 14 describe a group who have the “Father’s name written in their foreheads” (verse 1); they are clean and chaste, “follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth,” and are redeemed from among men (verse 4); and they are honest and “without fault” before God (verse 5).

Through the Prophet Joseph Smith, the Lord revealed that the 144,000 “are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn” (D&C 77:11). The song that is sung by the 144,000 (see Revelation 14:3) may be the same song that is recorded in Doctrine and Covenants 84:98–102. For more information about the 144,000, see Doctrine and Covenants 133:17–18; for information on God’s name written in the foreheads of the righteous, see the commentary for Revelation 3:12.

Revelation 14:6–12. Three Angels

John saw three angels, each proclaiming a message to the earth’s inhabitants. The first angel brought “the everlasting gospel” to the nations of the earth (Revelation 14:6). Many latter-day prophets have taught that the angel represents Moroni (see D&C 27:5; 133:36–39). The angel may also represent a composite of the many heavenly messengers, including Moroni, who have assisted in the latter-day Restoration of the gospel. Elder Bruce R. McConkie pointed out: “The angel Moroni brought the message, that is, the word; but other angels brought the keys and priesthood, the power” (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:530).

The Angel Moroni Appears to Joseph Smith

The Angel Moroni Appears to Joseph Smith, by Tom Lovell

In addition to bringing the everlasting gospel to the earth, the first angel announced that “the hour of his judgment is come”—a fitting message for a world that has been worshipping the beast (Revelation 14:7). This message prepares the reader for the second angel, whose message is that “Babylon is fallen,” which means that wickedness will end (Revelation 14:8). Babylon’s sin is described as “fornication,” meaning that the wicked of the world have been unfaithful in their relationship with God, placing their affections and loyalties on false gods (Revelation 14:8) and inducing others to follow this manner of

living. To “drink of the wine” of this sin implies internalizing Babylon’s evil ways (Revelation 14:8). Because of the impending fall of Babylon in the last days, the Lord has warned the Latter-day Saints to “go ye out from Babylon” (D&C 133:5), meaning that we must flee the wickedness of the world (see D&C 133:14).

The third angel described the judgments to come upon those who worship the beast and receive his mark (see Revelation 14:9). They will receive God’s punishing anger, described as drinking “the wrath of God ... without mixture,” or without dilution (Revelation 14:10). Other scriptures teach that God’s wrath is poured out only when all other efforts fail to persuade men to repent (see D&C 43:25–26; 88:88–90).

Revelation 14:13. “The Dead Which Die in the Lord”

John heard a voice saying, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13). This suggests that although the Lord’s people generally will be protected from many of the judgments to come (see Revelation 9:4; 1 Nephi 22:17–19), some righteous individuals will die in the calamities and tribulations of the last days. Nevertheless, to those who are righteous, death is associated with peace and joy—they “rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13; see also Alma 40:11–12; 46:39, 41; D&C 42:46).

Revelation 14:14–20. Two Harvests

John described two harvests in Revelation 14:14–20, which are reminiscent of those described in the parable of the wheat and the tares (see Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43; D&C 86:1–7). The first harvest gathers out the righteous from the wicked (see Revelation 14:14–16; D&C 33:2–6). This gathering began when the gospel was restored in the latter days and will continue into the Millennium.

winepress

Winepress, by Ted Henninger. Men crushing grapes with their feet in a winepress during Old Testament times

The second gathering (see Revelation 14:17–20) represents God’s judgments upon the wicked and the destruction that will come upon them when they, like grapes on the vine, are fully ripe in iniquity and are trodden in the “winepress of the wrath of God” (Revelation 14:19; see also Isaiah 63:3–4; D&C 88:106; 133:46–51).

Revelation 15–16. Seven Plagues

Revelation 15 appears to describe what the righteous—gathered in the first harvest—will experience, whereas Revelation 16 seems to describe what the wicked—gathered in the second harvest—will experience.

Chapters 15 and 16 work together. In Revelation 15:1, 7 John learned of seven destructive plagues that are to be poured out upon the wicked. Revelation 16 describes these seven plagues. The repeated use of the number seven may suggest that the plagues represent the completion of God’s judgment against the wicked in the last days: “For in [the seven last plagues] is filled up the wrath of God” (Revelation 15:1).

Revelation 15:2. “A Sea of Glass”

John saw that the righteous would stand upon “a sea of glass mingled with fire” (Revelation 15:2). The sea of glass represents the celestialized earth, where the righteous will reside in the presence of God (see Revelation 4:6; D&C 77:1; 130:6–9).

Revelation 15:2–4. “Victory over the Beast”

John saw that the righteous would gain “victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name”—in short, over all of Satan’s evils and deceptions (Revelation 15:2). Revelation 15:2–4 illustrates a major theme in the book of Revelation:

“There will be an eventual triumph on this earth of God over the devil; a permanent victory of good over evil, of the Saints over their persecutors, of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of men and of Satan.
...

“Such is the theme of the Revelation. ... If we fail to catch a glimpse of the theme, we fail in our comprehension [of the book], no matter how many details we are able to understand” (Bible Dictionary, “Revelation of John”).

Revelation 15:3. “The Song of Moses”

“The song of Moses” was sung by the children of Israel following their deliverance from Egyptian bondage (see Exodus 15:1–19). Revelation 15:3 tells us that the song of Moses will be sung again by those who inherit the celestial kingdom in celebration of the Lamb of God delivering them from the bondage of sin.

night sky with meteors

Darkness before Christ's Coming, by Paul Mann

Revelation 16:1. "The Vials of the Wrath of God" Are Poured Out

In Revelation 16, John described the scourges and plagues that will be poured out in the final days prior to the Second Coming of Christ (see also Revelation 15:1, 7). These plagues are summarized in the following chart.

Revelation 16

Description of the Plague

Verse 2

First, "a noisome and grievous sore" comes upon the wicked. (Similar plagues are described in Exodus 9:8–12 and Zechariah 14:12.)

Verse 3

Second, the waters of the sea turn to blood, and all creatures in the waters die (see also Exodus 7:19–21).

Verse 4

Third, the rivers and fountains of water turn to blood (see also Exodus 7:19–21).

Verses 8–9

Fourth, the sun scorches the wicked with fire and great heat.

Verses 10–11

Fifth, darkness spreads across the kingdom of the devil, and the wicked suffer pains and sores.

Verses 12–16

Sixth, the waters of the Euphrates River dry up to prepare for the gathering of the kings of the world at Armageddon (see also Zechariah 12:11).

Verses 17–21

Seventh, there are voices, thunders, lightnings, and a great earthquake; the cities of the nations fall; Babylon receives the cup of God's wrath; and great hail falls upon men.

Revelation 16:6. "They Have Shed the Blood of Saints and Prophets"

After John saw that the rivers and fountains of waters were turned to blood, he heard an angel proclaiming the justice of God in pouring out such a fitting judgment: "For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink" (Revelation 16:6). The angel's words of condemnation here are reminiscent of those found in 2 Nephi 26:3 and 3 Nephi 9:5–11 (see also 2 Kings 9:7; Luke 11:50–51; Revelation 18:24; Alma 37:30; 3 Nephi 10:12; D&C 136:36). It seems that safety in times of judgment is directly connected to the acceptance of prophets. For more information on the "blood of saints and prophets," see the commentary for Revelation 18:24.

Revelation 16:15. "Blessed Is He That Watcheth, and Keepeth His Garments"

In Revelation 16:15, the Lord warned, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." When the armies of the kings of the earth approach (see Revelation 16:14), all who are ready (clothed) to flee for safety will not be ashamed at having to flee in nakedness (see also Genesis 3:7–10; Exodus 32:25–26; Isaiah 20:4). In a spiritual sense, keeping one's garments symbolizes the spiritual readiness that results from living in spiritual watchfulness and receiving the blessings of the temple. Many other scriptures exhort people to live with watchfulness (see Matthew 24:42–25:13; 26:41; D&C 45:44; 133:10–11).

Furthermore, Elder Bruce R. McConkie taught that keeping one's garments also represents spiritual safety: "To defile one's garments [of the holy priesthood] is to disobey the Lord's law, and to keep one's garments (Rev. 16:15) is to keep the commandments and qualify for the robes of righteousness that clothe celestial beings" (Doctrinal New Testament Commentary, 3:454–55; see Revelation 3:3–5).

Revelation 16:16. Gathering in Armageddon

“The name Armageddon is derived from the Hebrew Har Megiddon, meaning the ‘mountain of Megiddo.’ The valley of Megiddo is in the western portion of the plain of Esdraelon, fifty miles (eighty kilometers) north of Jerusalem, and is the site of several crucial battles in Old Testament times. A great and final conflict that will take place near the time of the second coming of the Lord is called the battle of Armageddon because it will begin in the same locale. (See Ezek. 39:11; Zech. 12–14, especially 12:11; Rev. 16:14–21.)” (Guide to the Scriptures, “Armageddon”; scriptures.lds.org). The battle that will begin at Har Megiddo will spread to Jerusalem.

Revelation 16:20. “Every Island Fled Away”

President Joseph Fielding Smith explained the physical changes that will take place when the earth is returned to its original state:

“We are informed that the Lord ‘shall command the great deep, and it shall be driven back into the north country, and the islands shall become one land; and the land of Jerusalem and the land of Zion shall be turned back into their own place, and the earth shall be like as it was in the days before it was divided.’ (Gen. 10:25.) The notion prevails quite generally that the dividing of the earth in the days of Peleg was a division politically among the people, but from this word of the Lord we gain the idea that the earth itself was divided and that when Christ comes it will again be brought back to the same conditions physically as prevailed before this division took place. The sea is to be driven back into the north. The land is to be brought back as it was originally and the lands of Zion (America) and Jerusalem (Palestine and all the land pertaining unto it) will be restored to their own place as they were in the beginning. The Savior will stand in the midst of his people, and shall reign over all flesh. We have discovered in our study that the wicked, or all things that are corruptible [D&C 101:23–35], will be consumed and therefore will not be permitted to be on the earth when this time comes” (Church History and Modern Revelation, 2 vols. [1953], 1:264; see Isaiah 40:4; 64:1; D&C 133:22–24, 40, 44).

Points to Ponder

How do Revelation 16:9, 11 and Doctrine and Covenants 43:18–25 help you understand why the Lord will continue to pour out plagues upon the wicked?

How can President Dieter F. Uchtdorf’s statement in the commentary for Revelation 13:10; 14:12 help you faithfully withstand the wickedness you see in the world around you?

Suggested Assignments

After reading the commentary for Revelation 16:15, read the following scripture references to better understand the phrase “he that watcheth”: Matthew 24:42–46; Mosiah 4:30; Doctrine and Covenants 45:44; 50:45–46; 106:4–5. Also read the following scripture passages to explore further possible meanings of the phrase “keepeth his garments” (Revelation 16:15): Revelation 3:3–5; 1 Nephi 12:10; Alma 5:21; Doctrine and Covenants 109:72–76. Consider writing one or more of these references in the margin of your scriptures next to Revelation 16:15. Then write a summary of what you learned in your scripture study journal.

Search Revelation 14:11–13 and compare the state of the wicked to that of the Saints with regard to “rest.” List what you would be willing to do to receive the rest promised to the Saints.