

Lesson # 49 The Second Bowl Judgment Revelation 16: 3

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Revelation 16: 3 (ESV)

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.

I. Blood in the Sea v. 3

If this judgment stood alone, it would be horrifying and deadly, but it is cumulative and comes on the heels of the first bowl. This plague parallels the first plague in Egypt prior to the Exodus – Ex. 7:20-24 – and the second Trumpet Judgment – Rev. 8:8-9. However, this is much more intense and widespread. In the 2nd Trumpet, 1/3rd of the living creatures in the sea died, but now ‘everything’ dies in the sea. I believe this is a universal everything here, not limited by category or some other buffer. Once this takes place, the end cannot be far off.

In the flood of Noah in Genesis 6-9, only sea creatures survived along with the 8 people and the animals in the ark. Obviously some sea life died during the upheaval of the flood, and we have some fossil remains to prove that, but most would have survived. Now, they are no longer spared. ①

Since about 70% of the earth’s surface is water covered (mostly sea or oceans) the scope of this plague is almost unimaginable to us. The oceans becoming like blood would transform a life giving, refreshing, weather causing, climate motor of earth’s cycles to become a putrid stinking mess of death and decay. This could be a red tide type phenomenon since the text says “like blood”, but even if it is that, the result is the same – blood-like fluid replacing water and death everywhere one looks.

John Phillips comments here, *“From time to time, off the coast of California and elsewhere, a phenomenon known as “the red tide” occurs. These red tides kill millions of fish and poison those who eat contaminated shell fish. In 1949, one of these red tides hit the coasts of Florida. First the water turned yellow, but by midsummer, it was thick and viscous with countless billions of dinoflagellates, tiny one celled organisms. Sixty mile windows of stinking fish fouled the beaches. Much marine life was wiped out, even bait used by fishermen died on the hooks. Eventually the red tide subsided, only to appear again the following year. Eating fish contaminated by the tide produced severe symptoms caused by a potent nerve poison, a few grams of which, distributed aright, could easily kill everyone in the world. An unchecked population explosion of toxic dinoflagellates would kill all the fish in the sea.”* ①

Henry Morris adds, *“In this toxic ocean, nothing can survive, and soon all the billions of fishes and marine mammals, and marine reptiles and the innumerable varieties of marine invertebrates will perish, thus further poisoning the oceans and contaminating the sea shores of the world. The oceans will have effectively completed their age long function in earth’s physical economy, and will die. As God had created every living soul in the waters (Gen. 1:21), so now every living thing died in the sea.”*^②

Those who interpret Revelation as a historical record of events that occurred in AD 70 must come up with an historic scene for which this verse applies and has been fulfilled. If all marine life died, how do we now have more? David Chilton, an extreme Post-millennialist / Dominion Theologian claims that this verse was an isolated incident – one time thousands of Jewish rebels fled to the Sea of Galilee from the Roman massacre of Terichacae. They escaped on flimsy boats, and the Romans caught up with them and massacred them on the water. It is thus their blood in the water that this verse refers to, and he quotes from Josephus to support his contention; *“One could see the whole lake stained with blood and crammed with corpses, for not a man escaped. During the days that followed, a horrible stench hung over the region, and it presented an equally horrifying spectacle. The beaches were strewn with wrecks and swollen bodies, which, hot and clammy with decay made the air so foul that the catastrophe that plunged the Jews in mourning revolted even those who had brought it about.”*^③

II. Death in the Sea

In Gen. 1:21, God gave life to all sea creatures, both great and small, even the microscopic ones. Some even produce oxygen which escapes into our atmosphere and forms an important refreshing cycle for the atmosphere. Certainly all oceanic plants would also be involved in this massive culture of death in what was once water. Complete oceanic death is a harbinger of more death to come. You cannot kill 70% of the planet’s content and there be no implication for the rest of the world.

Next lesson – Lesson # 50 Rev. 16:4-7 The Third Bowl & an Interlude

^① John Phillips, Exploring Revelation, Moody Press, 1974; pp. 200-201

^② Henry M. Morris, The Revelation Record, Tyndale, 1983; p. 298

^③ David Chilton, The Days of Vengeance, Dominion Press, 1987, p. 398 - 400....quoting Flavius Josephus