

**Rev. 16:17-21, The Last Vial**  
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**Overview**

1. The seventh vial introduces the final series of the book, ch. 17-22. Movement is Whore -> Lord of Lords -> Bride
  - a) 17:1-18:24 The judgment of Babylon, Great Whore
  - b) 19:1-20:15 The Lord of Lords judges Babylon, the Whore
  - c) 21:1-8 God comforts Jerusalem, the Bride
  - d) 21:9-22:5 The Blessing of Jerusalem, the Bride
2. 16:17-21 is the detailed introduction.

**A. 17a, The Target**

Compare the points of application of the previous seven vials: Earth, Sea, Rivers & Fountains, Sun, Seat of the Beast, River Euphrates. Each is peculiar to the judgment. Why the focus on "air" here?

1. Eph. 2:2, this is the particular abode of Satan and his minions. The proper abode for the angels is heaven; for humans is earth; and for Satan is the air between. --> The seventh vial strikes directly at Satan's seat, thus going beyond and behind the beast's seat in the fifth vial.
2. This and the first item (the earth), unlike those in between, are the ones from which man cannot sever himself, even for a moment. We are of necessity constantly in touch with the earth and with the air around it. (Water is not far behind, but one can go seven days without drinking--nowhere near this long without breathing.) Thus emphasizes the comprehensiveness of this judgment.

**B. 17b, The Announcement**

1. "Great voice": last study noted that this appears to indicate a creature, throughout Rev. Here probably one of the four living beasts about the throne. They set the vial-bearers loose on their mission (16:1), and now they report to the Father that the work is complete. Cf. Luke 14:22, the servant's report to his lord.
2. Three such announcements in the NT.
  - a) John 19:30, the Lord Jesus on the cross: the work of salvation has been accomplished.
  - b) Here, the work of judgment has been executed.
  - c) 21:6, MT: "The Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, are done." Announces the culmination of all of history.
  - d) Difference in verbs between John 19 (*telew*) and Rev. 16, 21 (*ginomai*). Difference may be that *tel.* emphasizes the

completion by an individual of what they are assigned to do, while *gin.* emphasizes the results. Cf. Luke 18:31; 22:37 (the Lord fulfilling the scriptural description of his mission); 2 Tim. 4:7 (Paul: "I have finished my course.") In neither case were the outward results impressive to the unbelieving eye, but the impact of such obedience leads to God's final pronouncement, "Everything is accomplished."

### C. 18-21, Voices, Earthquake, Hail

Three manifestations, expanding the IF that has appeared at the beginning of each cycle in 4:5; 8:5 (augmented with earthquake); 11:19 (augmented yet again with hail). Now nothing new is added, but the trio is amplified.

1. 18a, "voices, thunders, lightnings": Recalling, as in 4:5, the voice of God from Sinai. His law is the standard against which they have sinned and the basis for the subsequent judgment.
2. 18b-20, earthquake.
  - a) Olivet: Matt. 24:7, many of these to characterize the present age.
  - b) A "great earthquake" introduced for the first time in Rev. at 6:12 as part of the signs of the appearing of the Lord Jesus.
  - c) This one is explicitly said to be without peer.
  - d) 19-20, Five details. The first two go together, as do the last two, and all four describe the *physical* effects of the earthquake. The center detail describes the *spiritual* effect of the cataclysm.
    - 1) Physical effects: All refuges are destroyed--first the artificial ones, then the natural ones.
      - a> 19a, the cities that men have built to protect themselves from disaster are destroyed. All human efforts at self-protection will fall. Not only Babylon the great, but also the other cities associated with her.
      - b> 20, the natural features of the world to which men naturally flee for refuge are removed. Cf. 6:14 for mountains and islands; 6:15-17 for mountains as a place of refuge; and Psa. 139:9,10 for a (futile) attempt to hide on the islands.
    - 2) 19b, Spiritual result: Babylon cannot hide from God. He remembers her sin, and will force her to drink the cup of his wrath.
3. 21, Hail

- a) This is the point of contact of the seventh vial with both the trumpets (8:7; 11:19) and Egypt (Ex. 9:23). "Plague," used to describe only trumpets and vials, linking us back to Egypt.
- b) First introduced in Rev. 8:7, the first of the judgments of the Great Tribulation. Now appears to finish them off.
- c) Talent: 30 kg, 66 lbs.
- d) Effect: blasphemy, not belief. Cf. Pharaoh, whose heart was hardened by the plagues.