

The 7 Bowl Judgments

Scripture: Revelation 16:1-21

1 And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.” **2** And the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. **3** And 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.

4 And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of fresh waters; and they became blood. **5** And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; **6** for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast 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 Thy judgments.”

8 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. **9** And 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.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon 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.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east. **13** “And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, that’s Satan, and out of the mouth of the beast, Antichrist, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; **14** for they are spirits of demons, performing signs. **15** (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.”) **16** And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har Magedon.

17 And 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** And the great city, Jerusalem, was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And 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, rained down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

Intro: As noted in our study last Sunday morning of the Prelude to the Bowl Judgments, chapters 15 and 16 of Revelation form one connected vision. These seven plagues or bowl judgments represent the final expression of God's wrath to be poured out upon all those who worship and serve the Beast, Antichrist. As we shall see, these seven bowl judgments are catastrophic in extent and occur in rapid succession. This final series of judgments will culminate with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power and great glory (Rev. 19:11-21).

The First Bowl: *Painful Sores* (16:1-2)

1 And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth." 2 And the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

The first thing John hears is a loud voice coming out of the temple instructing the seven angels to pour out their bowl judgments upon the earth. Most identify this loud or great voice as belonging to Jesus Christ, since all judgment has been consigned to Him by God the Father.

The first angel "poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image."

The first bowl judgment results in men being struck with loathsome and malignant sores. This reminds me of the plague God released on the Egyptians during the ministries of Moses and Aaron (Exod. 9:9-11). These sores refer to some kind of skin ulcer or boils, for which there will be no cure or deliverance.

This may be similar to the boils that the LORD allowed Satan to afflict Job with. They will cause painful and intense suffering.

The Second Bowl: *Seas Turned To Blood* (16:3)

3 And 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 judgment (8:8-9) you recall killed 1/3 of all marine life. But here, with the second bowl judgment every living sea creature in the sea will die. Whatever marine life survived the second trumpet judgment is now killed in the second bowl judgment. The stench and disease that will result from this global catastrophe is unimaginable. The fishing industry that supplied a living for my family for some 30 years is here completely destroyed.

This plague of blood upon the oceans of the world is similar to the first plague Moses released upon Egypt. Moses smote the waters of the Nile River with his staff, and as a result, “All the fish in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exod. 7:21).

The Third Bowl: *Fresh Waters Turned To Blood* (16:4-7)

4 And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of fresh waters; and they became blood.

This judgment, as with the third trumpet, involves the fresh water supply. Whereas the third trumpet judgment affected 1/3 of the fresh waters of the earth, this third bowl judgment will be global in extent. All fresh water sources, rivers, streams, lakes, and the springs and fountains which supply them will be turned to blood.

5 John hears the angel who releases this plague upon the waters of the earth declare that God is the righteous Holy One who dispenses judgment on the wicked. These apostate and rebellious followers of Antichrist have slain and shed the blood of God’s saints and prophets. 6 It is only fitting that they be given blood to drink. “They deserve it.” God is merciful and long-suffering but eventually God’s holiness demands that His righteous judgment against sin be delayed no longer.

John hears another voice in verse 7 coming forth from God's altar vindicating Him for releasing these horrific judgments,

7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

This voice may be that of the Tribulation saints who were martyred for their faith in Christ. As noted in chapter 6:9-10, the souls of these martyred saints reside under God's altar, and they continually cry out for God to avenge their martyrdom. Revelation 6:10 "How long O Lord before You judge and avenge our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?" He has heard the cries of these martyred saints and is now avenging their shed blood.

The Fourth Bowl: *Scorching Heat* (16:8-9)

8 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 And 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 is similar to the fourth trumpet that also affected the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars by diminishing their light by one-third (night and day). Here, the rays of the sun will not be diminished but intensified. The heat of the sun's rays will scorch men with fierce heat. We are not sure what this judgment on the sun will entail. It may be that the sun's rays increase in intensity, or the earth's atmosphere is made thinner. The point is, God, who has the power over these plagues, will increase the intensity of the sun's heat and ultra violet rays to such a degree that it will scorch and burn the skin of men.

I am certain that most if not all of us here this morning have experienced a painful sunburn from too much exposure to the sun. Just this past summer, I spent too much time out on the lake, and ended up with a painful sunburn. I wasn't wearing sunglasses, so my eyes got sunburned as well. The pain from the sunburn bothered me for several days. Can you even begin to imagine the pain that will be experienced from this fierce sun-scorching judgment? There will be no escape from the scorching heat produced by the sun's rays.

As noted in verse 2, these plagues are released upon those who received the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image. The absolute wickedness of these beast worshippers is expressed in their response, verse 9 "And 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.”

Instead of turning to God and pleading for mercy, these beast-worshippers blaspheme His holy name and refuse to repent. These people, like Pharaoh of Egypt, harden their hearts against God to a point of no return. They curse His name, which suggests they recognize that He is the source of the plagues. Their refusal to repent or to give Him glory reveals the hardened condition of their lost souls.

The Fifth Bowl: *Darkness* (16:10-11)

10 And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon 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.

The fifth plague is poured out upon or directed against “the throne of the beast, and plunges his kingdom into total darkness.” This plague is reminiscent of the ninth plague of Egypt, which brought thick darkness to the land of Egypt, “a darkness that could be felt” (Exod. 10:21-23).

The darkness described here is a total darkness, one that can be felt. Have you ever been in a place that can only be described as absolute, total darkness? If you have ever descended into the bowls of the earth on a caving excursion, and turned your light off, then you have experienced total darkness. It is a darkness that is so oppressive that it can be felt. True darkness is very frightening.

The Lord Jesus warned that rejection of Him as Savior and Lord would result in eternal hell (Matt. 5:30; 8:12; 13:42). He described hell as outer darkness, pain, and torment. Those who embrace the Beast as the light of the world will come to the realization that he is the prince of darkness and death.

The cumulative effect of these bowl judgments will leave men with painful skin ulcers, dehydration from a lack of fresh drinking water, excruciating sunburn, and a frightening darkness that can be felt. They will not be able to find any relief from the wrath of God released through these final 7 bowl judgments.

Verse 11 informs us that these followers of the beast blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.” They still refuse to turn to God and cry-out for mercy and grace.

The Sixth Bowl: *The Euphrates Dried Up* (16:12-16)

12 And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east.

The pouring out of the sixth bowl coincides with the sixth trumpet, which released four angels from the Euphrates River. Here, the sixth bowl dries up the Euphrates River. The Euphrates River is the longest and most important river in the Middle East. It was considered by the people of that day to be the boundary between the east and west. To the east of the Euphrates were the multitudes in India, China, and Japan. The river provided a natural barrier from a land invasion from the east. In this future day this natural barrier will be removed. The Euphrates River will be dried up that the way might be prepared for an invasion by the kings from the east. These kings are usually identified as China who proudly boasts of an army of two hundred million men (Rev. 9:16).

According to verse 16 these kings from the east are gathered together to the place which in Hebrew is called Armageddon. This is actually a reference to Mount Megiddo overlooking the Jezreel Valley. It begins near the Mediterranean Sea in the west and extends inland some 20 miles to the east terminating near the Sea of Galilee. It is a broad flat plain 14 miles wide and over 20 miles long. The Jezreel Valley provides a natural battle field. Many famous battles in Israel's history took place in the Jezreel Valley. This will be the scene of the greatest battle in all of human history, "the battle of Armageddon."

I should point out that "the battle of Armageddon" is not a single battle but rather a series of military conflicts. As you piece the various scriptures together it appears that Antichrist's fragile alliances with various nations disintegrates. He will be confronted by various world leaders who oppose his rule, and will endeavor to put down the various rebellions that rise up.

This final invasion is not prompted merely by political differences, but by demonic activity. We read in **verses 13 and 14** "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon, that's Satan, and out of the mouth of the beast, Antichrist, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs. These reptilian-like demons are dispatched to gather the kings of the whole world together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

God sovereignly moves Satan, the world ruler, and the false prophet to unite in inciting the nations of the world to gather for the final world war to the place which in Hebrew is called Armageddon. This is the final judgment of God described earlier in Revelation 14:14-20 as God's final harvesting of the wicked Beast worshippers of the Tribulation period. It is described by John in Revelation 19, and by the prophets Ezekiel (38- 39), Joel (3), and Zechariah (14). This final battle to be waged by the forces of Antichrist against the Lord Jesus Christ at His second coming will begin in the valley north of Jerusalem called **Jezreel** at the foot of Mt. Megiddo. It is not really a battle, but a final blood bath executed by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and His angelic reapers. It results in the worst carnage of human flesh the world has ever known. It will culminate with the second coming of Christ in power and great glory (Rev. 19:11-21).

In the midst of this description of the end-times judgment, there is a parenthetical statement in **16:15** ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.")

Jesus Christ Himself issues this invitation and warning for believers of every age to always be ready and looking forward to His second coming. Are you ready? If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, then you're ready!

The Seventh Bowl: *Catastrophic Destruction* (16:17-21)

17 And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud/**great voice** came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "**It is done.**"

This great or loud voice coming forth from the Temple in heaven belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. He spoke these same words "It is done or finished," from the Cross of Calvary. Here, He announces that the 7th bowl judgment finishes the outpouring of God's wrath upon a Christ-rejecting world.

John next observes an earth-rending earthquake (vv. 18-20)

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 And the **great city, Jerusalem**, was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And **Babylon the great** was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

The magnitude of this great earthquake is more severe than anything the earth has ever seen. It will rend the **great city, Jerusalem**, into three parts, and the cities of the nations will all fall. Everything that man has made will be reduced to rubble. And **Babylon the great** was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. Dr. Walvoord suggests that “it is preferable to view ‘Babylon,’ not as a referring to Rome or some other city, but to the rebuilt city of Babylon located on the Euphrates River, which will be the capital of the final world government” (*Revelation*, 240-41).

According to verse 20 the great earthquake is so catastrophic that every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. No more Hawaii, Australia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, or Virgin Islands. No more Rocky Mountains or Himalayas.

This great earthquake will produce global topographical changes, just like the global flood of Noah’s day. It will prepare the earth for the Edenic conditions that the prophets predicted would characterize the earth during Christ’s Millennial Kingdom rule (Isa. 55–65; Rev. 20:11; 21:1-2).

21 The great earthquake is followed by **great hailstones**, about one hundred pounds each, raining down from heaven upon men. The people’s response will be to blaspheme God because of the plague of hail, because its plague was extremely severe. You would think that the terrible pain and suffering caused by these final 7 bowl judgments would have men crying out to God for mercy and deliverance, but such is not the case. Instead these unsaved followers of the Beast will blaspheme God and refuse to repent.

Conclusion: The message is clear: God is a holy God that cannot tolerate sin. He has graciously kept His fearful wrath in check, but the day is fast approaching when He will harvest the earth and throw all the wicked Beast worshipers into the great wine press of His fierce wrath. The Book of Revelation makes it clear that the God’s wrathful judgment is coming.

The good news for us this morning is that as believers we will never have to experience the horrors of the Tribulation. God promises to deliver us from the wrath to come (Rom. 5:9; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9; Rev. 3:10). **Today is a day of grace.** The invitation remains open to anyone who will trust in Christ by receiving God’s gracious gift of salvation. If you are here this morning and have never asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart as Savior, and to forgive you of your sins, I urge you to speak with Him as I close in prayer. God knows your heart, and is far more concerned with the attitude of your heart than your words.

Closing Prayer:

Closing Song: *Marines, Singing Days of Elijah*