

68. The Book of Revelation—16:2-8

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(1-26-22)

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We have come to Chapter 16 in our study in the Book of Revelation.

So far in the book we have seen the 7-Seal Judgments; the 7-Trumpet Judgments—and now we are about to see the final and most devastating judgments of all—the 7-Bowl Judgments also known as the '*bowls* (i.e., 'saucers') of God's wrath':

In other words, these judgments won't be long and protracted—they will be quick 'rapid fire' judgments (without mercy so there's no need to lengthen them out to give people time to repent).

These 7 last plagues come one after another in just a few months' time—right before the return of Jesus, the battle of Armageddon and the establishment of Kingdom Age.

The reason they come in such rapid-fire succession is because by this point, the day of salvation is over. By that I mean that no one left is going to be saved that hasn't already been saved.

Revelation 16:1 (NKJV)

¹ Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

The first Bowl is poured out on the worshippers of the Beast and his image.

The First Bowl—Malignant Sores

Revelation 16:2 (NKJV)

² So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

The question has been raised as to whether the bowls of the wrath of God come *after* the trumpet judgments—or are they identical in the sense that they are really describing the *same* judgments using slightly different terms?

But listen, even though it's true that there is clearly a lot of similarity between the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments—similarities, however, do not prove that they are one in the same judgments.

A careful comparison of the *trumpets* with the *bowls* of God's wrath reveals striking differences even though the order of the judgments is the same.

In the trumpet judgments, generally speaking, a *third* of the earth and/or the heavens are afflicted—whereas in the bowl judgments the effects of the judgments are on the *entire* earth and are much more severe and final in character.

Accordingly, it seems best to follow the interpretation which has long been held in the church that the seven bowls are an expansion of the *seventh trumpet*—just as the seven trumpets are an expansion of the *seventh seal*.

The order is *climactic*, and the judgments become more *intensive* and *extensive* as the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ approaches.

'Loathsome sores' (verse 2)—This bowl judgment reminds us of the sixth plague in Egypt (Ex.9:8-12); also Deut.28 which has never been fulfilled in Israel's history—

Deuteronomy 28:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, with tumors, with the scab, and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed.

Deuteronomy 28:35 (NKJV)

³⁵ The Lord will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.

Only those who have submitted to *'the beast'* and who have rejected the warning of the angel will experience this judgment—

Revelation 14:6-7 (NKJV)

⁶ Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people-- ⁷ saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water."

This implies that God is judging the people of this world for their idolatry—they are worshipping the creation rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25)—in this case the Antichrist but also 'mother earth'.

These last plagues will be directed at the idolatry of the *earth-dwellers* and their false gods.

Revelation 16:10–11 suggests that these sores do not disappear—for by the time of the fifth bowl, people are still in pain from the first bowl judgment.

Ray Stedman—

"The corruption, pain, and ugliness that will afflict the flesh of men and women in the days of the first bowl of wrath are an outward symbol of the inner corruption, pain, and ugliness of sin. This judgment is in the form of sores — painful and ugly lesions that break out over the whole body. If you have ever experienced an outbreak of boils — painful, inflamed, pus-filled swellings on the skin — you have just the barest beginning of an idea of the suffering this judgment entails."

It's interesting to realize that boils that erupt on the skin are often the symptoms of something that is wrong on the inside of a person.

There are some scholars that believe that the language of this verse in the Greek seems to imply that the mark of the beast is actually the thing that causes these painful sores.

(Maybe something goes wrong with the computer chip implant?)

Second Bowl—Sea Turns to Blood

Revelation 16:3 (NKJV)

³Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and every living creature in the sea died.

This judgment is similar to the first plague in Egypt (Exodus 7:20–24), and the second trumpet judgment (8:8–9).

But this time the effects will not be *local* (Exodus 7:20-24); or *limited* (Revelation 8:8-9)—this will be a worldwide judgment since the oceans cover approx.70% of the earth’s surface.

After the angel dumped the contents of this bowl, **‘the sea’**, which is vitally important to all life on earth—**‘the sea** (saltwater bodies of water) **became blood like that of a dead man.’**

One commentator said—

“To the amazement, horror, and despair of the world, the oceans will no longer be fluid, but will become thick, dark, and coagulated, like the pool of blood from someone who has been stabbed to death.”

Exactly what supernatural means God will use to destroy the oceans is not revealed, but the effects will resemble those of the phenomenon known as the ‘red tide’—

Commentator John Phillips writes:

“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 shellfish. In 1949, one of these red tides hit the coast 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-miles of stinking fish fouled the beaches. Much marine life was wiped out, even bait used by fishermen died upon 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.”

The stench from the dead, decaying bodies of **‘every living thing in the sea’** (only partial death occurred at the second trumpet)—will be unimaginable.

Henry Morris writes:

“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 still further poisoning the oceans and contaminating the seashores of the world... As God had created every living soul in the waters (Genesis 1:21), so now every living soul died in the sea.”

So much of the world’s food comes from the world’s oceans and seas—this will hit the food supply hard and lead to worldwide famine. Since 80% of our oxygen on planet earth doesn’t come from the rain forest—it comes from phytoplankton and algae in the world’s oceans and seas—this means that the oxygen in the earth’s atmosphere will be cut by 80% making it extremely difficult to breath.

That’s why I say that the seven bowl judgments can’t be a long-drawn-out period of time—Jesus said, *“Unless those days were shortened no one on earth would be left alive.”* (Matthew 24:22)

Third Bowl—Fresh Waters Turn to Blood

Revelation 16:4 (NKJV)

⁴Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

What happened to the Nile River in Egypt (Exodus 7:20–24; Psalm 78:43–44) now happens to the world’s entire supply of fresh water.

Someone has commented on this—

“The contamination of the world’s oceans will be an environmentalist’s worst nightmare. But the destruction of the world’s remaining fresh water supply will be a catastrophic, staggering blow to fallen humanity.”

By the time the third bowl is poured out—fresh water will be in critically short supply. Remember, the third trumpet judgment (8:10–11) resulted in the poisoning of one third of the world’s fresh water.

Additionally, the Two Witnesses will—“...have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying [the first three and a half years of the Tribulation]; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood” (11:6).

Also, the temporary restraining of the earth’s winds (7:1) will also cause drought. With no wind to move clouds and weather systems, the hydrological cycle will be disrupted, and no rain will fall. The destruction of what is left of the earth’s fresh water will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering.

The scene is so unimaginably horrible that people who read this (before it happens) will wonder—“*how a God of love, compassion, mercy, and grace could send such a judgment?*”

So, there is a brief interlude in the pouring out of the judgments while an angel speaks in God’s defense.

Revelation 16:5-7 (NKJV)

⁵And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." ⁷And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

It is completely fitting that those who delighted in shedding the blood of the saints—should now be forced to drink blood!

These are those who refused the Living Water (Jesus)—and now will be given the waters of death.

Even in the midst of judgment, it is right that the angel declares “*You are righteous, O Lord!*”

God's justice is always *righteous, fair, and appropriate*.

- In Genesis 18:25 Abraham asked rhetorically, “*Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly [righteously]?*”
- David wrote in Psalm 19:9, “*The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether,*”
- Psalm 119:75 the psalmist added, “*I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous.*”
- Paul wrote of “*the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Romans 2:5).

J. Vernon McGee—

“My friend, whatever God does is righteous and holy. If you don’t agree with Him, it is too bad. You are wrong, not God. Imagine a little man standing up and saying, concerning the Creator, “I don’t think He is doing right.” I have a question for the person who would make a statement like that: “What are you going to do about it? In fact, what can you do about it?” If you are not in agreement with God, you had better get in agreement with Him. God is righteous in everything He does.”

Revelation 16:7 (NKJV)

⁷ And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

The voice of verse 7 is either an angel speaking from the altar—or the altar *personified*, representing the corporate testimony of the martyrs (Revelation 6:9) and the prayers of the saints (Revelation 8:3-5).

Fourth Bowl—Men are Scorched

Revelation 16:8 (NKJV)

⁸ Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

The worship of the sun is the oldest form of idolatry in the world—all other forms of paganism derive from it.

It goes all the way back to *Nimrod* (the name *Nimrod* means “*we will rebel*”)—he was the first cult leader on the face of the earth who established a ‘*sun-worship cult*.’ So, Nimrod built the Tower of Babel to worship the sun (as well as the moon and stars).

Genesis 10:8-9 (NKJV)

⁸ Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. ⁹ He was a mighty hunter before the LORD; therefore it is said, "Like Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD."

Many believe all this is saying is that Nimrod was a mighty hunter of animals—a mighty game hunter.

The idea is that Nimrod wasn’t a mighty hunter of *animals*—he was a mighty hunter of *men*.

In other words, as a cult leader he hunted the souls of men (and women)—but he was also a political despot, a tyrant ruthlessly conquering men and establishing an empire. He built four cities in Shinar (southern region of modern Iraq) and four more in Assyria (northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey).

But the capital of his kingdom was where he built the Tower of Babel—a place that later became *Babylon* (located in south central modern Iraq).

You see Nimrod understood that every empire needs a capital as a way to unite its citizens *politically*; and a center of worship to unite the people *religiously*—and so Babylon became both the political and spiritual center of Nimrod’s kingdom.

This is exactly like what the Antichrist will do someday—unite the world in a one world government and a one world religion which is referred to in Revelation 17 and 18 as ‘*Babylon the Great*’—the ultimate fulfillment of what Nimrod started in Genesis 10 and 11.

Revelation 16:8 (NKJV)

⁸Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

Let me say it again—the worship of the sun is the oldest form of idolatry in the world—because all earthly life depends upon the light of the sun.

In previous judgments, a part of the sun had been dimmed (Revelation 8:12)—but now the heat of the sun is increased.

One writer said—

“This could be referring to a supernova—the stage directly preceding the death of a star, wherein the star becomes intensely hot [before burning out and dying]. Be that as it may, because men turned their backs on the Son, they will experience the burning of the sun.”

Anyone who has been on the desert knows how merciless the sun’s heat can be—remembering too that the water system is now useless, you can imagine how people will suffer from thirst.

There is another serious consequence of the sun’s intense heat—but we’ll have to wait until next time to talk about it.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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