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The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath
Series: Between a Rock and a Hard Place
July 18, 2021
Revelation 15-16

I. **Context**

A. Prologue

1. **Revelation 1:7-8** (NASB95) — 7 BEHOLD, HE IS COMING WITH THE CLOUDS, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. So it is to be. Amen. 8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

B. **Theme**

1. **Jesus Christ is coming**
 - a. Tribes of earth will mourn over Him
 - b. Eschatological triumph of Christ over the anti-Christian forces of evil in the world and in the heavenly realms
2. **Purpose – encourage the churches under great pressure**
 - a. Series: Between Rock and a Hard Place

C. How is this purpose accomplished?

1. **Four visions**
 - a. **“In the Spirit”**
2. **Revelation 1:9-10**
 - a. First vision
 - (1) The glorified Christ
 - (2) The messages to the seven churches
3. **Revelation 4:1-2**
 - a. Second vision
 - (1) The heavenly vision
 - (2) The tribulation
4. **Revelation 17:1-3**
 - a. Third vision
 - (1) The mystery of Babylon
 - (2) Judgment of Babylon
 - (3) Final triumph and consummation
5. **Revelation 21:9-10**
 - a. Fourth vision
 - (1) The New Jerusalem

D. **Structure of the 2nd Vision**

1. **Chapter 4-5 – Heavenly scene with God and Christ**
 - a. Lion/Lamb is worthy to break the seals and open the book
2. **6.1-8.1 – Seven Seals**

- a. Interlude in Ch 7 between Seals 6-7
 - (1) 144,000
 - (2) Great Multitude
- b. No plague content in Seal 7 (silence in heaven)
- 3. **8.2-11.19 – Seven Trumpets**
 - a. Interlude in Chapters 10-11 between Trumpets 6-7
 - (1) Angel’s announcement
 - (2) John’s commission – Two witnesses
 - (a) Martyrdom and resurrection
 - (b) Those who survive the earthquake, observe the resurrection of the witnesses give glory to God
 - (c) Large scale conversion of Jews?
 - b. No plague content in Trumpet 7
 - (1) 11.15-19 – scene of worship
- 4. **Chapters 12-14 – Interlude? Or another cycle of 7’s**
 - a. 12.1-6 – Woman and dragon
 - b. 12.7-12 – Satan cast out
 - c. 12.13-17 – War between Satan and woman
 - d. 13.1-10 – Beast from the sea
 - e. 13.11-18 – Beast from the earth
 - f. 14.1-5 – Lamb and 144,000 on Zion
 - (1) Interlude – 14.6-12 – Three angelic announcements
 - g. 14.13-20 – The harvest of the earth
 - (1) Two harvests – redeemed and unredeemed
- 5. Completion of the second vision – 7 bowls, Chapters 15-16

II. **Preparation – Chapter 15**

- A. **15.1-4 – Martyrs worship in anticipation**
 - 1. **Revelation 15:1-4 (NASB95) —**
 - a. 1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.
 - b. 2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mixed with fire, and those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, holding harps of God.
 - c. 3 And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; Righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations!
 - d. 4 “Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; For ALL THE NATIONS WILL COME AND WORSHIP BEFORE YOU, FOR YOUR RIGHTEOUS ACTS HAVE BEEN REVEALED.”
 - 2. **Last plagues, God’s wrath finished**
 - a. In context – last of the tribulation

- b. More wrath yet to come in Satan's and beast's destruction in lake of fire
- 3. **Sea of glass, mixed with fire**
 - a. Sea of glass surrounding throne
 - (1) Revelation 4:6 (NASB95) — 6 and before the throne there was something like a sea of glass, like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind.
 - b. Fire – possible representative of judgment or of the nature of the death of martyrs which brought them to stand on sea
- 4. **Standing on the sea, those victorious over the beast**
 - a. Martyrs who conquered by not worshiping the beast, but by the blood of Christ and the word of their testimony
 - (1) **Revelation 7:14** (NASB95) — 14 I said to him, “My lord, you know.” And he said to me, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.
 - (2) **Revelation 12:11** (NASB95) — 11 “And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death.
 - (3) **Revelation 13:15** (NASB95) — 15 And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.
 - b. Victory came even in death!
 - c. Now find themselves in the presence of God (on the sea which surrounds the throne)
- 5. **Harp and songs – celebrating victory**
- 6. **Songs of Moses and Lamb**
 - a. Not sure whether there is one song or two
 - b. Song of Moses sung after Israel was delivered from Egypt through instrument of plagues
 - c. This song in anticipation of redemption of earth through instrumentation of bowls of God's wrath, many of which resemble the plagues in Egypt
 - d. Both carry theme of majesty and sovereignty of God, greatness of His works
 - e. Includes both redemptive work and justice of judgments
- 7. **Works**
 - a. Great
 - b. Marvelous
- 8. **Ways** (a course of conduct; a way of thinking or feeling; a journey)
 - a. Righteous
 - b. True

9. **Being of God**
 - a. Holy
 10. **Titles of God**
 - a. Lord God, the Almighty
 - b. King of the nations (ages)
 - c. Lord
 11. **Reactions**
 - a. Fear
 - b. Glorify the name of God
 - c. Worship
 - d. Not necessarily to be thought of as true of everyone – just the redeemed from every nation
- B. **15.5-8 – Angels receive wrath from temple**
1. **Revelation 15:5-8 (NASB95) —**
 - a. 5 After these things I looked, and the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven was opened, 6 and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes.
 - b. 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.
 - c. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power; and no one was able to enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.
 2. **Temple and tabernacle identified**
 - a. Both dwelling places for God
 - b. Both contain ark of covenant, indicative of God's faithfulness to covenant promises and of His Law
 3. **Opened**
 - a. Symbolic of revelation
 4. **7 angels with 7 plagues**
 - a. Plagues reminiscent of evacuation for Egypt
 - b. Clean and bright linen and golden girdles indicate splendor
 5. **4 Living Creatures**
 - a. Closest beings to throne
 - b. Deliver bowls of wrath
 - c. Indication that bowls of wrath originate from God Himself and carry His sanction
 6. **Temple filled with smoke from glory and power**
 - a. Both are unleashed and revealed
 7. **Temple evacuated until bowls are poured out**
 - a. God's solitary, undivided occupation – deliver justice to those who worship the beast
- C. **Applications**
1. **Victory by faithful martyrdom leads directly to the presence of God**

- a. Satan appears to have won, but not in reality
- 2. **Even in judgment, God is sovereign and just**
 - a. Can be trusted even in midst of seemingly impossible situations
 - b. His wrath is unmixed with any taint of sin; every act of judgment is holy and righteous
- 3. **Judgment issues from the very throne of God**
 - a. Don't try to abrogate God from His part in a just and holy judgment
 - b. He will inflict these things, but always in a way that is just and righteous

III. **The Seven Bowls**

- A. More succinctly described than the seals and trumpets
 - 1. Final judgment is swift
 - 2. Pace increased toward the end
- B. **16.1 – The Command**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:1** (NASB95) — 1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”
 - 2. Comes directly from God
 - a. No one else in the temple since its evacuation
 - 3. God is directly involved
- C. **16.2 – 1st Bowl – loathsome and malignant sores**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:2** (NASB95) — 2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.
 - 2. Reminiscent of the plague of boils in Egypt
 - 3. Objects of this plague are beast worshipers
 - a. Those who resist worshiping the beast are sealed and protected
- D. **16.3 – 2nd Bowl – sea into blood**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:3** (NASB95) — 3 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.
 - 2. Reminiscent of Nile turned to blood in Egypt
 - 3. Cf 2nd Trumpet (8.8-10)
 - a. There mountain burning with fire thrown into the sea, 1/3 turned to blood, 1/3 died
 - 4. Here the extent is full and complete – every living thing in sea died
- E. **16.4-7 – 3rd Bowl – rivers and springs into blood**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:4-7** (NASB95) —
 - a. 4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.
 - b. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”

- c. 7 And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”
 - 2. Actual devastation not described but implied and imaginable
 - a. Clearly great suffering
 - 3. Angel indicates the justice of this judgment
 - a. These have drunk blood of saints and prophets
 - b. Yet one more cup to drink – wrath
 - 4. God is
 - a. Righteous
 - b. The Holy One
 - c. Who are and who were
 - (1) Present and past
 - (2) Future is now!
 - d. Lord God, the Almighty
 - 5. Altar responds in agreement
 - a. Only place altar speaks
 - (1) Cf 6.9 – martyrs under the altar
 - b. Altar of burnt offering or of incense???
 - c. Meaning is agreement with the angel that judgments are just
 - d. Probably incense altar where prayers of the saints would be heard
- F. **16.8-9 – 4th Bowl – sun scorched men**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:8-9** (NASB95) —
 - a. 8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire.
 - b. 9 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.
 - 2. Some kind of cosmic catastrophe involving the sun
 - 3. Result is intense pain (foreshadowing Lake of Fire?)
 - 4. Response
 - a. Blasphemed the name of God (cf giving glory to God)
 - b. Refusal to repent and glorify God
 - (1) Again, “to glorify God” involves faith and repentance
 - 5. Again, God is said to be in control of plagues
- G. **16.10-11 – 5th Bowl – Kingdom of beast into darkness**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:10-11** (NASB95) —
 - a. 10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on 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.
 - 2. Now wrath comes directly on center of operations of the beast, rather than on those who worship the beast
 - 3. Beast of the sea – the political, military power
 - 4. Extraordinary pain involved

- a. Perhaps pain exacerbated by darkness
 - b. No visual stimuli to distract from the tactile pain
- 5. Response
 - a. Blasphemed God, refused to repent
 - b. Again, blaspheming God is the opposite of glorifying God
- H. **16.12-16 – 6th Bowl**
 - 1. **Revelation 16:12-16** (NASB95) —
 - a. 12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.
 - b. 13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.
 - c. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”)
 - d. 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.
 - 2. No real plague
 - a. Preparation for the final battle
 - 3. Frogs are demonic spirits
 - a. Miraculous signs
 - b. Directed to kings who will come for battle
 - c. Satanic in origin (dragon, beast of earth, beast of sea [false prophet])
 - (1) First time beast of earth is said to be false prophet
 - (2) Consistent with its religious character
 - 4. V 15 – interjection for the church
 - a. Keep in proper perspective
 - b. Reminiscent of Jesus’ teaching about 2nd coming as a thief in night
 - c. Purpose is to be watchful, clothed with righteousness of Christ
 - 5. V 16 – gathering of kings
 - a. **Har-Magedon = mountain of Megiddo**
 - b. Megiddo is not a mountain but a plain
 - (1) Part of the Plain of Jezreel
 - (2) Between Sea of Galilee and Mediterranean
 - c. Famous battleground in history of Israel
 - (1) Deborah and Barak defeated Canaanite king Jabin
 - (2) Ahaziah slain by Jehu
 - d. Ezekiel speaks of final battle taking place on mountains of Israel
 - e. Some combination of two images present
 - (1) Mountains of Palestine

(2) Battlegrounds of Israel's history

I. 16.17-21 – 7th Bowl – in air; lightning, thunder, earthquake

1. Revelation 16:17–21 (NASB95) —
 - a. 17 Then 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.”
 - b. 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.
 - c. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.
 - d. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.
 - e. 21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.
2. In air – the location of the kingdom of Satan
3. Common manifestations of divine power and glory
4. Announcement from throne – “It is done”
 - a. Again, last of tribulation wrath – but not all wrath
5. Earthquake unsurpassed
 - a. Similar phenomena in 4.5 (vision of God); 8.5 (preparation for sounding of trumpets); 11.19 (following the sounding of 7th trumpet)
 - b. This is unique in its extent
6. Great City = Babylon – split into three parts
 - a. Indicative of complete destruction
7. Cities of nations collapse
 - a. Proleptic view of destruction of nations that supported beast
8. Babylon drinks cup of wrath
 - a. Remember, Babylon is symbolic of world political system antagonistic to God
9. Islands and mountains affected
10. Huge hailstones fell on men
11. Response – blasphemed God
 - a. Again, failed to glorify God
 - b. No last repentance

J. Applications

1. God is sovereign, even over judgment
2. Unity of the Bible
 - a. Cf plagues in Egypt
 - b. Cf songs of Moses and Lamb
3. God responds to prayers and worship of His people
4. Repentance is not something people do unless moved by God in

regeneration

a. God's judgment is not rehabilitative

5. **Ultimately, kings of earth respond to Satan's direction**

a. Don't be aligned too closely with political powers

IV. **Pouring of wrath on Babylon**

A. Mentioned briefly in 7th Bowl

B. Elaborated in Chs 17-18

V. **Provocative Questions**

A. Do you find victory even when Satan appears to have won an earthly battle?

1. Cf Martyrs who were victorious in death

B. As you see the events unfold as they move toward the end, do you remember who God is?

1. Holy

2. Righteous

3. Sovereign

4. Omniscient

5. Omnipotent

C. Are you able to trust this God when things seem to be falling apart around you?

1. How will you respond if you lose an election?

D. Do you see God's judgments as being righteous, just and holy? Can you believe in a God who is actively involved in directing the judgment?

1. We don't have to justify God when He righteously carries out His sentences

E. Do you pray for God's righteous judgment of evil?

1. Cf pleas of the martyrs in Chapter 6

F. Do you recognize that you can't scare the hell out of people? Do you see that only those who are regenerate are going to turn to Christ (punishment of wrath doesn't accomplish redemption)?

G. Do you hold political power loosely? Will you be devastated if you lose an election?

1. Cf political power of the church in days gone by