

Revelation #40

May 21, 2023

Series Title: The Revelation of Jesus Christ: Behold I Am Coming Soon

Today's Message: The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath; Revelation 16:1-21

The discussion of the terrible final outpouring of God's wrath by way of the seven bowl judgments would not be complete without some understanding of the "why" of the bowl judgments? Why would God inflict such a terrible calamity upon humanity? Perhaps we can answer the "why" by way of reverse logic. Why hasn't God poured His final wrath out before now?

To form an adequate answer we first have to go back to the very beginning of things. We begin with the existence and attributes of God. Genesis 1-3 establishes the existence of God (Gen. 1:1). Genesis sets the foundation for our understanding of God's Sovereign right as the Creator, Source and Sustainer of all life and matter (see Gen. 1:1; 2:3; Rom.11:36; Col.1:16-17, John 1:4; 5:26). The Creation itself reveals "God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature" (Rom. 1:20). The Bible reveals many of God's attributes that cannot be known apart from His special revelation given to us in Scripture. We can know from Scripture that God is [a] eternal, [b] self-existent, [c] self-sufficient, [d] infinite in being, [e] omnipotent, [f] omniscient, [g] omnipresent, [h] incomprehensible, [i] incomparable, and [j] infinite in perfection and glory. (see [a] Dt.33:27; [b] Ex. 3:14; [c] Ps. 50:10-12; [d] 1 Kings 8:27; [e] Gen.8:14; [f] Is.40:13-14; [g] Ps.139:7-12; [h] 1 Ki.8:23; [i] Is. 40:25; [j] 1 Jn 1:5). Those are just a few of His incommunicable attributes.

The second important truth toward understanding the question of "why His wrath?" or "why not His wrath immediately?" requires our basic understanding of who we are as human beings. First we were created by Him and for Him and for His glory and also for His delight and enjoyment (see Ps. 86:9; Is. 43:7, and Ps.37:23; 147:11; 149:4; Pr. 3:12; Pr. 11:20.)

Additionally, God did more than create a being with a *body*. He created a being that would bear His image. When He created mankind He endowed these creatures with attributes reflective of His attributes. We call these attributes communicable. Again, they are His attributes which are more shared with us as people and are reflective of His attributes such as life, holiness, wisdom, personality, goodness, mercy, love, compassion, kindness, generosity, patience, justice, truth and the like. Yet, these attributes are all God's attributes. Remember, He shares these with us because He created mankind to be His image-bearers. When God created mankind He called His created order, "very good."

Truly, mankind was different from all other living creatures God made. God made mankind unique in that man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) as a living being (Gen. 2:7; 1 Cor. 15:45). According to His unique creative design, God made man a *moral* being by writing His law on the hearts of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and He also gave them the ability to fulfill that law. God created mankind with a

spirit capable of enjoying communion and fellowship with God without end! Man was made to dwell in eternal communion with God!

Here is where we answer the question “why?”.

Super-sadly, when Satan tempted our first parents, Adam and Eve, they transgressed God’s command and did eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 3:1-7). They sinned and fell from their original righteousness and communion with God. At that very moment the trespass brought condemnation upon Adam and Eve. Instantly they “became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.”¹ Immediately they died *spiritually*. That is, their spirit, that part of them that fellowshiped and communed with God died. (They died to God!) How do we know that they died to God? We see their fearful *physical* reaction as they tried to hide when they heard the precious voice of God calling to them as He walked in the Garden in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8-10). Their soul, that is, their personality began to die. *Morally* their hearts began darkening and their thoughts became futile (Rom. 1:21). This is seen almost immediately as Adam began blaming God for the woman God had given him, and the woman began blaming the serpent for deceiving her! And in time their *bodies* began corrupting to death; and in time the ground swallowed their bodies just as God promised in Genesis 3:19, “...for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

But the scope of the fall was not limited to Adam and Eve alone. Romans 5:12 teaches that “sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Their sin, which is called Original Sin, was imputed to all mankind. From that moment of sin, mankind began a horrific downward spiral of rebellion and godlessness. From that moment the image of God in man was marred and devastated. Mankind forfeited his desire to obey, glorify and adore God.

But God! But God was under no obligation to pacify His wrath and anger. He was under no requirement to restore even a righteous remnant. But God, being angry with sinners (Ps.7:11) and being under no obligation to even one sinner, did, from the foundation of the world according to His eternal counsel, have in mind the saving of human souls. He did so according to His good will and purpose in the person of His Son Jesus Christ. In Christ *alone*, did God by grace *alone*, satisfy His justice and turn away His wrath from everyone who believes in Christ by faith *alone*.

But, “men loved darkness instead of Light because their deeds were evil. Since the fall of Adam mankind has been at odds with God, and God has been at odds with man. But, to answer the question as to “why has God not brought wrath sooner?” we need to remember that “[God] is patient..., not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

But now, here is Revelation 16, the time of patience has ended, and the time of God’s terrible wrath has come. That’s where we are in history at this time predicted in Revelation 16. The Day of God’s eternal

¹ Westminster Larger Catechism, Chapter 6:II

wrath has come upon the ungodly. His wrath will mean punishment upon the wicked and vindication, salvation and eternal life and communion with God for His faithful tribulation saints who suffered the temporal wrath of the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet.

I. (16:1) The Instant Preceding the Outpouring of the Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

- A. John hears a loud voice come from the temple (holy of holies)
 - 1. Remember that God is alone in the temple at this moment
 - a) 15:8: "And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.
 - b) We should not even speculate as to why God is alone at this moment.
 - 2. The voice of God comes from within the temple commanding the seven angels with the seven bowls to "go".
 - a) To "go" has the full intensity of *immediacy and without delay*.
 - (1) Immediately and without delay "pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."
- B. The day of wrath has finally come
 - 1. The Day of patience extended to the rebellious and ungodly has ended.
 - a) Romans 9:28 says, "For the Lord will carry out His sentence on earth with speed and finality."
 - 2. This is God's wrath— supernatural acts of God, not at all natural occurrences.

II. (16:2-14) The Quick Succession of the Outpouring of the Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

- A. (16:2) The First Bowl: Sores on every earth dweller (unbelievers)
 - 1. Poured out on the land: immediately, fully, like a deluge, not a sprinkling.
 - 2. Sores break out on people
 - a) Ugly and painful (Loathsome and malignant)
 - (1) Painful, incurable, oozing
 - b) With no relief given to these people
 - (1) The people who rejected Jesus Christ and instead followed the Beast, worshiped the Beast, and took the mark of the Beast.
 - 3. God spares His surviving remnant!
 - a) His people who did believe on Jesus!
 - (1) Everyone whose names have been "written from the foundation of the world in the Lamb's book of life" will be spared from even one sore!
 - (a) Just like God separated Israel from Egypt during the plagues. (See the plagues in Exodus 7:14 - 11:10)
- B. (16:3) The Second Bowl: On all the seas and oceans of the earth

1. The seas and oceans are “poisoned” when they become like blood.
 2. Just think of it. There will be no fresh water with which to wash the sores inflicted by the first bowl. The life of the seas and oceans will die and putrefy and stink
 3. If it is like the waters turning to blood in Egypt, I have to think that somehow God exempts His remnant from this pain and suffering.
- C. (16:4-7) The Third Bowl: All freshwater on earth will turn to blood and putrefy.
1. The direct reason is given as the angel speaks:
 - a) As these people had persecuted the believing remnant by the shedding of their blood, now the persecutors will drink this blood of wrath.
 2. John heard the altar speak (the altar is personified here)
 - a) Are these the **martyred saints** who cried out from the altar in **Rev. 6:9-11**?
- D. (16:8-9) The Fourth Bowl: The Sun scorches the earth dwellers with fire
1. The sun was given power to scorch people with fire and intense heat
 - a) Yet, knowing this is from God, they cursed the name of God and refused to repent and give glory to God!
- E. (16:10-11) The Fifth Bowl: Poured out onto the throne and kingdom of the Beast
1. Yes, darkness, like when God darkened Pharaoh's kingdom! (Ex. 10:21-29)
 - a) Only this plague covers the whole worldwide kingdom of the Beast!
 2. And, still men cursed God because of the pains and sores. Unbearable misery!
 - a) No repentance. The condition of the hardened heart!
 3. Perhaps this is the last call for repentance?
 - a) Romans 2:5 well defines this moment: “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment is revealed.”
 4. Following the first five bowls comes the two most severe judgments on the unrepentant and hardened earth dwellers who took the mark of the Beast.
- F. (16:12-14) The Sixth Bowl: The Euphrates river dries up, setting a trap to lure the enemies
1. A trap set for the kings from the east. To lure the vast armies of the Beast and the kings of the east to come and make war against the Lamb (see 16:16 and 19:19)
 2. John then saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs come out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet
 - a) Seductive words spoken by the Dragon, Beast and False Prophet
 - b) Seductive miracles performed by demons in order to entice the kings of the east to “gather them for battle on the great day of God Almighty.”

(1) **Prn:** The seductive nature of sin drives men insane.

III. (16:15-16) A Momentary Pause for Encouragement, and the Gathering of God's Enemies

A. (16:15) A pause for the encouragement of the remaining believers

1. There was a pause for the encouragement of believers between the 6th and 7th seals in Rev. 7:1-17 and between the 6th and 7th trumpets in Rev. 10:1 - 11:14.
2. "Blessed is the one who stays awake..."
 - a) The encouragement to stay faithful!

(1) Truly we can say, Be faithful, Your redemption draws nigh!

(a) Luke 21:23, Jesus said, "When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

B. (16:16) The Gathering of the Kings of the East at Armageddon.

1. The spirits of demons draw these kings to their doom at Armageddon

C. **Application:** God is encouraging His people, you and me, and these future believers to be faithful for soon our redemption will be accomplished. But, to the ungodly, they are being seduced by demons to continue in unbelief for their doom draws equally near!

IV. (16:17-21) The Finality of God's Wrath

A. The Seventh Bowl: The global earthquake

1. The bowl judgment is poured out in the air
2. Simultaneously a "loud voice calls from out of the temple, "It is done!"
 - a) Just as Jesus' words from the cross, "It is finished!" meant God's judgment on Christ on the cross was complete and salvation belongs to repentant sinners...
 - b) So, these words from the temple means that the doom of unrepentant sinners is complete and final.
3. The sights and sounds of the most catastrophic disasters in world history
 - a) A global supernatural thunderstorm like never before experienced.
 - b) A global earthquake like never before experienced on earth
4. This occurs just prior to the Lord's second coming!
 - a) Haggai 2:6-7: "For thus says the Lord Almighty: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. I will shake all nations, and the desire of the nations shall come: and I will fill this house (the temple) with glory,' saith the Lord Almighty."
5. Jerusalem will be split
 - a) MacArthur asserts that this splitting of Jerusalem is not judgment but a preparation for the Lord's Millennial Kingdom and throne.
6. Babylon the Great falls

- a) That is, the capital city of Antichrist will be totally destroyed.
- B. Application: The threat and execution of judgment will not bring about salvation (see 16:21b), for **salvation belongs to the Lord! Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts!** (Hebrews 4:7)