

Revelation 16: The Bowl Judgments, Part I

Scripture: Revelation 16

Introduction:

This morning, we come to the pouring out of the bowl judgments, those final and universal judgments that are to come upon the world, which complete the wrath of God. The inner sanctuary of God has been filled with smoke and cut off from every means of intercession that would potentially lead to the repentance and conversion of the lost. This is it, the final destruction of the world, culminating at the return of Christ.

While these judgments will ultimately lead to the destruction of the beasts and the dragon, we will find that the most emphasized target of these bowl judgments is the world itself. And at the root and foundation of the world is the whole system of materialism and lust that governs it, represented by the whore of Babylon. When we think of John the Apostle's warning against loving the world in 1 John 2:15-17 ("Do not love the world...all that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life...etc") and the Apostle Paul's description of the "course of this world" as that realm which is controlled by the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:1ff), we are meant to see these as represented by the whore of Babylon. The "world," in this sense, is the very support and ground, upon which every unbeliever rests his confidence and hope. Take that away and they fall apart. Well, in the pouring out of these bowls, that is precisely what happens. Everything falls apart; life as we know it is finished; the foundation is torn out from underneath us, and those outside of Christ are eternally undone. Chapter 16 records the very judgments, which pour out, one right after the other, in rapid succession, destroying life as we know it under the governance and sway of Babylon. Only those in Christ; only those on the Rock will stand. And then chapters 17-19 give us more descriptive details of the judgment that has come upon Babylon as a result of these plagues, followed by the destruction of the beasts and the dragon, and leading into the creation of a new heavens and a new earth, where the Book of Revelation comes to its close.

Most time is given over to describing the utter fall, demise and destruction of Babylon (Chapters 17-19), because it is that judgment, which most affects the general unbeliever, and all who compromise with the beasts. [Comment on Revelation 16:17-21 and their expression in 17:1; 18:4, 8, 10, 17 & 19--the quick, surprise plagues = the bowls]. Indeed, the great emphasis is on the destruction of Babylon, everything in which mankind has put his hope and trust.

I. The Bowl Judgments

[SEE CHART: Note similarities between trumpet judgments and bowl judgments; similarities in focus of judgment; differences in scope of judgment---partial vs. universal; connection to Exodus plagues]

God Himself calls out in a loud voice, commanding the seven angels to pour out their bowls on the earth; those bowls, which contain the completed wrath of God (Rev. 15:1 & 16:1).

1) The First Bowl (vs. 2): As is the case with all of the bowl judgments, only the unredeemed (all who worship the beast's image and bear his mark) are affected by these judgments (Israel was safe in Goshen, while the Egyptians were plagued). This first bowl brings about some form of *universal* suffering (spiritual/physical). Illustrated by the 6th Exodus plague of boils.

2) The Second Bowl (vs. 3): All international commerce is shut down. Economic collapse is total and complete. Illustrated by the 1st Exodus plague.

3) The Third Bowl (vs. 4): Following economic collapse, all relied upon sources are drained, resulting in bitter anguish of body and soul. The realization of this world's inevitable collapse brings about despair. The confidence and life of the world has collapsed. Illustrated by the 1st plague.

***Insertion of praise and acknowledgment of properness of God's judgment comes from the "angel of the waters" (like angel of fire) (vs. 5-7). Similar to praise of the saints at the end of Chapter 15. The emphasis here is on the justice and goodness of God, in what He is doing. He is not harsh or mean or uncontrolled. He has been patient, and now recompense is being meted

out, according to the offense. "They drank blood; they took away the economy, livelihood and very lives of the church, and so, they will now drink that same cup." A voice from the altar (perhaps representing the martyrs--witnesses) "Amen" this proclamation as well. The Almighty God has brought about destruction, in accordance with His true and righteous judgments. While the scene of destruction is sobering and sad, it is proper and right!