

Things to Come

#20 The Seven Bowls of Judgment

(Rev. 16:1-21)

I. Introduction

The discussion of the justifiable wrath of God on sin has been a recurring theme throughout the Bible. The historical account of God's people illustrates it. The prophets discussed the need for such judgment and foretold of its coming.

Even the forerunner of Jesus, his cousin John preached a harsh message regarding the wrath of God on sin. See Luke 3:7 and Matthew 3:12.

Ps. 19:9 "The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the LORD are firm, and all of them are righteous."

The final series of judgments are plagues that are poured out from "bowls" (like the saucers used in the altar of incense). They are definitely more severe than the previous judgments, and their effects are cumulative.

These plagues are similar to those God inflicted on Egypt (see Exodus 7-12).

John hears the loud voice from heaven. See Isaiah 66:6 "*Hear that uproar from the city, hear that noise from the temple! It is the sound of the LORD repaying his enemies all they deserve.*"

II. The First Bowl: Ulcerated Sores (vs. 2)

"Sores": We get the word "ulcer" from this term. These sores are "festering, painful and incurable."

Examples in scripture: The Egyptians-Ex. 9:9-10, Job-2:7, Lazarus-Luke 16:21

III. The Second Bowl: The Sea Filled With Blood (vs. 3)

This is very similar to the first plague in Egypt (Ex. 7:20-24)

The sea will "become thick, dark and coagulated" like a pool of blood. Imagine what it will smell like as everything in the sea dies and rots.

IV. The Third Bowl: Rivers and Springs Filled with Blood (vs. 4-7)

This is similar to what happened to the Nile River in Exodus 7:20-24.

Fresh water will become in critically short supply. There will be no fresh water to drink; no clean water to wash the oozing sores and no water to bring a cooling relief from the scorching sun to follow.

They deserve it: See Heb. 10:30

V. The Fourth Bowl: The Scorching Sun (vs. 8-9)

Consider Isaiah's comment in 24:4-6 " *The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the heavens languish with the earth. The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.*"

Another consequence will be the melting of the polar ice caps, resulting in unbelievable worldwide flooding.

Amazingly, people do not repent. They "blaspheme the name of God."

VI. The Fifth Bowl: No Lights and Great Pain (vs. 10-11)

Where will the bowl be dumped? "On the throne of the Beast"-Satan's kingdom is on earth.

See Joel 2:2, 3:14-15 and Zeph. 1:15

"Gnawed their tongues"- literally, they kept on chewing. They are in great pain.

And yet again, they still do not repent of their deeds.

VII. The Sixth Bowl: The Drying Up of the River Euphrates (vs. 12-16)

Euphrates: The Great River, across which the army of the Antichrist will have to come to fight in the Battle of Armageddon. The Sixth Trumpet (9:14-16) is similar, involving an army of 200 million.

Note the evil triumvirate: The Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet

The "frogs": these are spirits of demons who talk the kings of the east into journeying to Israel for the great battle (see 17:12-14). No doubt, they will use supernatural signs and wonders to capture and hold their allegiance. (See Joel 3:2, 9-13 and Zech. 14:2-3)

The "war" will be over quickly, and the Lord will be coming "like a thief." See Matt. 24 42-43 and I Thess. 5:2. Notice too the warnings given to the churches of Sardis (3:2-4) and Laodicea (3:18).

"Blessed is the one..." This is the third of seven blessings listed in the book of Revelation. It is the idea of being prepared like the virgins in Matthew 25.

The place of the great battle: Har-Magiddon or Mount Megiddo. The valley of Jezreel has seen more than 200 major battles (for example: Barak and the Canaanites, Gideon over the Midianites and Josiah's defeat).

VIII. The Seventh Bowl: The Great Earthquake (vs. 17-21)

"It is done": this is the climax of the judgments. "The eschatological wrath of God is completed." But the tense of this verb suggests it is finished, but has ongoing results.

"The Great City": is likely Jerusalem (note that Babylon the great is mentioned in vs. 18-can't be the same place). The physical changes to the city are efforts to enhance it.

"The Cities of the Earth" fall and "drink of the cup of His wrath."

The effect of this final bowl is to prepare the earth for Christ's millennial reign.

IX. So What?

God is in charge and we cannot change or hinder His coming wrath...but we can escape it. "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus..."
(Romans 8:1)