

Lesson 20
Revelation 16
The Seven Bowl Judgments

Memory verse: "He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 Thess. 1:8 NIV)

We come to chapter 16 and the seven bowls of wrath, the last judgments. Some portions of God's Word, to be honest, most preachers preach with joy and exhilaration and there's a real thrill in it. This is not one of them. In fact, just reading these verses rips and tears at your heart, strikes terror. This is it in chapter 16, this is the end, the culmination, the final wrath of God filled up and poured out on the ungodly earth. Somebody might say to preachers, "Well if you don't like to preach it, why do you?" Well because it is in the Word of God and we have to preach the whole counsel of God. We preach it also to awaken Christians to the necessity of fulfilling our mission to bring people to Christ before the judgment comes. We preach also to those who don't know Christ to awaken them to their lost condition.

And the Bible really is full of great messages of comfort and great messages of joy and sweet words of refreshment, moments of peace, great sweeping statements about love. There is so much that is affirming in Scripture, but all of this is really its opposite. And if we understand love, it is because we understand hate. If we understand truth, it is because we understand lies. If we understand goodness, it is because we understand wickedness. If we understand reward, it is because we understand punishment. And God cannot love righteousness and faith unless He hates sin and unbelief. He cannot love truth unless He hates lies. He cannot love goodness unless He hates wickedness. He cannot reward unless He also punishes.

So while the Bible is a book of hope, it is also a book of judgment. In fact, it's full of judgment, just full of it. And even our Lord Jesus Christ was a judgment preacher, a damnation preacher. He said more about hell than anybody else. God has been pronouncing judgment on His people for a long time and who are by His virtue of creation live in His world and who reject Him. It's not just in the Old Testament, though, it's in the New. People sometimes say, "Well the Old Testament was written by a God of judgment, the New Testament was written by a God of grace." And some would tell us they're two different authors. Not so. There is equal fiery furious judgment in the New Testament right from the lips of Jesus Himself as well as from writers like the Apostle Paul who wrote about Jesus Christ the Lord being revealed from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. That's 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 9. Peter talked about the coming judgment of God when the elements will melt with fervent heat. The day of the Lord will hit. John warned it is the last time, the last time before the doom of God falls. The writer of Hebrews warned that there will be no escape for those who reject the gospel when the judgment comes. "It is a fearful thing," said the writer, "to fall into the hands of the living God."

Finally, prophetically we come here to the book of Revelation and the sixteenth chapter to the place of the last judgment. Here sin, unrighteousness, blasphemy, rejection will be swept finally from the earth. Chapter 15, remember, was a preview, sort of a preparation. Chapter 15, the temple of God which always meant mercy and forgiveness and sacrifice and atonement is now shut. And it has become a house of raging indignation, vengeance and judgment and fire and smoke come out of it, engulfing the temple until the seven last plagues have been poured out on the earth.

Chapter 16 gives us the picture of this final destruction from God's wrath at the close of a time known as the Tribulation, a seven-year period, the latter part of it known as the Great Tribulation.

Not everything in Revelation is chronological. It does have a chronological flow but it also backtracks, as we have learned, haven't we? Chapter 17 and 18 will go back into the Tribulation period and pick up some of the things we have not yet understood and take us back to the judgment from another perspective.

Things to learn: 1) Purpose of God's judgment. 2) Righteous Judgment 3) Tools of God's judgment

Discussion questions:

1) The bowls of judgments are the third woe described in Revelation 11:14. What do you think generally of the seven bowls of judgment? Are there any similar events that would have occurred somewhere in the bible before?

Q2. Discuss the seven bowls and perhaps draw from it the meaning of each bowl of judgment.

Q3. Some have read the last three chapters and were encouraged and some said that Chapter 16 is a "great chapter". What do you think