

## Revelation 16

### The Seven Bowls of God's Wrath

Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

4 The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,

"Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,  
for you brought these judgments.

6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,  
and you have given them blood to drink.

It is what they deserve!"

7 And I heard the altar saying,

"Yes, Lord God the Almighty,  
true and just are your judgments!"

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.

9 They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.

10 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish 11 and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east. 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 demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. 15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!") 16 And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.

### The Seventh Bowl

17 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" 18 And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. 19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. 21 And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.

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## Don't Go to Sleep

Just this morning I have been listening to a new song from my favorite Christian hip-hop artist. He very straightforwardly makes his view known in calling out other Christian hip-hop artists for de-emphasizing the Gospel as they have gained a wider audience and acceptance in the pop culture of America. Many of these artists state that they have been fulfilling a call to take Gospel themes to a wider audience in the hopes of influencing non-believers toward the Gospel. Shai Linne's critique is that you have shied away from the preaching of the Gospel if anything in your message is emphasized more than the Gospel.

What strikes me about this discussion, which takes place in public through the media of YouTube and Twitter, is that it is a discussion as old as the church itself. How can the church be a lampstand pointing the world to Christ while not standing in unity with a world that is in full-on rebellion against its Creator.

The rules for engagement are very seldom black-and-white. We must be students of the Word as well as students of the culture so that we can effectively know which elements of the culture to embrace and which elements from which to remain separated. We then have to understand the best way to communicate our separation so that people can see us pointing them to Jesus.

I am very encouraged to see this age-old dialogue taking place in the realm of Christian hip-hop. But, you don't have to be a hip-hop fan to understand that the issue in the dialogue is the same exhortation that John gives in Revelation 16:15.

**STAY AWAKE! THIS WORLD IS CURSED BY GOD BEYOND IMAGINATION. BE VIGILANT IN POINTING A LOST WORLD TO CHRIST LEST YOU BE DECEIVED INTO BELIEVING YOU ARE PART OF THIS WORLD.**

I don't know how to deal with seven bowls of wrath in Revelation 16 and not feel anything other than terror at the extent of the wrath of God. If you didn't listen to Steven Lawson's sermon on the wrath of God last week, I highly recommend it for getting a sense of how completely

consistent these bowls are with the nature of the Person of God.

<http://renewingyourmind.org/2017/09/01/the-wrath-of-god>

One important thing to note is that the bowls of wrath are not God's discipline. We often encounter limited aspects of the judgment of God in our own lives in order for God to call us to repentance and to live in glad submission to Him. None of this is happening in Revelation 16. Those who already belong to Christ rejoice at his justice. Those who are experiencing the full brunt of His wrath are further hardened in their opposition.

This pretty well illustrates the two camps into which all of humanity fall both now and into eternity: one camp is indwelt with hearts of worship toward the God of justice while the other camp rages against His wrath or attempts to conquer it without acknowledging its justice. These realities will be the difference between eternal heaven and eternal hell. Doug Wilson ascribes two statements to atheists: "There is no God; and I hate him."

Bowls 1-4 are biological and ecological disasters poured out on the earth in measures never seen. Judging by the responses of people today to natural disasters we can surmise what their responses will be to the bowl wraths.

As Christians, we understand that God in creation gave man and woman a place of dominion over the earth to care for it. Creation is not God, Man is not God. Man's job is to follow God's design for the earth and to trust that he will provide for mankind the same way that He provides for the birds of the air and the lilies of the field.

The modern environmental movement has taken some dark twists that place man as the ultimate arbiter for the success or failure of the environment and place the environment as the ultimate reality rather than God. This is philosophically nothing more than old-school pantheism (think Greek mythology or Hinduism). It's easy to imagine people vainly calling on the EPA for salvation rather than the God who is the source of the bowl judgments.

Bowls 4-7 represent God's wrath attacking the very institutions of human political power. Much more will be said in the coming weeks about the fall of Babylon. Babylon been the representative for the sinful pride of human civilization unified in defiance of God since the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. Just as God brought the civilization of Babel down to spectacular chaos, so will he suddenly and spectacularly lay low the unified forces of the world's superpowers that are arrayed against Him.

As with all of the Book of Revelation, this is not simply a story to sit back and enjoy. This unveiling is a message to spur the Church on to greater faithfulness to Christ. The exhortation in verse 15 is to tell us there is blessing in staying awake and ready for action in the midst of a cosmic battle between God and the pride of mankind.

It's very easy for us in the church to look around at the sinful aspects of the system of the World

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and believe that we are part of that system. There is a clear line drawn in the sand and the people of God are called to stand firmly on His side, which is the side of justice.

Discussion Questions

- How do you struggle with being a witness to the world while remaining separate from the world?
- How do you recognize the difference between God's punitive judgement and his disciplinary judgment?
- Why do you think repentance does not result from the bowl judgments?
- Do recent disasters make people think about the bowl judgments?
- What does it mean to fall asleep spiritually?
- Why is spiritual sleep such an easy trap?
- How are some of these bowl judgements reflected in the world today?
- How will these judgments be worse in the future?
- Do you grieve over the condition of the lost world?