

Revelation 16 – The Seven Bowl Judgments

I. The Command of Judgment is Given (1)

A. God commands wrath to be poured out

1. This command proceeds from the heavenly temple
2. No one could enter because of the glory of God
3. The Angels (as priests) bring forth the bowls (which were used in the drink offerings of the tabernacle)

B. The Parallel Nature of the Judgments

1. The Bowl judgments represent the final covenant judgment of God
2. The Bowl judgments are parallel with the trumpet judgments
3. The Bowl judgments are parallel with the judgments of the plagues upon Egypt
 - a. The plagues were poured out on Egypt who oppressed God's people.
 - b. We have seen the Exodus imagery in the last chapter
 - c. The Remnant of God (those in Christ) have come out from their oppressors (the Old Covenant system) and now judgment is falling.
 - d. Jerusalem has already been described as Egypt in Ch. 11
 - e. The plagues of Egypt were promised to Israel if they failed to keep the covenant (Deut. 28:60 - And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were afraid, and they shall cling to you.)

II. The Bowls of Wrath Are Poured Out (2-21)

A. The First Bowl (2)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out on the Land
 - a. The first trumpet also brought judgment upon the land
2. Sores Come Upon The Beast Worshipers
 - a. The references the sixth plague of Egypt – Boils
 - i. Exodus 9:9-10 It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt.” So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.
 - ii. This also has historical reference to the plague, disease, and pestilence that covered the city during the siege of Jerusalem
 - b. God also promised this specifically to Israel if they broke the covenant
 - i. Deut 28:27 - The Lord will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed.

3. How can Jerusalem be described as beast worshipers?
 - a. The Jews (especially the High priest temple aristocracy) overwhelmingly used the political administrative structure of Rome to persecute Christians
 - b. In Acts, Jews continually report Paul to Roman authorities – also seen in historical sources of the first century
 - c. Roman governors and Herod Agrippa II, often chose the High Priest, and deposed and replaced high priests when necessary. The religious leadership in Jerusalem were puppets of Rome.
 - i. The leadership rejected the Messiah for fear of Rome – John 11:48 - If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”
 - ii. The leadership incited the crowd at Jesus’ trial – John 19:15 - They cried out, “Away with him, away with him, crucify him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.
 - iii. John has already identified the synagogues as “synagogue of Satan” – Rev. 3:9

B. The Second Bowl (3)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out on the Sea
 - a. The second trumpet also spoke of the mountain being thrown into the sea
 - b. One third of the sea became blood in the second trumpet judgment – This is an intensified recapitulation
2. The Sea Becomes As Blood
 - a. This references the first plague of Egypt in Exodus 7:17-21 as the Nile turned to blood
 - b. The idea isn’t just that it became as blood but that it was congealed blood, like that of a dead person
 - c. We have already spoken of the historical significance in the Jewish war during the trumpet judgments
3. Everything in the Sea Dies
 - a. In the trumpet judgment, 1/3 of the creatures in the sea died
 - b. Here everything dies

C. The Third Bowl (4-7)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out on the Rivers (4)
 - a. The third trumpet was also poured out on the rivers (Rev. 8:10-11)
 - b. The trumpet caused the 1/3 rivers to become wormwood, bitter.

2. The Waters Become as Blood
 - a. Just like the Nile became blood in Exodus judgments
3. God's Wrath Is Proclaimed Righteous (5-7)
 - a. The Angel Praises God's Judgments (5-6)
 - i. God's judgments are just and righteous (5)
 - He is the Holy One of Israel
 - His wrath is righteous and good
 - ii. Those judged deserve their punishment (6)
 - Those judged have killed the saints and prophets – how can this be Jerusalem?
 - Matt. 23:34-37 - Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
 - Acts 7:51-52 - You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered
 - The Represents God's Lex Talionis (the law of retaliation)
 - Gen. 9:6 - Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his

blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.

- Ex. 21:23-25 - But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

b. The Altar Praises God's Judgments (7)

- i. Those under the altar – remember them? The martyrs
- ii. They cry out for justice and praise God for His righteous judgments

D. The Fourth Bowl (8-9)

1. The Bowl Poured Out on the Sun (8)

- a. The fourth trumpet was also blown against the sun
- b. A third of the sun was struck so that a third of it's light was darkened

2. The Sun Allowed to Scorch Men

- a. This is a revoking of the covenant blessing of being protected from the sun
- b. Ps. 121:5-6 - The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
- c. Isa. 49:10 - neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them.
- d. Rev. 7:16 - They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

3. The Judged Blaspheme and Do Not Repent (9)

- a. Just like Pharaoh – the people's hearts were hardened and they refused to repent and give God glory
- b. Read Josephus – Wars of the Jews – 5:12:4

E. The Fifth Bowl (10-11)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out on the Beast's Throne resulting in darkness

- a. The fifth trumpet darkens the air as the pit is opened
- b. This recalls the ninth Egyptian plague – Darkness
- c. Notice that the Throne of the Beast is Struck which results in the "kingdom" being darkened
 - i. Almost all commentators see this as figurative and symbolic – even those who believe this is a future end time scenario.
 - This denotes a judgment of judicial blindness or darkness that comes upon the people

- Futurists say this will happen in the revived Roman Empire of the end times
- ii. Kingdom is plunged into darkness?
 - It is the kingdom that is darkened
 - This raises interpretive questions, what is this kingdom and what is the throne of the beast?
- d. What is the Throne of the Beast?
 - i. At first glance, you would think Rome, the emperor's throne - That is the common interpretation and there is a lot of merit to it.
 - ii. Ralph Bass, in his commentary, says that the "beast" is not identified here so he thinks the phrase means the throne of the 2nd beast (the false prophet)
 - This is possible, but I don't think so. The beast's throne has already been mentioned in Revelation 13:2 where the dragon gave the beast his throne
 - This is clearly a reference to Rome. I don't think it would be sound to suddenly switch to the second beast without a textual warrant.
 - iii. High Priests and Temple Aristocracy were controlled by Rome
 - We already saw how John calls them "beast worshipers"
 - We have also seen John call the synagogues the synagogue of Satan
 - Jerusalem has been called Sodom and Egypt
 - Rome exercised control of the people through the Temple and aristocracy
 - Emperor appointed, or gave governors authority to appoint and remove high priests
 - What was supposed to be God's covenant people rejected their Messiah and aligned themselves politically with the beast. So John could rightly speak of the seat of the beast in the Temple that was supposed to be dedicated to God. The true temple, Jesus, had come and gone. Now the Jerusalem Temple was a puppet of the Beast. He ruled Judea from there.

- Many historians have noted that the Temple and the Jewish aristocracy were puppets of Rome.
 - Josephus – Antiquities 18:2:1- When Cyrenius had now disposed of Archelaus's money, and when the taxings were come to a conclusion, which were made in the thirty-seventh year of Caesar's victory over Antony at Actium, he deprived Joazar of the high priesthood, which dignity had been conferred on him by the multitude, and he appointed Ananus, the son of Seth, to be high priest;
 - Antiquities 20:8:8 - About this time king Agrippa gave the high priesthood to Ismael, who was the son of Fabi. (180) And now arose a sedition between the high priests and the principal men of the multitude of Jerusalem
 - Antiquities 15:11:4 - These vestments king Herod kept in that place; and after his death they were under the power of the Romans, until the time of Tiberius Caesar; (405) under whose reign Vitellius, the president of Syria, when he once came to Jerusalem, and had been most magnificently received by the multitude, he had a mind to make them some requital for the kindness they had shown him; so, upon their petition to have those holy vestments in their own power, he wrote about them to Tiberius Caesar, who granted his request: and this their power over the sacerdotal vestments continued with the Jews till the death of king Agrippa;
- iv. Also remember that everything in this chapter stems from a Jewish context (i.e. Euphrates, Meggido, etc.)

2. The Judged Blaspheme and Do not Repent (10b-11)
 - a. They gnaw their tongues in anguish
 - b. They curse God because of the pain from their sores
 - i. The people in the city do not repent and turn to Christ. Instead they curse God because of the pain from their sores
 - ii. Notice that these plagues are coming in fast succession. The people who experience this darkness are the same that experienced the sores, and the sores are still upon them. The plagues are building upon one another.

F. The Sixth Bowl (12-16)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out on the Euphrates (12)
 - a. The Euphrates was the Northern boundary of the land promised to Abraham
 - b. The Euphrates is also the river that all Israel's greatest enemies came across to conquer the land (Babylon, Assyria)
2. The Euphrates is Dried Up
 - a. This reminds us of the red sea dried up in Exodus 14:21-22, as well as the Jordan drying up to allow Israel across – In those instances it dried up for their protection, here it is to allow the invading army across
 - b. This also reminds us of the Persian King, Cyrus who diverted the Euphrates and dried it up to march his army down the river bed and conquer Babylon in 536 B.C. This is recorded in Herodotus' Histories 1:190-91
 - c. From the Euphrates were all the northern enemies came and conquered Jerusalem.
3. The Army of Judgment Assembles For Battle (13-16)
 - a. Demonic Spirits Unite the Armies of Judgment (13-14)
 - i. Frogs proceed from the mouths of the unholy trinity (13)
 - This alludes to the second Egyptian plague of frogs in Exodus 8:2-12
 - Jerusalem is the new Egypt experiencing these plagues
 - ii. The Frogs are demonic spirits (14)
 - These frogs are interpreted for us. They are demonic spirits that come out of the mouths of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet.
 - These spirits relate to the speech and accusations which proceed out of the mouth of the false prophet and the dragon.

- These demonic spirits will make sure the army comes to destroy
- iii. The Frogs assemble the world for battle
 - Why would these “frogs” be need to bring the army to battle
 - There was upheaval in the Roman empire that threatened their hold on the nations over which they ruled
 - The 60’s saw incredibly tumultuous times in the Empire
 01. Boudicca led a revolt in Britain
 02. 64 saw the great fire in Rome
 03. The Jewish Rebellion
 04. The Germanic legions revolted
 05. Nero committed suicide
 06. The year of civil war and four emperors between 68-69
 - We have already seen many historians say that it looked like Rome was falling, why would the people ruled by them support them in their war against the Jews? Because they were influenced by these spirits
 - Why does it say the frogs brought the “kings of the world” to do battle?
 - The Roman army consisted of auxiliaries sent from rulers all over the empire.
 - Wars 3:1:3 - So Vespasian sent his son Titus from Achaia, where he had been with Nero, to Alexandria, to bring back with him from thence the fifth and tenth legions, while he himself, when he had passed over the Hellespont, came by land into Syria, where he gathered together, the Roman forces, with a considerable number of auxiliaries from the kings in that neighborhood.

- Wars 3:4:2 - But as to Titus, he sailed over from Achaia to Alexandria, and that sooner than the winter season did usually permit; so he took with him those forces he was sent for, and marching with great expedition, he came suddenly to Ptolemais, (65) and there finding his father, together with the two legions, the fifth and tenth, which were the most eminent legions of all, he joined them to that fifteenth legion which was with his father: (66) eighteen cohorts followed these legions; there came also five cohorts from Cesarea, with one troop of horsemen, and five other troops of horsemen from Syria. (67) Now these ten cohorts had severally a thousand footmen, but the other thirteen cohorts had no more than six hundred footmen apiece, with a hundred and twenty horsemen. (68) There were also a considerable number of auxiliaries got together, that came from the kings Antiochus, and Agrippa, and Sohemus, each of them contributing one thousand footmen that were archers, and a thousand horsemen. Malchus also, the king of Arabia, sent a thousand horsemen, besides five thousand footmen, the greatest part of whom were archers; (69) so that the whole army, including the auxiliaries sent by the kings, as well horsemen as footmen, when all were united together, amounted to sixty thousand, besides the servants
- Wars 5:1:6 - There followed him also three thousand drawn from those that guarded the river Euphrates;

- b. The Warning of Christ Has Gone Out (15)
 - i. The passage is a reference to Christ's warning in Matthew 22:1-7
 - ii. For 40 years the church called the inhabitants of Jerusalem to the wedding feast. Instead of coming, the aristocracy and the majority of the people killed and persecuted the believers.
 - iii. The lesson is clear – the warning has been sounded for them and for us.
- c. The Army Assembles at Meggido (16)
 - i. HarMagedon (means the mountain of meggido)
 - Meggido is a valley about 2 days from Jerusalem –
 - The closest mountain is Mount Carmel. This would be a strange place for the world to launch an assault on Jerusalem (Even in the future)
 - ii. The Valley of Meggido was widely recognized by Jews as a place of mourning and loss (like a "waterloo")
 - It is the place where king Ahaziah died. 2 Kings 9:27 - When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled in the direction of Beth-haggan. And Jehu pursued him and said, "Shoot him also." And they shot him in the chariot at the ascent of Gur, which is by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo and died there.
 - It is the place where the good king Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco. 2 Kings 23:29 - In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. King Josiah went to meet him, and Pharaoh Neco killed him at Megiddo, as soon as he saw him.
 - There was great mourning for Josiah's death – see 2 Chronicles 35:22-25
 - It is a place prophesied to be a place of mourning when judgment falls (just like it was when Josiah was killed) Zechariah 12:11 – (I have included verse 10 which we have already seen quoted in Revelation) - And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on

him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

G. The Seventh Bowl (17-21)

1. The Bowl is Poured Out Into the Air
2. God's Judgment Has Reached It's Goal
 - a. Finally covenant judgment is complete
 - b. The judgments that God promised Israel for breaking the covenant are fulfilled – The old has passed away and the New Covenant has been ratified
3. The Foundations of the World Are Shaken (18-20)
 - a. The Presence of God Among the Judged (18)
 - i. We have seen these descriptions several times in Revelation pointing back to God's presence on Mount Sinai
 - ii. Here God's presence is experience in terror and judgment for breaking the covenant
 - iii. NOTE: Josephus and other historians also relate great earthquakes and storms during this time
 - b. The City Experiences the Wrath of God (19)
 - i. What city are we talking about that is receiving the wrath of God?
 - ii. Notice the differentiation between "that great city" and the cities of the nations (i.e. Gentiles)
 - iii. Jerusalem has already been called Sodom and Egypt in Revelation, now it is called "the great city" pointing back to the angel's statement "Babylon, that great city." Jerusalem is no characterized as Babylon.
 - iv. The city broke into three parts?
 - Reference to judgment pronounced on Jerusalem by Ezekiel 5:11-12 –
 - Therefore, as I live, declares the Lord God, surely, because you have defiled my sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will withdraw. My eye will not spare, and I will have no pity. A third part of you shall die of pestilence and be consumed with famine in your midst; a third part shall fall by the sword all around you; and a third part I will scatter to all the winds

and will unsheathe the sword after them.

(see also Jer. 15:2)

c. The Created Order is Shaken (20)

- i. Prophetic language is again used here for the destruction of a city or culture. The same decreation language was used to prophecy -
- ii. the destruction of Babylon by the Medes -
"Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine." Isa 13:9-10
- iii. The destruction of Idumea - *"And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment."* Isa 34:4-5
- iv. The invasion of Egypt by the Babylonians - *And when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord GOD.* Eze 32:7-8 (vv. 11-12 make it clear that it is the Babylonians that will attack.)

4. The Plague of Hail Rains Upon The City (21)

- a. Again we see the final bowl is reminding us of an Egyptian plague.
- b. These hailstones rained on the city and weighed a talent each. Josephus relates a very interesting account of the Roman siege engines throwing stones over the walls in Wars 5:6:3
 - i. The engines, that all the legions had ready prepared for them, were admirably contrived; but still more extraordinary ones belonged to the tenth legion: those that threw darts and those that threw stones, were more forcible and larger than the rest, by which they not only repelled the excursions of the Jews, but drove those away that were upon the walls also. (270) Now, the

stones that were cast were of the weight of a talent, and were carried two furlongs and farther. The blow they gave was no way to be sustained, not only by those that stood first in the way, but by those that were beyond them for a great space.

We have seen the judgments of both the trumpets and the bowls follow almost word for word with the Egyptian plagues as well as God's covenant warnings in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28, which were warning the Israelites what would happen if they broke the covenant. Just as He promised, God turned the plagues back on Jerusalem and Old Covenant Israel.