

Revelation 16:1-7 | The Seven Bowls (Part 1)

Introduction

Revelation 15 introduced the final bowl judgments, and chapter 16 details their outpouring on the earth. The 7 bowls will be the most intense expression of God's wrath on earth. This chapter can be divided into two parts: verses 1-8 are the first 3 bowls and the response of the righteous in heaven; verses 8-21 are the last 4 bowls and the response of the wicked on earth.

Jim Hamilton: "We really do need to read chapter 16 from God's perspective. If we read this chapter from the perspective of a sinner, we will think that maybe this is awfully harsh of God. We will think that maybe the people who suffer in these seven plagues from the seven bowls of wrath have not been treated fairly. So we need to take God's perspective on the matter, because our sinful, limited perspective is grossly inaccurate."

Verse-By-Verse Notes

Verses 1-2

- The voice John hears is almost certainly the voice of God. "Go" and "pour" are imperatives in the original language representing the command of God to execute His righteous judgment on the wicked.
- The "painful sores" brings remembrance the sixth plague on Egypt (Exodus 9:9-11) as well as the sores experienced by Job and Lazarus.
- The J.B. Phillips translation calls them "loathsome and malignant ulcers." See also Zechariah 14:12!

Verses 3-4

- The third and fourth bowls affect the earth's water supply and recall the first plague on Egypt – water turned to blood. The result is that all sea life dies.
- Note there is a textual issue here where the KJV has "every living soul died in the sea." Modern translations such as the NASB should be preferred – "and every living thing in the sea died." The KJV implies that sea creatures are endowed with souls, only man possesses a soul.

Verses 5-6

- The "angel of the waters" takes note of the justice of God in His judgments.
- Robert Mounce: "The judgment of God is neither vengeful nor capricious. It is an expression of his just and righteous nature. All caricatures of God that ignore his intense hatred of sin reveal more about human nature than about God. In a moral universe God must of necessity oppose evil."
- God is the avenger of the righteous and He will judge the wicked for their hatred of His people. Psalm 98:9b says, "He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples

with equity.” The unrepentant wicked justly get what they deserve. See also Isaiah 49:26.

Verse 7

- The voice(s) John hears from the altar are undoubtedly martyred believers – see Revelation 6:9. The righteous will rejoice at the destruction of the wicked.
- Robert Mounce: “It is significant that throughout Revelation (except in 11:1) the altar is connected with judgment (6:9; 8:3-5; 9:13; 14:18; 16:7). The principles of sacrifice and judgment are inextricably interwoven.”

BIG IDEA: “GOD IS GLORIFIED IN JUSTICE AS HE BRINGS AWESOME WRATH THAT FITS THE CRIMES HUMAN BEINGS HAVE DONE.” JIM HAMILTON