

Revelation 16:8-21 | The Seven Bowls (Part 2)

Introduction

The 7 bowls represent the most intense expression of God's wrath on earth. There is a sense of finality in them. Revelation 16 and the 7 bowl judgments 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. Look for and note any repeated words or themes in this last section of chapter 16.

Verse-By-Verse Notes

Verses 8-9

- The fourth bowl judgment will affect the sun, which will in turn affect conditions on earth. We might even call this "climate change." John MacArthur: "Searing heat exceeding anything in human experience will scorch men so severely that it will seem that the atmosphere is on fire."
- This will be torment for the wicked on the earth. Note their response: they cursed God and refused to repent. Also note how the notion of atheism is absent. They *know* God exists and they *hate Him*. Doug Wilson: "The two fundamental tenets of atheism: 1) there is no God and; 2) I hate him."

Verses 10-11

- The fifth bowl continues the cosmic chaos of God's wrath. Darkness will cover the antichrist's kingdom. The term "throne" most likely means the seat of his authority such as a capital city (e.g. the White House in Washington).
- Note that darkness is the absence of sunlight, so the fourth and fifth bowl judgments are related to the sun.
- No doubt still reeling from the scorching torment of the fourth plague and now the terror of darkness, people are in such agony that they begin chewing their own tongues, and yet they *again* cursed God and refused to repent.
- Danny Akin: "This is the final time we are told that mankind would not repent. The day of grace is at an end. God's deadline is now past. Neither mercy nor judgment changed the heart of sinful humanity."

Verses 12-14

- The sixth bowl does not affect humanity is a preparatory judgment drying the Euphrates River, leading up to the Battle of Armageddon.
- The Euphrates River runs 1800 miles from Mt. Ararat to the Persian Gulf. It forms the eastern boundary of the land promised to Israel, thus it's drying will allow for a massive invasion of the holy land by Israel's enemies.

- Though many attempts have been made, it is impossible to identify the “kings of the east” with any degree of precision. John Walvoord notes that as many as fifty possible identifications have been suggested. What we know for sure is that it will be a coalition of nations to Israel’s east.
- The invasion of Israel will be demonically motivated as indicated by the unclean spirits in the visionary form of frogs proceeding from the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet (v. 13).
- The purpose of the demonic frogs will be to deceive world leaders into assembling against Israel.
- Robert Mounce: “The evil spirits come out of the *mouths* of the unholy triumvirate, suggesting the persuasive and deceptive propaganda that in the last days will lead people to an unconditional commitment to the cause of evil.”

Verse 15

- In the middle of the sixth bowl, John writes a word of assurance from Christ to believers that He is coming soon to end the reign of the wicked, so remain alert and ready.

Verse 16

- The center of the Armageddon conflict will occur near the valley of Megiddo – 60 miles north of Jerusalem. However, this war will encompass the entire length of Israel (see Revelation 14:20).
- John MacArthur: “This ‘battle’ will be over almost as soon as it begins, as the Lord Jesus Christ returns to rescue his people and defeat his enemies. The resulting slaughter of the world’s armies will be almost unimaginable, with blood splattered several feet high and perhaps running in streams throughout a distance of two hundred miles.”

Verses 17-19

- The seventh bowl is the final act of God’s judgment on the world as we know it, for His voice will create an earthquake that will radically change the face of the earth.
- God will manifest Himself in a “storm-theophany” – “And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake . . .” A theophany is a physical manifestation of God in physical form such when Jacob wrestled with God in Genesis 32 or the burning bush in Exodus 3. The manifestation of God’s presence physically in nature and storms is a common theme in the Old Testament.
- The “great city” has traditionally been identified as either Jerusalem (see Revelation 11:8) or Babylon. Contextually, it seems Babylon is in view but the argument can be made that there is a distinction made between the “great city” and the “cities of the nations,” and “Babylon the great.” Revelation 17 and 18 identify the great city as

Babylon. This is interpretively difficult, so dogmatic positions should be avoided, though I strongly lean toward Babylon over Jerusalem.

- The statement “It is done” demonstrates the final nature of the bowl judgments (see also 15:1). Judgment is over, the millennial kingdom is now come.

Verses 20-21

- The cataclysmic earthquake will reshape the face of the earth, preparing it for the millennial kingdom (v. 20).
- Unimaginably large hail will fall on people, resulting in widespread disaster and death (by comparison, the largest hailstone ever recorded in the modern era is 8 inches and weighing 1.93lbs) and yet, they will continue to curse God.
- Danny Akin: “Judgment day has come. The results are certain. The response of humanity is stunning. So great is their hatred for God, they curse His name with their final, dying breath.”

BIG IDEA: “GOD WILL DECISIVELY BRING AN END TO HUMAN EVIL. THE RIGHTEOUS WILL BE VINDICATED, THE WICKED WILL BE JUDGED, AND THE EARTH PREPARED FOR CHRIST’S GLORIOUS RETURN.”