

Revelation 16

Overview

- This chapter deals with events that occur near the very end of the tribulation period.
- the 7 bowls of Rev 16 will be the final public showing of God's wrath against a rebellious world
- these last judgements are marked by both fury and fierceness. They are both inescapable and inevitable.
- there is a direct comparison between the 7 trumpets and the 7 bowls
- while there are similarities, the bowls have a finality not seen in the trumpets
- 15:1 -"for in them is filled up the wrath of God", the idea of completeness
- God's purpose in judgement will be accomplished (not only conclusion but a goal reached)
- the seals, trumpets and bowls are each divided into two groups (a group of four then three)
- in bowls 1-4, different parts of creation are affected
- in bowls 5-7, it seems like the creature is targeted more specifically (beast worshipers)
- the actions of God against man and his sin will be punitive in these judgements
- the seals – created fear in man but no repentance
- the trumpets – were a more severe warning – yet man became hardened to their sin
- the bowls – God will act in punitive judgement
- these golden bowls are given to seven angels (15:7)
- shallow (yet full) bowls allude to the fact that the judgements will be sudden and swift
- it seems that the bowls are emptied in quick succession(a couple days to a couple weeks)
- there is a sense of urgency associated with these judgements
- interval between the temple of God opened (11:19, 7th trumpet) and heaven opened (19:11)is very short
- the delivery of these bowls to the angels is set against the background of the temple
- 15:5-8 -from the smoke filled temple comes the command to empty the bowls
- 15:8 -God will not permit intercession during these bowl judgements
- 16:1 - a great voice out of the temple commands the angels to go and commence their work

1st Bowl

- vs 2 -note the complete obedience of the angel...doing exactly as he was commanded
- men are affected by "a noisome and greivous sore." a boil...ugly, foul and painful
- affects the men and women associated with the beast (those that had the mark and worshiped his image)
- same group of people are in view...both describe beast worshippers.
- this is a discriminate judgement

2nd Bowl

- vs 3 -there is no new command from heaven...the second angel understands his command and goes
- this angel empties his bowl into the sea
- seems to be a worldwide scope
- the sea will become as the blood of a dead man...associated with everything opposite to life
- marine life will meet a certain and immediate death
- the livelihood and source of food for many will be quickly eliminated

3rd Bowl

- vs 4 -the rivers and fountains of waters become blood (streams and underground springs)
- this bowl affects the clean sources of drinking water (see vs 6)
- with the 3rd trumpet 1/3 of the fountains of waters were affected but with this judgement there is no restriction.
- for earth's inhabitants this judgement may be far worse than the judgement under the 2nd bowl

Statements declaring the Righteousness of God

- vs 5 -the attitude of the angel stands in stark contrast to the attitude of unrepentant man
- the judgements reflect the holy character of God...He who is eternally holy
- the judgement of vs 5 seems to refer back to the 3rd bowl.
- Vs 6 -the scriptural principal of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Deut. 19) will again be seen with the 3rd bowl judgement.
- those that shed blood will be made to drink blood
- "shed" is the same verb used for the pouring out of the bowls
- sinful man poured out blood...God will pour out his judgement upon them
- "for they are worthy"... they have proved that they are worthy of divine judgement.
- Vs 7 - the voice of/from the altar speaks and is in agreement with the angel of vs 5
- the altar from under which were the souls of the martyrs
- it becomes the mouthpiece for all those that have died for the sake of Christ

4th Bowl

- vs 8
 - with the 4th trumpet there was a reduction in the energy reaching the earth from the sun
 - with the 4th bowl being poured out on the sun, the sun gains in strength..."power was given to scorch men with fire"
 - it seems that again it only affects the men in vs 2 (those which had the mark of the beast)
 - this view could possibly be supported by vs 9
- vs 9
 - the word "scorched" is again used along with the words "great heat." Men will realize, if they have not already, that God is at work in judgement.
 - Even though men recognize this they do not acknowledge their sin and repent. Rather they blaspheme God.

5th Bowl

- vs 10
 - a physical darkness descends on the kingdom of the beast
 - this bowl seems limited to a specific geographical area (the place of the beast's centralized authority)
 - from this point it seems to envelope his entire kingdom in darkness
 - the beast finds his command center plunged into darkness
 - this will be a public sign that Satan's power is diminishing and that he is becoming more restricted.
 - choosing darkness over light has very real and literal consequences.
- v10-11 - As a result of this bowl (as well as the preceding ones) there are 3 actions that characterize those that are subject to divine judgement.
 - 1) "they gnawed their tongues for pain 2) they "blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains" 3)they "repented not of their deeds."

6th Bowl

- vs 12
 - the river Euphrates is dried up
 - there is a divine purpose...God prepares the way for the armies from the east.
 - "that the way of the kings from the rising of the Sun might be prepared" JND
 - there are differing views as to the primary purpose of the armies from the east coming

The Vision

- v13-14 - the dragon, the beast and the false prophet seem to start to publish a specific message
 - unclean spirits like frogs...evil, deceptive communication or propaganda
 - the communication is evil and is energized by evil spirits. The miracles...deceptive in nature.
 - the purpose is to gather the armies of the world to battle
 - it may be that different armies may gather for different reasons but it would seem to be a worldwide gathering of troops
 - they do not realize that they are but puppets in the hand of another, they are aligned under Satan, gathered for "the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Christ will then confront them.

A message to the saints

- vs 15
 - "I will come as a thief" the unexpected nature of His arrival for those who will be judged
 - this will not create fear in the saints but will rather be a source of encouragement for them.
 - the saints are encouraged to be watching, waiting and ready

The gathering place

- vs 16
 - "into a place called Armageddon" ...the mountain where the troops gather
 - this is the meeting place...the battle is, "the battle of that great day of God Almighty"

7th Bowl

- vs 17
 - poured out by the angel into the air...affects the atmosphere of the whole earth
 - a great voice (of God) is heard out of the temple (holiness) and from the throne (righteousness) saying "It is done"...God's purposes have been accomplished through the series of judgements
 - this statement anticipates all judgement that is still to transpire until Christ returns in glory
- vs 18
 - the 7th bowl includes many components of a storm...the storms of judgement in the past have intensified and now culminate with the 7th bowl (thunderings, lightning, earthquake,hail)
- vs 19
 - the city of Jerusalem is divided into three parts...even in judgement there is preservation...God still has a plan and purpose for this city.
- Vs 19
 - "the cities of the nations fell"...due to the earthquake
 - Babylon...God is now ready to take specific action against it (ch 18)
- vs 20
 - both the ocean floors and the dry land are affected
 - islands will be moved...mountains will disappear
 - these judgements will end with Christ's coming
- vs21
 - as the 7th bowl reaches it's climax, great hail stones fall from heaven
 - in the midst of such terror and judgement, man remains unrepentant and a blasphemer of God