

THE BOWL JUDGMENTS

PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First, let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus Christ will receive a scroll from His Father in the presence of all the living beings in Heaven. It will have seven seals on it to protect its contents from being changed. It is the official document that reveals the true owner of the earth, which is His Son. He purchased its redemption from sin by His death on the cross. When He breaks the first seal to open the scroll, the Tribulation begins. God judges the earth for its rebellion against Him (Rev 6). When the seventh seal is opened, at the middle of the Tribulation, seven angels will blow their trumpets one at a time to announce a new judgment that will devastate the kingdom of the Antichrist for the last 3½ years of the Tribulation. Six angels will blow their trumpets (Rev 8-9), but John is given more information before the seventh angel blows his trumpet (Rev 11:15). The results of this trumpet-judgment are given (11:16-19), but not the judgment. The stage is set for this final judgment in chapters 12-14. The seventh trumpet announces the last seven judgments known as the bowl or vial judgments (Rev 15-16). These judgments fall in rapid succession near the end of the Tribulation.

AIM OF THE LESSON:

Understand the wrath of God in His judgments and why it is necessary.

John wrote that those that believe on the Son have everlasting life, but those that do not believe on the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abides on them (John 3:36).

OUTLINE OF THE LESSON (use the Study Notes to add to this lesson plan as the Spirit leads you):

I. Introduction to the Bowl Judgments (15:1-8)

Two reasons can be given to tell why the wrath of God is necessary. The first reason is to punish those who caused the death of the believers during the Tribulation (15:2-3). These believers will gain the victory over Antichrist ("beast") by not yielding to his demand that they worship him. However, to get this victory over him, they will pay with their life's blood (cf. Rev 7:9-17). These martyrs are like another group of believers who will be martyred by Antichrist during his ruthless rise to power during the first half of the Tribulation (6:9-11; 12: 10-11). God is just to pour out His wrath on Antichrist and his followers for killing the people of God.

The second reason for God's wrath is the attack of Antichrist against God. The martyrs will rightly praise God for His holiness and judgments (15:4), but Antichrist will openly blaspheme God (13:6). Furthermore, his False Prophet will demand that all people worship Antichrist and his image (13:11ff). This idolatry and blasphemy are hostile acts and words against God and deserve the wrath of God. After God's wrath is poured out, it will cause a proper fear and respect for Him among all nations so that they will come and worship before Him (15:4). They will do this when Christ's Kingdom is established on earth.

APPLICATION: Never question the judgments of God when you read about them in the Bible. He knows the hearts of all people hears their words and sees the actions. He loves all people and wants to save them from His wrath, but those who reject His love will experience his wrath. Receive Jesus as your Savior and experience His love.

II. Identification of the Bowl Judgments (16:1-21)

The seven bowls of judgments will reveal the nature and serious consequences of God's wrath.

A. First Bowl - Grievous Sores (16:1-2)

The wrath of God puts a malignant sore on those that receive the mark of the beast (Antichrist). This sore will be very painful (cf. 16:11).

B. Second Bowl - Bloody Seas (16:3)

Then the wrath of God produces a bloody sea. The sea is likened to the blood of a dead man. All the living creatures in it will die. This might be limited to one sea (the Mediterranean Sea?) or it may refer to all the seas of the earth as one great sea.

C. Third Bowl - Bloody Rivers (16:4-7)

Next, the wrath of God makes the rivers and fountains of waters bloody. This judgment strikes at the major sources for drinking water. An angel commends God for this judgment. Since the wicked followers of Antichrist shed the blood of multitudes of believers, they are forced to drink blood instead of water.

D. Fourth Bowl - Scorching Sun (16:8-9)

The wrath of God brings a blast of intense heat from the sun to the earth. God will make the sun hotter than normal to scorch the followers of Antichrist. They will blaspheme God, but they will not repent. This burning heat is a mere introduction to the greater burning heat that awaits them in the Lake of Fire (cf. 14:9-11; 19:20; 20:10,14,15).

E. Fifth Bowl - Dreadful Darkness (16:10-11)

The wrath of God generates impenetrable darkness on the "seat" or throne of Antichrist in Babylon his capital. His kingdom will be drowned in darkness so dense that men will gnaw their tongues in pain. This literal darkness will heighten the pain they are suffering from their malignant sores (16:2) or possibly from the heat of the intense sun (16:8, 9). This may seem like hell to them, but it is only the entrance to hell, where they will gnaw their tongues in pain forever (Lk 16:24). Although this judgment causes them great pain, they will still refuse to repent of their evil deeds and continue to blaspheme God.

F. Sixth Bowl - Armageddon Battle (16:12-16)

The wrath of God will dry up the Euphrates River so the kings of the East will have easy access to Israel. This may not sound like the wrath of God, but when all is said and done, it will be seen as the wrath of God. Satan, Antichrist and the False Prophet will send three demons with power to perform miracles to these kings to persuade them to help Antichrist destroy Israel. Without confronting them, Antichrist apparently plans with deceptive skill to put these nations under his permanent authority in the battle as he did with the ten kings of Europe. The staging area for these nations is in the fertile Valley of Jezreel, which has a mountain pass on its western end called Megiddo. The "Battle of Armageddon" gets its name from this mountain pass. Armageddon means "Mount of Megiddo. This valley is approximately 70 miles north of Jerusalem.

The battle against Jerusalem soon becomes the battle against Christ, when He comes to defend Jerusalem. Scripture refers to three major battles in this war between Christ and the nations. Besides Megiddo, another major battle will be southeast of Jerusalem in Edom at Bozrah (Isa. 34:1ff; 63:1-6). But the main battle will be at Jerusalem. The main objective of Antichrist in this battle is the destruction of Jerusalem so Christ cannot rule the world from that city as God has promised Him (Ps 2:6-9). That is why Jerusalem has been the center of world conflict.

Antichrist will gather these nations together to fight against Jerusalem (Zech 14:1-2), but contrary to his plans, God will use this gathering of the nations at Jerusalem to accomplish His purposes. He will destroy the nations gathered to fight against His city (cf. Zech 14:3-4; Rev 19:11-21). Antichrist will be defeated and cast into the lake of fire along with the False Prophet and Satan will be cast into the abyss (bottomless pit) for 1000 years.

G. Seventh Bowl - Great Earthquake/Hailstorm (16:17-21)

The wrath of God will come as the greatest storm of all time. It will be so intense that it will cause the fall of Babylon. At the same time that Babylon is being ruined beyond repair, Jerusalem is being rescued by Christ to be the capital of the world. In this storm will be an earthquake so great that it will cause Babylon and many cities of the world to fall. Even Jerusalem will be divided into three parts, but no permanent damage is mentioned (16:19). Finally, this storm will be so great that it will produce hail stones that weigh 100 pounds (16:21). God will use these stones to pulverize Babylon, so it will never be rebuilt. When the wrath of God in the seventh bowl is finished, it can be said of the Tribulation, "It is done" (16:17).

APPLICATION: The wrath of God in the bowl judgments is a fearful thing to behold. Do not harden your heart against God's Son. Receive Him as your Savior and you will escape the wrath of God (John 3:36).

THE HOLY WRATH OF GOD WILL PRODUCE THE HOLY FEAR OF GOD