

"SEVEN VIALS OR BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH"

Rev. 16

INTRODUCTION:

Chapter 16 presents a description of seven visitations. It relates to the pouring out of the contents of the seven bowls. As each bowl of God's wrath is emptied, certain actions occur. The results of these reactions bear a close resemblance to the opening of the seven seals and the sounding of the seven trumpets.

This is John's method of emphasizing the judgement by giving a recount. However the previous visions of punishment for sin, were localized. There was hope for repentance. Some of the other plagues fell on grass, trees, sea, water, sun, or a cloud of locust was used. But all of this is poured out from the bowls upon the heedless, unGodly world.

The judgement of God is upon those who have tread under foot the grace of the son of God. Who have despised the blood of the Covenant, and have said no to the call of the Holy Spirit.

That is one law of God which is fearful to contemplate - when God in grace and mercy sends his son to die for us. And then raises up a preacher to preach to us. And, give us the Holy Scriptures. And to plead for men to come to repentance and faith. And a wicked dejected, unbeliever says (no), I will not turn. I will not accept. Every gracious deed of God is then turned into judgement.

Before, we have had a succession of seven deliberate things - seals have been broken, trumpets were blown. And in the King James version, there are seven angels introduced here. As the first angel, the second angel. They say that in the original - this happened in rapid succession. First, second, third, etc. That is, when the judgement finally comes - it comes. In a fury. There is no let up.

There have been some people who have called this chapter a fantastic vision. It is so wild and it symbolizes the swift judgement of God executed. As it falls on sinful man, on the Roman Empire, on Babylon. And it leaves everything in the state of doom.

There are some similarities that we ought to think about between the trumpets and these which were judgements to call for repentance - these bowls. In all hope, repentance is past.

We could prepare these very briefly if we had time. The trumpets were in order! And the bowls followed in the same order. First, on the earth. 7:7. Sea, 8:8. Third, on the water. 8:10-11. Fourth, on the sun. 8:12. Fifth, smoked out of the abyss. 9:1-11. Sixth, the great river. 9:13-21. Seventh, the issue. 9:15-18.

Now you can take the bowls and they follow the same order -- the earth. 16:2. The sea. V. 3. Third, waters. 4-7. Fourth, the sun. 8-9. Fifth, the throne of the beast - V. 10-11. Sixth, the great river. V. 12-16. Seventh, it is done. V. 17-21.

It is remarkable how these things have features that are all common. And they are

very much connected. As they are sent. In fast order.

Now, there is another thing to notice in this chapter - we need to go back and read the ten plagues in Egypt. Because you find a similar pattern as God dealt with the evil Pharaoh. To let his people go - he will deal here in the pouring out of the bowls of wrath.

First, there was the water made blood, Ex. 7:20. Second, the frogs. Chapter 8:5. Third, the lice. Chapter 8:16. Fourth, the flies. Chapter 8:20. Fifth, the murrain on the cattle. Chapter 9:3. Sixth, the boils - Chapter 9:8. Seventh, the hail, Chapter 9:22. Eighth, the locust. Chapter 10:12. Ninth, the darkness. Chapter 10:21. Tenth, the slaying of the first born. Chapter 12:29.

Now if you were to take these ten plagues, and the next terrors of the seven trumpets - it would follow something like this.

First, the hail, fire, and blood. Rev. 8:7.

Second, the mountains cast into the sea. V. 8.

Third, the fall of the star in the waters. 8:10.

Fourth, the sun and the moon. 8:12.

Fifth, the smoke out of the pit, and the terrible locust. 9:1.

Sixth, the great river. 9:13.

Seventh, the final victory of God. 11:15.



Now you can set the terrors of this chapter that we are in, and you will find almost identical - the sores, the blood, the rivers, the sun, the darkness, the great river, the air, and the hail. When you put all of these different lists together - it is easy to see who many things they have in common. The hail, the darkness, the blood, and the water, the sword. And in this final series of terror, John seems to have gathered together all the horror and all the terror from all the stories of the wrath of God and hurled them on this unbelieving world. Which is doomed for disaster.

V. 1 - A command comes from the temple. Then I heard a voice from the temple telling the seven angels - go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God. That is the voice of God and he is discussing his messenger. The command comes from the temple, that is, the dwelling place of God. And this voice says pour out. And these bowls are suggestive of Jeremiah's cup of God's wrath. Righteous wrath - Chapter 25:15. In this verse, God commands the seven angels to fulfill the task. To empty the contents of the bowl upon the earth. Now this vision in many ways has reference to the Egyptian plagues. And they are meant to be taken symbolically - I think that is the only way that you can take them. (Symbolically.)

Now let us note that these seven angels as they pour out their bowls. We will just take them in order, as they come. Now, you will notice, that I could divide this up into the physical realm. Where these bowls affect things, in the spiritual realm. To follow the pattern in the chapter - we'll just take them one at a time.

## I. THE FIRST BOWL

Poured out on the earth. V. 2. The first angel went and poured his bowl upon the

earth. And fowl and evil sores came up upon the men. Who bore the mark of the beast and they worshipped this image. Now this first one, is introduced here - is the sixth one of the Egyptian plagues. Ex. 9:8-12. When the boils appeared, the magicians could not stand before Moses. In Egypt, the boils too, were a mark of offensive, disgraceful. Deut. 28:27. So the first plague poured out in the judgement of God was upon those who bore the mark of the beast. And who worshipped it's image. Those who were given over to the consequences of the unGodliness. Now this symbol commonly referred to bodily disease which is the outcome of sin. The evil sore afflict those who give themselves to these practices. But they do not affect other people.

He denotes that there was a throbbing - a hurtful sore. Whether it was spiritual or mental - but it was disturbing.

I want you to notice that this was poured out - not sprinkled. It was an overflow without any hold back of the measure - it was all emptied.

Now in the Old Testament, we find that Moses went before Pharoah and sprinkled ashes before Heaven out of the furnace. And these boils began to break forth upon the people and the beasts. Now, if we believe Exodus - we might as well believe Revelation. The plague here referred too is an evil and a grievous sore. And it is something that we learn from Luke 16:20-21 - that Lazarus dying among the dogs on the street was covered with these painful and incureable boils or sores. But the angels were waiting for him when he got to Heaven. Physical suffering is no doubt and will be part of the anguish endured by men. Some of God's judgement may come to you in this world. Your soul and conscience may suffer far more exceedingly than some bodily affliction. And it could be called evil and a grievous sore.



A bad ulcer - an unhealthy thing. Discharging. That which is offensive.

And person's bearing the mark of the beast and his worshippers. Those who were actively supporters of Satan's program. Will suffer under this judgement.

## II. THE SECOND BOWL IS THAT UPON THE SEA

V3 The second angel poured out his bowl upon the sea. And it became as the blood of a dead man. And every living thing died.

Now this kind of corresponds to the first Egyptian plague. Ex. 7:14. The symbol is of mankind - decaying, corruption, dying, creatures in the sea. And the entire community is touched here. It loses its vital force and source for life. This is a larger part that is being judged now under the wrath of God. The sea became blood. Just like the Nile. And this vial or plague is a scene of moral death. It was a dead man it says. Here we have death in a real double sense. First, the spiritual death. Eph. 2:5. And then, we have this second death - of giving up on religion. Jude 12 says twice dead. Every living soul died in the sea.

## III. THE RIVERS AND WATERS WERE AFFECTED - V. 4.

4 We read that this third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and fountain of waters and it became blood. Now the pouring out of this bowl was something like 5 Ex. 7:19. And it seems that in V. 5 - that here is an angel in charge of the waters. And it seems that if you have ever been down to the Springs in Florida - you see a great

volume of wonderful water. Where does this water come from. But here is an angel that seems to be in charge of the waters, that supply the earth. Maybe that is what has been taking place in this water shortage. But I tell you, the angel has certainly been doing his work in the past couple of weeks because we have plenty of water now - and some to spare. Now this may seem hard, but this is an act for the righteous judgement of God.

V. 6 - He talks about those who have been persecuted, the Godly, and those in V. 6 - he talks about those who have been responsible of the death of the saints and of the prophets.

V. 7 - He talks about a voice coming from the very altar. And the Lord God Almighty is true and righteous in his judgement. That is, his judgement has been right and worthy. Now they used to have an old scales in which you put 5# of weight on one side. And then you put a sack on the other side and fill it up with sugar - and you balance it. And when it was perfectly balanced, you had 5# of sugar - equal to the 5# of weight. That is worthy. And that is what John is saying here about the judgement of God. That this judgement is coming here - and it expresses, it is coming from beneath and around the altar. That God's testimony and judgement is judged worthy.

#### IV. THE FOURTH BOWL WAS POURED OUT UPON THE SUN

And it was allowed to scorch men with fire. And in V. 9 - it says, men were scorched by the fierce heat - they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. And the last part of that verse says, and they did not repent and give him

glory.

Now this plague comes under the plague in Ex. 10:21. The sun is employed as an instrument of scorching heat. The sun which has such a blessing - now has become a curse. And God often has spoken of the light of the world. And here the darkness, the passion of evil will be dealt with by this power. One who has rejected the light already has been judged. John 3:18. And 16:11.

And the great moral effect of this upon the worshippers of the beast is - instead of repenting they blasphemed. They blamed God for their suffering. They blamed God for their wickedness. And their unrepented heart is hardened in sin. Against his righteous judgements. So they pervert God's revelation.

V. V. 10 - THE FIFTH BOWL OF WRATH IS POURED OUT UPON THE THRONE OF THE BEAST, AND HIS KINGDOM.

10 And they gnawed their tongues with distress. Blasphemed the God of Heaven in their distresses and their sores - and did not repent of their works. This is something that is very tragic. The beast of the Kingdom is darkened. And the contents are poured out - and the seat of world power is here assailed. This is the ninth plague - Ex. 10:21. The symbolical use of darkness is very common in literature. And this darkness symbolizes strife, confusion, calamity, disorder, distress, vision. And when men refuse light, they will die in a state of sin, ignorance, and darkness.



In this 10th verse, there is remorse, in the statement that men gnawed their tongues. This is very painful and tormenting thing that is symbolized here. That is a fore-shadow of the great distress - the intense agony of remorse. V. 11 - and instead of repenting, they are set against God in Heaven, and there is a hardness in their hearts.

Paul says in Rom. 1:24-26-28 - there is the formula. God gave them up. They were so hard against Heaven - they had chosen the evils and they were bound to the disastrous results.

Now this is a strange picture. It is strange that people, men know about God. They have no doubt that God exists. They see God's hand in the events of history. And they still go on their way. They do not give any attention to this appeal. Now, I wonder whether we are very different. There are some people who do not doubt the existence of God. We know that God is interested in the world. And we know that God has some laws for this universe. There is the goodness of God. But time and time again, knowing all of this, we go our own way. The tragedy of life and the world is not that men do not know God, but knowing God, they still insist on going their own way.

#### VI. V. 12 - WE HAVE THE SIXTH BOWL POURED OUT UPON THE GREAT RIVER

12 It is called the Euphrates. When this bowl is poured out - there is included with it a vision. Of an Army that is going to come from the same river, which is dried up - to give them free passage. And to dry up as the Red Sea and as the Jordan. And John pictures here that this great river is going to be the way that kings of the

East might be prepared. And then he says, I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs. Creatures of filth and dirt. Coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. V. 12. For they are the spirit working, going forth as the kings of this earth, as they gather towards the great battle of the great day of God Almighty. V. 14.

Now, here is the number three - it is like frogs - uncommon quality. Of uncleanness, as they come forth. And this is a sign of the power of God. The drying up of the waters. As he acted at the Red Sea. Ex. 14:21. As he acted at the Jordan. Josh. 3:17. And so he says, he has power to do this. Jer. 51:36, Isa. 11:16. There was the famous incident in history. When the Persian captured Babylon. He actually did so by drying up the Euphrates. The river flows right through the center of Babylon. And Cyrus came, and they had their defenses, and they were strong. But he had a brilliant plan. He put one section of his Army at Babylon, and he took another section down the river. And in an engineering feat, he temporarily deflected the course of the river into a lake. And that meant, that bit by bit, the level of the river dropped. And Babylon became a dry road - and that was a natural defense had been destroyed. And so they entered on the river bed and the city fell. History knew what the drying up of the river meant. It was a way for invaders to come. Now that is a picture that John wants to get in the people's minds. That here is - God's going to come, and God is going to dry up the Euphrates. And in V. 13 - there are going to be three unclean spirits. There is the dragon) - satan. There is the beast) - world power. There is the false prophet) - false religion. And these enemies - these unclean spirits and enemies are going to come forth and breed their evil influences. They are going to be disrupting, their teaching of their anti-God influences upon men and on nations. They are like frogs. And they are connected with the plagues in Exodus. And they are unclean animals. And you know they are famous for their empty, continuous croaking.



And the sound of a frog is a symbol of futility and meaningless speech. Who can understand the croacking of a frog. It doesn't have much message to it. And it is the power of darkness. And frogs come out of the mouth of the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet. And this dragon, identified with Satan - the Devil, and the beast identified with the world power - the Roman Empire. And the false prophet coming on the scene as the false religion and those who divert the faith. The Christian church has been warned about the false Christ and the false prophets. And telling us that they would arise and they would work impressive signs. And they would deceive and delude many people. Mark 13:22.

True religion has no worse enemy - and really, Satan has no better ally than for a false religion or a false prophet to arise.

There are always people who would come and want you to worship some other God.

Dr. Dana really says - that the Greek says here, I saw out of the mouth of a dragon, he takes the position that the frogs were vomited up. Now, Professor Sweet says he thinks that they were breathed out. These three were called up. But they are called spirits of demons. And they are sent out by three evil allies. And they are going to fulfill their task. And they are going to gather the kings for battle in a place called Harmagedon. Of course, the battle, will not be fought until chapter 19.

16 - In V, 16 - he says they will be gathered together in the kings of the earth at Armageddon. Now this is the final day of the Lord God almighty.

The strange thing about that war is revealed in the Bible by all of the enemies.



All the Armies and leaders are going to be gathered in Palestine. They are all there. Now, how do they get there. But in this sixth vial that is poured out - we find that part of it is going to be brought about by the mouth of the dragon, and the mouth of the beast, and the mouth of the false prophet. They are going to go out and gather them for battle. Evil deception is going to bring about the battle.

You remember the story of Ahab - I Kings 22. Ahab is going up to be slain. How is he going - an evil spirit said, I will put a lying testimony in all of his prophet's mouths. And they will persuade him to go up. So Ahab was persuaded to go up to Ramoth Gilead by the spirit of evil. And of lying that he was slain. Now that kind of thing is going to happen, God says, in this last great battle. The evil spirit is going to persuade those armies together in Palestine where that final battle, Armageddon is to be fought.

The word Armageddon means literally mountain or hill of Megiddo. It is at the foot of Mt. Carmel and there lies the claim of Megiddo, the valley of Esdraelon.

This was the scene of Elijah's struggle with the prophets of Baal. I Kings 18:20. This level piece of ground is the entrance to the high country. And has been the gathering place for many battles.

The <sup>with</sup> Cain united kings were defeated by Deborah, and Barak - Judges 5:19.

This was the place where Ahaziah, king of Judah was slain, 2 Kings 9:27.

It is referred to Zach. 12:11. As a place of mourning and sorrow.

2 Kings 23:29 - It was the place where the overthrow and death of Josiah took place.

John uses this name as the Spirit gives it to him - as he expresses a truth that is timeless and universal. There is no location on the map of the world that is called Armageddon. There is no where - and yet it is everywhere. But this is the general area where the struggle is to take place. And these unclean spirits go out - and they stir up the kings of the earth for battle, in the final conflict, as we find in Psalm 2:2 - where the kings of the earth and the rulers consent in council. Against the Lord and against his anointed. So we have a battle that is forecast. And this is going to be the battleground.

Now this is strange - it is fascinating to the mind and to interpreters of the Scriptures. This final battle between God and the hostilities - and the hostile powers of this world. Where many famous battles have been fought.

There is a couple of things that we need to note here - the Euphrates drying up, the great river was the protection to Israel. Both because of its difficulty in passage, and because it had been placed in the wilderness - between the upper northern part and the so-called Babylon country.

It was nearly 2,000 miles long. And it came out of the mountain and flowed first



toward Palestine to within less of a 100 miles to the Mediterranean Sea and turns south east at the Persian Gulf. It flowed through old Babylon. And it was first seen in or outside of the Garden of Eden - Gen. 2. Where human sin began. And here again, where human sin has reached its height - it reappears. Chapter 9 - we find in V. 13 - that there were four great angels that were standing by this river bound. And they were going to be let loose with judgement on the world. Now, people can have a way with the great throngs of people from the west and east. China, into Japan, and they could all travel. And they could come on horseback and on foot. They could bring their military might - and then that would open the way to Palestine.

You know there have been people who have said that the foot soldier would soon be done away with. I read an interesting story once, where Dr. W. A. Criswell, said, flight on a plane - and he happened to be seated by a five-star general. And he was a man who was chief of staff at the Pentagon. And he said he learned some things from that man while they were traveling together. The man told him about his children and grandchildren. About his son being a test pilot, and the tragedy of being killed. How the General is raising the little grandchildren. And he told him that living in the world of jet planes, atom bombs, and etc. But he says, do not believe that the foot soldier, the Army will ever be out of date. He will always be used. You know the Bible speaks of armies here. And Dr. Criswell asked the man the question, do you think that the foot soldier will ever be used again in battle. And his reply was, well, in atom warfare - whatever it is. I'll give you some reasons. Whenever we conquer a country - someone has to possess it and control it and to guide it. That means, you must have soldiers. If we are victorious - and we are going to occupy somebody's land, the second thing he says here is - the biggest reason you need an army is this - we need an Army to push our enemies together. He says in atomic warfare - you can drop something and kill maybe 10 soldiers or 10 people. Or 50, but he says, the only way to do it - is to get a concentration of the enemy in one place.



And then you can be effective.

I read that story - and then I thought of Armageddon. Why are these vast armies in Palestine. Why does it happen that the great leaders - this awesome thing is going to happen. And that blood is going to be 200 miles long - flowing, a river of blood. And I saw the unclean spirit, and I went forth - and they gathered them for battle.

13 V. 15 - right in the middle of this appeal of Christ, do you see it. Behold, I come as a thief. Here he says, to the Christian, to the church, to you - main thing - watchfulness. If any man will hear my voice, and lay his heart open to it, and listen to it. When the people of this world and the spirits of darkness - he says behold I will come as a thief. Blessed is he that is ready.

VII. V. 17 - THE BOWL IS POURED OUT UPON THE AIR

I want to ask you a question - how long can a man liveth without air.

17- V. 17 - He poured out his contents on the prince of the power of the air. Eph. 2:2. The evil spirits have bowed in atmosphere - they are invisible. Satan is upon us with an evil spirit. And he is unlimited. He is everywhere. And he attacks us. And this last bowl of wrath is set against the air.

18 V. 18 - An unequal thing - since man had been placed on the face of the earth happened. And who is able to stand such a judgement.

Babylon - the great Godless power - is overthrown.

V. 20 - There is nothing in this world that is fixed. We discover here that even the islands disappear. And are separated from the mainlands and melt. Every thing has been dealt with through this mighty earthquake. There has been a leveling of everything. The mills of God may grind slowly. But in the end - there is no escape for sin.

V. 21 - The judgement is complete. As we discover something here that happens that has - he says that great hail. Every stone about the weight of a talent - well, he concludes with some great hail stones. It says, in the best interpreters that these weighed from 100# to 125#. And the judgement just gets terrible. Hail is often mentioned as judgement, in the Bible.

We find in 1831 - in Constantinople in October, they had a hail storm in which the stones were picked up a half an hour later. Which some of them weighed about one pound. But it destroyed all the crops. Killed several people. And wounded, and was an awful thing in breaking up the tiles on the roofs.

What would it have been like if there had been hail stones 100 times larger. Than actually descended - do you not think men would turn to God. No, they just blaspheme God more. Is this not a picture of the world today. Oppressed, enchained in slavery. Do people turn to God and follow the Lord. No. There is no sign of revival or repentance. Or turning in this deprieved world. There is no cry for have mercy upon us, oh God. That is why the preaching of the Gospel and the invitation

of the Gospel continues.