

The Seven Bowl Judgment, Part 3

Revelation 16:17–21

I want to take you back to the sixteenth chapter of Revelation and to look at the last plagues, the final wrath of God that comes at the end of the time of the tribulation, the end of the great cataclysmic judgments that fall in the period known as the Day of the Lord, just prior to the return of Jesus Christ to set up His kingdom on earth.

As I mentioned last week, for many, many months now in our study of Revelation, we have been talking about the wrath of God. And not a particularly common subject among preachers, not a common subject for preaching or discussion in our time today, but nonetheless one we're bound to preach if we're faithful to the Word of God.

Sometimes people think the wrath of God, the judgment of God is an Old Testament theme and not a New Testament one. That of course is not true. In *John chapter 3 and verse 36* we read, ***“He who believes in the Son has eternal life, but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him.”***

Romans chapter 3 and verse 5 talks about the God who inflicts wrath. *Colossians chapter 3 and verse 6*, along the same line, says, ***“It is on account of these things” – that is immorality, purity, passion, evil – impurity, passion, evil desire and greed – “It is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come.”***

In Paul's tremendous, marvelous epistles to the Thessalonians, it is abundantly clear that he warned about the wrath of God.

He talked about God repaying with affliction those who afflict believers. He talked about the Lord Jesus being revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of the Lord Jesus, and said they will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power in the first chapter of 2 Thessalonians.

Throughout the New Testament, including the very words of Jesus, and going even before Jesus to John the Baptist who said that the wrath of God would come. He said, *"I'm baptizing you but there's one who is coming after me who will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* **And he was talking about the fire of judgment.**

All throughout the New Testament the wrath of God, the judgment of God is a recurring theme. When you get into the book of Revelation, it takes center stage because now we're focusing on the end time when God's wrath really falls.

And it is not only the wrath of God that is discussed, but as I noted for you in 2 Thessalonians 1, it is the wrath of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Revelation 6:16 it is called the wrath of the Lamb.

Now this wrath, this final wrath of God, His judgment on ungodly men and women is explicitly detailed for us here in the book of Revelation. And we're in chapter 16 now so we're at the very end of these detailed presentations of God's wrath.

They have come to the Apostle John in a series of visions; and he, the best he could under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has recorded the details of these visions for us that we might have sufficient and appropriate warning about what the future holds. It's always amazing to me how people pursue the knowledge of the future in the wrong place and ignore it in the right place where it is given, namely in the Word of God.

The last of the plagues that the Lord is going to send on the earth in the very end of human history, in the world as we know it, the last of the plagues comes in chapter 16 and is described in a vision that reveals seven bowls or seven wide saucers that indicate the last pouring out of God's wrath.

It's kind of that they're dumped instantaneously and comprehensively and universally on the world. The first five, you remember, came in the first eleven verses. And I would just remind you that the first bowl in verse 2 caused men to have loathsome and malignant sores. The second bowl in verse 3 turned all of the seas into blood and everything in them died. The third bowl in verse 4 polluted the rivers and the springs of waters and they became like blood. And then the fourth bowl, poured in verse 8, causes the sun's heat to be turned up till it scorches people with fire. And of course, then in the fifth case, verse 10, the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. The kingdom became dark. They gnawed their tongues because of pain.

And then their continual reaction, verse 11, they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores and didn't repent of their deeds. So, the final judgment elicits the response of rejection and blasphemy.

And then we saw the sixth bowl, indicated to us starting in verse 12 down through verse 16. the angel pours out his bowl on the great river Euphrates. The water is dried up. Remember at that point there's bound to be a flood plain the Mesopotamian valley like there has never been because the scorching sun will melt all the snow and ice and glacier fields on Mount Ararat to the north of the Euphrates where its headwaters are. The water will rush down, flood that part of the Middle East, and it will make it very difficult for the great armies of China and Japan and India and others to the east to come to Jerusalem. And so, the river will be dried up by a miraculous and instantaneous act of God so that those great rulers from the east can come and find their way to the battle of Armageddon.

What brings them? You remember that out of the mouth of the dragon who is Satan, out of the mouth of the beast who is Antichrist, out of the mouth of the false prophet come three unclean spirits like slimy frogs in the vision that John sees. **They're described in verse 14 as demons. They do amazing signs, and those signs are what causes the kings of the whole world to gather together for the war that they're going to fight with the great God, the Almighty God, on the plains of Megiddo. Verse 16 says they're all gathered to a place in Hebrew called Har-Magedon.**

So, there you have it. They are gathered in the sixth seal to the great conflict after all of these other horrifying things have happened, to say nothing of the trumpet judgments and seal judgments that have already come to pass. They are gathered together, the nations of the world, for this final war with the great God Almighty. What brings them is some kind of satanic, seducing deception. The specifics of which we do not know.

Then we come to the last judgment, **verses 17 to 21.** “**And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying, ‘It is done.’ And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder, and there was a great earthquake such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it and so mighty.**

And the great city was split into three parts and the cities of the nations fell and Babylon the great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away and the mountains were not found and huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men, and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.”

And that’s it. The final judgment on sinners. It’s an appropriate thing, I think, to remind we of this because it simply boils down to the fact that if you are not covered by the judgment that occurred on Calvary, then you’re going to experience the judgment of the wrath of God.

Either eschatologically and eternally, or if you should die before this time, you will experience it eternally. Men who have never come to the cross to have their sins judged in Christ will be judged for their own sin in devastating holocaust of judgment that will last forever.

Now this seventh bowl finishes God’s wrath on man in this present earth as we know it. Then comes Jesus, sets up the thousand-year millennial kingdom.

Now at the end of the thousand years there is one final act of judgment, when He judges all of those who have joined in Satan's rebellion after Satan is loosed. You remember he's bound for a thousand years, loosed for a little while at the end, collects rebellious people around the world, tries to fight against Christ. That is the final little action and then that's the end, and the new heaven and the new earth are created where there is no more sin and no more rebellion forever and ever.

So, there's just one little future piece of judgment, but it's not in the world as we know it because the world of the kingdom will not be a world like the world we know today. And I'll describe why as we go through this.

This is the end that has been promised. It's been told already back in chapter 10 verse 7 when the seventh angel sounded that the mystery of God was finished.

We've already gotten a glimpse of that finish in chapter 11 verse 19, where we looked into the temple, and there we saw flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm.

And now the earthquake and the hailstorm that were seen in heaven as beginning, land on earth in chapter 16. So we've had anticipation of this and now it's going to come.

It's worse than anything that happened in any of the earlier judgments. Maybe the most devastating one that you remember is the sixth seal, when men were crying for the rocks and the mountains to hide on them because of the terrifying judgment.

This is far worse even than the sixth seal, indicated way back in chapter 6. This is the worst human calamity in the history of the world. It is the most complete and devastating catastrophe the earth will ever experience. Let's look at it then, starting back in **verse 17.**

“And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air” – or the atmosphere.” **The air encircles the globe. And the whole atmosphere, the whole atmosphere in which the earth exists is affected by this.**

Some have noted also that since Satan's last area of dominion was the air, he is known as the prince of the power of the air, he and his demons operate in a sphere of the heavenlies, that there is a sense in which God is cleansing the domain where Satan last ruled, though by now he has been cast to the earth with the rest of his demons to ply his wickedness there.

But in this situation the air, though it may be a cleansing of that domain dominated by Satan, I think also is indicated because there are cataclysmic changes in the atmosphere. What else is going to produce hundred-pound blocks of ice coming out of the sky? Certainly not any kind of weather pattern that humanity has ever known in the heavens that now exist. So, I believe there is a massive alteration of the atmosphere, and I'll say more about that as we go on.

Then in **verse 17**, again introducing this tremendous judgment, **“A loud voice came out of the temple from the throne saying, ‘It is done.’”**

The term loud or great is used seven times with this bowl. Everything about this is great. The voice has to be the voice of God. It cannot be any other than God, the Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, He is the one now executing His final wrath. Here is the climax of the great day of the Lord that spreads doom over the entire face of the earth. And when God speaks He says, "It is done."

By the way, the very same kind of expression that Jesus said on the cross when He said, "It is finished." That was a judgment, too, a judgment that provided grace for sinners. This is a judgment with no grace. **"It is done" – gegonen – is a perfect tense, it means it has been and will remain done.**

This is it. Christ then comes, sets up His Kingdom. And just as at Calvary when it was finished, God punctuated it with an earthquake. The same thing here is going to happen. Only this earthquake isn't going to be local. It's going to be worldwide, and it's going to remake the earth appropriately for the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ in His universal reign.

The curse will be removed. This is when the lion lies down with the Lamb. This is when a child can play with snakes. This is when people live to a very old age, and if someone dies at a hundred years of age, says the prophet, they die as a child. This is when the configuration of the world completely changes, as we shall see, for the kingdom. Then at the end of the thousand years, the whole heaven and the whole earth is completely recreated. Here you have a renovation, after the thousand years you have a recreation.

In John's vision he sees the action starting in **verse 18**. **“And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.”**

Very much like we read back in **chapter 11 verse 19** when we were seeing this in heaven. **“Flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder.”** Remember now, the bowl was poured into the air and it immediately affects the environment. Just another note. The seventh seal, **do you remember how the seventh seal was introduced? Let me remind you, chapter 8 verse 5, “And there followed peals of thunder and sounds and flashes of lightning and an earthquake.”**

Do you remember how the seventh trumpet was introduced? **Chapter 11 verse 19**, I just read it. **“There were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder and an earthquake and a great hailstorm,”** which was only a small preview of the one to come. And here again the seventh bowl is introduced the same way. It's to show the fury coming out of the throne of God as the final event in each of the series of seven unfolds. Each of them is introduced with the elements of a storm

And then, it says, there was a great seismos, that's where we get the term seismograph to measure earthquakes. There was a great earthquake. And we know all about earthquakes. We are well versed in earthquakes. Other parts of the world experience them, as you well know, but no part of the world has ever even come close to experiencing what this earthquake is like. **This earthquake is a great earthquake, “Such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it and so mighty.”**

It is the greatest shaking ever. It is worldwide. This planet is not designed to last. Try as the earth people will, they cannot perpetuate it. It must be restored because it is cursed.

Even the solar system and the environment around the earth is cursed, and it too has to be cleansed. You remember already through the book of Revelation all kinds of things have been catapulting loose out of heaven, haven't they, as the solar system has been breaking up. Huge massive chunks of the solar system crashing into the earth.

And this cursed tottering imbalanced unstable shaking earth is set for a final shaking. And the final shaking, I believe, is to put it back the way it was before the curse, the Fall, and the Flood.

Since Genesis 6, when the earth was split open so the fountains of the deep could gush forward and form the continents and the oceans, since then there has been earthquakes. **The tectonic plates, I believe, were formed in the Great Flood, it is their moving that creates the earthquakes.** And we've always had them somewhere in the world all the time. It's an unstable earth. It never was designed to be the way it is. **God created it perfectly and it didn't shake. It stayed still until sin caused it to be broken up.**

The prophet *Haggai chapter 2 verse 6* wrote about this. ***“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Once more’ – once more – ‘in a little while I’m going to shake the heavens and the earth.’”*** I shook it in the curse, when in effect He cursed it, and the Flood was part of that. I shook it once; I'm going to shake it again. And next time I'm going to shake the heavens also and the earth. You remember He shook the heavens the first time and the canopy that protected the earth dumped. I'm going to shake it again.

“I’m going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land and I’m going to shake all nations.” This is the great shaking that the prophets talked about. It’s a frightening, really an unimaginable thing to conceive of the entire earth shaking. Nowhere to go. Nowhere to hide.

Listen to what *Isaiah* said. ***“Terror and pit and snare confront you, O inhabitant of the earth. Then it will be that he who flees the report of disaster will fall into the pit and he who climbs out of the pit will be caught in the snare.”*** No way to get out. ***“The windows above are opened”*** – I believe something’s going to happen in the sky – ***“And the foundations of the earth shake; the earth is broken asunder; the earth is split through; the earth is shaken violently. The earth reels to and fro like a drunkard. It totters like a shack for its transgression is heavy upon it, and it will fall never to rise again. So it will happen in that day, the Lord will punish the host of heaven, wicked angels, and the kings of the earth. The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem.”*** That’s talking about the coming of Christ. Isaiah saw this same thing, the reversal of the curse. Inconceivable. And you’ll see why I say that as we move through.

The effect of the quake is then described. What does it do? First of all, look at **verse 19**. ***“And the great city was split into three parts.”*** There’s that word great again. What city is this? Well, some suggest it’s Babylon, but I don’t think Babylon would be mentioned as the great city, and then repeated again as Babylon the great. I think it’s other than Babylon because it’s distinguished from Babylon in this same verse.

There are some other hints about what city it might be. Verse 8 of *chapter 11*, talking about the two witnesses who were killed when they were preaching, it says, “***And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city.***” **What’s the great city? It’s the city mystically called Sodom and Egypt because it’s become so corrupt. But it’s the city where also their Lord was – what? – crucified. What city is that? Jerusalem. It’s the city of Jerusalem that is the great city.**

Zechariah chapter 14 says that when the Lord comes He’ll stand on the Mount of Olives which is in front of Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split.

When the Lord comes, He’s going to split the Mount of Olives. Now if you split the Mount of Olives, guess what city you’re going to split? You’re going to split Jerusalem.

And then Zechariah describes an incredible thing. There’s going to be an earthquake, same kind of thing, all the lights in the sky are going out. And then in *verse 8*, “***Living waters are going to flow out of Jerusalem, half toward the eastern sea which is the Dead Sea, half toward the western sea which is the Mediterranean. It will be that way in summer and it will be that way in winter. What’s going to happen? God’s going to split Jerusalem.***

Here we get some further insight. He’s going to split it, according to *verse 19*, into three parts.

And then there's going to be a spring that God creates right on Mount Zion that's going to gush permanently through the kingdom, and Jerusalem will be the divide, its elevation being I think a mile high or more, and the water will flow both directions, east toward the Dead Sea, west toward the Mediterranean, gushing river of waters all year long through the entire millennial kingdom.

So, this earthquake isn't going to judge Jerusalem, it's going to enhance it cause if there's anything they need over there, it's what? It's water. This has to be Jerusalem. Jerusalem is called, as I said in verse 8 of chapter 11, the great city.

You say, well why wouldn't God judge Jerusalem? Go back to *chapter 11 verse 13*. In chapter 11 verse 13 a great earthquake – God likes earthquakes. A great earthquake hits Jerusalem where the two witnesses are. And a tenth of the city fell. And seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake. And the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. What's that? I believe that's the salvation of the remnant of Israel. So, you know what happened? No need to judge Jerusalem in the seventh bowl because Jerusalem has already been – what? – converted. The Jerusalem has already had their judgment. The earthquake has already hit. A tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand were killed. And everybody else repented.

I think that's – that's – that's the fulfillment of what Paul talked about in Romans 11 when he said, "All Israel will be saved." I think that's when the rest of the come, the rest of them that are in that city come to embrace their Messiah.

It is that great city that is first affected by the earthquake, but the effect is good. It splits, it creates a valley and a fountain of water that flows permanently.

So, the city of Jerusalem is not diminished, it is enhanced. And you should expect that, shouldn't you? I mean, you really should. Do you remember, just to share a few Scriptures with you quickly, *Psalm 125:1*, "***Those who trust in the Lord are as Mount Zion which cannot be moved but abides forever as the mountains surround Jerusalem.***" You see Mount Zion is not going to be moved. It can't be moved. It's going to last. God is going to reconfigure it but He's not going to destroy it.

You want to know something interesting. Mount Zion which is just split and becomes the fountain for the streams that flow east and west may become the highest point in the earth, the pinnacle from which the Messiah will rule.

Listen to what *Micah says, chapter 4 verse 7*, "***I will make the lame a remnant and the outcasts a strong nation and the Lord will reign over them in Mount Zion from now on and forever.***" Mount Zion isn't going anywhere. *Psalm 48:2* says, "***Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion, the city of the great King.***" You know what happens to Jerusalem? It's just made more glorious, more wonderful, more beautiful, getting ready for the arrival of the King whose feet touch the mountain and create the spring.

Now go back to **chapter 16. The cities of the nations**, however – what? – **fell**. The cities of the nations fell. Every city in the world is smashed. All over the world cities just crumble as the earth shakes like it's never shaken in history.

The only other major city that's mentioned here, besides Jerusalem, is Babylon. And he says, **“And Babylon the great was remembered before God to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.”** More details, by the way, on the destruction of Babylon are coming in chapter 17 and 18. In fact, a lot of details, because Babylon is a city rebuilt. It's already been rebuilt, hasn't it, by Saddam Hussein. It will become the capital city of the Antichrist's empire. The term Babylon will refer not only to that city but the whole empire. But the city is mentioned here, Babylon the great, the capital city of Antichrist's empire is going to be destroyed. Now the destruction of Babylon was predicted many, many centuries ago by Isaiah the prophet. I won't read it, but ***Isaiah 13:6-13*** is a text where Isaiah predicts the destruction of Babylon.

Babylon was destroyed historically to some degree, but never completely destroyed in the way that Isaiah describes the destruction. In fact, the city was never fully destroyed by Cyrus. It wasn't really until about 293 B.C. that it began to decline on its own. But what Isaiah said was going to happen has never really happened in the full violent overthrow that Isaiah predicted, and that's why we think that the historical destruction was only sort of a preliminary taste of the final destruction of Babylon that is really described here. **Babylon will rise again as the city that is the capital city of the Antichrist's empire. And it will be destroyed.**

And then the topography of the whole earth is altered drastically. And this is why I said Mount Zion may well become the highest point in the world because **verse 20 says, “Every island fled away and the mountains” – what? – “were not found.”**

The topography of earth is altered drastically. Every island fled away. You know what islands are? What are islands? Mountains in the water, aren't they? They're just mountains in the sea. And the mountains are going to flatten out, the islands are going to disappear. That's pretty frightening for people who live on them to think about. And mountains are going to flatten out. I heard somewhere that the San Fernando Valley shrunk three inches in the last major earthquake and the mountains went up six inches, or something like that. And that was pretty traumatic. Imagine the kind of earthquake that would flatten the mountains. **"The mountains were not found."**

Now mountains pose a real barrier. The Lord is going to flatten out the world to the gentle rolling Edenic earth that He originally created without the barriers – no more rifts, no more fault lines. I think the indication of the sky and the changes in atmosphere, the Lord may canopy the earth again. And that explains why people in the kingdom live so long that if they die at the age of a hundred, they die as a baby, cause that's how it was in the pre-flood time, right?

When people like Methuselah lived 969 years, because no ultra violet rays from the sun directly came through the vapor. I think we're just going to run the film backwards. All of the earth's great fault lines – you know where they are, they run would you believe from Alaska to Argentina down the complete west coast of the western hemisphere. They run, in case you're thinking of leaving and going far away, from Siberia clear to New Zealand. They run along the entire coastline of the Mediterranean and all of southern Europe. There won't be any rifts. There won't be any fault lines. The islands will shrink. The mountains will not be found.

The whole face of the earth will completely change. But it will be deadly, won't it? People swallowed up and engulfed into the ground as it moves and shakes and people drown as water goes places it's never been.

This unimaginable shaking is to return the earth to the way the Lord wants it, so He can come and reign over it.

People who somehow escape the collapse of the mountains and the drowning of the islands, people who somehow escape that and are just catching their breath because they're still alive, are going to be pelted in an unimaginable way. Look at **verse 21**. Huge hailstones, about a hundred pounds. Actually that's a term in the Greek that is intended to express the heaviest weight possible. And the way they expressed it was to conceive of the most weight that a normal man could carry. The term could identify anything from 90 to 135 pounds.

You may have experience some time to get a twenty-five or even a fifty-pound block of ice. It would be hard to imagine a hundred or a hundred-and-thirty-five pound block of ice careening out of heaven. Just an inconceivable kind of thing. Those people who were crying for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them way back in the sixth seal aren't going to have any mountains to cry to.

And you know it's even amazing that apparently for a while some people can dodge the ice blocks, because it says at the end of verse 21 that they blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail because this plague was extremely severe.

Isn't it amazing how tortured humanity still maintains its hard heart? It's incredible. If you think signs and wonders are going to convince people to be converted, guess again. If the wonder and the grace and the beauty and the magnificence of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice won't do it, you can be pelted like this and you'll still blaspheme God. **The world is committed to its devotion to blasphemy. That's the end, except for one thing.**

There are the armies of the world gathered, right? Those armies and whoever else in the world survives will see Jesus come and destroy them all. And we find that in **chapter 19 and verse 11. "He comes with His eyes like a flame of fire," verse 12. "He comes, in verse 15, "with His mouth bearing a sharp sword so that with it He may smite the nations."** **Whoever is left is going to be killed and then He will rule with a rod of iron, crushing out life, treading the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty.**

Such destruction. He calls for the great supper of God. He calls for the birds to come and eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders, and the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses.

I'm going to tell you something about the birds in Israel when we get there that will just absolutely amaze you. God is even getting them ready. They come and eat the carcasses. Then the false prophet, Satan, the beast are all cast into the lake of fire. And the kingdom begins in chapter 20. Chapter 17 and 18 is a little bit of a digression to describe Babylon. And we'll look at that.

Now in conclusion let me say this. This is where the world is going, folks. This is where the earth is going.

Nobody can prevent it, are you ready for this? Nobody can prevent it, but we can escape it. Why?

Because Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 1:10 that Jesus came to deliver us from the wrath to come. He came to deliver us from the wrath to come.

There is therefore now no condemnation – right? – to those who are in Christ. We'll never experience His wrath in any form, eschatological or eternal. The world that rejects Him will experience eternal wrath and many of them will experience this eschatological wrath. God is a God who hates sin and when His grace is exhausted and repudiated and mocked, He will act in judgment. O how grateful we can be that our sins were judged in the body of Jesus Christ on the cross. Amen?

Father, thank You for our time in Your Word and thank You for the gift of Jesus Christ who gave Himself for us. Thank You that we've already experienced Your judgment vicariously. When You judged Your Son, You judged us who believe in Him. Wonder of wonders that You've been gracious and merciful to unworthy sinners like we are, and we have escaped the wrath to come. We thank You. There's nothing in us to deserve it. Nothing we have achieved, nothing we have done. It's all of Your grace. And we can come to this table and remember the death of Jesus Christ for us with tremendous joy. It isn't just the joy of life here and now. It's the joy of knowing we will never be judged. We'll never know Your wrath, Your vengeance, Your anger, because all of it was put on Christ for us. And we can't even fathom what it must have been like for Jesus to have felt the kind of fury we've heard described tonight, but He did, for us. What devotion to sinners. What love for His enemies that He would take that for us. Thank you, Lord. Amen.

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