

Notes on Revelation 16

Intro: The seven bowls of wrath are said to be the last plagues against God's enemies. In them the wrath of God is finished. Thus, we may safely say that these bowls of wrath represent God's historical judgments on those who have opposed Him and His people. They are the final stage in the cloud coming announced in chapter 1:7.

Overview of the bowls of wrath

As in the seven trumpets one seems helpless to identify any particular historical events represented by the pictures described. Rather they are apocalyptic pictures designed to instill terror and awe at the wrath of God. What these bowls suggest is complete destruction with judgments that are unprecedented. These judgments are more severe than anything man has ever experienced. There is no area of the enemies's existence that is not affected. In contrast to the seven trumpets these judgments are total. There is no fractional punishment of 1/3, etc. Everything and all are affected. Even now, these judgments leave room for repentance. God does not want any to perish. Yet, it is evident that the enemies' hardness of heart will keep him from repenting.

The first bowl

Into the earth

Malignant and loathsome sores break out on those who worship the image of the beast and the receive his mark.

This bowl conveys the powerful message that those who have compromised for earthly advantage will suffer even on earth when the judgments of God arrive.

The second bowl

Into the sea

The water is turned to blood entirely

Everything in the sea died

This plague is reminiscent of the Egyptian plague that turned water to blood and calls to mind the similarity of character between unbelieving Pharoah and these enemies of God.

The third bowl

Rivers and springs of water

They became blood

This judgment decrees the justice of this act in that God's enemies have drunk the blood of his people. They have unjustly killed them. Note especially that is is "saints and prophets" who have been killed.

With this the altar agrees. Since this seems to symbolize the worship of the church on earth, it suggests the church's agreement with the judgments. They have called for vengeance upon those who killed their loved ones.

The fourth bowl

Upon the sun

Scorched men so that they died

This plague reveals the hardness of heart of those who were punished. Even these severe judgments bring about only blasphemy rather than repentance.

The fifth bowl

Upon the throne of the beast

The kingdom is darkened and pain results.

Again this is reminiscent of the Egyptians plagues and here perhaps symbolizes the spiritual darkness and pain that comes from it.

But again, there is no repentance but rather blasphemy. The hearts of God's enemies have become hardened.

The sixth bowl

The great river, Euphrates

The way is made for the kings of the east.

In Biblical symbolize the Euphrates marks the boundary of the promised land. It marked the place from which God brought judgments upon his people in the O.T.

The enemies of God think that they can fight against God. They send out their unclean spirits to call together the kings of the earth to fight against God.

They are gathered together at the Mt. of Megiddo. It is here that many decisive battles were fought in the O.T. God's cause always prevailed here.

The seventh bowl

Upon the air

This bowl finishes God's wrath.

The results were thunder, lightning, earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell as well. Babylon the great was remembered for her sins.

There results a plague of hail with hailstones about a hundred pounds each.

The wicked respond by only blaspheming God. Their hardness of heart has continued to the end.