What do the 7 Bowls Mean? April 10, 2022

*Revelation 16:1-21 Series: Understanding the Book of Revelation*

God’s wrath is not a cranky explosion, but his settled opposition to the cancer … which is eating out the insides of the human race he loves with his whole being. – Becky Pippert

Intro: I thought it would be a judgment-free zone!

1. God’s judgments are fair because the punishment fits the crime
2. Bowl #1: Painful sores for those marked by the world

v. 2 *harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image*

Exodus 9:10 *Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast.*

Job 2:7 *So Satan … struck Job with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.*

1. Bowl #2 & #3: Blood in the water for those who shed blood

v. 3 *[the sea] became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea*

Exodus 7:17 *with the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water that is in the Nile, and it shall turn into blood*

v. 4 *the rivers and the springs of water … became blood*

v. 6 *… they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!*

1. God’s judgments are deemed true and just

v. 5 *Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments.*

v. 7 *I heard the altar saying, “Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!”*

* When do people want God to ‘do something’? Why do they also complain about the idea of His wrath, then?
* Knowing what comes after this life, how is it merciful for God to make life painful for those who reject Him?
* Do you struggle to believe that God’s judgments are just?
1. God’s judgments are fair because people express no remorse
2. Bowl #4: Scorching heat brings cursing instead of repentance

v. 8 *the sun … was allowed to scorch people with fire*

v. 9 *They were scorched by the fierce heat …*

v. 9 *… they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory …*

1. Bowl #5: Darkness over the seat of power brings more cursing

v. 10 *its kingdom was plunged into darkness*

Exodus 10:22 *So Moses stretched out his hand … and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days.*

v. 10 *People gnawed their tongues in anguish*

v. 11 *[they] cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores*

v. 11 *They did not repent of their deeds.*

1. Bowl #6: Drying up the great river brings a global uprising

v. 12 *its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east*

v. 14 *demonic spirits, performing signs … go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle*

v. 16 *they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon*

* How can believers cling to their confidence in God’s goodness when everyone is cursing God for what He does in the world?
* Why are judges lenient on defendants who show remorse?
* How is the battle at Armageddon similar to the ‘battle’ between the Egyptians and the Israelites at the Red Sea?
1. God’s judgments are fair because they answer the victims’ cries
2. Eventually, the cries for justice will be answered

Revelation 6:10 *O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before you will judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?*

Genesis 4:10 *The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground.*

Psalm 119:84 *How long must your servant endure? When will you judge those who persecute me?*

1. Eventually, it will be too late

v. 17 *The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, “It is done!”*

v. 18 *there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth*

v. 20 *every island fled … and no mountains were to be found*

v. 21 *And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.*

1. Now is the time of salvation

Revelation 16:15 *Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!*

* How would you think differently about God if He never judged unrepentant sinners?
* How should God’s judgments comfort His people?
* What does it mean to “stay awake” and “keep your garments on”? How does the vision of the bowls help you do that?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Mark 16:1-8

Notes