

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **The Seven Bowl Judgments, Part 1**

Scripture: Revelation 16:1-11

Code: 66-56

Well I know by now that those of you faithful folk who come and study the Word of God with us on Sunday night have endured a great amount of judgment preaching. You have been...you have been faithful through chapter after chapter after chapter of bad news. And you're still here. And we've even had some illustrations along the way.

Tonight we come to chapter 16 and the seven bowls of wrath, the last judgments. Some portions of God's Word, to be honest, I preach with joy and exhilaration and there's a real thrill in it. This is not one of them. In fact, just reading these verses rips and tears at your heart, strikes terror. This is it in chapter 16, this is the end, the culmination, the final wrath of God filled up and poured out on the ungodly earth. Somebody might say, "Well if you don't like to preach it, why do you?" Well because it is in the Word of God and we have to preach the whole counsel of God. We preach it also to awaken Christians to the necessity of fulfilling our mission to bring people to Christ before the judgment comes. We preach also to those who don't know Christ to awaken them to their lost condition.

And the Bible really is full of great messages of comfort and great messages of joy and sweet words of refreshment, moments of peace, great sweeping statements about love. There is so much that is affirming in Scripture, but all of this is really its opposite. And if we understand love, it is because we understand hate. If we understand truth, it is because we understand lies. If we understand goodness, it is because we understand wickedness. If we understand reward, it is because we understand punishment. And God cannot love righteousness and faith unless He hates sin and unbelief. He cannot love truth unless He hates lies. He cannot love goodness unless He hates wickedness. He cannot reward unless He also punishes.

So while the Bible is a book of hope, it is also a book of judgment. In fact, it's full of judgment, just full of it. And even our Lord Jesus Christ was a judgment preacher, a damnation preacher. He said more about hell than anybody else. God has been pronouncing judgment on His people for a long time and those who are His by virtue of creation who live in His world and who reject Him. It's not just in the Old Testament, though, it's in the New. People sometimes say, "Well the Old Testament was written by a God of judgment, the New Testament was written by a God of grace." And some would tell us they're two different authors. Not so. There is equal fiery furious judgment in the New Testament right from the lips of Jesus Himself as well as from writers like the Apostle Paul who wrote about Jesus Christ the Lord being revealed from heaven with His mighty angels and flaming fire,

dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus, and these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. That's 2 Thessalonians 1:7 to 9. Peter talked about the coming judgment of God when the elements will melt with fervent heat. The day of the Lord will hit. John warned it is the last time, the last time before the doom of God falls. The writer of Hebrews warned that there will be no escape for those who reject the gospel when the judgment comes. "It is a fearful thing," said the writer, "to fall into the hands of the living God."

Finally, prophetically we come here to the book of Revelation and the sixteenth chapter to the place of the last judgment. Here sin, unrighteousness, blasphemy, rejection will be swept finally from the earth. Chapter 16 gives us the picture of this final destruction from God's wrath at the close of a time known as the Tribulation, a seven-year period, the latter part of it known as the Great Tribulation.

And what happens in chapter 16 immediately precedes the return of Christ. You say, "Well wait a minute, the return of Christ isn't until chapter 19." This is true, but chapter 17 and 18 go back over the Tribulation from another viewpoint. Not everything in Revelation is chronological. It does have a chronological flow but it also backtracks, as we have learned, haven't we? Chapter 17 and 18 will go back into the Tribulation period and pick up some of the things we have not yet understood and take us back to the judgment from another perspective.

But chapter 16 really happens immediately prior to the return of Jesus Christ. It is followed by His breaking open heaven and descending to earth and trampling the armies of the earth that are gathered at a place called Megiddo, Armageddon, and there He defeats them all, destroys the sinners and inaugurates His one thousand-year reign on the earth called the Millennial Kingdom.

Now the nature of these judgments that precede immediately the return of Christ is very severe. They are very severe judgments and they are a good indication as anywhere in the Bible of how God feels about sin and rejection. We want to talk about a God of grace and goodness and mercy and love, but here we're going to see the holiest and most extensive and final wrath of God against sin which will show us as clearly or more clearly than anywhere else how He feels about it. It is the epitome of God's absolute total destruction of sinners.

And it's a fitting thing because at this particular time in human history men will be at the epitome of their worship of Satan. They will be at the epitome of their total, absolute rebellion against God. They will be blaspheming. And so they are at the apex of their sin and God is at the apex of His wrath.

We come to this chapter very much aware of the fact that through this seven-year period there is a mounting and escalating worldwide rebellion. The gospel is being preached throughout the world at this time. Many people are being converted to Christ from every tongue and tribe and people and

nation. The nation of Israel is being redeemed. The greatest revival in all of human history is taking place among Jews and Gentiles, more people coming to Christ than ever before. The gospel is being preached across the face of the earth. And still even with all that proclamation and all the attendant holocausts that are unfolding in the seal judgments and the trumpet judgments, there is still mounting rebellion and mounting rejection until finally the last seven plagues fall at the very end in chapter 16.

Look at verse 1. "I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, 'Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth.'"

This is it. As God has set a boundary to the restless sea, so He has set a boundary to evil men and nations. Chapter 15, remember, was a preview, sort of a preparation. Chapter 15, the temple of God which always meant mercy and forgiveness and sacrifice and atonement is now shut. And it has become a house of raging indignation, vengeance and judgment and fire and smoke come out of it, engulfing the temple until the seven last plagues have been poured out on the earth.

Now I want to just give you a bit of an overview before we look at them specifically. These terrible plagues can be compared to two other sets of plagues. The first occurred in Egypt and is recorded in Exodus chapter 7 through 12. Plagues which God brought upon the wicked in Egypt where they had kept His people captive and in liberating His people He brought, as you know, the plagues that were judgments upon the Egyptians. The second set of plagues that have similarity to the seven bowls would be the seven trumpets which are recorded in Revelation chapter 8 through 11.

Now in noticing these three sets of plagues starting back in Egypt, Exodus 7 to 12, then coming to the trumpets in Revelation 8 to 11, and now coming here, we're going to notice there are some similarities and some differences. The first set of plagues was very local. It happened in one country, the country of Egypt. The second set of plagues, the trumpets, extended beyond any one nation and covered one third of the world, as you will remember. In Revelation 8 and following we noticed that the plagues that were coming at the blowing of the seven trumpets touched one third of the world. Now we come to chapter 16, it isn't limited to a nation, it isn't limited to a fraction of humanity, it covers the whole globe.

Also, the plagues in Egypt involved water turned into blood, frogs, lice, flies, disease among the cattle, boils, thunder and hail, locusts, darkness and the slaughter of the firstborn. The terrors of the seven trumpets involved hail, fire and blood, destroying a third of the trees and green grass, hail, fire and flood, I should say, destroying a third of the trees and green grass. The trumpets also involved a flaming mountain cast into the sea destroying a third of the sea, turning it into a blood-like substance. They involve the fall of the star Wormwood into the fresh water, a third of the freshwater was poisonous and bitter. Then the smiting of the third of the sun and moon and stars bringing about darkness. And then demons overrunning the world. And then the loosing of the four angels found in the Euphrates and the coming of the great demonic army from the east. And then in the

announcement of the final victory of God, the seventh trumpet was blown.

Now when we come to these last seven plagues, they involve ulcerous sores on men, all the sea turned into blood, all the rivers and waters turned into blood, the sun becoming scorchingly hot, the whole world becoming dark, the Euphrates drying up and the pollution of the air and the accompanying terrors in nature, the thunder, the greatest earthquake in the history of the world, lightning and hail. Now you can see some common features. All three have hail, darkness, blood, sores and hordes from beyond the Euphrates...whether they be insects or demons.

But in Revelation there's a very important difference and that difference needs to be pointed out. It is the difference in that which is partial and that which is total. What you have here in chapter 16 is a gathering of all the horrors and all the terrors that were most severe from all the history of the judgment of God in all the past plagues, only now not partial, but now completely inundating the entire world in total disaster. Preparations, as I noted, were made in chapter 15, and now the judgment comes in chapter 16. And from the smoke-filled temple comes a great voice commanding the seven angels to pour out their judgment. It is the judgment of God now on those who have heard the gospel and rejected it, those who have trodden underfoot the blood of the covenant, who have despised the grace of the Son of God, who have said no to the gospel of Jesus Christ. God has demonstrated love, God has demonstrated grace. In mercy He has sent His Son to die. He has raised up preachers to preach through all the years and in this seven-year period He will raise up some invincible preachers to preach. He has given to us throughout history and will then His holy Word. He has pled with men to come in repentance and faith to Jesus. He has given them tastes of judgment. And still they say no, they will not believe, they will not come, they will not receive. They love their sin. They will hold to their sin. They will worship Satan. They will bow down to the Antichrist. They will believe the false prophet. And they will reject the Son of God.

And so the final judgment comes. The first judgment in Egypt that we noted was over a period of time. The second judgment we noted, the judgment of the seven trumpets, was definitely over a period of years. This last series of judgments comes very, very fast..very, very fast, rapid-fire, staccato like a machine gun, one immediately after the other. In a matter of hours, days, it's all over. So we're really at the end. The wrap up of the day of the Lord.

And remember, by this time the worldwide devastation is inconceivable, just inconceivable. It can't even be understood what it will be like when all of the standard function of the bodies in heaven are skewed, when the earth is overrun by millions and millions of demons who can bring plagues and also kill, when two witnesses are preaching for a period of three and a half years and they shut up the heavens so there's no rain. And you can imagine what's happened to the water supply, to say nothing of a third of the fresh water in the world being polluted by judgment. Incredible problems, but it's only a foretaste of what is to come.

Now look back at verse 1, "I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels..." This loud or great voice occurs twenty times or so in Revelation. There are some great things in this book...some great things happening. The great voice is surely the voice of God, as it was the voice of the Lord. If you go back to chapter 1 verse 10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, I heard behind me a loud voice..." There it was the Lord and here again it was the Lord, I believe, as well in the vision that John saw. The Lord's voice. After all, in the middle of the temple the smoke was coming out, verse 8 of chapter 15, from the glory of God and from His power. You have in verse 17 of chapter 16 the loud voice again coming out of the temple from the throne saying, "It is done."

So here is the great chapter. Some commentators have called this the great chapter because the word megale(?) or great occurs eleven times. And it starts with the great voice of God. It reminds me of Isaiah 66:6 where it says, "A voice of uproar, a voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord who is rendering recompense to His enemies." Here is that voice. Coming from the throne, the holy place, the temple where God dwells, here comes the last activity on the earth as it now exists. The seven-sealed scroll has fully unrolled. The seventh trumpet has blown. The final judgments are to fall.

And so God speaks to the seven angels. You remember them from chapter 15, they are the seven angels who hold the seven plagues. They were introduced in chapter 15 verse 1, and then in verses 6 and 7 we see them again having been given the seven plagues which hold the wrath of God to be poured out in the world. And now the command comes...God and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth."

Now let me just say here that in reading commentaries and books that are written on these plagues, I'm always kind of amazed about how people will struggle to explain these in some natural way. There's no need to do that. There is really no natural explanation for these, no natural explanation needs to be sought. I can't give you a scientific explanation of this. It is supernatural. And God who has spoken in mercy for so long has now reached the end of His mercy and His furies come rapidly. There wouldn't even be time for scientific natural unfolding of these events, they're just too fast, too rapid to come from any other than God Himself. In fact, there are only brief pauses in the midst of them for angels to affirm that what God is doing is right because anybody getting into this is going to say...this is unbelievable that God would do this, this is inconceivable that a loving God, a gracious God would do this. And so at several intervals the angels stop and justify what God is doing, lest there be needless questions.

So let's begin with the first one. The first bowl in verse 2, "And the first angel...the word "angel" is added, as you can see in italics, but it is appropriate...the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth." Remember, I told you these were flat open saucers and when you take a saucer and turn it like that, it just dumps. And that's the essence of these kinds of judgments, they just hit all at once. The first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth. Instant action at the command. The first

angel does what he is told to do. "And it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image."

The word "sore," helkos, an ulcer...that's probably where that word ulcer comes from, a running sore, a cancer, anything like that. It is called loathsome, foul, bad, malignant, wretched, growing, incurable. The same term, by the way, is used in the Greek translation of Exodus chapter 9 to describe the boil there. Some kind of oozing sores all over the body. It is also the same word used in Luke 16:21 to describe the sores on the body of the beggar by the name of Lazarus. The whole world is going to have unbelievable pain in their physical bodies as they are hit with these sores.

In Deuteronomy 28 there is a judgment pronouncement given in verse 27, "The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and the itch from which you cannot be healed." Verse 35, "The Lord will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils from which you cannot be healed from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head." Oozing cancerous malignant loathsome ulcers all over the bodies of the Christ rejecters.

Notice in verse 2 it says, "It will be upon the men," that's generic for men and women, "who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image." It's not on remaining Christians, and there are some. There are Jews that the Lord has spared, remember in chapter 12? There are Gentiles who have not been executed by Antichrist, they've escaped him. But this is going to come to everyone who has the mark of the beast and worships his image. You go back in to chapter 13 and you remember that those people who wanted to identify with the beast took his mark. And then they worshiped the image of the beast that the false prophet developed. But there were others who wouldn't take the mark. They were the ones whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world. Believers will reject it. Those who take it identify their allegiance to Antichrist, they'll be the ones struck. And I believe the remaining Christians as indicated there will be exempt.

Back in chapter 14 verse 9, you remember that an angel warned about what was going to happen to those who worshiped the beast and his image. "If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he will also drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger. He will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and the presence of the Lamb and the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image and whoever receives the mark of his name."

There he's talking about eternal judgment. Here we find on those same people a frightening, unbelievable, painful, terrible, temporal judgment. They have chosen the beast. They have chosen to worship him. They have rejected the warning of the flying angel who said, "Fear God and give Him glory because the hour of His judgment has come," chapter 14 verses 6 and 7. They made an awful

choice. They chose Antichrist over Christ. And now they are afflicted from head to foot.

This could be a fulfillment of Zechariah 14:12 which says, "Their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongue will rot in their mouth. And it will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them and they will seize one another's hand and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another." They'll kill each other. It's an awful thing, horrifying.

Then the second bowl, and remember they come on top of each other with no relief from the first, so they're cumulative. Verse 3, "The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea." And what happened? "It became blood, like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died." That is like the plague that fell on Egypt in chapter 7 verses 20 to 25 of Exodus, that is also like the trumpet plague in Revelation chapter 8, but much more intense and extensive. The second angel pours his bowl into the sea and it becomes like blood, like that of a dead man...thick, black, dark, cooled, coagulated. It just pictures the sea like the pool of blood that would come from a man who had been stabbed and all his blood was lying in a pool. I don't know what it is that the Lord is going to use to do this. From time to time in California...we get all kinds of things in California, we have another deal here called "The Red Tide," you ever read about it? The red tide kills millions of fish and poisons those who eat contaminated shell fish.

Back in 1949 one of these red tides hit the coast of Florida. First the water turned yellow but by mid-summer it was thick and viscous with countless billions of what are called dinoflagellates, tiny one-celled organisms. Sixty mile winds arose or rose, stinking fish fouled the beaches, much marine life was wiped out, even bait used by fishermen died on the hooks. Eventually that red tide subsided only to appear again the following year, according to this report. Eating fish contaminated by the tide produced severe symptoms caused by potent nerve poison, a few grams of which distributed right could easily kill everyone in the world. An unchecked population explosion of toxic dinoflagellates would kill all the fish in the sea. Maybe that's what the Lord will use. I don't know what it is that He's going to use. But every living thing in the sea is going to die...billions of creatures. And when they die, where they going to go? To the surface with an inconceivable stench. And the world's seas will become putrid pools of death, testimony to the wickedness of man.

Then the third bowl in verse 4, "And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and springs of water and they became blood." What happened in Egypt, according to Exodus 7:19 to 21, now happens all over the world. Not just the saltwater. You say, "Well we might be able to survive if we just lost the saltwater, but immediately on top of that all the fresh water is contaminated." Now remember, fresh water by this time has been in very short supply. You say, "Why?" Chapter 11 verse 6 tells us that during the time of the ministry of the two witnesses which is three and a half years, the second half of the seven-year period, they shut up the sky in order that rain may not fall during the days of their prophesying. They too have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to smite

the earth with every plague as often as they desire.

Water must be in short supply because it may well have rained only sparsely or not at all. We don't know whether that just means in the location where they were prophesying, but it could well mean they just shut down heaven for three and a half years.

There's another interesting note that I discovered in just kind of reading through this. Chapter 7 verse 1 says, "Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth are holding back the four winds so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree." Do you know what that does to the rain? It disallows the rain from moving across the land. It's wind that blows clouds into which water has evaporated that moves it across the land so that it drops rain. No wind, no cloud movement. It may well be a time of unbelievable draught and then compounding that you have this. "And all the fresh water is turned into blood."

Now we've gotten a little bit of an idea of what it's like not to have water. No water anywhere. No water to wash the oozing sores. No water to quench the thirst. The whole scene is absolutely unthinkable. It's so unthinkable that we just stop and say, "Wait a minute, how can a God of compassion and a God of mercy and a God of grace do this? It doesn't seem fair!" And so to the defense of God the angel speaks in verse 5. "And I heard the angel of the waters," that would be the angel associated here with the third bowl who poured out his bowl on the waters, "I heard the angel of the water say, 'Righteous art Thou who art and who wast, O holy One, because Thou didst judge these things.'" We cannot question the righteousness of God. We cannot question the holiness, the virtue of God. His judgment is right. His judgment is just, though His wrath be terrifying and deadly, it is right, it is deserved.

As people, no doubt, across the world will be cursing God and blaspheming God and shaking their fist at Him, and questioning why He is doing this, the Lord is exonerated, and an angel comes to His defense to declare that He is dikaios and hagios, He is righteous and holy, He is just and virtuous. This is an appropriate response to rejection. It's not as if they didn't have an opportunity. That populous bears heavy guilt and has repeatedly and for years spurned the gospel and grace and mercy. And more than that, look at verse 6, "They deserve it for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets." They have mercilessly killed the believers and killed the preachers. They've done it through this whole period of time.

Back in chapter 6 when the whole thing starts, already we find martyrs under the altar who had been slain, verse 9, because of the Word of God and the testimony which they had maintained. And they're crying out for their blood to be avenged. In chapter 7 verse 9, a whole multitude of people who have come out of the Tribulation, they have died. Verse 14 says they've come out of the Great Tribulation, washed their robes and made them white. And they will hunger no more, thirst no more, all those things they suffered they'll suffer no longer.



In chapter 11 they kill the two greatest preachers in the world. In chapter 11 and verse 18 it says the nations were enraged and Thy wrath came and the time came for the dead to be judged and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints, to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth. There are the saints and the preachers and there are those who hate them, persecute them and destroy them.

Chapter 17 verse 6 describes the final world system called Babylon. It just sums up the whole world system under the term Babylon and it says the system, the woman, the mother of harlots, Babylon the great is drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the preachers or prophets or witnesses. Chapter 18 verse 20, "Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets because God has pronounced judgment for you against her." Her being Babylon, the wicked final world system of Satan and Antichrist.

So, says the angel...Look, they poured out the blood of saints and preachers, the slaughter of the saints and the slaughter of the preachers of the Tribulation has no parallel in human history. Jesus in Matthew 24:21 says there is coming a time, and He was speaking of this time, the likes of which there has never been. And it is equally true to say there will be a time of lestalionis(??), there will be a time of retribution, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, like there has never been as well. God is just, God is holy and God is a God of vengeance.

Look at verse 6 again. "They poured out the blood of saints and prophets and Thou hast given them blood to drink," and then this terrifying statement, "they...what?...deserve it."

What does it mean, "Thou hast given them blood to drink?" The water all turned to blood. Or some blood-like substance. They deserve it. They're sinners who have gone on sinning willfully. Hebrews 10:26, "After having received the knowledge of the truth and they should have a certain terrifying expectation of judgment." They will receive the punishment of one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God and regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant and insulted the Spirit of grace and God will say, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay." It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God. They deserve it.

No hesitation in the action. Immediate affirmation that what is happening is right and just and holy. And it is retribution. It is vengeance on behalf of the martyrs for the faith.

And then the angel adds in verse 7, or actually the altar speaks in verse 7, the altar is personified, echoing the testimony of the angel, "And I heard the altar saying, `Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.'" It's the altar, perhaps under which the saints had been praying and now the altar is affirming the answer. "Yes, this is right, O Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

Listen to Revelation 19:1 and 2. "Hallelujah, salvation and glory and power belong to our God because His judgments are true and righteous, for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her." And a second time they said, "Hallelujah, her smoke rises up forever and ever. And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, 'Amen, hallelujah.' And a voice came from the throne saying, 'Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.' And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude and as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty peals of thunder saying, 'Hallelujah, for the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.'"

What God is doing is right. It is just. It is holy. It is righteous. This sounds, doesn't it, like the song of Moses from chapter 15 verse 3, "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God the Almighty, righteous and true are Thy ways." May I suggest to you that God sets the standard for what is right by what He does? God doesn't have to live up to a standard, He sets it, He is the standard and when He acts it becomes the righteous standard. Far be it from Thee, says Genesis 18:25, to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from Thee, shall not the judge of the earth deal justly?"

So when the world is hit with these incredible sores and seas are destroyed and the fresh water, God is doing what is right, what is just, what is an appropriate holy reaction to sinners.

Verse 8, the fourth bowl. "And the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and it was given to it to scorch men with fire." The sun has always given the world light and warmth, energy. Now it becomes a deadly killer. I was reading in a science article this week about some study of the sun that indicated the sun at its center is filled with helium and if it were to expand, it could incinerate the earth as it would cause an expanding of the sun's hydrogen gas. Maybe that's what God will do. Maybe God in a millisecond or less will destroy all the protective ozone which shields us from deadly ultraviolet rays radiated off the surface. The bloodied oceans and bloodied fresh water will begin to boil. No water to drink and heat like humanity has never experienced.

Please would you notice again, it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men has to here limited to the unbelievers, the followers of Antichrist. Deuteronomy 32:22 says, "For a fire is kindled in My anger and burns to the lowest part of Sheol and consumes the earth with its yield and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains." The Lord is going to ignite the earth in some unbelievable way with burning heat, the kind of heat surely that will blow out whatever may be left of the earth's cooling systems.

In Isaiah 24 he said in verse 3, "The earth will be completely laid waste and completely despoiled. And the earth mourns and withers, the world fades and withers, the exalt of the people of the earth

fade away and the earth is polluted by its inhabitants. They transgress laws, violate its statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse devours the earth and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned and few men are left." Isaiah saw that coming, didn't he? Chapter 30 of Isaiah in verse 26, "The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter. Like the light of seven days on the day the Lord binds up the fracture of His people and heals the bruise He has inflicted, at the time when He redeems Israel and judges the ungodly, the sun will be seven times hotter."

In Malachi...well actually, one more in Isaiah, Isaiah 42:25 also refers to this, "He poured out on him the heat of His anger, set him aflame all around." God has done that, God will do that.

Malachi 4 looking at the day of the Lord says, "Behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff and that day that is coming will set them ablaze, says the Lord of host, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch." This has to be the end, has to be. And it has to come fast, no seas, no fresh water, scorching, blazing, burning sun.

Something else will happen immediately. If the sun is seven times hotter, if the sun expands its hydrogen gas, it will melt the ice caps. And upon melting the ice caps scientists tell us instantaneously the seas will rise two hundred feet. That would engulf the populations for miles and miles inland and drown them all.

Amos may have had that in mind in chapter 9 when he says that God's going to call for the waters of the sea and pour them out on the face of the earth, chapter 9 verse 6. You might be saying to yourself, "You know, if I wasn't a Christian by now, I'd repent." Wouldn't you?

Verse 9, "And men were scorched with fierce heat and they repented." Is that what it says? No, they blasphemed the God of heaven...the name of God, I should say. God of heaven comes later. They blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

You know what's interesting about that? First of all, they didn't repent. Secondly, they knew who was doing this and they still didn't repent. They know it's God. They are so in love with sin, they are so committed to hell and Satan and Antichrist and demons that though they see the hand of God, they feel the judgment of God, they will still not repent. Verse 11, "They did not repent of their deeds." Verse 21, "The last of all the plagues, they blasphemed God." Neither grace nor wrath can move their wicked hearts. They didn't repent. Even though they were scorched with fierce heat they blasphemed the name of God. They cursed Him...the one who has the power over these plagues. How blind can you be? How idiotic can you be to curse the one who is doing that?

They know who God is. They know what He's doing. They know He will forgive because the gospel is being preached. And they will not do anything but blaspheme, they did not repent so as to give Him glory. It's unthinkable. They wouldn't glorify Him. They wouldn't honor Him as God. They wouldn't worship Him. They're just like their leader, the Antichrist.

And then fifthly, and we'll stop with this one. Save the final ones for two weeks from tonight. The fifth one is the fifth bowl, verse 10, "And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast and his kingdom became darkened."

Now you say, "Well what does this mean?" Well some people think he actually poured it out on some chair that the Antichrist sits in. Some people think it may well mean that he pours out his bowl on the renewed and restored city of Babylon where he sets up the capital of his world empire. And some would take it that it's just a general statement, speaking of His dominion. In any case it extends to the end of his dominion because his kingdom becomes darkened. It may be dumped in one spot in the vision that John sees, but it covers the whole dominion of the Antichrist which is a worldwide dominion, the entire human system called Babylon is now engulfed in darkness.

Boy, these incredible sores, stinking wretched polluted seas stenching up the whole world, no water to drink, fire burning and now it becomes a fire like an invisible flame that comes out of a torch because it's dark. Isaiah 60 verse 2 says, "The darkness shall cover the earth." Joel 2:2 looks at this day and says, "The day of the Lord comes a day of darkness, a day of clouds and thick darkness, the sun shall be turned into darkness."

There they are in the blackness in the darkness. We too had a little experience of that, didn't we? Stumbling through the chaos in the darkness when all the power is gone. Jesus said in Mark 13:24, "In those days the sun will be dark and the moon will not give its light, the stars will be falling from heaven and the powers that are in the heavens shall be shaken."

How did they react? Verse 10, "They gnawed their tongues because of pain." Very graphic. Sometimes when you're having pain that is so severe, you hurt yourself somewhere else so you can redirect your attention. They'll literally bite, chewing on their own tongues to distract themselves from the other agony. And while they're chewing on their tongues you might think they would repent, but no. Verse 11, "They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores," and that takes you all the way to the first and tells you how cumulative it is, "And they didn't repent of their deeds."

Is this incredible defiance? Does this show you how engulfed they are in the satanic system? By the way, that is the last reference to their unwillingness to repent, that's the last reference. They're set. And what that tells us is that these first five plagues were sent by God to bring them to...what?...repentance. They didn't repent. That's the last mention of it, they're set.

The heart can become so hard, can't it? How about you? Have you rejected Christ over and over and over so that your heart is hard? You say, "Ah yeah, but if that ever happened to me, boy, I'd knuckle under." Really? They don't and they've heard it and seen it all. When this day comes, it's unthinkable. And you know something? As bad as this is, hell is worse. And the only relief is hell. Is it any wonder that Jesus said, "Why will you perish? Is it any wonder that Jesus wept? Is it any wonder that we preach knowing the terror of the Lord? The worst is yet to come in bowl six...five, six...actually six and seven, starting in verse 12. We'll see the worst in a couple of weeks.

Father, we are just burdened now with this. My own heart is heavy with this. What we have experienced is nothing. Much of what we've experienced in this recent terrible series of earthquakes has somehow been mitigated, any physical pains we might have suffered are pretty well gone. We got all the water we need and the food and probably have a warm bed and a house to stay in. The roads are being opened so we can go where we want to go when we want to go there. It's just kind of come and gone is fading away. Even financial loss, though it's severe, is just financial and we'll be able to get some help and maybe pick up and go again. And, Lord, I know in a time like this there will be people who initially turn toward You and as they get a little more comfortable, they turn away and harden their hearts. Lord, don't let it happen because people's hearts can get so hard that even when this happens they don't respond, even when the unfolding of judgment that we've read about tonight comes, they don't respond. No wonder...no wonder Your Word says, "Harden not your heart...harden not your heart." Lord, while You're still calling us and while we can hear Your voice, we want to repent. Lord, take every sinful soul and press upon them with conviction the need to come to Christ now, embrace the Savior and be forgiven of sin so that they can be gathered away with the elect before this even happens, in the glorious catching away of the church.

Father, we just pray that the fact that we know this will motivate us, Lord, motivate us to call out to the lost, some very dear to us, very near to us and lead them to the only one who can snatch them from the storm, the only one who can deliver them from the wrath to come, even our Lord Jesus Christ. And, Lord, for those who might be with us tonight who don't know Christ, we know these events could begin to unfold anytime...anytime, Lord, may You move on their hearts and lead them to the knowledge of Christ. Amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).