

A young boy lived way out in the country with his family where they had to use an outhouse – which the young boy hated. It was hot in the summer, cold in the winter, and always smelly. The outhouse was located near the creek, and so the boy decided that when the opportunity presented itself, he would push it into the water. Well one day, after a heavy spring rain, the creek swelled over its banks and so the boy pushed the outhouse into the current.

Later that night, his dad told the boy they needed to make a trip to the woodshed. The boy knew what that meant – it meant punishment. The boy asked why, to which his dad replied, “Because someone pushed the outhouse into the creek and I think that someone was you. Was it?”

The boy responded that it was, but then he added, “Remember when George Washington’s father asked him if he had chopped down the cherry tree? He didn’t get into trouble because he told the truth.”

“That is correct,” the dad said, “but his father was not in the cherry tree when he cut it down.”

That was a funny little story, but I will tell you I hesitated to use it because there is absolutely nothing funny about our passage this morning. I only choose to use it because this funny little story, just like our passage, presents a very clear truth – that being – there are consequences for our behavior – inescapable consequences.

We have been working our way through the book of **Revelation**, and now we find ourselves near the end of the seven-year Tribulation period, and the time has come for the Lord to clean house so to speak, from top to bottom, just before He returns to set up His own earthly kingdom. We have made it to **Revelation 16**, so turn there in your Bibles, and we will begin with **verse 1**. The Apostle John tells us,

¹Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.” ²So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

Last week, we left off with seven angels lined up in heaven waiting for the command to pour out their bowls of wrath – and now the command to **go and pour** is given, and if you notice, the command was given to the **seven angels** at the same time, which suggests that these judgments will be delivered one right after the other – one on top of the other, so this is fast, it’s rapid-fire in nature.

We are told that when the first bowl was poured upon the land, **loathsome and malignant** sores broke out, or described in another way, these sores are ugly painful festering boils. They are not natural, there are no medical treatments, there is no relief, they will not go away – and these boils only appear on those who worship the **image** of the Antichrist and have taken his mark – **the mark of the beast**, and as a reminder, the mark of the beast is always associated with a person's worship of the Antichrist. They are connected in the Bible.

I want to make a point here. The mark is not the real issue here – it's the worship that it represents. Worship, which speaks to the direction of one's heart, has always been the real issue. Throughout the Bible, Old and New Testament alike, the heart of the problem has always been the problem of the heart, and in this passage, those being affected are those who have given their hearts, given their worship to the Antichrist instead of Jesus Christ. As public evidence of their worship, they took his mark, and as a public consequence, they are covered in ugly painful festering boils from head to toe.

Now, if the boils are not bad enough, on top of them comes the next bowl. Again, these are rapid fire in their occurrence, and we are told in **verse 3**,

The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

The contents of the second bowl were poured out by the next angel **into the sea** – so, it's judgment against saltwater, and if you think about it, this second bowl judgment is similar to the second trumpet judgment we read about in **Chapter 8**.

If you recall, with the blowing of second trumpet, a *third* part of the seas became like blood, a *third* part of all sea life died, and a *third* of the shipping had been demolished, but with this second bowl judgment – the devastation is total – it's complete – **every living thing in the sea died**. Everything died, and John says, the water became something like the blood of a **dead man**, meaning the saltwater was similar to the rotting fluids found in a decomposing body. All the world's oceans and seas that cover most of the Earth will become nothing but dark, coagulated, stinking cesspools of death.

It's hard to imagine the devastation pictured here, but maybe there are those who think they could survive without the oceans and the seas – and maybe they could for a while, but here's a question: **Could they survive without fresh water?** Let's continue beginning with **verse 4**.

⁴Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. ⁵And I heard the angel of the waters saying, “Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; ⁶for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it.” ⁷And I heard the altar saying, “Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

The third angel poured out his bowl **into the rivers and the springs of waters** – so here, we are talking about all fresh water sources, and **they became blood**. Again, this is similar to **Chapter 8**, where the third trumpet sounded and it impacted a *third* of the world’s fresh water, but this is something entirely different – this is all the fresh water sources, meaning there will be nothing safe to drink.

Now, maybe you are a “prepper” who is already thinking about storing up massive supplies of bottled water in some underground bunker to get you through this, but that will be an exercise in futility, because if this third bowl judgment is anything like the second plague over Egypt described in **Exodus 7** – which I suspect it will be, even the fresh water stored in containers was turned to blood. Remember, none of this is natural – it’s supernatural – it’s God’s doing, and His consequences are inescapable.

No doubt, people will question – **“Why is God doing this?”** **“Why is God being so harsh?”** to which the angel will say in effect, *“God, they wanted blood and they took it from Your saints and Your messengers, now they will get more blood than they had bargained for. They will reap what they have sown.”* Yes, this judgment is severe, but it is also **true** and **righteous** – meaning His judgment is based on the true facts and it is carried out in a just and right way – in other words, the punishment fits the crime – it is fair – or as the angel said, **“they deserve it.”**

Remember, these are people who were given many warnings and given every opportunity to turn to Christ, but they rejected Him and devoted themselves to the Antichrist. They were given a choice – God’s *forgiveness* or God’s *fairness*. They rejected His forgiveness, and therefore by default, they get His fairness – they get what they deserve.

Now, maybe the people of earth, parched with thirst, turn their attention to the skies and seek relief in the form of rain – but rain is not what they get. Instead, beginning with **verse 8**, we are told they get something else.

⁸The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. ⁹Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

Instead of catching drops of rain from the sky, the fourth bowl is poured upon the **sun**, and the unrepentant people of Earth are **scorched** with searing rays.

If you recall back in **Chapter 8**, during the sounding of the fourth trumpet, we were told a *third* of all heavenly bodies – the sun, the moon, and the stars were impacted so that they would be darkened – but not this time. This time, with this judgment, comes just the opposite. This time there is an intensification of heat from the sun that burns people with fire.

Notice, we are not told this scorching causes death – rather it's torment, it's another taste of the terrible suffering they will experience in Hell if they do not repent, and surprisingly, these people still refuse to do so. They cursed the **name of God**, who had power over these judgments – that is, they acknowledged that God was the source of their judgment, they knew He was in control, and yet they still would not **repent** and turn to Him.

You know, the fact that repentance is even mentioned here near the end of the Tribulation period suggests that God is still graciously extending His offer of mercy right up to the very end, and still people curse God and blame Him for the devastation, the pain, and the death they have brought upon themselves. **That's hardcore, isn't it?**

So far, four angels have poured their bowls and nature has begun to completely unravel. The impact on human life would be unimaginable, and yet, the Antichrist is still in control – but all that begins to change as we see beginning with **verse 10**.

¹⁰Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, ¹¹and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

This is God's judgment against the **throne of the beast** – a direct hit on the dominion of the Antichrist. John tells us that in spite of the scorching rays from the sun, the kingdom of the Antichrist will be plunged into darkness, which I take

to mean that literal darkness will fall upon his headquarters – upon his seat of power and control.

If you think about it, God has done this before – during the ninth plague, when darkness fell upon Egypt. This is how the darkness was described in Egypt back in **Exodus 10:21-23**.

²¹ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.”

²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. ²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings.

In Egypt, the darkness was thick, it could be felt, you could almost cut it with a knife so to speak, and I think this is the same kind of darkness that John is describing for us here. It is a darkness that is stifling and suffocating, and it creates confusion and chaos for those enveloped in it.

We are told that people **gnawed their tongues** because they are in such pain – pain from their sores, pain from the lack of drinking water, and pain from the scorching sun, and once again, for the second time, John tells us the response of the people – still they cursed God and refused to **repent**. This is nothing but a total defiance against God, and they are only hurting themselves.

Okay, let’s move to the sixth bowl beginning with **verse 12**. We are told,

¹² The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east. ¹³ And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; ¹⁴ for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty.

The sixth angel poured out his bowl and two things happen. First, the **Euphrates River** dries up to prepare the way for the **kings from the east**. That phrase “kings from the east” literally means “the kings of the sunrise” who are believed to come from the Orient – Asia – most likely powerful countries such as China and North Korea, with Communist governments who currently and actively oppose Christianity and aggressively persecute those who follow Christ.

Now geographically – today, the Euphrates River serves as a natural boundary between the Holy Land and Asia, and to march troops and to move military equipment used in conventional warfare from Asia to Israel, you would have to go through the Euphrates – but here we are told that boundary will be supernaturally removed by the sixth angel.

Secondly, John also tells us he sees **three unclean spirits** – that look **like frogs** to him coming out of Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet. We are told these demonic spirits go throughout the **whole world**, influencing the leaders of the world to assemble their armed forces together for one great final battle, and beginning with **verse 15**, we are told where the battle will occur and who the battle is ultimately with.

¹⁵ “Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.” ¹⁶ And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

So, this last great battle – we commonly refer to as the “Battle of Armageddon” will prompted by the unholy trinity, it will involve the military forces of the world, and it will occur in the place in **Hebrew** called **Har-Magedon**, which is actually two words – when put together, mean the mountain of Megiddo.

This great battle will occur in an area about 60 miles north of Jerusalem, on the nearby plains of the Valley of Jezreel – the place Napoleon called “*the most perfect natural battlefield on the earth*.” The Valley of Jezreel is one of the greatest battlefields mentioned in the Bible, over 200 battles have occurred on this plain, and if you remember, just to drop a name, Gideon and his 300 fought there.

Now, we don’t want to overlook **verse 15**, because it is here that we see the very close connection between this last great battle – the Battle of Armageddon and the Second Coming of Christ, for when these forces gather for battle, it will be Jesus whom they fight against when He returns. We are told that Jesus will come quickly, **like a thief**, and quite frankly, the battle – if you want to call it that, will be over just as quick. We will talk more about this later in **Chapter 19**.

Okay, we have one more bowl to go, so let’s look at these last few verses beginning with **verse 17**.

¹⁷ Then 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.” ¹⁸ 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. ¹⁹ The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. ²⁰ And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. ²¹ 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.

The seventh angel poured out the contents of his bowl into the atmosphere and immediately a **loud voice** came out from the temple, saying “**It is done**” – meaning the wrath of God is finished with this last bowl. With this last bowl, a storm was produced with flashes of **lightning** and peals of **thunder**, and we are also told that the greatest **earthquake** in the history of man will shake the planet to its core, and as a result of this earthquake, the **great city** was split **into three parts**.

I want to tell you that had a lot of momentum preparing this message until I got to the subject of this **great city**. I spent hours trying to identify this city and as a result, I concluded – I apparently have issues. For some reason, I just could let this go until I found an answer that was biblically accurate to my satisfaction.

Now for the answer – Bible commentators are divided about the identity this great city – some say it is Jerusalem, and I can see that. Many conclude that this great city is Rome – the seat of the revived Roman Empire, and still others suggest it is Babylon – which seems to be a city and a system that represents the empire of the Antichrist, and after a few hours of mind-numbing study, the best I can tell, in context with these judgments – I believe it is Babylon. As we will see later in **Revelation 18**, several times Babylon is described as the great city, and just to give you a head’s up here, in **Chapters 17** and **18** – beginning with next week, we will back track a bit and look at this Babylon in much greater detail.

So, as I see it, this great earthquake split Babylon into three parts. It’s a total ruin for the Antichrist – it’s the end of his empire, but not only that, the earthquake also destroys the cities of the nations that were in league with him. Assuming this is literal – and that’s how I see it, this would essentially be the end of all human kingdoms.

Notice, we are told Babylon was **remembered before God**, which takes us back to the first time we are told that God remembered. Back in **Genesis 8**, we were told that God remembered Noah and all that was with him in the ark – He remembered Noah in His mercy, but here, God remembers Babylon in His **fierce wrath**.

In **verse 20**, as part of this final shaking of the Earth, God changes its geographical features by causing **every island** to sink and the **mountains** to be leveled. This is an extreme makeover where everything about the Earth, including its geographical features, are changed. For the unrepentant people, there is no place to escape to and there is no place to hide, and then the sky literally falls on top of them in the form of huge hailstones that weighed about **100 pounds each**. That's a lot of ice. **And what was their response?** They cursed God.

Now, I want to circle back to what was said in **verse 17**. When the seventh bowl was poured, a loud voice from heaven said, **“It is done.”** Judgment is done. I was reminded that when Jesus hung on the cross in torment and agony – at the very end He said something very similar. He said, **“It is finished.”** That too was a statement about God's judgment.

Jesus took the full wrath of God's judgment upon Himself on that cross, so that we would not have to experience it, and knowing this truth should prompt a decision from each of us. We can accept what Jesus has done for us and choose God's *forgiveness* – or we can reject Him – even defy Him and choose God's *fairness*. If you do not choose God's forgiveness found only in the finished work Jesus Christ, then by default, you choose God's fairness – and you don't want that, for just like these unrepentant people during the Tribulation period – you will get what you deserve – terrible, inescapable consequences.

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