

The Seven Bowls of Wrath

Revelation 16:1-21



The Revelation of Jesus Christ

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Main Idea: God upholds justice for all people while simultaneously extending grace to them.

The events of Revelation sought to show mankind the justice of God while still extending the grace of God through the full display. The final opportunity for people to repent and turn to God are presented here. The loud voice from heaven directing the angels, most likely indicating God's direction, signifies the end of the judgment. Each time, God represents Himself as all powerful and over the elements of the world. No other god compares with the holiness of the one true God. Despite the severity of the judgments, they are all earned. Yet, by displaying the justice of God on those who rebel, the grace of God becomes all the more real. Jesus took the fullness of our punishment on Himself in order that we would not need to bear the consequences of

Seven Plagues

The seven bowls of God's wrath upon the earth marks the harrowing last opportunity for those to come to the fullness of God's presence through repentance and crying out for their Savior. Yet, at this point, the lines are essentially drawn. Scholars debate whether or not these plagues present themselves through metaphor or were merely the best John could do to describe physical events he was seeing. They note the similarities of these plagues to the plagues of Egypt given through Moses and to the ancient gods of Greek. Yet, in each circumstance, the scale of judgment extends globally beyond anything the world has ever seen.

- **Harmful and Painful Sores.** The first bowl of wrath pours out specifically on those who willingly chose to bear the mark of the beast. For those who placed their faith in anything other than the one true King, they would receive the consequences of their misplaced faith. Where they faith in Christ for worldly gain, they would first be met with painful sores over their body.

- **Seas of Blood.** The second bowl of wrath begins the process of undoing creation. The sea turns red with blood and with it, any sustenance. Imagine for a moment seeing the vastness of a once familiar ocean now displaying the fullness of God's wrath. The water turns to blood. Creation from the effects of sin is not immune to the effects of God's wrath as sin's corruption extends through all the physical earth.
- **Rivers and Springs of Blood.** Where the seas previously turned to blood, the third wrath attacks any additional source of water. The rivers and springs no longer provide refreshing and nourishing water but instead become non-potable. Life will turn increasingly difficult for those under the wrath of God. Where once the church struggled to find food through economic restrictions, God will limit the very resources the planet provides.
- **Sun Scorching The People.** Some have speculated that this may be the final case of the atmosphere deteriorating or some other phenomenon. Whatever the methodology, the people cried in anguish and cursed God. Their lives could no longer sustain itself in the presence of the fullness of the light, physically or spiritually.
- **Kingdom of the Beast Thrown Into Darkness.** The fifth bowl of wrath displays the true nature of the spiritual state of those who reject Christ. The allures of sin often feel fun and exciting, but ultimately, only results in people living in darkness. Now the darkness they desired has become manifest the people cry out in anguish. Yet, even knowing the true nature of God and their sin, the people curse God rather than repent.
- **Drying of the Euphrates.** As one of the final sources of water and refreshing dries up, even the dragon and the beast spew evil spiritual beings from their mouth. Frogs, throughout scripture, have represented the presence of evil. As the angels pour out this bowl of wrath, the demons mount their final rebellion against God at the final place, Armageddon, bringing those who obey them alongside them.
- **It Is Done.** Yet, ultimately, they will meet a fatal ending. The

final bowl of wrath has been brewing since the beginning of time and culminates in this moment. God's attention drew to the city of Babylon and her continued rebellion. The fullness of God's presence would reveal itself to a people who could not bear the presence. Again, the holiness of God demonstrated by the flashes and lightning and pearls of thunder becomes clear. Only this time, the judgment of God is complete. The time for repentance is passed and the salvation for the people of God is finished.

A Just Wrath

Most people are tempted to see the works of God and quickly move to deeming God to be either hateful or angry. In truth, as the angels pour out the wrath of God, their song declares the just nature of God. This demonstrates a vast misunderstanding of sin and its effects. Sin, ultimately, is not something we do to ourselves rather it is an affront to the Kingdom of God. Our sin served as the weapon we attacked the High King of Heaven with. Furthermore, the criticism that God could extend grace to everyone blatantly ignores that this is precisely what occurred with Jesus Christ. Blood must be shed as an atonement for sins but the grace of God through Jesus Christ pays the blood cost on our behalf as a propitiation of our sin. God offers grace to everyone and upholds justice simultaneously. Every sin will be paid for in some sense or another.

Yet, people even today, complain of the harsh realities of God's dealing of sin. They reject the form of grace they ask for while simultaneously criticizing God for not providing a "reasonable" way out. Plain and simple, salvation should occur on their terms and require nothing of them, rejected the fundamental notion of Lordship. The response of the people gives a clear indicator as for the just nature of the harsh response. Even faced with the consequences of their actions, the people chose instead to curse God rather than repent. Christ showed grace on the cross and not in the final days, the fullness of God's presence showed justice and truth. Neither persuaded the people led astray to die to themselves, repent from their sin, and step into the newness of life a loving God offers.

Discussion Questions

- How does God balance justice and grace simultaneously? What role does Jesus play in seeking justice for those who put their belief in Him?
- What does the justice poured out on sin tell us about the grace of Christ's work on the cross?
- What does it mean that the death of Jesus Christ on the cross counted for you? What did Jesus die to save you from?
- Why do you think the people refused to turn to God, even understanding that God is the one who can save them?
- Why do we refuse to bring our sin to Christ? What are the effects of sin on our lives? How is the presence of God superior to any allure that sin offers?