

Revelation
A Wednesday Night Bible Study

Lesson #41
6/13/2007

The Judgment of God, The Great Tribulation, The Great Day of God's Wrath
Chapter Sixteen - The Bowl Judgments
The Last Series of Judgments, The End of The Tribulation Period

Chapter four of the Revelation of Jesus Christ begins by telling us that John was **“called up”** into heaven. It is a picture of God **“rapturing,”** removing the church, His body on the earth, out of the world and protecting it from what is to follow. God then begins to judge this wicked world of Satan-worshippers. In Chapter six we read about the first of three series of judgments, **(1) the Seal Judgments, the (2) the Trumpet Judgments, and, now, the (3) Bowl Judgments.** The judgments are **ASCENDATIVE** in that they **ascend in intensity and severity** with the **Trumpet Judgments** being worse than the **Seal Judgments.** Likewise, the **Bowl Judgments** are worse than the **Seal or Trumpet Judgments.**

God has two purposes for this **Tribulation Period.** First, it is the time of ultimate judgment on this earth for those who reject Him. Second, it is also called **“the time of Jacob's trouble”** (Jer. 30:7) because it is God's final disciplining of Israel. In order to understand what happens during this **Tribulation Period** we must search the Old Testament because it is there that God has given us some very important prophecies about this time. Therefore, these judgments also fulfill prophecies found in the Old Testament and have a **FULFILLING** nature.

The Bowl Judgments are distinctive in that they are CUMULATIVE. For the first time, **all of the effects of each Bowl Judgment continues,** and, to those effects, are added the effects of the judgments which follow.

Since, when the **Bowl Judgments** are finished, the **Tribulation Period** will have been completed, many traumatic and devastating events will have already happened. Some of those did have a lasting effect upon life in this world, but, in essence, each one was a separate event. The judgment event generally happens, is completed, and the wicked world make some adjustments and move on. It is true that some of these events of God's judgments will have some lasting effects and alter the way life is lived, but men are often resilient and find ways to adjust, usually hardening their hearts even more and then cursing God for their “bad luck.” Many of them will live through the trauma, likely thinking they were “survivors” while they continued to turn more and more to Satan and away from God.

One example of this is when the hordes of warriors from the north invade Israel (Ezekiel 38 & 39). Seven years after God destroys the invaders their weapons are still being gathered and burned (Eze. 39:9). Though Revelation does not specifically describe this, it likely takes place when the **Second Horseman appears, the Second Seal Judgment** (Revelation 6:4). This, then is followed by the world-wide famine of the **Third Horseman, the Third Seal Judgment** (Revelation 6:5-6), which results in the **Fourth Seal Judgment, the Fourth Horseman,** which is the pale horse of death when one out of four people on the earth will die.

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The first series of judgments devastates the earth and men begin to realize what is happening. As God had said, He would *“magnify Himself and sanctify Himself and become known in the eyes of many nations”* and they begin to *“know that He is the Lord”* (Ezekiel 38:23). That does not mean that evil men repent and submit themselves to God, but they know that what is happening is coming from His hand.

The **Sixth Seal Judgment** happens and produces chaos in nature, with the great *“earthquake moving every island and mountain and stars falling to the earth ... men hid themselves in the dens and the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and to the rocks, fall on us and hide us from the face of the One Who sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of His wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?”* (Revelation 6:12-17) Wicked men know that God has caused this, but they still rebel against Him.

As it has been over the centuries, the sinners soon adjust, and harden their hearts, refusing to repent. Then God sends the **Trumpet Judgments** (Chapters eight and nine). In rapid order the angels blow their trumpets. The first judgment results in *“hail and fire mingled with blood ... and a third part of the trees and all green grass was burned up”* (8:7). Then the *“second angel”* blew his trumpet and *“something like a great mountain was cast into the sea, and a third part of the sea became blood”* (8:8-9). Quickly, the *“third angel blew his trumpet and a great star from heaven fell on the earth and a third part of the rivers and fountains”* are poisoned (8:10-11). Then the *“fourth angel blew his trumpet and a third part of the sun, the moon and the stars were darkened”* (8:12).

Chapter nine tells us about some demonic beings being loosed from the *“bottomless pit”* which begin to torture those *“who had not the seal of God in their foreheads, but were not allowed to kill them”* (9:1-5). As horrible as this was, and even though men tried to cope with their pain by killing themselves, they could not escape the pain because God would not allow them to die. However, this horrible experience only lasts five months and then it is over. We are told that, even after this, *“They repented not of their sins”* (9:20-21).

With this partial review of the effects of the previous judgments, we come to the Bowl Judgments and discover that something is different. In addition to being ASCENDATIVE, they are also CUMULATIVE in nature. Whereas, with the previous judgments, the wicked generally experience the effects of each judgment which mostly end before they are faced with the effects of the next new judgment. This is not true of the **Bowl Judgments**. These judgments are **CUMULATIVE** with the effects of each judgment continuing and the effects of the following ones being added to the previous ones. That is why we read of the severe, unbearable pain and despair resulting

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from the **Fifth Bowl Judgment**. The wicked will have already experienced pain they thought they could not live through, **this Fifth Bowl Judgment describes the CUMULATIVE and ASCENDATIVE effects of these judgments.**

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Every moment of every day, they agonize with the “**pains**” produced by the seas of the world turning into coagulated blood and disrupting the dependable and predictable weather patterns of the earth. Gone, and not to return, are the refreshing rains and winds, normally produced by the climatological cycles of evaporation and condensation. The “**pain**” of this is complicated by the poisoning of all fresh waters producing a drastic shortage of drinking water. Added to this will be the effect of the **Fourth Bowl Judgment**, the “**seven-fold**” increase in the heat from the sun that “**scorches men with fire.**”

No rain, a drastic shortage of drinking water, and scorching heat would, with nothing added, seem to be totally unbearable. However, we are specifically told in verse eleven that the untreatable and debilitating pain of their “**sores**” still plagues them. All of this was so much that “**they gnawed their tongues for pain.**”

As we begin to examine this Fifth Bowl Judgment we shall see the FULFILLING nature of these Bowl Judgments. What is this darkness? It is a strange “**darkness,**” unlike anything that we are familiar with. When we now think of darkness, most of us simply think of the absence of light. This “**darkness**” produces great pain. It is different, so different that I am not sure that it is possible for us to comprehend its nature. However, God has already given warnings about it by providing predictive samples of it. In this we will see **the FULFILLING nature of these Bowl Judgments.**

In Exodus 10: 21-23 we read, “**And the LORD said unto Moses, Stretch out thine hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: They saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days: but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings**”

From this predictive sample of this “**darkness**” we first learn that it is a darkness that can be “**felt.**” I have never known a darkness like that. It is not simply the absence of light and God did not explain it then and He doesn't

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explain it here in Revelation. Second, we learn that it was *“a thick darkness,”* whatever that means. We can more easily understand that *“people could not see one another.”* One more thing stands out about the *“darkness in all of the land of Egypt.”* It did not affect *“the children of Israel.”* God exempted and protected His own.

Another predictive reference is found in Isaiah 60:2 when God describes some of the events of the *“latter days,”* or **Tribulation Period**. He said, *“...behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross (thick) darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”* Then, in Joel 2:1-2, 10-11,30-31; 3:15 the Lord said:

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the LORD shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can abide it? And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”

From these Old Testament verses we learn: (1) *“The darkness shall cover the earth and gross (thick) darkness the people;”* (2) It will be *“A day of gloominess;”* (3) It will be something different from anything else that man knows; *“there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations;”* (4) That day will be so terrible that *“Who can abide it?”* (5) *“The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining.”*

There is one great underlying truth about this **“darkness”** that needs to be mentioned. In the Gospel of John, chapter one, the deity of Jesus Christ is presented, perhaps better than any other place in the Scriptures. We are told that *“In Him was life; and the life was the light of men”* (1:4). Since He is the source of all light, there is light wherever Jesus Christ is present.

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Where Jesus Christ is not, there can only be the opposite of Who He is and what He does. Even as all *“life and light”* originates with Jesus Christ, all darkness with its evil, wickedness and death originates with Satan. What we are seeing with this terrible *“darkness”* may indeed be a sampling of what *“the lake of fire and brimstone is like.”* Indeed, those who choose to reject Jesus Christ are actually choosing to join Satan in the place that God has prepared for him (Matthew 25:41). There is no other option where one can spend eternity. There is only heaven, where Jesus Christ rules, or hell, which was created to give those a place to which to go who do not want to live under the rule and authority and provision of Jesus Christ. **The Tribulation Period is like Hell on earth and all who choose to reject Jesus Christ should take serious notice.**

To attempt to speculate or further explain these statements is beyond most of us. God tells about these things beforehand and we need to simply accept what He has said. In addition, God gives a sampling of this day in Chapter eight, verse twelve, where we read about **the Fourth Trumpet Judgment** as **the Fourth Angel** sounded his trumpet:

“And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.”

We are told that this **Fifth Bowl Judgment** was **“poured out upon the seat of the beast.”** It is the very center of his government, from his throne from which he will be exercising his dictatorial rule over all those who accept his mark. Not only is the *“darkness”* poured out upon his throne, but upon his whole for **“his kingdom was full of darkness.”**

Many reputable scholars have tried to identify this evil emissary of Satan and the location of his throne. Perhaps someone knows, but God does not tell us and I am sure He has some good reasons for not doing so. It does seem, with God's emphasis upon Babylon throughout the Bible, and particularly in Chapters seventeen and eighteen, that the throne of Anti-Christ, the beast, may actually be located at the city known as Babylon.

Certainly, with all of the geopolitical, religious changes taking place in our world today that is a possibility. It is almost impossible to properly interpret the meanings of current events and fit them into God's program of prophecy. The guiding principle of interpreting God's Word, specifically the Book of Revelation, is that we take each word literally unless God indicates otherwise. The warnings are too dire for man to do anything else.