

## Lesson # 48    Revelation 16: 1-2    The First Bowl Judgment

Date: April 1, 2012

**Revelation 16: 1-2 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." <sup>2</sup>So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

## I. Introduction to Chapter 16

Chapter 16 is a 21 verse description of the final rapid fire judgments on earth – the last physical judgments prior to the return of Jesus Christ. If Revelation were set to music – like the 1812 overture – this chapter would be the loud, cannonade climax, and this is followed by a review of the specific results of the destruction wrought on earth in Antichrist's kingdom by these final 7 directed disasters in chapters 17 & 18.

As these last bowls of judgment are being poured out, the end of the 7 year Tribulation is just over the horizon, in fact, these last 7 bowls could all fall inside the last ½ or perhaps even ¼ year or so of the tribulation. They come that close <sup>①</sup> to Christ's return. While these judgments rock earth below, preparation is being made in heaven for the appearance of Jesus Christ and the culmination of history so that the Millennial Kingdom can begin. Paradise restored is now on the verge.

As we saw during the trumpet judgments, and even the seal judgments, we see again, there are no flowing descriptive paragraphs depicting the actions, but rather very short 1 or 2 verse records of what John saw. The longest descriptions are for bowls number 6 ( vv. 12-16 ) and # 7 ( vv. 17-21 ).

By now, perhaps we should not be surprised by the utter depravity and hard-heartedness of people; but our minds are still jarred when we read v. 9, 11 & 21 & discover not repentance, not a crying out to God for mercy but a constant reminder that these judgments are fully deserved and righteous and fitting for those who cling to their sin and their hatred of God.

## II. The Command of God

v.1

Since Rev. 15:8 told us that God alone is in the Temple in heaven, the loud voice that resonates from the Temple can only be the voice of God. As in every other judgment in Revelation, there is no question as to the source of the authority and decrees to bring judgment. It is not Satan, although many who have never read Revelation presume that this is a war between God & Satan in sight. No,

Satan may be used here as an integral part of the goings on, the details of the judgments and the power of Antichrist & the False Prophet – but this book is all about God’s judgments.

The angels who had been given the 7 bowls stand ready, with no presumption of their own authority to pour out the bowls of judgment, but they await this command, which they knew must come from God. And the command is directed at these 7 angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.”

There can be no toleration here for those who proffer the idea that these judgments are simply natural occurrences in nature and are really just descriptions of a final series of ecological disasters which result from man’s abuse of the earth & its’ resources. There may be natural elements at work here, but they are under the supernatural control of the God who created them and not just consecutive natural phenomena, each one causing the conditions which will trigger those judgments that follow.

Although there are some similarities in some of these judgments to earlier seals and trumpets, this chapter is not a recap or summary. These are new plagues, the most intense yet and will leave the world with no spiritual or physical defense against the return of a righteous, vengeful and wrathful God. People ought to take heed of passages like **Heb. 10:26-31** & **Rom. 12:19**.

### III. Bowl Number One

v. 2

This is a judgment specifically directed at unbelievers only. It targets those who “have the Mark of the beast and worshipped its’ image”. Believers will not be affected by this because they have not taken the Mark and refuse to worship the image of the beast.

Those who are affected become afflicted with ‘harmful and painful sores’ (loathsome & malignant – NASB ). The original language is describing sores that are like ulcers – oozing, festering, painful and incurable. The victims will receive ( **Deut. 28:27,35** ) “unrelieved physical torment”.<sup>i</sup> “They will become outwardly what they are inwardly”.<sup>ii</sup>

It is not a huge leap ( in my mind anyway ) to postulate that, since only those who have taken the Mark acquire this horrible condition, then it is possible that the Mark ( be it bar code, chip, tattoo or whatever ) is the internal source for this plague. Perhaps a manufacturing flaw or allergic reaction is being described. If so, it is still God’s design and it occurs in every affected person simultaneously so there can be no mistaking the true source of it – especially when those known not to have taken the Mark are seen to be exempt!

It is also possible that this is a partial fulfillment of the **Zechariah 14:7-12** prophecy, although I believe that prophecy has more to do with the bowl judgment which brings the wicked to Armageddon in Rev. 19:21.

In any case, the first bowl judgment sets the tone for the final 6. It will not go well for an already beleaguered population still reeling from the first 12 judgments, as they now face a new and final series of relentless and merciless attacks, for which their only defense is repentance, but they will not repent! Note **Ezek. 8:17,18; 9:1-11**.

Next lesson – Lesson # 49    Revelation 16:3    The Second Bowl

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<sup>i</sup> John MacArthur, Revelation 12-22, Moody Press, p. 139.

<sup>ii</sup> Donald G. Barnhouse, Revelation, p. 290