

Lesson # 50 The Third Bowl Judgment Revelation 16: 4-7

Date: April 8, 2012

Revelation 16: 4-7 (ESV)

⁴The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say,

"Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was,
for you brought these judgments.

⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
and you have given them blood to drink.

It is what they deserve!" ⁷And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty,
true and just are your judgments!"

I. Fresh Water Tainted v. 4

We've all seen the pictures – on TV, in movies, in ads for people to donate to poverty stricken countries – people lined up with pots or bowls at a spout or tank of some kind, waiting desperately for a quart or gallon of clean water to try to meet their daily needs. We have not experienced this in our country, where even the homeless and very poor have some access to fresh water. As a result, the effects of what is described in our text, the 2nd time a Tribulation plague has targeted fresh water (cf. Rev. 8:10-11 / 3rd Trumpet) is beyond the scope of our imagination. ①

Humans can survive without food for a month or more. Some on 'hunger strikes' last longer than they probably imagined they would. Jesus Himself, as recorded in Matt. 4:1-11, fasted for 40 days and survived in the wilderness. However, we cannot last more than a few days without water. A judgment on all fresh water – and this appears to be worldwide – would be a devastating thing indeed, taking away a God-given gift that people who have it take for granted.

Fresh water is such an absolute necessity for us that space missions to the moon, to Mars or fly-bys of other planets have always had, as one of their key scientific goals, to search for water or to see if there is evidence that it ever existed there. This would help determine survivability for colonization (way off in the future) or be a clue as to whether life forms as we understand them could ever have or may now exist there.

The text does not say how long this judgment lasts, but unless it is almost immediately before the return of Christ, it would kill every living thing within a couple of weeks if it was sustained. It is also not caused by the seas being made blood, because the seas and oceans are what fresh water flows into – water does not flow upstream.

The water turning into blood during the Exodus plagues (Ex. 7:20-24; Ps. 78:43-44) was localized within Egypt – the Nile River chiefly – but this future judgment is much more serious, and all sources of fresh water are affected. Perhaps bottled water will be spared (who knows) but that would run out very quickly and most of those resources would be in specific places and once this takes place, very tightly controlled, like gold.

The environmental aspects of most of the judgments so far, but especially the first 3 bowl judgments, are way beyond the average tree hugger's worst nightmare. The seas are blood, and everything in them dead, and now the rivers and springs...climate will be affected, rain will be unlikely (since we know how rain originates), and all aquatic life in the fresh water would die almost immediately. A stench would go up that would make the entire globe horribly smelly – the least of people's worries, granted, but added to everything else – horrifying.

Coupled with the 4th Bowl Judgment, soon to be poured out – scorching heat – imagine desert conditions and no water! Some look at this scene and have a hard time ascribing to God love and compassion. These attributes seem to be visibly lacking, and those same people who would deny the existence of Hell or temper the reality of it, will be the first to deny that our loving God would be so callous as to send a judgment like this on the world even when the world is given over to wickedness and hates God.

II. The 3rd Angelic Proclamation vv. 5-7

It is perhaps for that very reason that verses 5-7 are part of John's record – a pause to hear the commentary of the angel who poured out the 3rd Bowl. This is a defense of God's righteousness and fairness. How many years of history will have passed before this judgment comes? Even if it happened 7 years from today, many thousands of years have passed by and the truth God presented to Noah in Gen. 8:21b – "...even though man's inclination is evil from his youth..." will day after day, month after month, year after year, have been revealed indelibly and in increasing evil demonstrations. With the Holy Spirit's restraining role being curtailed in the Tribulation (cf. II Thess. 2:7), the iniquity of people in the Tribulation will make the rest of history look like a Sunday School picnic.

In v. 5, the first aspect of the defense of God's righteousness comes from this angel; "Just are You, O Holy One, who is and who was, for You have brought these judgments." There is no pulling of punches here, no wringing of hands or slick spinning of the facts, no hint of attributing these judgments to Satan, man's free will or natural causes out of God's control. This is one of the strongest proclamations of God's sovereignty over His creation in the Bible! It is not apologetic in the least – "You are Holy & Just"!

For centuries, Arminian theologians have argued that God has created man with autonomous free will, and God has limited His own power and own His free will

so as not to interrupt man's free will. Arguments against this foolish, man-centered notion, very popular in 21st century Christianity are found throughout the Bible,^① but consider how many people's free will is being violated by these judgments the angel says God has brought?

Verse 6 is theodicy 101 – people deserve judgment because they are wicked sinners. This does not interfere with God's perfect love and righteousness. His wrath is an extension of His holiness and asserts His righteous vengeance on those who have rebelled against, hated and killed His people. God's loving response to the cries of His people is found in these judgments and the final Great White Throne Judgment – cf. **Rev. 6:9-11; 19:1-5**. Just briefly, turn to **Gen. 1:1**. Who establishes what is fair? The Creator, doesn't He? Yes, we sin-addled 'thinkers' think through a fog of iniquity which is part of our inherited nature that we can establish what's fair and bring God to task on it. We believe we know best what is fair for a loving God to do – cf. **Rom. 9:14-23**.

This judgment fits the crime. Earth's people have, since Cain, shed the blood of the weak, the innocent, the defenseless, often in a quest for land, power, influence, money, convenience, pride, or whatever seems important at the time. Consider the abortion epidemic alone. The USA and Canada cannot muster the righteous indignation and biblical obedience to put murderers to death, but allow babies to be aborted by the millions^②, mostly for convenience and money – not for the advertised reasons of protection for the mother's health, because of rape or incest, or a woman's right to choose. God help us that the church has so lost the message of the gospel that they cannot gather the courage to consistently speak out against this travesty, due to the corruption of governments and the rising tide of anti-God sentiment within western culture. ③

We have not yet even touched on persecution. Specifically, the angel mentions the blood of saints and prophets. Currently, in 2011, to the shame of the world, about 160,000 Christians per year are being martyred for their belief in Christ, and that rate has not fluctuated much over the last century. The corrupt US and Canadian liberal media are quick to jump on a story about a celebrated Christian pastor or a priest who falls into immorality, but seldom report on such martyrdoms, unless they sanitize it and remove the Christian angle. The same type of sanitizing takes place when a Muslim or homosexual is found to be murderous or immoral. If you find the story at all, it will be buried on page 37 of the paper, or mentioned on TV without any reference to the perpetrator's belief system.

Many try to support their claims that Christians are as bad as Islamist terrorists, even though there is no evidence of that, with isolated exceptions such as the absolutely wrong murder of abortion doctors, which other Christians then decry as sinful and illegal. It is amazing how often, due to the lack of current evidence against Christians in general as violent, that the Crusades are brought up. They are far enough in the past that most people don't have a clue what they were all about anyway, so reporters can spin that any way they feel like. Most people know very little history in general, and especially ancient history, so they

are easily misled by reconstructed versions of the Crusades where Christians are painted as the evil aggressors and the Muslims and Jews the victims.

The truth is that the Christians (mostly RC) were the defenders of the nations that were being overrun by very aggressive Muslim invaders. There were, to be truthful, incidents where the Christian crusaders attacked and killed Jewish innocents, and this was wrong, but these incidents were incidental, and not sanctioned by the bulk of the crusaders or their leaders.

The point is, however, that you will notice that on virtually every question about societal morality, increasingly, the Christian viewpoint is being marginalized, overrun and in some case, criminalized. By the time the Antichrist arrives, it will likely be a worldwide capital crime to be a Christian or a Jew, officially once the Mark system is put into place. The world deserves what it will receive from God's hand when these judgments come. Truly, even from our 2011 perspective, we can understand the angel's claim, "You have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"^① Note **Heb. 10:26-31**.

God's justice (v. 7) is further defended from the altar in heaven now, probably the very altar under which the martyred saints cried out to God for vengeance in Rev. 6:9-11; and the answer to their cries is seen as just and true. The Scriptures constantly assert that God's judgments are true and just – cf. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 19:9; 119:75; Rom. 2:5; Rev. 19:1-2; I Sam. 3:10-18; etc.

In the world we live in, which predates the account in Revelation we have been studying, our belief in a good and powerful, Biblical God is challenged every day by our society and even by laws which continually usurp God's righteous laws, and we await the vengeance God says is coming. We must cling to the Biblical view of God's holiness and righteousness and not be deceived into seeing God as somehow unfair or a moral monster (as the new atheists and even some Arminians paint Him). He has exhibited His grace in the very gifts he has given to those who hate Him – rain, sunshine, fresh water, food, freedom, families & friends, safety, etc. God is not naïve or deceived by those who consume His resources and spit in His face by evil actions against His people. We are not to respond in violence, which is why we are not to murder abortion doctors or hate-filled government officials. We are to leave vengeance to God – Rom. 12:17-21 – and when it comes, declare, "True and just are His judgments."

Only a God who is love could ever mete out judgments righteously against those who spurn that gracious love. He loves all, but not indiscriminately.

Next lesson – Lesson # 51 Rev. 16:8-9 The Fourth Bowl

^① For example, places where God does interrupt man's free will – Acts 9; Gen. 20:6; Jonah; I Sam. 2:25 – and many others exist.

^② Since 1973 & the Rove v. Wade decision, 50 million babies have been aborted in the USA as of 2010. Source, Ron Rhodes, The Coming Oil Storm, Harvest House, 2010, p.93.

^③ I strongly recommend that every believer read Roger Elwood's novel "Angelwalk" for a fictional account that show how the angels view evil on earth.