

Rev. 15:5-16:11 “Seven Bowls”

For the Children: How do you think your dad would react if right in the middle of being told off for something else, you also insulted him? Then, when he punished you for insulting him, you stuck out your tongue at him? This kind of thing is called “adding insult to injury.” People who do not believe in the Lord often do something like that to Him. When He sends judgements to warn them, they only attack Him more. When He punishes them for that, they say and do even worse things. If people continue to “add insult to injury” in this way, the Lord will make their punishment heavier. **Questions:** How should we respond to this information about God’s judgements on those who do not repent? What are some bad ways people have of attacking God when they are in the middle of being punished for their sins? Why should God’s children not be terrified of His judgements?

Introduction:

First Point: The Nature of the Seven-Bowl Judgement

- 1) Old Theme, New Vision: “After these things” indicates a new vision, though the theme – God’s judgement on the wicked – has been seen before (e.g., the 7 Seals and 7 Trumpets). Even specific details, like the fall of “Babylon” (14:8, 16:19, ch. 17, 18:2) are repeated. This shows that Revelation is recapitulating key ideas, rather than providing a chronological account of the future
- 2) A New Emphasis: Again the judgements follow the pattern of the plagues of Egypt. Again, Creation co-operates with the Lord. But unlike the “Seals” and “Trumpets,” here the whole earth is judged. See 16:3, in contrast to 6:8, 8:1-12, 9:5. This is about a full measure of God’s wrath – the “bowls” are full of His wrath (15:7). It is also very final – no one can stop the Lord from executing His wrath from His heavenly Temple
- 3) Failure to Repent: We may regard the “Seals” as depicting the fact of God’s judgements as a way of rescuing His people. The “Trumpets” are about the warning that all receive from these judgements. The “Bowls” are about what happens when the warnings are not heeded. Hence there is an emphasis on lack of repentance, further cursing of God when judgement strikes (16:9, 11) – similar to Pharaoh. See Ps. 79:12, Lev. 26 for a similar idea of “7-fold” judgement when men refuse to repent

Second Point: The Detail of the Seven-Bowl Judgement

- 1) Widespread Havoc: The first 5 Bowls are about more extreme, world-wide punishments in response to widespread hardness of heart. The last 2 Bowls will go on to deal with the Final Judgement. The “finality” is about the inevitable nature of judgement when men fill up the full measure of their sins
- 2) The First Bowl: Like the plague of boils in Egypt, those with the mark of the Beast suffer terrible sores for their idolatry – a symbol of suffering
- 3) The Second and Third Bowls: Like the waters in Egypt turning to blood, seas, rivers etc are turned to blood. Those who have spilled the saints’ blood are made to “drink” blood. This parallels the 2nd and 3rd Trumpets. The fouling of the waters implies economic hardship for those who have used economic pressure on believers. The Lord, not the Beast, controls the economy
- 4) The Fourth Bowl: The sun scorches the wicked, another common symbol for judgement. See Rev. 9:17-18.
- 5) The Fifth Bowl: The darkening of the sun, moon and stars – and of the Beast’s throne and kingdom – reflects both the similar plague on Egypt and Trumpets 4-5. The world-system of political-ideological opposition to God and His people will be eclipsed and collapse. Men in darkness cannot relate to each other (as in Egypt) and cannot discern the Lord. Ultimately, they will experience eternal darkness in hell. In contrast, God’s people live in the light of Christ

Conclusion:

