

Living Word Fellowship Church

An Expository Explanation of Revelation Chapter 16

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“God will be Respected”

We may not want to worship Him; we may even try to ignore Him; One day the world will have to bow before Him. He will reign with or without us.

Part I

A. Chapter Introduction:

Wrath brings grief even to the heart of God, but God will not coerce our love of Him. He has given His children their freedom. He will not destroy their humanity by removing that freedom, even when His children stubbornly persist in using that freedom in rebellion against Him. Incredibly enough, despite the overwhelming mercies of God revealed through Jesus Christ, there will be those who refuse His mercies. In such cases, the faithful God of creation and redemption will faithfully respond in keeping with His nature and word by giving His rebellious sons and daughters what they have stubbornly insisted upon, namely, everlasting separation from Him. ^[1]

Let me remind you that the Lord Jesus Christ is still in full charge. Remember that way back in chapter 5, the Lord Jesus was the only One found worthy to open the seven-sealed book and His opening of the seals ushered in this entire series of sevens. He is in command to the end of this book. He is the One who is marching to victory. The power and the glory and the majesty belong to Him. This is His judgment upon a Christ-rejecting world. The Father has committed all judgment unto Him. Christ is the One who gives the command that sends out these seven angels with the final

judgments. There is no longer a delay, no longer an interval or intermission. The hour has come. The order is given, and the seven angels execute the command.^[2]

A “great voice” commands the seven angels to “pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God onto the earth.” The voice is that of either an angel, a cherub, Christ, or God Himself. That the voice comes from Christ or God is implied by 6:6, where a “voice” comes from the throne to command one of the cherubim (cf. 9:13). That God is the speaker here is suggested by the fact that God has just been mentioned as being in His heavenly temple (15:5–8) and by the allusion to Isa. 66:6: “a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD rendering recompense to His adversaries” (which is applied to judgment of Rome in *Midr. Pss.* 18.11).^[3]

The seven cups of wrath represent the judgments of the Lamb on the earth, especially on those who have received the mark of the beast. Between the sixth and seventh seals and the sixth and seventh trumpets, we were told of God’s protection of, and mission for, the people of God. But with the seven cups, there is no break between the sixth and seventh outpourings of judgment. Now only wrath is left; there is no more delay. Babylon the Great, the symbol for all who have vaunted themselves against the Most High God, will fall. With the pouring out of the seventh cup of wrath, there is again the great earthquake accompanied by “flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder,” for the end has come.^[4]

Chronologically, this chapter is close to the time of the second coming of Christ, and the judgments described fall in rapid succession. Alford says, “There can then be no doubt here, not only that the series reaches on to the time of the end, but that the whole of it is to be placed close to the same time” (*The Greek Testament*, 4:696). Daniel indicated that these closing days of the Tribulation will be a time of world war (Dan. 11:36–45). World events are now pictured by John as rapidly coming to their climax.^[5]

Just as the seven seals and the seven trumpets depict different aspects of God’s judgments through Christ, so now another dimension of His judgment must be revealed. The seven cups of wrath are similar to the seven trumpets and the seven seals, but they

also are different, for there comes a time when the wrath of God is no longer partial or temporary but complete and everlasting. The outpouring of the seven cups of wrath means that God's judgment is also final and irrevocable. The partial judgment ("one-third") of the trumpets suggests that God uses the sufferings and evils of this life as a warning to draw humankind toward repentance and faith. But such tribulations also foreshadow the final hour of judgment, when God's wrath is finished, and there is delay no longer. ^[6]

Similarities, however, do not prove identity, and a comparison of the trumpets with the bowls of God's wrath reveals striking differences even though the order of the judgments is the same. In the trumpet judgments, generally speaking, a third of the earth or heaven is afflicted, whereas in the bowl judgments, the effects of the judgments are on the entire earth and are much more severe and final in character. **Accordingly, it seems best to follow the interpretation which has long been held in the church that the seven bowls are an expansion of the seventh trumpet, just as the seven trumpets are an expansion of the breaking of the seventh seal.** The order is climactic, and the judgments become more intensive and extensive as the time of the second coming of Christ approaches. All indications are that the bowl judgments fall with trip-hammer rapidity on a world that is reeling under previous judgments and a gigantic world war. Some bowl judgments are selective and extend only to the wicked (16:2, 8–11), and several affect parts of nature (sea, rivers, sun, etc.). ^[7]

^[1] Sloan, R. B. (1998). [The Revelation](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 677). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

^[2] McGee, J. V. (1991). [Thru the Bible commentary: The Prophecy \(Revelation 14-22\)](#) (electronic ed., Vol. 60, pp. 69–70). Thomas Nelson.

^[3] Beale, G. K. (1999). [The Book of Revelation: a commentary on the Greek text](#) (p. 812). W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press.

[4] Sloan, R. B. (1998). [The Revelation](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 677). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[5] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 966). Victor Books.

[6] Sloan, R. B. (1998). [The Revelation](#). In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman concise Bible commentary* (p. 677). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

[7] Walvoord, J. F. (1985). [Revelation](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 967). Victor Books.