

The Revelation of Jesus Christ - A Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words
Lesson 11: The Picture of the Bowls of Wrath

Introduction

Many people who claim to follow Christ suggest, "The religion of Jesus is not the Old Testament religion. The Old Testament was a God of wrath and horrific judgment on people who broke God's Laws. Jesus, however, teaches that God is love. So we don't have to fear He would ever punish us."

How does God's angry judgment bring Him glory and honor?

Read Revelation 15:1-8

What vision are we now going to see, according to verse 1?

Before we see that vision, what do we see in verses 2-4? (For the symbolism of the glassy sea, recall chapter 4:6.)

Who does John see? What are they doing?

(Note: See Exodus 15:1-18 for Moses' song celebrating the Lord's victory over Pharaoh. The song the saints sing in heaven is also called the "Song of the Lamb" since only through Jesus' victory over Satan do we receive God's grace in heaven.)

Regardless of what people believe about the Lord now, what will everyone have to do at the end of time? (See also Philippians 2:11.)

After this vision of heavenly joy, what does John now see?

What do the bowls represent? (Seven is the number referring to God's dealings with mankind. The seven bowls remind us this is a total expression of God's wrath..)

- 1) On earth those who trust in Jesus may have appeared to be overcome by God's enemies, but in eternity they praise Him and share His glory in heaven. God will vent His wrath on all who oppose Him.**

For Discussion:

- How did the Church's future look when the dragon was chasing the woman into the desert, or when the Beast was exerting his power (chapters 12 & 13)? What in today's world might cause you to fear for the future of the Church? What comfort does this chapter give you?
- Reply to the person who says, "Christians don't need to hear about God's wrath. They should only hear about His love."

Read Revelation 16:1-11

Recall that the events seen in Revelation are figurative. We would be destroying the language of this vision if we tried to identify the plagues that follow with specific historical events. What we do see in these plagues is God's wrath upon the impenitent. None of them strike God's children. The plagues

resemble in some ways the plagues of Egypt, which stand forever as symbols of God's wrath upon unbelief and the deliverance of His people. They also remind us of the plagues of the seven trumpets (chapter 8). The difference is that the entire earth, not just a fourth or a third, is affected. God's final judgment is coming upon the wicked.

What can we learn about those who seek security and happiness in ungodly secular power or only in earthly things?

(Note: Even the sun, a source of life and hope, becomes a source of pain and agony.)

What is the attitude of these unbelievers as they experience God's wrath?

We can perhaps best understand these plagues as the beginning of the end. The first three bowls seem to picture judgment through the destruction of created things. Bowls four and five picture the torment of the unbeliever as he experiences God's wrath.

2) God's judgments are just and bring Him glory as the Holy One who will not be mocked.

Read Revelation 16:12-21

In general terms, what does John now see?

The enemies of the Lord line up to do battle with him. The kings from the East were God's enemies in ancient times, especially Assyria and Babylon. The Euphrates had served as boundary between Israel and its enemies. Now that boundary is removed. Satan and his agents deceive these people with false signs and wonders. The evil spirits, looking like frogs, represent the deceit and false teaching which leads God's enemies to still assume they can overcome His church. In Egypt frogs were an object of worship since they came from the Nile, which was worshiped as the god Osiris.

What can we expect of Christ (v. 15)?

The battle represents the final trials the ungodly bring upon Christ's people. Since Christ's enemies can't really battle Him, they vent their anger on his Church.

The Battle of Armageddon is the struggle between Jesus' enemies and His Church. Armageddon is the "Mountain of Megiddo." In Hebrew it would be pronounced, "Har Megiddo." It controlled the pass between the Plain of Sharon and the Plain of Esdraelon. Thus it was the scene of many important battles in Israel's history. In Revelation Armageddon represents the final affliction of God's people at the hands of the ungodly. But Christ suddenly appears for Judgment day, which verses 14-21 describe in figurative terms as the fall of Babylon. The hail stones are a flashback to God's judgment through the plagues of Egypt. His judgment is so severe no one can dodge or escape it.

3) On the Last Day Jesus shall end all tribulation for His Church by returning in power and glory. He will then destroy all His enemies.

For Discussion:

- **Why do the impenitent insist on opposing God even when they experience His judgment?**
- **What warning does Jesus give us (v. 15)? Why do we need this warning? What is our hope and confidence?**