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Sermon Notes

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## **The Seven Final Plagues**

### **Revelation 16:1-21**

#### **I. God's Great Patience Finally Runs Out**

##### **A. We Come to the End of the World**

1. One of the most common ways callous people comfort others who are suffering is with the glib phrase: "It's not the end of the world!"
2. As we come this morning to Revelation 16, the seven bowls poured out on the people and the planet earth, we come to the second to last phase of human history... the devastations are so great that there is no way for human life to continue much beyond these plagues
3. This is the end of the world! And it's far more horrible than anything we can possibly imagine

##### **B. Worse Than We Can Imagine**

1. So many different ways creative people have imagined the end of the world
2. I have watched so many movies and read so many books that have involved fictitious descriptions of how the world will end
  - a. One movie was based on the center of the earth ceasing rotation, thus destroying the earth's magnetic field
  - b. Another movie posited a supervirus that went airborne and wiped out massive swaths of the earth's population like in the Black Death

- c. Another fictional work described a world devastated by solar flares that destroyed the ecology of the earth
- d. Then there is the gradual destruction of the breathable air, requiring a remnant of the earth to find another habitable planet
- e. One movie plunges the earth into another ice age
- f. One is based on the premise of a war between human beings and artificially intelligent robots, and the robots won
- g. One posits that the cold war went hot and the human race blew itself back into the stone age
- h. Earthquakes, ecological disasters, alien invasions, collisions with massive asteroids, on and on the human mind comes up with doomsday scenarios for the end of the world
- i. T.S. Eliot says the world will end, “Not with a bang but a whimper.”
- j. Friends... all these theories will prove that people really don't know the future

3.

4.

### C. God's Matchless Patience Described

1. The Apostle Peter says that God's patience is to give time to lost people to repent and come to Christ

***2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.***

***2 Peter 3:15 Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation***

2. The Apostle Paul said God's kindness, tolerance and patience is meant to lead sinners to repentance

3. Paul was eventually brought to Christ because God was amazingly patient with him... he was a rebel, hating Christ, persecuting Christians, dragging off men and women and throwing them in prison... “breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples”
4. When Paul was converted on the Road to Damascus, Jesus said to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads!”
  - a. “goads” are sharpened stakes that the farmer puts behind a fractious beast like an angry ox or horse that has the habit of kicking back every time the master snaps the reins... the sharpened stakes teach an instant lesson not to fight the master
  - b. The goads the Lord put in Paul’s life were inducements for him to come to Christ—blessings if he did, curses if he didn’t
5. When Paul finally came to Christ, he couldn’t stop praising God for his amazing patience in waiting for him to repent

***1 Timothy 1:15-16 Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-- of whom I am the worst. <sup>16</sup> But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.***

6. In Romans 9, Paul writes of the astonishing level of patience God has shown to the wicked, to reprobates who never will repent and believe, but who only stubbornly harden their hearts

***Romans 9:22 What if God, choosing to show his wrath and make his power known, bore with great patience the objects of his wrath-- prepared for destruction?***

7. God is an amazingly patient God
  - a. Despite the fact that Genesis 6:5 says the hearts of the human race were continually wicked, only evil all the time... God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the Ark was being built

- b. He waited for 400 years for the sins of the Amorites in the Promised Land to reach their full measure
  - c. He also waited for 400 years for Egypt to stop enslaving and mistreating his people
  - d. When Israel settled down in the Promised Land under the Old Covenant, God waited patiently for them as they continued to break his laws, violate his statutes, and worship foreign gods... God waited for centuries, sending them prophet after prophet to warn them
8. So it is every day of human history... the river of sin that flows from wicked human hearts every day is incalculable

***Romans 1:28-32 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. <sup>29</sup> They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; <sup>31</sup> they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. <sup>32</sup> Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.***

And yet, God waits patiently... the judgment we sinners so richly deserve does not fall

BUT the scripture clearly reveals, it will not go on forever

#### D. God's Matchless Patience Comes to an End

1. There will come a day, called "The Day of the Lord," in which his righteous judgment will fall
2. No book so clearly reveals the terror of that future day as this book of Revelation... and this chapter is the most dreadful of all the depictions of the general wrath of God on planet earth and its sinful inhabitants

***2 Peter 3:9-10 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. <sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.***

***Romans 2:4-6 do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance? <sup>5</sup> But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. <sup>6</sup> God "will give to each person according to what he has done."***

3. The wrath will be especially fierce for those who have heard the gospel and stubbornly rejected it and have defiantly gone on in sin, provoking the God of heaven directly

***2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. <sup>8</sup> He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. <sup>9</sup> They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power***

#### E. Context in Revelation

1. The seven bowls are the final plagues God sends on the earth... and the most dreadful
2. The Book of Revelation is given to the people of God to know the future events, "what must soon take place" (the first verse declares that—Revelation 1:1, and so also one of the last verses; Revelation 22:6)
3. Revelation 4 reveals the throne of Almighty God, as the sovereign King of the universe
4. Revelation 5 reveals Jesus Christ. The Lion of the Tribe of Judah, the Lamb of God who was slain for the sins of his people... he takes a scroll from the right hand of God—sealed with seven seals

5. Revelation 6: the Lamb commences to break open the seven seals, initiating events, a series of judgments on the earth... what I consider “the beginning of birth pains” that will culminate in the New Heavens and New Earth
6. Revelation 7: the purpose of it all... the assembly of the redeemed from every nation, tribe, people, and language celebrating their salvation through the blood of the Lamb
7. Revelation 8-9: the seven trumpets... a series of devastating judgments initiated by heaven, by angels blowing trumpets
  - a. These judgments are overwhelming, unprecedented in the history of the world: 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of all trees and green, growing things burned up; 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the sea turned to blood resulting in 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the living things in the sea dying and 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the ships being destroyed; 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the fresh water turned to poison; the celestial bodies—sun, moon, stars—struck resulting in a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> reduction of their light; a demonic assault billowing from the abyss resulting in the people on earth being stung as with a scorpion and tormented for five months; a demonic army invading and killing 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the human race
  - b. We can see a very strong correlation between the seven trumpets and seven bowls... so much so that some commentators think they are describing the same judgments
  - c. But there are some key differences
    - i) First: the seven trumpets have a limited effect... as devastating as they are, it's still 1/3<sup>rd</sup>, 1/3<sup>rd</sup>, 1/3<sup>rd</sup>... God was restraining himself even at that points; as we are about to see, the seven bowls are 100%... nothing held back anymore
    - ii) Second: the seven trumpets do not directly assault human beings; the devastation comes more indirectly—the effects on people of the wrecked ecology; but the seven bowls are God's direct wrath poured out immediately on the bodies of human beings
    - iii) Third: therefore, it seems the purpose of the seven trumpets is still an opportunity on the survivors for grace and mercy

from God... it is a trumpet call of warning... the bowls are wrath poured out directly, and the earth cannot long survive these—the end must come in a matter of days

- iv) Fourth: the fourth bowl (the intensification of the sun's power) has no parallel in the trumpets
  - v) Fifth: these bowl judgments are called the final judgments, and with them, the wrath of God is completed...
- d. Better to see the seven bowls as God circling back to finish the task... the time has come for a full display of the wrath of God
8. WHY does God finally end the day of salvation? It's because the hardness of heart and idolatry of the human race has reached such a level that God is done waiting
- a. The astounding and clearly miraculous nature of the seven trumpet judgments should have caused people to repent... instead, they hardened their hearts MORE and become MORE IDOLATROUS

***Revelation 9:20-21 The rest of mankind that were not killed by these plagues still did not repent of the work of their hands; they did not stop worshiping demons, and idols of gold, silver, bronze, stone and wood-- idols that cannot see or hear or walk. <sup>21</sup> Nor did they repent of their murders, their magic arts, their sexual immorality or their thefts.***

- b. Revelation 13 depicts the Antichrist, the Beast, who has risen with the secret power of the devil to rule the entire earth... the false prophet comes along and is empowered to do deceptive signs and wonders causing everyone on earth who is not elect to worship the beast and the idol of the beast
- c. The religion of the world is utterly corrupt and defiant
- d. And the power of the government is overwhelming... the Mark of the Beast is required in order to buy or sell anything... so everyone willingly bows down and worships the beast in open rebellion against the God of Heaven

- e. To make matters worse, there is clear evidence of a powerful level of WITNESSING going on during
- f. The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 powerfully and courageously and miraculously testify to Christ and to the gospel in Jerusalem until they are overpowered and killed by the Antichrist
- g. The so-called Tribulation Saints—believers alive at that time—will consistently refuse to receive the mark of the beast and will be martyred

***Revelation 12:11 They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.***

- h. God will send a special group of totally dedicated men as witnesses all over the world:

***Revelation 14:4-5 These are those who did not defile themselves with women, for they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. <sup>5</sup> No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless.***

- i. And there will be an astounding eagle flying in midair, proclaiming the gospel all over the world

***Revelation 14:6-7 Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth-- to every nation, tribe, language and people. <sup>7</sup> He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of his judgment has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water."***

So... God will wait NO MORE! He will accept NO PRAYERS for a forestalling of his wrath... the day of his wrath has finally come. That is the context for these seven bowls

- F. It all begins with a command from God



***Revelation 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, "Go, pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth."***

Remember that these seven angels were introduced to us in Revelation 15...

***Revelation 15:1 I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues-- last, because with them God's wrath is completed.***

***Revelation 15:5-8 After this I looked and in heaven the temple, that is, the tabernacle of the Testimony, was opened. <sup>6</sup> Out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden sashes around their chests. <sup>7</sup> Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God, who lives for ever and ever. <sup>8</sup> And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.***

These horrific judgments are coming directly from God... and therefore, they are JUST and RIGHTEOUS

As I mentioned before, the pouring out of these bowls onto the earth and sky is spiritual, but it has a clear physical effect

Note: Should we take these seven bowls as symbolic, metaphors for some form of judgment from God? One evangelical commentator rejects any attempt at saying these things will literally happen on the surface of the earth, but sees a symbolic and literary tie to the Exodus plagues, and says that God is telling a general, symbolic, overarching story of judgment and redemption. He says the turning of the sea into blood represents a symbolic judgment on the world ECONOMY, since so much shipping and prosperity comes from the sea. But this generalistic, symbolic approach fails to embrace the text as it is written... the DETAILS of every verse. And it fails to see the powerful link between human sin and the earth.

From the Garden of Eden, God has LINKED the health of planet earth to the rulership of humanity... when Adam sinned, God CURSED THE EARTH because of him, saying it would produce THORNS and THISTLES.

We can see that the curse on the earth has developed since then; and that this overwhelming judgment on the actual planet – on the seas and the fresh water, and on every living thing in them makes perfect sense if we are the rulers of the earth

In the second bowl judgment, every living thing in the sea dies... because of MAN'S SIN!!

This is the clear link made in Psalm 8

***Psalm 8:5-8 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup> You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: <sup>7</sup> all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, <sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.***

So also Romans 8:

***Romans 8:19-22 The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. <sup>20</sup> For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope <sup>21</sup> that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. <sup>22</sup> We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.***

The effect of man's sin on the earth, on its ecology and fruitfulness, is clearly asserted in the Bible. This is the final judgment, paving the way for a New Heaven and New Earth.

## II. The Seven Bowls Described

### A. The First Bowl: Malignant Sores (vs. 2)

***Revelation 16:2 The first angel went and poured out his bowl on the land, and ugly and painful sores broke out on the people who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.***

1. The angel DOES NOT HESITATE, but pours out his poisonous bowl onto the LAND... and it results in a direct assault on the bodies of people
2. “Loathsome and malignant sores”... festering boils, painful, incurable
3. Greek word tied to our English word *ulcer*
4. The result: overpowering suffering for people
  - a. This earthly physical torment is similar to the locust/scorpion plague of the fifth trumpet (Revelation 9)... only the entire population of the earth that worships the Beast is involved
  - b. It is an agony unlike anything they have ever experienced... but it will be as nothing compared to the torments of hell
5. WHO? Everyone who has received the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image
6. Saints are excluded... protected by the hand of God

The Lord knew how to rescue Noah and his family from the worldwide flood... he knew how to rescue Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah... so

***2 Peter 2:9 the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment.***

B. The Second Bowl: The Entire Sea Turned to Blood, Every Living Sea Creature Dies (vs. 3)

***Revelation 16:3 The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it turned into blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.***

1. Obviously this plague is just like the second trumpet judgment (Revelation 8:8-9)... only this time, it extends to the ENTIRE OCEAN and to every living thing in the sea

2. The sea is turned into blood like that of a dead man... meaning thick, dark, coagulated, like the pool of blood from someone gunned to death
3. Some commentators liken it to the Red Tide

National Geographic: Red Tide is also known as 'Harmful algal blooms', or HABs; it occurs when colonies of algae – simple plants that live in the sea and freshwater – grow out of control while producing toxic or harmful effects on people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals, and birds.

4. The plague at the end of the world will be worst than any Red Tide ever recorded... EVERY LIVING THING IN THE SEA WILL DIE
5. Oceanographers estimate that there are 230,000 different species of marine life
  - a. Fish: mackerel, flounder, swordfish, sharks, stingrays,
  - b. Jelly fish, Orcas, great white sharks, cod, dolphins...
  - c. Even the plankton, plant life in the sea...
  - d. Biologists estimate that 50-80% of all living things are in the sea
  - e. UNLIKE NOAH'S FLOOD... in which all the sea creatures survived just fine, this time, they will die first
6. After the sea dies, the human race must die quickly as well
  - a. From the sea we get 70% of our oxygen, generated by marine plants
  - b. From the sea we get 83% of our rainwater...
    - i) Given the fact that God is about to pollute all the freshwater as well, there will soon be nothing to drink

C. The Third Bowl: All Fresh Water Turned to Blood (vs. 4-7)

***Revelation 16:4 The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.***

1. This is a worldwide expansion of the third trumpet judgment... which polluted 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the world's freshwater supply
2. Now... all the rivers and springs of freshwater in the world are turned to blood

John MacArthur: "The destruction of what is left of the earth's freshwater will cause unthinkable hardship and suffering. There will be no water to drink; no clean water to wash the oozing sores caused by the first bowl judgment; no water to bring cooling relief from the scorching heat that the fourth bowl judgment is about to bring. The scene will be so unimaginably horrible that people will wonder how a God of compassion, mercy, and grace could send such a judgment. So... an angel speaks in God's defense:"

***Revelation 16:5-7 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say: "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; <sup>6</sup> for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve." <sup>7</sup> And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."***

3. These devastating judgments from God are displays of his perfect wisdom, justice and righteousness
  - a. Finite sinners deserve infinite punishment for their rejection of an infinitely glorious God
  - b. That will be even more clearly on display in eternity in hell
4. Beyond this, we must see the way the angels all think
  - a. The angel pouring out this unspeakable wrath on the people of the earth is not squeamish or embarrassed about what his King has decreed that he should do
  - b. He doesn't shrink back or question it at all
  - c. Rather, the angel in charge of the waters CELEBRATES the justice of God's judgments!

***YOU ARE JUST IN THESE JUDGMENTS... you who ARE and WERE the Holy One***

- d. And look at the heavenly logic... why is God just in these specific judgments? Because this is what he judged to do!
- e. God is the STANDARD... the definition of justice!

As Abraham pressed God before destroying Sodom and Gomorrah... he pressed him on the issue of God sweeping away both the righteous and the wicked with the same fiery judgment:

***Genesis 18:25 Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"***

- f. That implies that there is a moral standard HIGHER THAN GOD that even he must obey
- g. But God IS the standard... and the angel knows that everything God does is just and right

***Daniel 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because everything he does is right and all his ways are just.***

- h. We need to think more that way! God cannot act contrary to his nature... and his nature is the measuring stick for all moral actions
5. HOWEVER... the angel goes beyond this to see a certain symmetry, an obvious justice and parallelism to what he is doing:

***Revelation 16:5-6 "You are just in these judgments, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have so judged; <sup>6</sup> for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."***

- a. Angels and humans alike are created to be like God in our ability to APPRAISE his actions and evaluate them and praise him for them
- b. It is APPROPRIATE for these blood-thirsty killers... who have hated God's people, who have chased them and rooted them out of their hiding places and seen to their execution, who have

approved of their deaths even if they were not directly involved as agents of the Antichrist's police-state

- c. It just MAKES SENSE... it just LINES UP with what SEEMS JUST

***Proverbs 26:27 If a man digs a pit, he will fall into it; if a man rolls a stone, it will roll back on him.***

The altar's response probably refers to the many prayers of the martyrs that ascended to God pleading for vengeance... like those after the fifth seal:

***Revelation 6:10-11 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" <sup>11</sup> Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.***

D. The Fourth Bowl: People Scorched by the Sun's Heat (vs. 8-9)

***Revelation 16:8-9 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup> They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.***

1. The sun has served planet earth since the 4<sup>th</sup> day of creation... it gives the world light, heat, energy... every living thing on earth ultimately depends on the sun for its continued life
2. The sun is massive... 109 times larger than the earth... you could fit over 1 million earths inside the sun
3. Every second, the sun puts off the equivalent of half a million years' worth of the energy used by the human race
4. The sun is staggeringly hot... 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit at its outermost surface... five times hotter than molten lava; at its core, the sun is 27 million degrees F!

5. It is 93 million miles from the earth... just the exact proper distance necessary to allow life to occur on earth
  - a. Near the equator is where the hottest temperatures on earth occur; and at the poles is where the coldest places are... the earth's diameter is roughly 8000 miles, so that means the equator is roughly 8000 miles closer to the sun than the North Pole is... that is almost immeasurably insignificant difference when compared with 93 million miles... less than .01% closer!!
  - b. If the earth were just 1% closer to the sun, we would all be incinerated by the sun's intense heat
  - c. But all of the sun's power and heat is as nothing compared to that of GOD!

***Hebrews 12:29 our "God is a consuming fire."***

God sustains the sun in its burning every moment by his awesome power

6. When the fourth angel pours out his bowl, God will cause the heat of the sun greatly to increase on the surface of the earth
  - a. People's skin will be seared, and they will be in agony
  - b. The increase of the sun's heat will not be enough instantly to kill people... but the pain will be indescribable... and as we mentioned, no water with which to quench thirst
  - c. Another effect of the increase of the sun's heat will be the melting of the polar ice caps... and the resulting rise in the ocean's water level will inundate the coastal regions, flooding the inland territories with the filthy, noxious blood-like viscous ocean water filled with the dead carcasses of all the fish
  - d. Widespread disease and misery will come ... and many will die as a result
7. People's response:



***Revelation 16:9 They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.***

a. We'll go back and discuss this at the end!

E. The Fifth Bowl: Darkness (vs. 10-11)

***Revelation 16:10-11 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony <sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.***

1. God has given the gift of light as his first creation...

***1 John 1:5 God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.***

***Genesis 1:3-4 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. <sup>4</sup> God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness.***

2. Jesus came into the world to bring spiritual light...

***John 1:4-5 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.***

***Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.***

3. The darkness represents people's ignorance of God, and their wickedness in loving the deeds of darkness

***John 3:19 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.***

4. Because the world hated light, they killed Christ... and they will continue to love darkness rather than his light right to the end of the world

5. So, as a perfect act of judgment, the fifth angel will pour out his bowl of judgment on the THRONE of the beast

- a. The throne represents the seat of the Antichrist's power, the place from which he rules the world under the Prince of Darkness, Satan himself
- b. This judgment shows conclusively how POWERLESS Satan and the Antichrist are to stop God and the power of his judgments

***Joel 2:1-2 Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the LORD is coming. It is close at hand-- <sup>2</sup> a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness.***

6. Just like the plague on Egypt

***Exodus 10:21-23 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-- darkness that can be felt." <sup>22</sup> So Moses stretched out his hand toward the sky, and total darkness covered all Egypt for three days. <sup>23</sup> No one could see anyone else or leave his place for three days.***

Now at that time, God made an exception for his people:

***Exodus 10:23 Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.***

So it may be for Christians at that time

7. Practical insights

- a. What would it be like to live through a single day with absolutely no light?!
- b. They have been walking in spiritual darkness; now they will walk in physical darkness
- c. The darkness of hell will be worse, for it will be eternal

8. Physical pain of HEAT (burning by the sun) coupled with total darkness... very much like hell

***Matthew 8:12 will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."***

So also these people will be gnawing their tongues for the cumulative pain they will be feeling – pain of the sores, and thirst, and disease, and pain from the sun, and from smashing into things that you can't see

9. But they WILL NOT REPENT, but rather will CURSE GOD for the suffering he is bringing upon them

10. More on that in a moment!

F. The Sixth Bowl: The Way Opened for the Final Battle (vs 12-16)

***Revelation 16:12-16 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the East. <sup>13</sup> Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty. <sup>15</sup> "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed." <sup>16</sup> Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.***

1. Unlike the other bowls, this judgment does not directly assault the human race
2. Rather, it is preparatory for the coming battle between the forces of the Antichrist and the heavenly armies led by Jesus Christ
3. The flooding which will come because of the melting of the polar ice caps will make it very difficult for a massive army to march and get where it wants to go
4. The Euphrates River was the boundary for the demonic army that assaulted the earth in the sixth trumpet (Revelation 9:14); it was the northernmost boundary of the land allotted to Israel... it was therefore the last barrier protecting Israel from the dreaded Gentile armies that would invade from the north

***Jeremiah 1:13-15 The word of the LORD came to me again: "What do you see?" "I see a boiling pot, tilting away from the north," I answered. <sup>14</sup> The LORD said to me, "From the north disaster will be poured out on all who live in the land. <sup>15</sup> I am about to summon all the peoples of the northern kingdoms," declares the LORD. "Their kings will come and set up their thrones in the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem***

5. This time the Lord is moving these wicked armies, under the ultimate power of the Antichrist, to Palestine to assault the Jews (now believers in Christ) and wipe them out once and for all
6. The Lord is opening the way for these armies to be assembled and to move south to kill God's people... he is gathering them to be slaughtered in the Battle of Armageddon
7. So also Satan will speak through false prophets to move these kings to lead their armies in service to the Antichrist
  - a. The lying spirits he puts in the mouths of these false prophets are likened in the text to FROGS... unclean, nasty creatures
  - b. With the lies come the evidence of false miracles... like those the False Prophet was said to be able to do in service to the Antichrist (Revelation 13:13-14)
8. We will learn more about these wicked kings in Revelation 17
9. They will be gathered to a place in the text called "Armageddon"... a plain about sixty miles north of Jerusalem
10. There the final battle will occur between the forces of sinful man under the Antichrist, and the heavenly armies that will descend under the command of Christ
11. Warning and encouragement to Christians to heed

***Revelation 16:15 "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."***

- a. This should remind us of the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins

- b. Jesus will come like a thief... the world will not be expecting him... but that day should NOT SURPRISE US as it does them
- c. So we are to be dressed and ready, keeping our lamps burning with zeal, ready at any moment for the Lord to return
- d. We are to be clothed in holiness and righteousness, clothed with Christ and living out holiness every day

G. The Seventh Bowl: Massive Earthquake, Hailstones (vs. 17-21)

***Revelation 16:17-21 The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and out of the temple came a loud voice from the throne, saying, "It is done!"<sup>18</sup> Then there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder and a severe earthquake. No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.<sup>19</sup> The great city split into three parts, and the cities of the nations collapsed. God remembered Babylon the Great and gave her the cup filled with the wine of the fury of his wrath.<sup>20</sup> Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.<sup>21</sup> From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.***

1. The seventh bowl is the final display of God's direct wrath on the earth before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ
2. The angel pours out his bowl INTO THE AIR... mindful of the fact that Satan is called "the Prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)
  - a. Notice that the earth, the sea, the waters, the throne of Satan, the sun, and the atmosphere are the targets of these bowls
  - b. Every realm is subject to the judgment of God
3. After the angel pours out his bowl into the air, there is again the evidence of the power and wrath of God... FLASHES OF LIGHTNING, SOUNDS and PEALS of THUNDER

- a. These powerful sights and sounds have always terrified the human race and have stood as displays of the superior power of God over our weakness
  - b. Such a storm is a fitting end to the outpouring of the wrath of God on earth
4. This bowl results in a massive earthquake... the great city is split into three pieces (this may either refer to Jerusalem or to the city of Babylon the Great where Antichrist has his throne)
- a. Few events on earth can so remind human beings of their weakness and impotence as does an earthquake

Illus. Experience in Tokushima, Japan, on January 17, 1995

- b. But this earthquake will be greater than any in human history

***Revelation 16:18 No earthquake like it has ever occurred since man has been on earth, so tremendous was the quake.***

***Revelation 16:20 Every island fled away and the mountains could not be found.***

- c. This is a direct judgment on “Babylon the Great”... the wicked empire that the Antichrist will set up... God will remember all the wicked acts of that empire—its king (Antichrist) and all its servants... as we already saw when the third angel poured out his bowl on the waters turning them into blood and remembered all the bloodshed the inhabitants of the earth had done

- 5. Final action: massive hailstones

***Revelation 16:21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men.***

Hailstones are usually just a few ounces, and they do terrible damage... but these weigh about 100 pounds... utterly deadly

### III. The Cumulative Effect: Suffering, but no Repentance

- A. The Worst Part of these Plagues Physically: THEY WILL BE CUMULATIVE

## B. The Worst Part of the Plagues Spiritually: THEY WILL PRODUCE NO REPENTANCE

1. Again and again, this chapter has reported this terrible fact... these judgments which were so clearly the action of God... NO DOUBT ABOUT IT (in that they come in rapid-fire succession, one right after the other)... could have been an instrument of conversion and salvation

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved.

*Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

2. And so, this chapter has the steady drone of increasingly hardened reactions by the sinners who are being judged

*Revelation 16:8-9 The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and the sun was given power to scorch people with fire. <sup>9</sup> They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify him.*

*Revelation 16:10-11 The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom was plunged into darkness. Men gnawed their tongues in agony <sup>11</sup> and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, but they refused to repent of what they had done.*

This is a foretaste of hell... people will not repent after a long time in hell... they will be ever-increasingly bitter at God, expressing overt hatred toward him

*Revelation 16:21 From the sky huge hailstones of about a hundred pounds each fell upon men. And they cursed God on account of the plague of hail, because the plague was so terrible.*

## C. Salvation is a Gift from God

1. Repentance is a gift from God... God “grants” people repentance (2 Timothy 2, Acts 11)

2. No matter how many supernatural actions God brings—whether healings by Jesus or judgments by these angels—people will never repent unless God works it in them!

So... repent and trust Christ NOW while there's time!

And if you are a Christian, warn people of these coming judgments