

Study 31: Revelation 16:1-7

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."

- My, oh my. We start again this week with a familiar phrase: "I heard a loud voice from heaven." What is heaven saying to you? When I was a pastor, I would almost always start my counseling sessions with people by asking, "What is the Lord saying to you?"
- Most people get hung up on hearing the voice of God. But God is a great communicator. He speaks through His Word, circumstances, other people, and even some people who don't know that God is speaking to you through them. If your heart is to hear God, then He will make sure you hear Him.

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe (Hebrews 1:1-2).

- I can find at least five references in the book of Acts that state, "The Holy Spirit spoke or said." What is the Holy Spirit saying to you today, right now? It is important to be in touch with that at all times.
- The seven angels are holding bowls of God's wrath. Fortunately, these bowls are not under their supervision and control. These bowls are under God's control. There are seven bowls, and seven as we learned in the last study, is the number of spiritual perfection. So God has a perfect plan to pour out His wrath on the earth.
- I trust God. I have learned that He is just and merciful. For God to pour out judgment is an act that is pure. I know when God pours out wrath, He is not being arbitrary or cruel. Not everyone agrees with that statement, as we will see a little later in this study.

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.

- This is similar to one of the plagues that the Lord brought on Egypt through Moses:

Then the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from a furnace and have Moses toss it into the air in the presence of Pharaoh. It will become fine dust over the whole land of Egypt, and festering boils will break out on men and animals throughout the land." So they took soot from a furnace and stood before Pharaoh. Moses tossed it into the air, and festering boils broke out on men and animals. The magicians could not stand before Moses because

of the boils that were on them and on all the Egyptians (Exodus 9:8-11).

- Anyone familiar with the Old Testament would recognize that the magicians in Egypt were powerless to withstand this plague. No matter what the early Church was going through, there was no power that could stand against God. If any power has seeming success or has the upper hand, so to speak, it is only with God's permission. He is sovereign and none can withstand His hand.
- Those who don't worship God do not have the physical protection that the people of God do. We are so frail. A few days without water, a week without food, a month without sunlight and we can be in bad shape. It is easy to take our physical well being for granted, but we ought to thank God regularly for health and wellness.
- It is of note that here God marks the people who worship the beast with His own external markings, just like they had adopted their "mark" to identify with the beast.
- There are seven bowls, just like there were seven trumpets. The rise of any antichristian system, no matter how pervasive or world encompassing, is no match for the power of God. Every "ism" that every existed or will exist has or will be a "wasm."
- Nature is under God's power. The fact that He inflicts such judgments on natural resources shows His power and absolute control over all of life and creation. I fear no act of the beast because my faith is in God. Where is your faith?

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.

- This second bowl resembles another plague that the Lord inflicted on Egypt:

This is what the LORD says: By this you will know that I am the LORD: With the staff that is in my hand I will strike the water of the Nile, and it will be changed into blood. The fish in the Nile will die, and the river will stink; the Egyptians will not be able to drink its water." The LORD said to Moses, "Tell Aaron, 'Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt-- over the streams and canals, over the ponds and all the reservoirs'-- and they will turn to blood. Blood will be everywhere in Egypt, even in the wooden buckets and stone jars." Moses and Aaron did just as the LORD had commanded. He raised his staff in the presence of Pharaoh and his officials and struck the water of the Nile, and all the water was changed into blood. The fish in the Nile died, and the river smelled so bad that the Egyptians could not drink its water. Blood was everywhere in Egypt. But the Egyptian magicians did the same things by their secret arts, and Pharaoh's heart became hard; he would not listen to Moses and Aaron, just as the LORD had said (Exodus 7:17-22).

- It is interesting that the magicians were able to duplicate this phenomenon through their magic arts. The enemy of God will try to confuse God's message to the world so that people do not repent and turn to God.
- The devil, God's enemy, will produce deceitful explanations of what God is doing to confuse and hide God's work of judgment. He will help men define natural explanations for the intervention of God in the affairs of men.
- The magicians had secret arts that turned the water into blood. We should not be naïve that evil is sophisticated to some extent and has power.
- The fact that the seas were turned to blood speaks to me of God doing something of judgment on a worldwide scale.
- In Jesus' ministry, He turned water into wine for celebration and joy. Here God turns water into blood. God is able to take the most basic experience, symbolized as water, and turn it into something that sustains life or takes it away.

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

- Rivers and springs speak to me of more localized judgments inflicted upon certain areas and peoples. God is specific in His works.
- But let's look at it from another perspective. There is a promise that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the seas (see Isaiah 11:9). Let's assume that the seas and rivers symbolize knowledge systems or philosophies. Here the seas of the beast, his knowledge and teaching, become a source of poison in which nothing can exist. That is where all false religions and philosophies end: in death. The very source that promised life will ultimately take it away.
- That is why it is so critical that we have a correct understanding of who God is and how He acts. God can be a source of life but not choosing God is a source of death.

5 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;

- God is just. When judgment comes, it is a last resort. You can be sure that God has reached out to speak and turn people from their wicked ways. In the fullness of time, He then judges.
- Here heaven declares God's justice. Heaven not only acts, but interprets its own actions. We cannot understand God apart from God! We cannot figure God out according to human thinking. We must allow God to explain Himself and His actions.
- My role is not to defend God; He can defend Himself. My job is to tell people of His goodness and mercy and let God explain Himself to those with whom I am in contact.

6 for they have shed the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink as they deserve."

- So that is why the water is turned to blood. It is because the followers of the beast have killed God's people. They are now reaping what they have sown! In a sense, they determined their own method of being judged. They choose blood shed and now blood is being returned to them many times over!

7 And I heard the altar respond: "Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and just are your judgments."

- I have heard many people say at one time or another: "How could God do that, or allow that to happen?" We must not judge God or His actions; God judges us. We don't interpret God through our limited understanding; we interpret God through the revelation He gives us about Himself.
- John continually saw and heard things from heaven. What are you hearing from heaven? If your "revelation" leads to any conclusion other than God is just and true, then you don't have a revelation from heaven.