

Revelation  
Ch 16:1-9

Revelation has multiple camera angels on how we are to see what God is doing:

There are the Seven Seals, Trumpets, Bowls

We get multiple angels of how we see reality between Resurrection and return of Christ. We are getting reality from God's perspective: EX: like Kings vs Chronicles

Seals – believers and unbelievers

Trumpets – unbelievers

Bowls – Empire of man – Babylon

Revelation is not a code book; it is a picture book. It is not a theological essay like Paul might have written. It is a pastoral, prophetic, apocalyptic letter filled with symbols, visions, and imagery.

**REVELATION 16 Babylon is Judged**

**Six Bowls of Wrath**

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

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

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

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

So, what would those first century readers have gathered from Revelation 16 and the account of the seven bowls of God's wrath being poured out on the earth?

He is telling the saints that victory will be ours!

The similarities between the judgments of the trumpets and that of the bowls is unmistakable. The trumpets are directed against (1) the earth, (2) sea, (3) rivers/streams, (4) sun, (5) realm of beast, and (6) the Euphrates River. Exactly the same targets in the bowls of wrath. But there is a progression in intensity of judgment, the magnitude of judgment. The trumpets affect one-third of their objects but the bowls affect the whole of their objects.

Dr. Rayburn...

A first century reader would gather from this chapter the same lessons that have been taught throughout the book so far:

- 1) the moral/spiritual/political system of this world is organized in opposition to God by the unseen hand of the Devil and so is and remains opposed to the kingdom and the people of God;
- 2) that evil kingdom stands under divine judgment and must at last be destroyed, however much difficulty it may cause believers until it is;
- 3) that believers will often be caught up in the judgments visited upon mankind simply because they are part of mankind; they may bear the mark of the Lord and be safe from any ultimate harm, but they live in a world being punished; and
- 4) it is the believer's calling to remain spiritually alert, aware of his or her situation in the world, faithful to the Lord Jesus no matter the cost, in the confidence that such faith and loyalty will be vindicated in due time.

Various passages of scripture give differing perspectives on the dynamics of salvation.

Jesus speaks of the fields being ripe for harvest and that is echoed in Rev 14.

Jesus also speaks of the hardness of the human heart in [John 3:19-20](#) "The light from heaven came into the world, but they loved the darkness more than the light for their deeds were evil. 20 They hated the heavenly light because they wanted to sin in the darkness."

While we know that no one is beyond the power of God's saving grace, Revelation gives a less than cheerful picture of mankind's desire to come to God.

Unlike the interlude of comfort that we saw with the seal and trumpet cycles, i.e. 1-6 followed by an interlude prior to the 7<sup>th</sup>. Here, the seven bowls or plagues begin and unfold intensely without the interlude of comfort.

### **THE OBJECTS OF THE WRATH – v.1-2**

The voice comes from the TEMPLE, i.e. the presence of God.

"The earth and the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshipped his image."

Unlike ch 8 with the trumpets, where the judgment was on a third (1/3) of the earth etc, here there is no restriction. Entire areas are impacted. This final series brings a greater intensity even as it recapitulates the previous two series of seals and trumpets.

### **God understands the realm of "earth dwellers"**

v. 1 "on the earth" is their realm. They are not concerned about Christ who is seated above. Their concern is for the here and now. They are Defined by what happens here. Their values, resources, heroes, joy, and identity come from "the earth."

EX: Identity issues have risen like a flood in the past few years. This is because of the worldview shift in the culture that has slowly seeped into everything.

A recent book by [Carl Trueman, A Strange New World](#), explains how "Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution."

This is so relevant today because we are seeing in real time how earth dwellers are displaying their rebellion against God's ordained institutions and reality. And women, men, and children are being damaged.

The book explains how we got to where we hear language about “denying someone’s existence if you don’t celebrate or at least affirm their sexual identity.” Up until the past few hundred years, the idea of the self was focused on an interior life that had God as a significant reference point. The person was a creature of God, who sought to conform himself to the truth and to objective moral standards, in pursuit of eternal values. Modern man, however, seeks to be “true to himself.”

Authenticity to inner feelings, rather than adherence to transcendent truths, becomes the norm. This modern self, then, is not accountable to those who explain how to conform oneself to God but to the therapists who counsel how to be true to oneself—thus giving rise to what Philip Rieff described as the “triumph of the therapeutic.”

And it is this therapeutic self that then becomes sexualized and politicized, it becomes the focal point of personal identity and existence. So, the current mantra is that “if you disagree with someone’s sexualized and politicized self, you have denied their existence.”

This is the latest installment of what being a secular earth dweller looks like.

Trueman, Carl R.. *Strange New World* (pp. 11-12). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

VoV – Colloquy on Rejoicing

“Have you sought joys in some creature comforts?

Look not below God for happiness; fall not asleep in Delilah’s lap.

Let God be your all in all.”

Christianity is about two realms – the earth below and the kingdom of God above.

God is pouring out His wrath on this realm below. As Christians, by grace, we belong to the kingdom above.

We should think differently:

We focus on biblical preaching, not man-centered Political schemes

Theology, not Theories

Promises of grace, not Will power

Salvation power, not Statist power

Repentance, not Revolution

As citizens of heaven, our realm is above – not on earth Phil 3

18 For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;

**This text helps us Understand Their condition: they are under wrath**

God’s wrath is upon the earth and its empires. He gives them over Rom 1

There is no apology or sense of embarrassment on the part of the angels in declaring these things. Those judged have the mark and worship the image of the Beast

The “sores” are, in part, the agony of unbelief and the judgement of God.. Isa 1:4-6

They result from the madness of unbelief as people are weighed down with iniquity.

5. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint.  
6 From the sole of the foot even to the head  
There is nothing sound in it,  
Only bruises, welts and raw wounds,  
Not pressed out or bandaged,  
Nor softened with oil.      Isa 1:4-6

NOTE THE GOSPEL PROMISE: There is No wrath on those in the kingdom of God. Jesus took it as He drank the cup.

Andrew Peterson...

On Sunday You came as a King, On Monday washed the temple clean  
On Tuesday You told of what will be, On Wednesday You waited patiently  
On Thursday You said it is time, I'll drink this cup 'cause it is mine  
On Friday, Lord, You poured the wine

We now have God's favor so that we can pursue kingdom values.  
Don't be impressed with Babylon.  
Don't be bullied by Babylon or those who compromise with her.

We must keep our conduct holy without being impressed by the man's empire. We need to keep our kids from being indoctrinated by the empire's entertainment centers. We need to instruct our kids, catechize our kids or else Babylon will. We must explain to our kids what the world is and what its values are.

#### **v. 3-4 Judgement on their resources:**

The Roman empire is built around the Mediterranean Sea, so a sea and rivers of blood would shut down commerce, travel, and a major food source. The economy collapses in financial ruin.

In our own day, in the providence of God, we are seeing crises in humanity that show the frailty of our human idols. I think it is biblical reasonable to see this as a form of God's strange grace to get our attention.

In scripture God used such means to call people to repentance. – Exodus; Amos

This pattern continues through v. 9 where we see the result ...AND THEY DID NOT REPENT.

EX: Exodus and the plagues – Pharaoh

#### **V. 5-7 THEIR Demeanor and God's Righteousness**

God brings justice for those who "Pour out the blood of the saints and prophets." The original audience could resonate with this issue. They knew persecution from Rome – burned at the stake, fed to beasts in the arena, beheaded, acts of bloodshed.

It would have been natural for them to ask, "Where is Jesus when his people suffer? Where is justice?"

v. 5-7 highlight the righteous character and judgements of God. The angels don't apologize for God's justice. The God "who is and who was" knows all and he will bring about justice. He is not some aloof cosmic force. He is the Almighty who is true and righteous in His judgements.

The “earth dwellers” learn that when you pour out the blood of the saints, then justice may be served to you as a bloody beverage.

This text reminds us that we don’t have to wonder how the world feels about us. THEY hate us, the church.

Even those who don’t openly kill the saints are part of the beastly culture that enables and condones it. Those who live in silent rebellion against God wear the mark of the beast. Even the respectable people who refuse to acknowledge the Creator and worship the creature instead fall under the justice of God. For they too refuse to give thanks, praise, and glory to God.

Don’t play the game of trying to please or appease the world so that they’ll speak well of us. Babylon is under wrath, and no matter how far you go to appease her, she still hates you.

We’ve all heard this argument: “the world hates us because we’re so mean”

That may explain a small part of it, but Jesus gives a better explanation.

**In 15 <sup>17</sup> I demand that you love each other, <sup>18</sup> for you get enough hate from the world! But then, it hated me before it hated you. <sup>19</sup> The world would love you if you belonged to it; but you don’t—for I chose you to come out of the world, and so it hates you. (Living Bible)**

It’s just Not that confusing. It’s simpler than we think, and it is more alarming than we think. We may not like it being so cut and dry but that’s how Jesus sees it.

v. 5 God is righteous in his judgements. He is not righteous if he doesn’t judge the evil upon the earth.

God is not unjust for the judgement is deserved.

Many might question if the “punishment fits the crime.”

Who is in a better position to determine that? Us or God?

**God has shown Himself to be full of compassion and grace, but we’ve never shown an inclination towards holiness and righteousness. He sees the full picture while our perspective is very limited.**

God will bring righteous judgement, so we don’t have to. God has our back.

1 Pet 3-4 Don’t be persecuted for the wrong things. Suffer for God and the gospel, not for doing wrong.

EX: Book of Acts – persecution because the gracious message of salvation in Christ alone went to Jew and Gentile. And they were persecuted because the worship of Christ alone was a social, spiritual, and political offense to those who worshipped the Emperor.

### **v. 8-9 Hardness of Heart**

**They don’t repent** – like Pharaoh in Exodus

There is a divine purpose that we don’t see in the ways of God. Scripture reveals that God providentially acts in disciplinary judgement to bring hearts to repentance. We see this clearly revealed in God’s dealings with Israel in Amos 4-6. God brings about calamities, but He is ignored. “You have not returned to Me” is the refrain of ch 4. “Seek me that you may live” is the refrain of Amos 5.

Here in Revelation 16 God demonstrates the same care on the 'earth dwellers', but they do not repent.

We would like to think that those who get a taste of the fragility of this life would stop and call on God.

Rather than repent they blaspheme the name of God. So would I, and so would you. Apart from the grace of God, we love the darkness more than the light.

We recoil at the thought of judgement if we misunderstand the nature of those who receive the wrath of God. Wrath does not come upon those who are sorry for their rebellion against God. No, God brings what is deserved to those who have been hostile to Him and His people.

As C.S. Lewis observed, the doors of hell are locked from the inside. The earth dwellers who worship the Beast simply won't have heaven on God's terms. The motto of Babylon is "I'LL DO IT MY WAY."

How should we then live?

A life of gratitude for the saving grace of God!

A lifestyle of repentance as we seek to glorify God in all that we do and say.

When the world sees common benefits removed in the plagues, they curse God - v. 9

For believers, it should be different because our benefits and identity can never be taken from us. We can still bless God because the true eternal blessings are still ours.

The devil wants to attach a message of complaint and blasphemy when trials arrive.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord" is at the core of our true self in Christ.

The world needs to hear and see that. It is a way for our hope to be seen as real in Babylon.

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