

THE GRACE OF WRATH

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

Text

Revelation 16:1-21

Topic

Despite God's severe measures to bring them to repentance, those who inhabit Earth blaspheme Him

Title

***"Blah, Blah, Blasphemer,
Have You Any Shame?"***

The world population is closing in on 7.9b.

Despite that hefty number, when trying to emphasize a point, we often claim, "There are only two kinds of people in the world."

A Portuguese artist created the blog *2 Kinds of People*. It is a series of paired illustrations that identify two approaches to a behavior.

Think of two Hershey's plain candy bars, unwrapped, lying side-by-side:

- One of them has a bite mark in the upper right corner.
- The other is broken evenly along the indented lines in the upper right corner.

Thus there are only two kinds of people - those who *bite the bar* and those who *break the bar*.

Another paired illustration shows two iPhone screens. One has multiple apps with notifications, while the other is free from any pending notifications. Thus there are only two kinds of people - those with notifications cluttering their screen and those with an uncluttered screen.

Indulge me for one more. Do you add milk to cereal or cereal to milk?

There are only two kinds of people in chapter sixteen of the Revelation. Those whom God has blessed, and those who blaspheme God.

- In verse fifteen, the Lord speaks, saying, "Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments..."
- In verses nine, eleven, and twenty-one, we are told men "blaspheme" the name of God.

God has blessed those of you who are in Christ with the gift of salvation received by faith. Those of you unsaved are blaspheming God. We will discuss what that means.

One more thing. Jesus interjects in verse fifteen, saying, "Behold, I am coming as a thief."

I'll organize my comments around two points: **#1 Since You Are Blessed By God, Jesus Doesn't Come Upon You As A Thief**, but **#2 If You Are A Blasphemer, Jesus Does Come Upon You As A Thief**.

#1 - Since You Are Blessed By God, Jesus Doesn't Come Upon You As A Thief (v1-16)

During their military operations in Lebanon in 1982 and 1996, warnings were given by Israel to the civilian population of southern Lebanon before attacks through the distribution of leaflets and via radio and loudspeakers, as well as by telephone calls.

The measures taken by Israel to warn the civilian population during the operation have been described by some as “probably the most extensive, and most specific, warnings of offensive operations over such a short period in the history of warfare.”

Jesus gives an advance warning to those who dwell on Earth, saying in verse fifteen, “I am coming as a thief.”

Rev 16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.”

You know by now that Jesus took from His Father a scroll having seven seals. Beginning in chapter six, the Lord opened the seals in succession:

- When Jesus opened the seventh seal, seven angels were given seven trumpets to blow in succession.
- When the seventh trumpet was blown, seven angels were given seven bowls to pour out upon Earth in succession.

We have come to the bowls, late in the seven-year Great Tribulation and on the verge of Jesus’ Second Coming.

The “Wrath of God” is His divine response, in His perfect holiness, to mankind’s disobedience and sin. You could say that from cover to cover the Bible is a display of the Wrath of God, from compassion to condemnation.

The plagues in the following verses are awful. I need not describe them in detail. They speak for themselves. What I will say is that they are literal.

I’ve mentioned before in our studies that it has become popular among Christians to reject the futurist interpretation of this book:

- Futurists - that’s us - believe the Revelation is primarily about future events that have not yet occurred but will occur.

- The non-futurists claim that the Revelation was mostly fulfilled in the first century with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans.

The plagues in this chapter are reminiscent of the plagues that were meted out upon Egypt before Israel's Exodus. Question: Were the ten plagues against Egypt literal? Yes, and so will be the plagues we read about today. Nothing like them in their scope and severity has happened anytime in human history.

Rev 16:2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

- The "Beast" is the world leader we call the antichrist. He has a considerable number of names in the Bible.
- Chapter thirteen described his "image" in a way that reminds us of Artificial Intelligence.
- His "mark" is something *in or on your hand or forehead* by which you to participate in contactless, cashless transactions.

At the very middle of the Great Tribulation, the Beast will enter the re-erected Jewish Temple and desecrate it by demanding to be worshipped.

Angels warn those who inhabit Earth to refuse to worship him or be lost for all eternity. The majority of mankind ignores God's compassion and worships the Beast.

Rev 16:3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead *man*; and every living creature in the sea died.

This is global in its scope. All bodies of water that are "seas" are affected.

The "blood" of a "dead man" pools, then separates. It leaves dark red gunk at the lowest point and a light-colored fluid above that. Add to that the putrefaction of the death of "every living creature in the sea."

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

I feel for you folks in Lemoore, struggling in the aftermath of the incident that has affected your water supply. In the final months of the Great Tribulation, there will be no source of potable water on the planet.

Rev 16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying: "You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.

Rev 16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due."

Angels are "an eye for an eye" group. Those who "shed the blood of saints and prophets" having only "blood" to drink seems about right to them.

We are not to think eye-for-an-eye in the dispensation of the Church Age. The first Christian martyr was Stephen. We read in the Book of Acts, "And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on *God* and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (7:59-60).

We are to expect mistreatment and respond to it with compassion for the spiritual blindness of those who are perishing.

Our Lord "is," "was," and "is to be." It is a way of proclaiming God is eternal in words we can sort of understand. It speaks to us, too, of all things working together for the good of the saints. From eternity past through eternity future, God works on our behalf.

He is "righteous" to judge. It is His right to judge, but additionally, He judges in such a way that He can save sinners and remain righteous. Listen to this passage from the New Testament Book of Romans:

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Rom 3:24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

Rom 3:25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

Rom 3:26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

That is a mouthful. Simply put, we are all sinners, but God can receive us just-as-if-we'd never sinned because the death of Jesus on the Cross satisfied the penalty mankind deserves. God remains "just," or righteous, while justifying believing sinners.

Before moving on, notice that there is an "angel of the waters." Revelation 7:1 has four angels in charge of the winds, and in 9:11, an angel has authority over the Abyss. In 14:18, there is an angel with power over fire.

If we wanted to develop a devotional thought, we could talk about how we, too, as believers in Christ have our specific assignments:

- Some are general, e.g., saint, husband, wife, son, daughter, employer, and employee.
- Some are specific, e.g., our gifting from God the Holy Spirit, our calling in serving the Lord, our place as a living stone in His Temple on Earth, and as a member of His body on Earth.

You are blessed with glorious purpose as a child of God.

Rev 16:7 And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

We cannot overemphasize that God is "true and righteous" in His "judgments." There is in Him no unrighteousness. He is perfect in all His ways. Trust these

things when you cannot fathom the depths of what He is doing, or allowing, in your life or the world.

God is Father. Earthly fathers know how to give good gifts to their kids. How much more does your Heavenly Father work all things together for good.

Rev 16:8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

Rev 16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

Rev 16:10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

Rev 16:11 They blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

I read these verses as a unit because they introduce us to blasphemy. The word connotes cursing or foul language, but that is not its meaning here. A good definition is *defiant irreverence*.

Blasphemy is expressed by refusing to “repent of [your] deeds,” and by not repenting to “give Him glory.”

Whatever else they might say or do to express blasphemy, it is their unbelief that blasphemes God.

There is one, and only one, unpardonable sin. It isn't murder or suicide, or adultery, or coveting. It is unbelief in Jesus. Die rejecting Jesus in defiant irreverence, and you blaspheme, committing the unpardonable sin.

Rev 16:12 Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

By an act of God, the Euphrates River is dried up. This makes easy the travel of the massive army of the "kings from the east" to the land of Israel to participate in the conflict.

Is this referring to China? It's interesting to note that soon India will be the world's most populous nation. "Kings from the east" is plural. It is a last days coalition.

Rev 16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

Rev 16:14 For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The apostle John told us a few chapters earlier that Satan is "the dragon." The Beast has an assistant whom we met previously, here called "the false prophet." Together we could call these three the unholy trinity.

Those who inhabit Earth won't see Satan or "unclean spirits" that resemble "frogs." John is privileged to see into their realm. It is by the agency of these supernatural creatures that the armies of the world gather "to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Although they seem to come to oppose the Beast, these armies will forget their conflicts to oppose the coming of Jesus Christ in power and glory from Heaven.

Rev 16:15 "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said, "But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into" (24:43). The "master of the house" knew a thief was coming, *just not "what part of the night the thief was coming."*

Jesus forewarns everyone that He is “coming as a thief.”

The entire seven-year Great Tribulation is a warning that Jesus is coming. He announces shock & awe in advance.

- The blessed believe Him and look forward to His return.
- Nonbelievers blaspheme Him, believing the dragon, the Beast, the false prophet, and the world’s combined military might can repel the thief.

“Garments” represent your salvation in the Bible. In your natural state, God sees you dressed in what the Bible calls “filthy rags.” You are unfit for Heaven. When you believe God and are saved, Jesus removes your filthy garments, and you receive a garment of salvation, illustrated as a pure white robe of righteousness.

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah said, “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, My soul shall be joyful in my God; **For He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness...**” (61:10).

You are “blessed” by God with the garment of salvation, clothed and ready.

Rev 16:16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

This battle will take place in the Valley of Megiddo, in Hebrew called *Armageddon*. One commentator said, “This is the day of the Lord’s coming to do battle with the Beast, the climax of human history when God assumes His great power and begins to reign (11:17). It is “the great and terrible day of the LORD” (Joel 2:31).

The Lord isn’t saying it is up to you to remain saved. He is describing two kinds of people.

Are you blessed and robed or are you a naked blasphemer?

#2 - If You Are A Blasphemer, Jesus Does Come Upon You As A Thief (v16-21)

Emergency information networks send out texts or voice messages to warn a population to evacuate in the face of imminent disasters like fires or floods. Some people like to roll the dice, staying put to guard their property. It is materialism at its worst.

Despite centuries of advance warning, and seven years of judgments and invitations, blasphemers hold their ground against God during the Great Tribulation.

Rev 16:17 Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of Heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

To state the obvious, "air" is what we breathe. Not being told precisely how this plague affects the air we breathe makes it more terrifying.

Ginomai. It is one word translated by three English words in verse seventeen, **"It is done!"** It isn't the last word of the book or even the chapter. It is, however, a fitting last word for the pouring out of the seventh and final bowl. A critical movement in God's plan, the Great Tribulation, is done.

Rev 16:18 And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth.

The deadliest, most destructive earthquake ever recorded hasn't happened.

The worst localized earthquake mankind has experienced will be insignificant compared to this global shaking.

Footnote: It is accompanied by earthquake weather - "noises and thunderings and lightnings."

Rev 16:19 Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath.

- The “great city” is Jerusalem. It will be split into thirds.
- The “cities of the [Gentile] nations” all around the world will fall into rubble.
- “Babylon” will be the subject of a retrospective in the following two chapters. It is Babylon, not New York or Rome or Washington D.C., or any other city.

Rev 16:20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

These words describe incredible topographical changes. It will be a different version of the flat earth.

Rev 16:21 And great hail from Heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the record for the largest hailstone in the US belongs to an 8-inch wonder that fell near Vivian, South Dakota, in 2010. It was the size of a volleyball and weighed just under two pounds.

The Tribulation hailstones will average twenty-nine inches and weigh one-hundred thirty pounds.

A.W. Tozer said, “When God is finally ready to refine and restore the earth, everyone in Heaven and on Earth and in Hell will know that no human laboratory could compound the fire that will be poured out on the earth. God has promised that He will not hide His wrath forever. He is prepared to speak in supernatural manifestations in that coming Day of The Lord!”

Blessed or blasphemer... Believer or nonbeliever... Sheep or goat... Wheat or tare... Robed in white or naked... Heaven or Hell.

Unlike a Hershey bar, your iPhone, or cereal, what kind of person you are matters.