

Revelation 15-16:17 – Gods Judgments

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- [0 : 0 0] We are studying the book of Revelation. So we have a few weeks left in this book.! The chapters, you know, the chapter breaks are kind of divinely inspired.
- So we're going to kind of cover 15 and a bit of 16 this week, a bit of 16 and 17 next week, and then 18 the following week.
- And then we pretty much get into happy territory again. So that's what we need, right? So Revelation 15 and 16 is really concerning the judgment of God.
- Like we're in that place in Revelation where really from chapter 6, we've been looking at God's judgment. And, you know, one of the things, one of the barriers to Christianity, especially amongst those who think that or are drawn to the idea that God is only loving, He's only compassionate, one of the big barriers, obviously, is what the Bible then teaches about judgment.
- Because you really can't read too much before you come up with this problem of God's judgment. Like the idea of reward, we're okay with.
- [1 : 3 9] We like rewards, right? The idea of judgment is a little bit harder for us to swallow. And how do we tackle it as Christians? Like how do we even answer those questions?
- Charles Darwin declared once that God's judgment was a damnable doctrine. Now, despite the obvious contradiction in his phrase, he wasn't alone.
- A LifeWay report last year suggested that 42% of people who believe in some kind of higher power say that God doesn't judge.
- But what we learn in these two chapters, and what we have been learning throughout these chapters, is that God's judgment is not damnable in terms of our believing it, but it's surprisingly something worth celebrating.
- Because when you do away with judgment, when you do away with actually any kind of judgment, the result is that victims are put at risk.
- [2 : 4 6] So if God is a God of love only, and there is no one to judge or be accountable to, then vulnerable people become more vulnerable, and violent people are encouraged to continue being violent.
- And what we would be living in is a world of chaos in which the strong eat the weak, and only the powerful survive, which is essentially Darwin's thesis up front.
- For love to be truly loving, there must be judgment. And what these two chapters do for us is bring us face to face with the reality that we actually don't want to worship and follow a God who doesn't also bring judgment.
- We don't want that. We're going to decide together at the end that we don't want a God who doesn't judge. We don't want that kind of God. Give them the choice. We'd rather have a God that judges than a God that doesn't.
- We need a God that gets angry. We need a God who will not only protect, but one who will also do away with sin once and for all.

- [4 : 00] And so the main idea of the text is coming on the screen for you note takers. The main idea of the text is this, that God himself is on a personal mission to go after sin and its effects so that he can reverse, restore, and renew.
- God himself is on a personal mission to go after sin and its effects so that he can reverse, restore, and renew. And we're going to see that this makes his judgments not just passable, not just something I'm going to put up with, but actually it makes his judgments and him himself worthy of our worship.
- That we don't apologize for it. Actually, we come out and celebrate it. So in verse 1, John, you remember, is seeing this vision.
- And what he says, he says there in verse 1, that I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels, and seven plagues.
- So pause there and check out this chart. There you go. So we've used this chart before, just so that we're all on the same page.
- [5 : 22] Just if you've missed a couple of weeks, or this is your first time maybe going through this book, we've had 14 judgments so far in the book of Revelation. And I would say 14, we've had at least 14, but 14 major ones.
- The first seven are called the seal judgments. They're not the seals that you get in the sea. They're seals that seal a contract. Just so everybody's like, for the longest time, I didn't get that.
- And out of the seventh came another set of seven judgments known as the trumpet judgments. And so we're moving now from the second interlude into the last seven, where we get these judgments known as the bowl judgments.
- And John says there in verse one, that those judgments are plagues. And note that, we'll come back to that.
- They are plagues. And they're the last, he says. For with them, the wrath of God is finished. And that word finished is complete.
- [6 : 29] It doesn't just mean it's over or come to an end. It's the same actually root word that we find Jesus saying in the cross when he says it's finished. It's everything is done. Like job is done.
- I've finished. Right? And so he saw then in verse two, what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire. And also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.
- Now, as we've done before, we noticed before how much of this language is kind of rooted in the Exodus, in the book of Exodus, and the story of the Exodus.
- And so what we notice actually is, as we go through this, that these judgments are very, very similar to the plagues of Egypt.
- And again, you know, John there in the first verse, notice he calls those, these seven judgments, he calls them plagues. And what is really interesting is some of the subtle ways that John is doing this.
- [7 : 36] And one of the subtle ways is there in verse two, where he talks about this sea of glass and fire and how judgment as this big picture is both really, really bad if you're on the receiving end of judgment.
- But if you're the one being free, that's really, really good. Like if you're the one who is the victim, if you're Israel in Egypt, judgment is really, really good for you.
- If you're an Egyptian in Egypt, not so good. Right? And so you get this idea of the sea mingled with fire. We've said before that the Jews saw the sea as a reservoir of evil.

And we've seen in chapter 12, how the beast or chapter 13, how the beast came out of the sea. And this is, but this picture, we see it mingled with fire, which again is that idea of judgment.

And so when you think about it, you know, the Red Sea was that, you know, the thing that the Israelites crossed to get out of Egypt there in the Exodus was both a place of salvation for Israel, but it was also a place of condemnation and judgment for Egypt.

[8 : 45] It was the means by which Israel escaped. But it was also the means by which Egypt got judged. And so what we're seeing right up front this morning, and to repeat it again so we get it, is the purpose behind the judgment.

God isn't just, and he isn't just, he isn't at all. He's not pictured as one of like, you know, one of the Greek or Roman gods just having fun up there in heaven, sitting on a cloud, throwing down lightning bolts, as if just to say, this is like, you know, I'm bored, so how's some of that?

Right? Behind God's judgment, behind God's judgment is his desire to reverse, restore, and renew in time for when Jesus comes back.

So God is judging both the aggressor and then he's saving the victim in the same instance.

So again, God himself is on a personal mission to go after sin and its effects so that he can restore, reverse, and renew.

[10 : 00] And so John says that they, in verse 3, that is the people who are now kind of, you know, on the beach, I guess, singing on the side of the sea, they're singing, notice this, they're singing the song of Moses.

Like, where is that? Well, that's Exodus 15. Right? So after they come out of the river, the Red Sea experience, after they come through that, they start singing, but notice, what they actually sing is not what's recorded by John.

which is a little bit strange. All right? So they, so John says, they're singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb and then he tells us what they sing and what they sing isn't the song of Moses.

But it is a song of deliverance and that's the point. And this is what they sing. Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God, the Almighty. Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations.

Who will not fear you, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you for your righteous acts have been revealed.

[11 : 13] That's the kind of song I can get behind. Great and marvelous, great and amazing are your deeds. And so the judgments of God are coming to an end and the people are worshiping and giving credit and praising God because of that.

There are a group of people in this vision that understand the purpose of judgment is to bring about that restoration, renewal, and revival.

Now, I want to pause here in the main flow of the text and just notice four things about this worship that I just think can help us in our worship as a church.

It'd be really easy just to skip over these few verses and kind of just go, this is a great song, let's move on. But actually, I think there's four things that I noticed that I've just been impressed upon this week just to share with you about their worship that I think will help us with our worship.

And so the first thing that I think will help inform our own worship is firstly, notice that this worship is about God. Like the subject, it's about God.

[12 : 28] Great and amazing are your deeds. Just and true are your ways. Not just the things that God does, great and amazing are your deeds, but the way that God does things, like it's incredible.

Just, it's true. God doesn't judge unfairly or with some kind of bias. He's just and true in the way that he judges.

They say, you alone are holy. See, do you see that? The fact that God is really at the center of the worship because it's God's works that are being remembered.

Secondly, it's not only about God, but it's also directed to God. It's not only about God, but it's directed to God.

They are not just singing great and amazing are his deeds or just and true are his ways. There is a recognition that they are in the presence of such a God and they are directing their worship to him, not just about him.

[13 : 35] I find that in much of our singing, in much of my own singing, it's good to sing about God, but true praise and thanksgiving and worship is directed to God.

Now thirdly, there is a call to respond to the truth of what is being sung within the worship.

You might say, well, surely that is the response. There is a call to respond within the response. who will not fear? Kind of like a rhetorical question, isn't it?

Who will not fear? Well, no one. Once you see God's judgment, everybody should. Who should glorify? You're not. Everybody should. And this is kind of like sometimes we need, I need help in worship.

I am, I am encouraged when I hear you singing and I'm encouraged to sing when I know that maybe you've had a particularly hard week or hard month or you're going through a particularly hard season and you are, you are singing that encourages me and exhorts me that I should also be singing.

[15 : 04] You see, there is a response within the response. they're saying the right response to the fact that God is a God of judgment and he has sought out every ounce of sin and corruption and defilement and injustice is to come.

That's what we're doing when we're singing. It's the third aspect is I'm going to sing and I'm going to encourage all of you to come and sing too. So we see that worship here is a response to the judgment of God.

It's about God. It's directed to God. It includes a response to God. Once again, once we're on the subject of worship, you know, one of the biggest areas that I think that we still need to grow into as a church is our worship.

And this has actually been a real focus for the leadership team since really like the middle of last year. And I think that we can agree all the worship team are doing us an incredible service right now as they lead us each week.

I don't know when the last time you thanked them for it because sometimes they're here on a Saturday practicing, getting it right so that they can lead us well.

[16 : 24] But it's not just about having the right songs and the right music. And I was thinking about this this week, you know, there's so many different arguments for having the right song, the right music, the right way, the right this and the right that.

And like I sat down and I'm like, you know, I've been playing the piano for 44 years. I know, I don't look old enough, thank you. like I was playing the piano before I was born, right?

At least 14 years. And like the thing that I've come to understand both theologically, musically, but also in my own life, if the Spirit of God is leading me, the music becomes secondary.

we're blessed as a church to have phenomenal musicians. And they lead us well.

But it's the Holy Spirit who leads us. And like I was thinking about that and how we can help ourselves in our worship.

[17 : 40] worship. And one of the things I think that we can help ourselves is is that the idea of coming with right hearts to give our worship to God when we gather.

And when I'm talking about worship, I know the argument, worship isn't just singing, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I'm talking about singing. All right? You see, one of the lessons that I think that we have here is that whether we're looking back at our salvation, the moment we decided to follow Jesus, the moment we realized all that he had done for us, or whether God has brought us through some trial or he's bringing us through some trial and we're recognizing God's protection and God's hand in that, the lesson is that our heart's response should be to say thank you.

I mean, isn't that the heart of worship? It is for us to say thank you, to praise him and to worship him.

Like, we're not getting through our hardships because we're so smart or we're so clever or we're so hard working. We're getting through our hardships, we're going through even the mundanity of life.

Why? Because God helps us. this group of people are singing this song because even though they have been through some incredibly difficult things, some incredibly hard things, they understand that God has taken care of them and they see that God is going after the very things that caused those incredibly difficult things.

[19 : 23] And they're expressing their gratitude in song. God has not only come to their rescue, and this is I think the key thing, he is ensuring, and this is what these two chapters are about, he's not only come to their rescue, he's also ensuring that that can never happen again.

Let's just be real for a minute. It can be easy to forget to give thanks for all that God has done. can't it?

In the business of the weekly routine, whatever that looks like for you, juggling work, family, other commitments, we rise early, we go to bed late, that's on a good day, we find ourselves on any day exhausted.

And that's not to mention that sometimes the challenges and frustrations that mark our days and those seasons of life can leave us pretty, well, feeling pretty ungrateful.

And I can't tell you how many times I've caught myself praying for something, like and then God comes through, and I feel like I'm one of the nine lepers that were healed and forgot to go back and say thank you.

[20 : 48] I'm like, cool, and on I go, I have a schedule, I have a routine, oh and I'm tired. In his book, The Grumbler's Guide to Giving Thanks, great title, isn't it?

Everybody's like, I'm writing that one down. That's on my book list for 2023. Dustin Crowe, he said this, he asked this really important question, he says this, the Apostle Paul instructed the Philippians to be anxious in nothing and thankful in everything.

And when he said everything, he meant everything. We can all agree that this is easier said than done. Disappointments and discontent may cause you to slip into dissatisfaction and grumbling becomes a state of mind.

Gratitude seems impossible to find. However, what if this was the precise reason you lack the joy of a God-filled life? Instead of a reaction to when things are going well, what if gratitude is actually necessary to knowing the hope of our gracious God?

Do you get what he's saying? He's saying, what if the reason for your dissatisfaction and grumbling is because we've forgotten to say thank you?

[22 : 10] The fourth thing I think I see in this text in terms of worship and how it may help us is that the expression of gratitude is never invisible and it's never silent.

silence. I know that there's moments of silence that can be incredibly powerful. But as a general rule, if you were to do something for someone and they didn't express their gratitude in a way that was visible or audible, you would conclude, we would conclude that they were ungrateful.

When our children, when we do something for our children and we give them something and they snatch it out of our hands eagerly and they run off, what do we do? We go, say, now they might have incredible gratitude in our hearts.

Got the chocolate bar. Yay. I'm going to eat it all in one mouthful. Yay. But our conclusion, because there hasn't been an outward expression, is that they're ungrateful.

people. Whether it's in our relationship with God or our relationship with others, how we express our gratitude is important.

[23 : 54] How we express it is important. The expression of gratitude always shows up and it always speaks up.

If we are truly grateful for what God has done in our lives, we will find a way to express it and we will find a way to demonstrate it.

If we are truly thankful for someone else, what they mean to you, something they've done for you, gratitude doesn't let that go without speaking up.

Sam Crabtree, in his book, *Practicing Thankfulness, Cultivating a Grateful Heart in All Circumstances*, which is probably one of the longest book titles I've ever come across, he writes this.

He says, what Christians believe about God is visible in how they exhibit thankfulness for all that he has done on their behalf. So, can I encourage you, can I encourage us, me included, to never again give ourselves the excuse to participate in silent, invisible gratitude.

[25 : 16] If you are grateful, show it and say it. Let's move on. We've got loads of text to cover.

Verse 5, after we see this group of individuals, singing, praising, worshipping God because his judgments have been finished.

He says, after this, I looked, verse 5, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues clothed in pure bright linen with golden sashes around their chests.

And one of the four living creatures, you remember those guys back in chapter four? One of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever.

Okay, so, clarify, these are not cereal bowls. There is nothing inherently evil about cereal. some of us are not convinced.

[26 : 27] These bowls are ritual bowls, objects found in the temple. So, if you go back to Exodus 25, Exodus 37, you read about how Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle and all of the objects that would be found in the tabernacle.

Right? You couldn't just go out and go, that bowl of dew, that's about the right size. Right? So, Moses was instructed to go out and make these and these bowls were for clearing the temple or cleaning the temple after the sacrifices had been done.

Like, that's a question, isn't it? Like, who clears that mess up? Like, how do you clear that mess up? Answer, with these bowls. Right?

So, you gather the ash in the bowls, pick up the ash, dump the ash. All right? You know, the leftovers, the stuff that wasn't consumed by the fire. We've all seen that, right?

Barbecue season is hopefully coming upon us really, really soon. Right? It's like getting out there, cleaning the barbecue, all the stuff. If you're like me and you didn't clean it last summer very well.

[27 : 40] Where does that stuff go? Bowls. Right? So, the idea is that these bowls are for cleaning up. I like it. In reference to judgment and God kind of on a personal mission, right, to go after every ounce of sin, he hasn't forgotten to clean up.

And that's what God is doing. He's cleaning up judgment. The idea about purification. Like the world is in chaos and defiled and God is preparing the earth for his son to come back and occupy it.

It says that the sanctuary in verse 8 was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished.

Again, the book of Exodus, what happens is that towards the end of the book, God gives Moses, again, this blueprint for the tabernacle, which would later become the temple under Solomon and everything from the size of the materials that would be used.

You see Moses put this plan in place and Solomon later puts his plan in place. And what happens is that God comes down and that's his dwelling place.

[29 : 02] That's where he lives on earth. And the whole place gets surrounded in this cloud and this glory. And what we learn in the New Testament is that the plan for the tabernacle and the plan for the temple were prototypes, not only of the real temple that we see in this chapter, like the one in heaven, but also in chapter 21, he says that that one will descend and it will be our home forever.

And so what is happening here is exactly what we see in the Old Testament. The sanctuary was filled with glory, excuse me, was filled with smoke.

Where from? Well, it was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power. So Exodus 40, 1 Kings 8, 2 Chronicles 5, Isaiah 6, all speak about God's presence in the tabernacle or the temple.

Now, in chapter 16, we actually now get these judgments described. So in chapter 15, that was the setup. Chapter 16, we get it described.

So he says, then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls or the plagues of the wrath of God.

[30 : 22] And so the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshipped his image.

So God is going after all kinds of sin, but every ounce of sin and its effect.

God is going after God is going after every ounce of it.

And what we see, there's some elemental truths about this. So we'll see in a moment how the Hellenistic Jews thought that everything was made up of earth, wind, or earth, air, sun, or heat, and water.

And God goes after those elements. So it's not just he's going after nations or he's going after wickedness or he's going after the, he's actually going after the very elements that make up the universe.

[31 : 34] earth. So here he goes after the earth. The angel comes, takes the, if you like, the ash of judgment, pours it out on the earth, and from that come boils on those who aren't following God.

Just like the boils that were sent to Egypt. And notice that the judgment only comes to those who God targets. It says those who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped his image, which we said in chapter 13, I think the best way to describe it was that just those who don't follow Christ.

And so here the target audience, if you like, for this judgment is unbelievers. And that is going to be kind of important fruit of judgment. You know, we, we, we certainly get the impression in Exodus that the Israelites were living in Egypt and were unharmed by the plague.

And so the same kind of thing is happening, is happening here. Now the second and third bowls take us again back to Egypt. Verse three, the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea.

And it became like the blood of a corpse. And every living thing died that was in the sea. And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water and they became blood.

[33 : 09] And I heard the angel in charge of the water say, just are you, O holy one, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets and you have given them blood to drink.

It is what they deserve. And I heard the altar. Now clearly, it's not an altar speaking.

Figurative language. I looked there by the altar. Someone said something. But I couldn't really see who it was. So it was the altar.

I heard the altar saying, yes, Lord God, the almighty. True and just are your judgments. So it's easy to see how this is using Exodus type language to describe what's going on here.

It's also pretty easy to see if you were back with us in January, how the second bowl parallels the second trumpet judgment. Right. So Revelation 8, verse 8, the second angel blew his trumpet.

[34 : 16] Something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea. Third of the sea became blood. Third of living creatures in the sea died. Third of the ships were destroyed. So you kind of get that parallel, right?

And so both the second trumpet judgment and the second bowl judgments are based on the first plague that God sent to Egypt. Right. Which was to make the Nile blood, make the water blood.

Now the controversial thing is that in my understanding there is a difference between the second bowl and the second trumpet and that's this.

Not just one's called a trumpet and one's called a bowl. That's not the significant difference or the controversial thing. You might think that's really easy. It's this. In the second trumpet judgment, the actual sea and waters were turned to blood.

I mean, we commented on that when we looked at that in January. But in the second bowl judgment, they don't necessarily. Let me walk you through what I mean.

[35 : 22] The question is this. Verse 3 says that the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea. And the question is, does the sea mean what we think it means? And it usually does.

But does it mean what we think it means here? Like what it meant in chapter 8? Or does it mean what it meant in chapter 12 when it referred to the nations?

So that's the question. So it certainly doesn't mean something else, right? So we're not into kind of an allegorical interpretation of the Bible where we just kind of think we just make it up.

Right? We use the Bible to interpret the Bible. So does this sea mean what it meant in chapter 8? Or does this sea mean what it meant in chapter 12?

And I think the answer to that is found in verse 6, which is the angel's response to the second and third bowl judgments. Let me reread it. Just are you, again, so we have this worship response to the judgments of God.

[36 : 26] Just are you, O holy one, who is and who was, for you have brought these judgments. Now check this out. Verse 6, for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink.

It is what they deserve. Now, that is a quote of a few verses from Psalm 79. You've also got some Deuteronomy 32 mixed in there as well for good measure, right?

So Psalm 39 verse 1 says this, O God, the nations, so immediately that should grab your attention. When we're asking the question, does the sea mean sea, as it did in chapter 8, or does the sea mean nations, as it did in chapter 12?

And then he quotes from Psalm 79, and the opening of Psalm 79 is, O God, the nations, that should immediately kind of spark our interest, right?

So, O God, the nations have come into your inheritance. They have defiled your holy temple. They have laid Jerusalem in ruins. So this is a psalm, and it's probably one of the late psalms, probably written sometime after Jeremiah, at least after the Babylonian captivity.

[37 : 38] It's not a psalm of David, because he wouldn't know anything about, you know, Jerusalem in ruins. They have, verse 2, they have given the bodies of your servants to the birds of heaven for food, the flesh of your faithful to the beasts of the earth.

They have poured out their blood like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them. So, look, the quote doesn't translate well, does it? You know, and we see that quite often in the New Testament.

The New Testament writers quote stuff from the Old Testament that is a little bit like, how is that even a quote? How is that even a citation? And that's just because the translation doesn't work amazingly well. But then he, so he quotes verse 3, then he quotes from verse 10 of Psalm 79, which says this, Why should the nations say, where is their God?

Let the avenging of the outpouring blood of your servants be known among the nations before our eyes. And he continues in verse 11, Let the groans of the prisoners come before you according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die return sevenfold.

And this is the idea at the end of that passage, or what the angel says, Return sevenfold into the lap of our neighbors, the taunts with which they have taunted you, O Lord. But we, your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever from generation to generation.

[38 : 57] We will recount your praise. Okay, so I know everybody's going, great, that's crystal clear. This psalm that John quotes from verse 11. It's talking about the nations.

And it's not lost on the angel. Verse 1, Oh God, the nations have come into your inheritance. And the point is that the nations are going to have, and this is the point of this psalm, the nations are going to have the same thing happen to them that Babylon did to God's people all the way back to the Old Testament in Psalm 79.

Psalm 79 is a call for vengeance. It's a call for God's judgment. But what we see in this chapter is the other way around.

We don't see God's people being afflicted by Babylon, and it's going to be really, really important in chapter 17 and 18, this word Babylon. What we don't see in this chapter is God's people being afflicted by Babylon.

What we see is God afflicting Babylon on behalf of God's people. It's Psalm 79 in reverse. It's a fulfillment of Deuteronomy 32.

[40 : 14] Rejoice with him, O heavens. Bow down to him, O gods. For he avenges the blood of his children, takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses, notice that, cleanses his people's land.

So, that's a long way around to saying that the Psalm that John is quoting from is talking about the nations killing God's people.

And John applies that in reverse to talk about God avenging the killing of God's people. And so, my point is that when we get to verse 3, the second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, he's talking about the nations rather than the water.

And so, the first three bowl judgments are really talking about the judgment of the nations who are under the control of the beast. So, this is kind of like part of this long narrative about the beast's control over the world.

Now, look, the next three bowl judgments start to be described in verse 8. Beautiful. I love my own theme tune.

[41 : 34] That's great. The fourth angel, verse 8, the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun and it was allowed to scorch people with fire.

They were scorched by the fierce heat and they cursed the name of God, which is a bit of an irony because they are those who bear the name, curse the name.

That's the idea. So, those who curse the name of God who had the power over these plagues, they did not repent and give him glory. Now, again, look, this has caused a little bit of debate, like how is it that God's people survive this?

Because I don't know if you've noticed, the sun is a pretty big thing, right? And, you know, when it kind of spits out some of its big flames, this is scientific language, people know about it.

And the whole world, you know, there's solar stuff that happens and it's a big deal. And so, how is it that the sun is being directed, that one, let's get him or her, right?

[42 : 46] And that one not. How is it that these ones are not protected and these ones are protected? Like the question is, how do God's people survive this, right?

Well, check out verse 17. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air. Like it gets even more complicated. Like our God, question, that probably doesn't need an answer, are God's people wearing some kind of space helmet so that they don't have to breathe the air?

How are God's people not affected? Well, of course, you know, it's not very easy to understand. But if you think how, again, how the Greeks would think at this time, it kind of makes it easier.

It kind of goes back to this fundamental element idea. They believe that everything was made up of earth, water, fire, and air. And so, the first judgment was poured out on earth.

The second on water. The second and third, actually, on water. The fourth on the sun or fire. And the seventh on the air. And so, it seems like God is going after just the very fundamental things of the world.

[44 : 01] And so, rather than take these things as literally like earth, the stuff that we walk on, water, the stuff that we drink, air, the things that we breathe in heat, it's better to get into the head of like how a Hellenistic Jew would be thinking and to see that the bowls are a judgment on the unbelievers in their most basic elemental sense.

There's not a rock that has been left unturned by God in his search to weed out sin and its effects. That's the point. It's not a kind of surface thing in his efforts to go after sin.

He's not leaving even one primary element left untouched. And in fact, you know, Peter talks about how when Christ comes back, all of the elements will dissolve.

And so, all of the elements of the earth are affected. And that brings upon the earth some significant challenges. Like, God is in control.

I don't know how much you've thought about this. Of the elements. Now, you may go, I don't really know what the elements are. Me neither.

[45 : 21] But if you boil down everything into its most basic component, that's what we're talking about. And God's going after the corruption that's even found there.

The fifth angel, verse 10, poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast. And its kingdom was plunged into darkness.

And notice, as a result, people gnawed their tongues in anguish and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores.

And they did not repent of their deeds. And so, most likely, this fifth judgment, which is what we'll end with this morning.

This fifth judgment is a judgment on the beast's sovereignty over his ability to rule. And again, this echoes the judgment of Egypt, doesn't it?

[46 : 27] You know, the plague versus the ninth plague, I think it is. There was a plague of darkness. But it was an actual plague of darkness. Also reminds us of the fourth judgment.

Back in Revelation 8, verse 12, where the sun, the moon, and the stars all turned down. So, again, question, literal or symbolic? Well, probably given the flow of the rest of the bold judgment, this is more symbolic than literal.

Or at least, there was a darkness. But the darkness was the external realization of their spiritual separation from God. You know, all of these things, again, make up the basic fundamental parts of the world and people, certainly at that time.

And so, here you have the idea that separation from God is as real as anything else. I mean, just look at how the effects of this darkness are described.

This darkness, most of us, the light goes out. We're like, don't know what's going on. Light's gone out. We've tried to find a switch or we just hope that the power comes back on. Right? With this darkness, people gnawed their tongues in anguish.

[47 : 55] Anguish. There must be something about this darkness that sets this darkness differently, separate than someone's just turned the lights out.

It must be a different kind of darkness than the darkness that we saw in Revelation 8 under the fourth trumpet. Jesus would actually describe this kind of darkness in Matthew 8, Matthew 22, and Matthew 25.

Where he says that unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. That kind of darkness.

And they're getting to experience it. What is that kind of darkness? Well, that kind of darkness is the separation from God darkness. It's the spiritual darkness. And what I see God doing here is a certain kind of irony.

He is enlightening their minds so that they may see darkness. It's a precursor, obviously, to the final judgment.

[49 : 11] And so again, God is judging. And God is going after sin. Everything that has caused all kinds of hurt, upset, tribulation, problems, its effects, how we short circuit frequently.

We don't do the things that God desires us to do. We can't fellowship with God. We can't live at peace. We can't live with joy. Why? Because of sin.

And rightly, God is angry at that. God is angry at my sin. And He is angry at your sin. He is angry at the world's sin.

Why? That sin prevents that relationship with God that we are designed for. And He knows that if He just removes sin and the effects of sin, what's sin going to do?

Come back, isn't it? Like how many news resolutions that you made, you know, to be a better person or whatever it is. And how long does it last? Not very long. Why?

[50 : 26] Because we may say, well, I'm going to remove that sin. There's something there waiting in its wings to take its place, isn't there? Right? You know, if I think about it like this, if there's not cheesecake in the fridge, there's biscuits in the cupboard.

Do you know what I'm saying? Like we can move one thing out. Jesus said this, you move one thing out, how many more things are going to move in? Seven. Right?

And here what God is doing is going, you know what? I'm going to stop that. My judgments are now final. Right? I'm going to stop that repeating process of everything's just getting worse and worse and worse and worse.

Finish. God is judging. Good thing, bad thing. It's not even a good thing, is it? It's a great thing. Because what it means is without that cycle of sin, decay, death, problem, tribulation, struggle, all of those hardships, without all of those things just keeping back over and over and over again, there is no barrier, there is nothing stopping us walking in the joy, in the peace, in the fullness of what God has for us.

God says, let's get rid of all of that. Let us stop coming back ever again. Now let's go. Worthy of our worship?

[51 : 56] You bet. So let's do that. Father, thank you for your word. Lord, thank you that you are not only seen as loving and compassionate, but in your love, because you love, you are on a personal mission to go after sin and its effects so that you might bring in restoration, renewal for us.

Lord, thank you that we can look forward to the day where all of our struggles will be behind us.

All of the problems that we encounter, even the ones just in our own minds, in our own hearts, let alone the ones that happen on a day-to-day basis.

Lord, we want to thank you, Lord, that there will no longer be the struggle of sin. Lord, thank you, Lord, that we will one day, Lord, be known and fully known.

Lord, we do pray this morning, Lord, that we would be more and more aware of our sin, not as something that would depress us or get us down or make us despondent.

[53 : 19] Lord, that we would be more and more aware of our sin, bring them to you for judgment so that then we can walk in the newness and light of life. Lord, we thank you, Lord, that you are a God who desires that even more than we do.

Lord, we thank you, Lord, that really ever since the Garden of Eden, you've been on that mission to do away with sin. We thank you, Lord, that you demonstrated your power over sin where you went to the cross and you died for us so that the penalty of sin can be removed.

Thank you, Lord, that you rose from the dead so you give us new life today. Lord, thank you, Lord, that we can look forward to one day sin, death, being defeated.

Lord, we pray, Lord, as we wait, Lord, as we experience the work of your Holy Spirit sanctifying our hearts, Lord, we would fill our mouths and our hearts, not just our hearts with worship and thanks, Lord, but we would realize that worship should never be silent and it should never be invisible.

Lord, help us to walk out in that, we pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.