

Transcription of 21ID3511

Revelation 16:1-9 "The Fullness of God's Wrath" (Part 1)

August 25, 2021

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to Revelation 16:1 as we continue in our slow crawl through this book. And we are getting near the end. If you haven't been with us, all of these studies are on the Archives online; they are also available in the bookstore, as well as all of the outlines for all of those studies. I think this is.....I don't know.....we're at, like, study number I don't know what it is. It's a lot. What is it? (Someone says) "31." There I go. 31. But they're available to you. I can't go over all of it every week, and I'm not going to do so tonight. We're having communion as well.

But suffice it to say we are towards the end of the Great Tribulation. In chapter 14, if you were with us, the Lord spoke to us about how glorious His longsuffering had been and, even to the bitter end, the extremes that God will go to be sure that every heart hears the good news of His Son. I mean, it is God's greatest desire that you would be saved. It is the single most important thing we can talk about.

By chapter 15, however, that end for man is near, and this pouring out of God's judgment - this wrath of God - is now ready to be poured out. In fact, we read in chapter 15:1 that, then, these last seven plagues will complete the judgment or the wrath of the Lord upon unbelieving man. By the time this preparation, as we get to these last seven judgments, goes forth, God has isolated Himself in the temple in heaven; put everyone out. His throne is closed for access and, very somberly and with great isolation, the Lord sends forward these angels to judge. It's not God's heart to judge the wicked; He wants to save us. The Bible says that He is not and cannot rejoice in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 33:11). He does rejoice in the death of His saints (Psalm 116:15). We have a couple of funerals here the next couple of Fridays - dear saints from the church. All of heaven rejoices in their arrival because for them Jesus came.

But by the time we get to the end of this chapter (16).....in fact, if you look at verse 17, you will read, "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," (from the Lord Himself) "saying, 'It is done!' " It is finished. We're going to spend tonight down through verse 9. Next week we will finish this chapter on wrath. There will be two chapters in the middle where we are given by the Lord insights into God's

heart towards man's religion - which now finds itself unable to deliver - and from man's commercialism - his commerce - and the desire to just.....the world is driven by gain. And yet that all comes falling down as well. All of them characterized under the example of Babylon, if you will, in history.

So, two chapters here.....I should say two weeks here, two chapters, and then we'll get to chapter 19 which is, I think, what we've all been waiting for - the Lord to return.

Though God, in His love, has waited so long and reached out continuously to man, this chapter is different. Judgment comes with no alternative, no hope, no offer of salvation, no interrupted, I should say, judgment from God. It is unavoidable. Most of those that are left upon the earth have taken the mark of the beast, have found their future to be sealed, and will now face the judgment of God.

Imagine what Jesus went through to give us life; I mean, we're having communion tonight. Always brings that to mind: the abandonment that Jesus faced on the cross from His Father. "My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The lonely road that He walked, that He alone understood from day one, why He had come. The ultimate sacrifice He made. And then if you read Genesis 22 - the sacrifice of the Father in sending His only begotten Son as He sent Him for our sins. God's constraint - I can just imagine the angels offering to just come and destroy everyone that touched Jesus - His patience, His love.

Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthians, said in chapter 1:22-24, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

For the Jews, the cross was a stumbling block because their anticipation was a Messiah that would take over, take over now, loose our chains, take over the world, put us out where we belong. And anything that fell short of that kept them from really believing and embracing that which God had come to do, though the Scriptures that they bore certainly pointed to Him as the One they had been waiting for. They wanted a ruler. And when He died, their hopes were dashed. Though, like I said, His work, His witness, certainly His resurrection testified that He was the One.

To the Gentiles, the cross was simply foolishness. It didn't compute. In their minds, their understanding, it didn't come together. "How could one Man on the cross possibly bring salvation to me?" And the idea violated their scholarship, their reason. "Is that really the way things should work out?"

Yet Paul said, to those who believe in God, the cross is both God's power and His wisdom set upon display.

If nothing else, the cross is God's statement that there's only one way in. This isn't just door number one, this isn't just one alternative. It is the way to life paved by Him. The problem is for many people, the cross becomes very restrictive. It's too narrow, it's too limiting. The message, which is unflattering to the flesh - "You're a sinner, you're going to hell, you need a Savior" - is set aside because people - man, in general - want to play a bigger part in their own salvation. "If all I have to do is believe in the Lord, it doesn't seem like I'm getting a lot of credit." So man wants to broaden the way. He wants to just simply do his best and follow that mantra that "all roads lead to God," and the most important thing is sincerity; not truth, not doctrine, not faith, not the infallibility of God's promises. "But I did the best I could! How can you say Christianity is the only way?" And the answer is: because that's what the Bible says.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus faced the inevitability of His sacrifice, Matthew tells us, in chapter 26, that the Lord labored for hours in prayer, fought with this whole concept of the substitutionary death that He would have to face. Three different times - verse 39, verse 42, verse 44 - He said to His Father, "If it's possible, let this cup pass from Me. If there's any other way. Yet, Father, Your will be done, and if this cup cannot be taken from Me, Your will be done." "But if man could be better, if man could accomplish more, if there was a better way, a more religious way, if I could avoid the cross and the separation that I will have to face with You for their benefit, then let's do that." And heaven's answer was pretty clear: there was no other way. The angels came to minister to the Son. We're so close now. And each time He prayed, sweating great drops of blood in anguish and used the word "nevertheless." God longed to redeem man. He made you, then He wants to save you, and He offered to do that at the cross of His Son and then says it is absolutely the only way your sins can be forgiven. It's the only way God can forgive your sins and remain just because He'd already declared the judgment of sin would be death. He can't change the rules midstream because they don't work out for Him. He's holy and righteous. He's good but holy. And Jesus

suffered the agony and the shame of our transgressions but, in the process, He declares in no uncertain terms this is the only way you can go. "I'm the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). It's very narrow indeed, and it is because God has provided a way that He could righteously save man.

On the other hand, the cross puts on display the horrible destiny of anyone who decides to just go it alone. "I don't need Jesus." Okay. This is what you can expect, then, to face. The horror is so great that God sent His only Son to spare you from it. Hell is so horrifying that He says to you, "It isn't made for you. It's made for the devil and his angels. You don't have to go there."

At the cross Jesus took the wrath of God, who is righteous. But it is the same wrath that you read in this chapter. It's the wrath of God against rebellion and sin. He took it for those who would look to Him, and to those who will not, they'll face it themselves. God is angry at sin. He sees how it destroys lives. You see it in the world around you. Everything it touches it destroys. If tonight you are living in sin and have no relationship with God, it's destroying you. You can cover it up in a hundred ways, put a bigger Band-Aid on the problem. But His anger is at sin, and ultimately His anger will be against those who refuse His love, who decide they don't need Him, He died in vain.

The Father, in His righteousness, has declared that sin must be punishable by death, which is why He came. In sin, we have no hope. There was no hope when we were in sin. "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23), but God came to bring us a reward, a gift to those who would trust in Him. His anger against sin was nailed to a tree. So complete is His work that Paul will say to the Romans, "Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." Here's His wrath, and you're in heaven. Romans 5:9. 1 Thessalonians 5:9. Same chapter, same verse. "For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." So, when it comes to the Tribulation time, for anyone to think that a Christian would have to stand here and face the wrath of God does not clearly understand the Bible or the effectiveness and the sufficiency of the cross. The Lord has delivered you from His wrath. God's judgment was fully satisfied at Calvary. We're having communion to declare that. It's taken care of. Nothing needs to be offered beyond what's been offered for us. And the people you're going to meet in this chapter have decided they don't need Him, and at some point, you just run out of room, and God says that's enough. There's nothing left for you to do but to trust in His Son; nothing you can add, nothing you can

accomplish that will complete the work. The work is done for you. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1). So, we've been delivered from His wrath (back to chapter 4:1), but here in the end of the Great Tribulation, God pours out His wrath and in great sadness and great sorrow, I am sure, but with tremendous certainty, this final judgment falls before He returns. And, like I said, this chapter leads directly to chapter 19; those chapters in the middle are those parenthetical ones where you're stopped and asked to consider some other things. But timeline wise, one leads directly to the other. So you want to be sure you have Jesus as your hope, as your anchor. Hang on to Him. He'll get you there. Because all that you face in the world is far little and very nonconsequential compared to what eternity will be like.

Verse 1, chapter 16 says this, "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.' 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 worshipped his image." Back in chapter 15, as we began in verse 1, I think, to read that when these seven plagues were accomplished, the wrath of God would be completed, we were shown in verse 2 those who had gone through the fire of life under this Antichrist and under his minions, if you will, and ended up losing their lives for the sake of their faith in Christ. And they find themselves gathered together before the Lord, having victory over the mark of the beast and the number of his name. Well, these in chapter 16 have not. These guys have decided otherwise. "I'm gonna throw in with the world. I'm gonna throw in with the ways of the world. I'm gonna throw in with the beast and all of his power." And, like I said, all of this judgment comes forth from the privacy of God's temple, where He has removed Himself from everyone else during this grievous but righteous time as He speaks.

Complete judgments will lead to the return of Christ. And, like I said, John has a couple more visions in the middle for us to look at. But I think if you look at verse 2 and, for that matter, if you've been with us for a while, there is a tremendous hardness that sin brings into a person's life. I can't imagine all that these folks have seen and experienced the last few years, and yet somehow they have decided they can go it alone. Up to this point, even with the trumpet judgments, there was always a partial loss of things to instill hope that it could be restored. There was always a door open for repentance. But at least, in this chapter, the judgments and the bowls are completely and totally punitive. In other words, they've passed the

point of no return. This is it. It's a horrible chapter but one that we should take note of.

So John, in verse 1, "hears a loud voice." By the way, if you've been paying attention, John has heard a loud voice twenty different times! I don't know if everybody's just screamin' in heaven or what, but to John it was, you know.....and this is obviously the Lord speaking from the temple. It'll be His voice in verse 17 that says, "It is finished!" But here the order given by the Lord, in His solitude, "It's time. It's time." These bowls that were filled with God's wrath are being poured out. That little phrase - "poured out" - you'll find it a lot in the Old Testament, in the New Testament as well, as the Lord begins to just judge the people. You'll read in Psalm, for example, 79:5-7, "How long, LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire? Pour out Your wrath on the nations that do not know You, and on the kingdoms that do not call on Your name. For they have devoured Jacob, and laid waste his dwelling place." God.....it is that imagery that you see constantly used. When we look at the seven years prophecy of these final seven years in Daniel 9, it speaks about the abomination that will be taking place, and then it says "until God's judgment is poured out upon the desolate," until God says, "This is enough." Well, here it is. This is enough.

These bowl judgments have a lot in common with the trumpet judgments. They're not all the same, but they tend to differ specifically in intensity and in timing; one comes right on top of the other. I think, for example, if you lose water to drink, you know this isn't lasting long; and that will be one of them as well. But they mirror much of what God did in judging Pharaoh in Egypt in not letting His people go. There's a lot to be said for laying Exodus next to the book of Revelation in terms of how God works.

So, the first bowl, verse 2. Loathsome sores - an oozing, discharging ulcer that appears on those who have taken the mark of the beast and bowed their knee to the image that he made; a running sore that won't heal. If you read ahead to verse 11, where the fifth bowl is poured out upon these afflicted, they are still suffering the physical affliction of this first bowl. So this appears to be something that certainly doesn't go away, and it is found in the lives of those who have knelt down to the dragon, the beast, the false prophet. And we will read, as we go, that they continued, verse 9, to "blaspheme" God. Nothing can bring them to the end of themselves, and that's really what is left: people that are not willing to turn. You say to yourself, "Who's left, then, to go into the kingdom?" It's a good question.

The Jews that God has been hiding in Petra certainly will enter into the Kingdom Age, just as the LORD had brought some of Israel's contingency through in the days of His wrath in Egypt. Anyone who has survived without taking the mark, wherever they might be, and I guess you could probably do that around the world. But there's going to be fewer people than you think getting to the time where, in Jesus' return, we find those who are ready to stand before Him and enter the kingdom that He's going to rule in. There may be some countries that fight against the Antichrist and stand their ground. We don't know. God doesn't tell us. You can just conjecture and that's.....anybody's guess, I guess, and we don't really want to go with that.

These boils, if you will, or these sores that we read remind us of the sixth plague that God brought upon Pharaoh in Egypt in Exodus 9. When the LORD later brought the children of Israel into the land, He had the priests stand some upon one mountain, some upon the other, as they entered, and one of the things the LORD said to the people is, "If you obey Me, I will keep from you all of the plagues that Egypt faced. But if you turn your back on Me, if you decide to go it alone, I will allow all of the plagues upon Egypt to fall upon you" (Deuteronomy 28:15, 27, 35). And those who, here, had chosen to bear the mark of the beast will now be wearing the mark of God's wrath. "He's got the mark of the beast." "Yeah, and he's got boils. He's got sores. He's marked, all right." God had already warned that taking the mark of the beast or bowing your knee to its image was irreversible, eternally-damning (chapter 14:9-11).

And now this first bowl brings suffering to nearly everyone upon the earth. It's a visible, constant, obvious pain that will not go away. They will die in that pain, facing God. There's been a lot of speculation - that's the word I'm looking for - by a lot of Bible scholars as to what the cause of these boils might be. And if you go to read Revelation commentaries - especially if they've been written in a modern era - they will try to explain them as radioactive fallout or the result of a nuclear war; they'll point to Hiroshima or Nagasaki, where many suffered in like manner because of the radioactivity. And that's fine if you want to try to figure out a natural cause for what God is doing. If you go to the book of Exodus, and you read the same thing, there isn't one of these scholars that will say, "Eh, it's probably nuclear fallout. It's a nuclear bomb. Just look at Hiroshima." Because they didn't exist. And somehow God could still accomplish it. So that's good enough for me. I like when you speculate - up to you - but I'll only give you what I know the Bible says. It says this is gonna happen, and God's gonna do it. It's comin' right from His

throne, it's in the hand of an angel, it's at the very end of the Great Tribulation when there is no more hope for those that are left; they've decided to go elsewhere. So I really don't need an explanation as to how; I'm comfortable just knowing why and who, and it's a time of tremendous distress. And notice there's no repentance; it's out of the question. It is mind boggling to me that an earth would be filled with people like this, but God has not lied to us yet.

Verse 3 tells us, "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 bowl follows hard on the heels of the first. This time the judgment is poured out upon the sea. "Blood as of a dead man" - coagulated, unable to carry life to the tissues, remove waste from the body, dried blood. Imagine an ocean like that around the world, where every living creature in it dies.

Now back in Exodus, as God brought judgment upon Pharaoh who held His people - a type of the world - Moses, in the first of the ten plagues, turned the Nile River into blood. Earlier in our study here in Revelation in the sounding of the second trumpet, a third of the ocean was affected when a molten star hit it, and a third of the creatures in it died (Revelation 8:8-9). Well, this is the rest. This second bowl brings universal impact. Now this circle of death encompasses the globe.

Imagine the beaches, the stench, the bacteria, the loss of food. Especially if you live in a nation that looks to the sea for its substance. The end is in sight. Every kind of essential life-supporting system is being removed by the Lord. Judgment is poured out. This is it. And it's horrifying.

Verse 4, "Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. 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. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.'" If it wasn't enough to touch the oceans, now the third bowl hits all the fresh water - the lakes, the streams, the rivers, the fountains of water. And all of the drinking water upon the earth now meets the wrath of the King of kings. I don't know how long you survive without water, and I can just imagine the war, at least for a few days, that will be fought over stored water. You know? You don't want to own a 7-11 now; they'll all come running for the water. We just know it's going to be short. Right? This tells you how short this period is going to be. Again, during the trumpet

judgments, a third of the drinking water was left by the Lord's hand undrinkable and bitter. But now all potable water is affected. Jesus' first miracle - He turned water into wine in celebration, the ordinary for the extraordinary. Well here the awesome work of God will let everyone know that the world has chosen a direction that.....they've chosen to follow a liar. But it'll be too late.

As these things are taking place, John hears some very interesting declarations. First, notice in verse 5, from "the angel of the waters." I like the title. It's not really used elsewhere in the Scriptures. I couldn't tell you this is the same angel that poured out the third bowl, for he seems to be designated as a different angel.

Angels sure have lots of jobs in the Bible. Back in chapter 7, we met some angels that their whole job was to hold back the winds from the four corners of the earth until the Lord said, "Let 'em go." So here you are, for years, waiting. Others are seen as guarding the "*abussos*." Others are delivering messages. Some are watching over the saints as guardians. Some are in the heavens, singing God's praises. A few that we saw last time were flying through the heavens with warnings and a message of the salvation God would bring. And here's an angel who seems to be in charge of the water. Culligan man in heaven. You know, it could be that what the world sometimes calls the forces of nature are nothing other than the hand of God that works through His servants, the angels.

This angel, on the heels of what is going on on the earth, simply declares that God's judgment is right, that God is right in what He's doing; that they had spilled the blood of the saints and the prophets over the generations, but now they would be forced to drink blood, so to speak. The bloodshed during the Tribulation is unparalleled in history. From chapter 7 forward, the number of saints coming to the Lord is uncountable the Bible says. I mean, there's no way to even add them up, there'll be so many having to give their life.

And so the angel declares that the punishment fits the crime. This is poetic justice. This is right, and he declares loudly and defends God's honor, lest anyone questions His ways. By the way, this is how God often works in the Bible. Pharaoh set out to drown the newborn Hebrew children. Instead, God turns around and drowns his entire army. Haman builds a gallows with a plan and a hope to hang Mordecai upon them and exterminate the Jews. God makes sure that Haman gets hung on the gallows that he built. Saul refuses God's direction to wipe out the

Amalekites. And so he spares some, and years later he's mortally wounded by an Amalekite.

Reap what you sow. Want that kind of life, you get that kind of life. "You have shed the blood of My saints." There's a Scripture in chapter 17:6 where John writes, "I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. And when I saw her, I marveled with great amazement." Well now, try this on for size. Isaiah 49:26, Isaiah prophesied, "I will feed those who oppress you with their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with sweet wine. All flesh shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior, and your Redeemer," (I'm, alone,) "the Mighty One of Jacob." Well here He is, the Mighty One of Jacob declaring who He is.

So, chiming in with this "angel of the waters," another angel from another area around the altar in heaven, notice, verse 7, "And I heard another" (another angel) "from the altar saying, 'Even so,' " (which, by the way, is the word "amen") " 'Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.' " This time that God had prolonged His mercy for so many generations, He will prolong it no longer. But, "Even so, God, this is right." It's a good thing tonight that God hasn't given this room what we deserve. Amen. I'm so glad. Sometimes I wish that on my enemies. "Give them what they deserve, Lord." But never upon myself nor upon you. Maybe this is the angel that stood before the altar of incense, representing the prayers of the saints, because there had been a lot of prayers coming from this group, saying, "Lord, how long before You justify us, before You pay them back, before You bring judgment to bear? And how long before You avenge our blood?" And God is doing that. I know there are a lot of people that question the goodness of God or the fairness of God on this side of the grave; I guarantee you there's none on the other side who are questioning His goodness. All the angels are in harmony with God's choices and God's decisions; they call Him just and righteous. "The LORD is righteous in all His ways, gracious in all His works" (Psalm 145:17) "Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments" (Psalm 119:137). It would be wise to consider that, tonight, God feels the same way about sin as you read here; He hates it. Hates it in your life. Hates what it will do to you. The good news is we're living in this age of mercy and grace that still constrains God's judgment. But eventually, in chapter 16, it comes out. How patient is the Lord? Well, look around.

When Abraham had that discussion with the LORD, back in chapter 18 of Genesis, and he began to question the judgment upon Sodom and all, he said, "LORD, it's not like You to destroy the righteous with the wicked. Far be it from You. You're the judge of all the earth. You're going to do the right thing. LORD, don't be angry with me. How many would it take to turn Your judgment?" And he said, "For ten righteous, would You hold back?" and He said, "For ten righteous, I would.....I'd spare the place." That ought to tell you what's going on on the earth now. There aren't ten righteous. The judgment is falling.

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

The very fact that the sun rises and sets consistently to bring heat and cool and comfort is a blessing that most of us take for granted. Unless you're Annie. Think about it.....you'll be all right. "The sun will come out....." (Pastor Jack sings) (Laughing) Okay. Tryin' to lighten up the mood here a little bit. Sorry Gerard. Now the sun becomes man's enemy. What had been a blessing from God now turns against them as they seek to use His blessings, if you will, to their advantage; but they lose it. When Luke wrote Jesus' conversations with the disciples about the last days, he recorded the Lord saying (Luke 21:25-27), "And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the Lord will come." So, true to form. The sun that had blessed so many for so long would now become his enemy as the goodness of God that they'd been granted faithfully is removed from them.

Here's what Isaiah wrote about this time, very prophetic and powerful verses. In chapter 24:1-6, he wrote this, "Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the LORD has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away; the haughty people of the earth languish. The earth is also defiled

under its inhabitants, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left." Pretty powerful. 700 B.C. Points to this verse and God's promise to fulfill it.

In the fourth trumpet judgment (chapter 8), the sun had lost a third of its light. In fact, everything had dimmed, if you will. But here, everything is completely reversed. When Jesus hung at Calvary for those last three hours - from noon to 3:00 - the earth was darkened. The sun wouldn't give its light. It's like all of creation mourned His death. But here the Lord sets the temperature to broil. The word "scorched" is a word that means to severely burn. And remember, there's no drinking water. It reminds me of the request of the rich man in hell, there in Luke 16, where he said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." And he was told that there was a gulf between him and those who believed. Again, read commentaries on Revelation, and you can skip a lot of these because the Bible scholar will say, "Well, you know, this is the depletion of the ozone layer, this is a nuclear explosion," whatever it is, "the UV levels are damaging, we're heading off the scale." Again, I would say to you - rather than speculate as to how, just believe that He will do what He says. Right? And the why you are given and the response to His judgments you have. You just don't have the how. Which is the kind of stuff you leave up to the Lord anyway because we always like to tell Him how, but He usually has different plans than we do anyway.

So verse 9 is a reaction that is, to me, remarkable. They know the source of their suffering. They know the cause. And rather than repent, they defy God. They "blaspheme" Him. It's a strong word. It means to chide or to speak evil against, to mock, to rail. How do you shake your fist at a God that has taken you out? Your arms are too short to box with Him. They realize He has power over these plagues, and they will not repent or turn to Him for help. And their response ought to.....I hope lays to rest the mistaken notion that if people could just see one real act of God, they would repent. They won't. It's a spiritual battle. Remember that discussion between Abraham and the rich man, the fellow in hell (Luke 16). And he said, "Abraham, send someone back to warn them because if someone rises from the dead, certainly they'll turn and go the right way. They won't have to come here." And it was Abraham who said to the rich man, "No, no, no. Not at all true. They have Moses, they have the prophets. And even if one would raise from the

dead, that won't persuade them." So here. At the end of all things, the heart that is desperately wicked is blinded still. The real problem for man is not his environment but the condition of his heart. Sin will blind. Look at this response.

And these on the earth are now getting a foretaste of hell, and their reaction says that they deserve to go there. Malachi wrote (4:1-3), " 'For behold, the day is coming, burning like an oven, and all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,' says the LORD of hosts, 'that will leave them neither root nor branch. But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings; and you shall go out and grow fat like stall-fed calves. You shall trample the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day that I do this,' says the LORD of hosts."

Victory for you. Judgment for them. Because God's testing does not always elicit a response of repentance. Not always. When people pass the point of no return, God continues to test them to provide an abundant witness to them of the unwillingness of their hearts. They're unwilling to hear. Revelation 3:10, the Lord said, "If you keep My commandments and you persevere in this hour of trial, you who are tested upon the earth, I will keep you from the world and its judgments." Jesus, in the wilderness, showed who He was by the fact He endured; Pharaoh by the fact that he would refuse.

So the remainder of these bowl judgments will focus.....and the reason I cut them off there, and that isn't so that we can have communion, obviously, but the rest of the bowl judgments center on the empire of the beast. He goes after his henchmen, his city, and his rule. The Lord is going to destroy those who now are seeking to destroy the earth. The end will come at breakneck speed. The psalmist declared, "The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether (Psalm 19:9b)." And the angels sang it as well.

God, tonight, waits for you to respond to His grace. But if you will not, one day you will answer to Him as Judge. The cross itself is the warning of that. Sin will be judged. God suffered for your sins so you don't have to. He died so you don't have to. He was separated from the Father so you don't have to. But if you refuse Him, you're gonna face judgment; you're gonna pay. Because there is a debt to be paid. Tonight, though, we can celebrate His victory. And if you're listening to us here or online or next door, God will give you victory through His Son. You can go home tonight knowing your slate is clean, your sins are forgiven, there's a place for you in

heaven, you'll be welcome there. And then when we do your funeral, we'll rejoice.
Oh, we'll miss you, but we'll know where you are, and you'd better be waiting for us.
(Laughing)

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
August 29, 2021