

Revelation 16:1–11

Seven Bowl Judgments

📖 The Passage — Revelation 16:1–11 (NKJV)

Revelation 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.'"

Revelation 16:2 | First Bowl

"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."

Revelation 16:3 | Second Bowl

"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."

Revelation 16:4–7 | Third Bowl

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood. ⁵And 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. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." ⁷And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Revelation 16:8–9 | Fourth Bowl

⁸Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. ⁹And 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.

Revelation 16:10–11 | Fifth Bowl

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. ¹¹ They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

Introduction — The Last Alarm

◆ **Father Francis Sampson — Normandy, 1944**

Military chaplain Father Francis Sampson parachuted into enemy territory under heavy fire. Captured and awaiting execution, he asked for a moment to pray. Kneeling in a muddy field surrounded by rifles, he later said he understood perhaps for the first time in his bones that there are moments in history when time runs out. There is no more waiting. The hour of decision has come and gone.

We come tonight to such a moment in the book of Revelation. Chapter 16 is not a passage that brings joy to preach. Reading it tears at the heart. It strikes terror. It is not comfortable.

Why we preach this passage:

- ▶ Because it is the whole counsel of God (**Acts 20:27**).
- ▶ To awaken Christians to the urgent mission of leading others to Christ before judgement falls.
- ▶ To awaken those without Christ to their lost condition (**2 Corinthians 5:11**).

God cannot love righteousness unless He hates sin. He cannot reward unless He also punishes. The Bible is not only a book of hope, but it is also a book of judgment.

2 Thessalonians 1:7–9, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

Even Jesus, the embodiment of grace, spoke more about hell than anyone else in Scripture. Judgment is not foreign to the New Testament it runs like a scarlet thread from Matthew to Revelation. **Chapter 16** is what it looks like when a holy God says: enough.

Setting.

A. The Voice from the Temple (V 1)

Revelation 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.'*"

The command comes not from an angel, nor a saint, but from God Himself thundering from the smoke-filled temple. The word 'great' (Greek: *megalē*) occurs eleven times in this chapter alone.

Revelation 15:8, *The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.*

20 times in Revelation we hear a "loud voice," and here it thunders from the smoke-filled temple, the place that once spoke of mercy, sacrifice, and atonement. No longer.

Isaiah 66:6, *"The sound of noise from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the Lord, Who fully repays His enemies!"*

What God has already done before this moment:

- Demonstrated love — sent His Son to die.
- Raised up preachers and witnesses across the ages.
- Pleaded, warned, and given foretastes of judgement.
- Given the gospel to every tongue, tribe, and people.
- Still — they will not come.

B. How the Bowls compare to earlier Judgements

Egypt's Plagues (Exodus 7–12)	Seven Trumpets (Rev. 8–11)	Seven Bowls (Rev. 16)
Local — Egypt only	1/3 of the world	Total — entire earth
Liberating God's people	Escalating warnings	Final — no more delay
Spread over time	Spread over years	Rapid — hours/days
Partial destruction	Partial destruction	Complete destruction

These bowls come rapid-fire not over years but over hours and days, one upon the next.

There would not even be time for natural explanations. These are direct, supernatural acts of God Almighty.

The Five Bowl Judgements

BOWL 1 Loathsome sores on the Beast followers.

Revelation 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."

Oozing, malignant ulcers — the Greek word *helkos* (ulcer) — break out on every person bearing the mark of the beast. From head to foot, incurable and relentless.

Those who chose Antichrist over Christ now suffer for it.

Notice who is spared: believers. Those whose names are in the Lamb's Book of Life refused the mark (**Revelation 13:8**).

Exodus 9:10, *Then they took ashes from the furnace and stood before Pharaoh, and Moses scattered them toward heaven. And they caused boils that break out in sores on man and beast.*

Deuteronomy 28:35, *The Lord will strike you in the knees and on the legs with severe boils which cannot be healed, and from the sole of your foot to the top of your head.*

Zechariah 14:12, *'Their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet; their eyes will rot in their sockets; their tongues will rot in their mouths.'*

BOWL 2 Every Sea becomes Blood.

Revelation 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."

Not the thin reddish tinge of the second trumpet judgement.

Revelation 8:8–9, *Then the second angel sounded: And something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea, and a third of the sea became blood. ⁹ And a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*

But thick, dark, coagulated blood like pooled blood from a dead man. Every living creature in every ocean perishes.

Billions of creatures float to the surface. The stench is unimaginable. The world's seas become putrid, silent graves.

Exodus 7:20–25 (first plague of Egypt, now scaled to every ocean on earth).

BOWL 3 Rivers and Springs become blood.

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

If losing the saltwater seas was catastrophic, this is unsurvivable. All fresh water every river, spring, and reservoir is now blood.

By this point, water is already desperately scarce: the two witnesses have shut up the sky for three-and-a-half years (**Revelation 11:6**), four angels have held back all winds blocking rainfall (**Revelation 7:1**), and a third of fresh water was already poisoned by Wormwood (**Revelation 8:10–11**).

No water for the wounds. No water for the thirst. No water anywhere.

God defends His Justice (vv. 5–7)

In the midst of these devastating plagues, the scene pauses not for mercy, but for vindication. An angel speaks as the world shakes its fist at God.

Revelation 16:5–7, " 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. ⁶For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due." ⁷And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

Why is this judgement just?

- Throughout the Tribulation, the followers of Antichrist have hunted and slaughtered believers and preachers.
- The martyrs' blood cried out from beneath the altar: 'How long, O Lord, until You judge and avenge our blood?' (Revelation 6:9–10).
- God answers that cry with *lex talionis* — retribution fitting the crime.
- God does not conform to an external standard of righteousness — He IS the standard.

Hebrews 10:30–31, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

BOWL 4 SCORCHING HEAT FROM THE SUN

Revelation 16:8–9, Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. ⁹And 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 sun — humanity's source of warmth, light, and life — becomes an instrument of death. Fatal, scorching heat burns the unbelievers.

If the sun's hydrogen expands: ice caps melt, seas surge two hundred feet, coastal populations drown in moments.

Isaiah 24:3–6, *The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, For the Lord has spoken this word. ⁴The earth mourns and fades away, The world languishes and fades away; The haughty people of the earth languish. ⁵The earth is also defiled under its inhabitants, Because they have transgressed the laws, Changed the ordinance, Broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶Therefore 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.*

Malachi 4:1, *“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.*

Then comes the most chilling detail in the chapter: they KNOW who is doing this. They KNOW God has power over these plagues. Yet they do not repent. They blaspheme.

KEY OBSERVATION: No grace can soften what has been wilfully, repeatedly, furiously rejected. The heart can be hardened beyond recovery.

BOWL 5 DARKNESS ON THE THRONE OF THE BEAST

Revelation 16:10–11, *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. ¹¹They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.*

The fifth bowl targets the very seat of Antichrist's global empire. His entire kingdom goes dark. The sun that scorched them is now gone. No light, no relief, no direction.

They are still carrying the sores of Bowl 1, still parched from Bowls 2–3, still burned from Bowl 4 and now they stumble in absolute darkness, chewing their own tongues in agony.

Yet still they do not repent.

This is the LAST mention of repentance in this section. After this silence. They are set.

Joel 2:2, *"A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness... A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will there ever be any such after them."*

Why did they not repent?

Three times in chapter 16 we are told they **'did not repent'** (V 9, 11, 21). This is one of the most sobering realities in all of Scripture. At the height of God's wrath with full knowledge that it is GOD doing this with the gospel still being preached by 144,000 Jewish evangelists and two witnesses, yet they choose to blaspheme rather than bow.

They have already made their choice:

- They took the mark of the beast.
- They worshipped his image.
- They shed the blood of believers.
- The human heart, hardened progressively through each rejection of grace, becomes incapable of repentance — not because God refuses, but because the person will not.

Hebrews 10:26–27, *"For if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries."

Proverbs 29:1, *"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy."*

This is not a problem reserved for the Tribulation. Every person who hears the gospel and says 'not yet' is taking a step toward this kind of hardness. The invitation of grace is not permanent. There comes a point — known only to God — where the door closes.

What these Judgements reveal about God?

1. God's wrath is Holy — Not Hateful.

The God who pours out these bowls is the same God who sent His Son to bear the wrath we deserved. The bowls are not the reaction of a vindictive deity they are the holy and inevitable consequence of a world that chose darkness over light.

John 3:19, *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."*

2. God's Judgement is Patient before it is final.

Throughout the Tribulation God preaches grace even as judgement unfolds. Two indestructible witnesses proclaim the gospel for three-and-a-half years (**Revelation 11:3**).

An angel flies through the heavens with the eternal gospel for 'every nation, tribe, tongue, and people' (**Revelation 14:6**). The bowls fall only after every avenue of mercy has been exhausted.

2 Peter 3:9, *"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise... but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."*

3. The Human Heart Without God Is Irreversibly Hard.

Three times in these eleven verses the refrain echoes:

They did not repent.

They blasphemed.

The process of hardening is not sudden it is the accumulated weight of a thousand small rejections, a thousand times the voice of God was heard and turned away.

Hebrews 3:15, *"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."*

Application

This passage is not given to frighten Christians into paralysis. It is given to awaken them to urgency.

1. Live with Eternity in View.

When we read chapter 16, the trivial concerns of daily life are placed in their proper context. Career, comfort, reputation all of it evaporates before the reality of God's coming judgement.

Christians are called to live as people who know how the story ends.

What lasts?

Souls last.

Invest accordingly.

2. Evangelise with Urgency — Not Embarrassment.

The Tribulation will see the greatest revival in history and the greatest slaughter of believers.

The time to reach people is now, before judgement falls.

Do you have family members, friends, or colleagues who do not know Christ?

Revelation 16 should set your feet moving toward them.

2 Corinthians 5:11, *"Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God."*

3. Do Not Harden Your Heart.

For anyone who has not yet surrendered their life to Jesus Christ the repeated refrain of chapter 16 is a warning written for you:

'They did not repent.'

Three times.

The capacity to repent is a gift from God, and it can be forfeited through repeated rejection.

Respond to God today, while His Spirit is still calling.

Hebrews 3:7–8, *"Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.'"*

4. Trust the Justice of God — Even when it is difficult.

The angels in this passage stop to affirm that what God is doing is righteous and holy.

God has demonstrated love, patience, and grace for centuries. He has sent His Son to die. He has preserved His Word. The judgement that

falls here falls on those who had every opportunity and refused every one of them.

Genesis 18:25, *"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

Conclusion — The Door is still open

◆ John Harper — RMS Titanic, 1912

Just before the Titanic departed Southampton, a young Christian worker named John Harper pressed gospel tracts into the hands of passengers. He had an unexplained compulsion that this voyage mattered for eternity. When the Titanic sank and the ocean swallowed her, Harper was seen in the freezing water calling out: 'Are you saved? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.' One young Scotsman, half-frozen, said no. Harper pressed him again. The man believed and was eventually pulled from the water alive. He later testified: 'I am the last convert of John Harper.' Harper knew the terror of the Lord — and it made him fearless in love.

That is the only fitting response to Revelation 16. Not dread for its own sake. Not curiosity about end-times chronology. But a burning urgency to bring people to the only One who can deliver them from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 1:10, *"...and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come."*

The bowls of Revelation 16 are coming. They are as certain as the promises of God. But they are not here yet. The door is still open. The gospel is still being proclaimed. The Spirit of God is still calling.

A personal appeal:

- Do you know Christ? If you do who in your life does not? Go to them today. While there is still time.
- If you are hearing/reading this and you do not yet know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour the very fact that you are here, and not living through Revelation 16, means grace is still extended to you.
- Do not walk away from it! Do not harden your heart! Repent, and believe the gospel.

Romans 5:9, *"Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him."*

1. Why is it important that we preach passages like Revelation 16, even when they are uncomfortable?
2. What does it tell us about the human heart that people continue to blaspheme even as the bowls fall?
3. How does understanding God's wrath deepen your appreciation for the cross of Jesus Christ?
4. Is there someone in your life you have been hesitant to share the gospel with? What is holding you back?
5. What does it mean practically to 'not harden your heart'? What habits or attitudes make hardness more likely?