

Revelation 16:1-21 **“Crime and punishment”**

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I. Intro

This section of revelation is where John sees God’s righteous judgment upon the earth; a topic that draws much conversation depending upon your perspective. There are those that see God as indifferent towards sin and that His judgement is long overdue. To which Hebrews 10:30-31 says, *“Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”* Then there are those that see God as a mean restrictive ogre who punishes poor mankind on a whim. Based upon the Bible there are six reasons God is right in His judgment:

1. Ps. 90:8 *“You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.”* Eccl 12:14 *“For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.”* Mark 4:22 *“For there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed, nor has anything been kept secret but that it should come to light.”* Simply put **God see every hidden thing** as well as the *“the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*
2. Rom. 1:18 *“The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness”*. Not only does man “miss the mark” concerning how God created him he does so **willingly suppressing the truth.**

3. Rom. 2:5 “*But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*”. Mankind continues **to harden their heart** while God is patient giving them time to repent.
4. Ps. 78:21-22 “*Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious; So, a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.*” Mankind’s **continual refusal to trust God** is yet another reason for His judgment.
5. 2 Sam 6:7 “*the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.*” Not only is there a refusal to trust God there is **a rebellion seen in repeated attempts to approach God on our own grounds.**
6. Finally, there is a **disobedience that will continue and not ever change.**

II. Vs. 1-11 Righteous judgments of God

Vs. 1-2 This is the first of the seven bowls of wrath which is a continuation of the 15th chapter. These final seven judgments will happen in quick succession at the very end of the tribulation period just prior to the 2nd coming of Jesus.

1. Vs. 2 This judgement causes “*foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.*” In chapter 14:9-10 the angel of the Lord warned the people of the earth “*If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.*” Mankind’s reaction to God’s warning is willful disobedience as

they were given every opportunity to heed the Lord's warning. The description of this sore as being "*foul and loathsome*" describes an ulcer like sore that has become malignant. *These words are the very words used to translate the sores given to the Egyptians in Exodus 9:9 when it was translated from Hebrew to Greek.* It is interesting to remember the plight of Job who was attacked by satan with painful sores from head to foot. **How fitting it is that God's judgement for those who have disobeyed His word not to take the mark of the beast to receive a mark of having done so!**

2. Vs. 3 The 2nd bowl judgment comes out against the sea turning it into "*blood as of a dead man*". This is descriptive words that describe the color of the sea being blood red and its smell will be that of something in a state of decay. The location of this judgment is upon the sea and its effects will be universal as, "*every living creature in the sea died*", from whales to the plankton they eat. Again, *the judgment fits the crime as those who wanted to worship the creation apart from the creator or given the stench of death of such worship.* Mankind has always sought to worship their environment, but **God has given us His creation to sustain us and to point us to Him.** But instead of worshipping the creator they fallen humanity has chosen to fashion idols that look like the creation (Rom. 1:18-23, Isa. 46:5-7). *God sends judgment upon the very thing that man looks to as their savior showing them the futility of worshipping that which cannot save.*
3. Vs. 4-6 The 3rd bowl judgment is sent towards the fresh water supply. Those who have shed the blood of those who dispensed "*living water*" are given blood to drink. Just like Pharaoh who tried to drown all the Jewish boys saw in the end his first-born

son die and his army drown in the Red Sea. Notice that the angels worship God based upon His Character as well as His actions:

- A. “*You are righteous, O Lord*”: **God always at all times does right!**
 - B. “*The One who is and who was and who is to be*”: Not only is He self-existing but He is unchanging. Thus, *His counsel, purpose and character are always the same!*
 - C. “*Because You have judged these things*”: Based upon the above two aspects God’s judgment can never be unfair and will always fit the crime! Since He always does right He alone is the true test of what right is. Furthermore, since He has never changed His standards will never be altered; thus, man is without excuse as to their behavior. Verse seven declares the affirmation of what was just said as all of heaven sees the consistency and righteousness of God’s judgments.
4. Vs. 8-9 As in the 4th trumpet the judgment being upon the darkness of mankind’s heart here the sun is not darkened but intensified the result being that people are scorched. How fitting is this judgment when we consider Matt. 5:45 as Jesus said that the Father, “*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*” All of life depends upon the light of the sun to sustain them but here it will be this light that will judge them. Amazingly we are told that the effects of these first four judgments will not cause a change of heart. So often people think that if God just displayed His power or let them know that their behavior is unexcitable then they would repent and turn to Him. The truth is that based upon

- verse 11 they just blaspheme Him in their stubborn rebellion. If the harden heart will reject the love of God the judgment of God will do nothing to alter it either.
5. Vs. 10-11 Here the 5th bowl is upon the source of all wickedness, “the throne of the beast”. The people who proclaimed his invincibility in chapter 13:4 claiming that no one will be able to make war with him will see how powerless he is against God’s judgment. But amazingly even this will not turn them from their devotion to a defeated foe or their sinful behavior! What a fitting judgment as the antichrist’s kingdom of darkness with all of its lies is placed into a physical place to match its wickedness. The word for “darkness” means to obscure or blind and seeing that satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4) The veiled appearance of satan as an angel of light will be removed and those that worship him will see the object of their worship, yet in spite of that will still not repent!

III. Vs. 12-21 Preparation for war

6. Vs. 12-16 Here we see the 6th bowl judgment which begins the start of the war known as Armageddon. The start of the river Euphrates is in Turkey and flows northwest to southeast through Iraq on its way to the Persian Gulf forming the boundary of the ancient Roman Empire as well as the boundary to the land God gave to Abraham in Gen. 15:18. Dams have since been built on this river making the prophecy of Isa. 11:15 as well as the words here very easily done. In chapter 9:13-14 we were told that a demonic army would be released from this area. The purpose of this drying up of the river is to prepare the way for the kings of the east, unclean spirits (who are like frogs); the dragon who we know is satan, the beast who we are told is the antichrist

and finally the false prophet. So, there are five distinct groups that will play a part in the final battle:

- a. **The kings of the east**: This would include China, Japan, India etc., which represent ½ the world's population. This army will gather together and cross the dried up river Euphrates.
- b. Vs. 13 **Unclean spirits like frogs**: This is just another way of saying demons what is interesting is if you travel the world you will see idols of many of the pagan religions that are depicted as frogs.
- c. **The dragon**: In the 12th chapter we were told that this is satan who is the accuser of the brethren.
- d. **The beast**: The 13th chapter tells us that the beast will be the antichrist that will be the political world leader who will get his power and authority from satan.
- e. **The false prophet**: He will be the mouth piece for the antichrist as well as the religious leader who will encourage the worship of the beast.

The demons will perform signs to deceive the people of the world to fight in this battle. It seems as though this battle breaks out in internal conflict that unites as Jesus' 2nd coming as they seek to attack Him. Dan. 11:35 through chapter 12 deals with this the rough outline being that the antichrist will assume power and for the first 3 ½ year period enjoy peace until his reign begins to crumble and people begin to rebel under his leadership. He enters Israel to stop the opposition against him at which time he gets news of the Kings of the east coming from the dried up river all will meet at Megiddo in Jezreel valley which some 14 miles wide and 20 miles in length. The point of the battle at first is who is going to be king of the earth as the world is not too happy with the antichrist's reign. It is at this

very time that Jesus comes back, and the object of their hatred unites against Jesus. In verse 15 we have a quote from Jesus serving as a warning and an admonition. Jesus is saying that those who are alive are to walk in the righteousness that He has given or else they will walk unclothed and ashamed. Armageddon comes from a combination of two words “Hill” and “slaughter”.

7. Vs. 17-21 Finally we see the 7th bowl judgment which at the very end of the great tribulation. Before it transpires there will be verbal signs proclaiming the end of judgment. These words are familiar as they are the same as Jesus words on the cross in John 19:30 when He proclaimed, “it is finished”. The difference between these two statements has to do with the truth that God judged all of mankind’s sin on the cross and that there will be no other judgment except what that unrepentant man will bare their own guilt! The choice is simple have your sins judged based upon Jesus finished work upon the cross or have your sins judged based upon your own works which is seen here. There will be visible signs as well as audible ones all of which will demonstrate His power and authority. There are four things to note about this earthquake:

- a. Vs. 18 It will be like no other earthquake that has ever been. There will be nothing to compare this with not even polar shifts.
- b. Vs. 19 Jerusalem will be divided into three parts and all other cities of the earth will be destroyed. All of this seems to be a simultaneous event other speculate that it will be a domino effect one triggering the other which Seismologists have concurred the possibility of happening for some time. Babylon will be the specific target as it is the center of all false worship.

- c. Vs. 20 Every island and mountain will be destroyed and as such there will be and safe place as the whole earth's surface will undergo restructuring.
- d. Vs. 21 Finally there will be hail stones that weigh approximately 75 pounds. The interesting thing here is that the penalty for blaspheme was stoning in the O.T. and it appears that it will still be!