

Norman C. Schwab  
Yacolt EVFree  
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## **Bowled Over Revelation 16**

Some things are going to happen..sooner or later. Michael Parfit for the Smithsonian magazine wrote a feature article on the mighty Mississippi. He learned about the incredible power it held by riding the river from Memphis, Tenn. to the Gulf of Mexico in a 12 foot rubber raft. The Mississippi gathers water from 41 percent of the United States, catching water from Montana to New York state. One half a trillion tons of water flow down its channel each year, carrying with it 63 thousand tons of soil every day. (23 million tons per year). This river is a huge threat to the surrounding countryside so engineers have designed levees to pinch this giant into a controlled channel to keep it from flooding towns and farmlands nearby. On the lower Mississippi side, the levees average 25 feet high and run for over 2,200 miles on both sides. It holds back the river from the Mississippi river delta home to more than 8 million people.

Now Parfit decided to take a small plane down the river and noticed the rivers tracks. From a plane it was easy to see that the river had often flooded the Delta. The mud tracks said over and over this river has very little respect for channels and levees, someday soon...someday soon. That is what Parfit warned in his Smithsonian article in February 1993. Someday soon there will come another devastating flood like the ones in 1882, 1927, and 1973. An engineer interviewed by Parfit said. "These people get a sense that everything is totally under control, that is a false sense of security..we have yet to see what this river can do. Just months after the article came out, that summer of 1993 saw one of the worst floods in Mississippi history.

God's Word says that someday soon, Christ will return and just before, there will come the terrible wrath of God on all who have not prepared their lives for his coming. We may be lulled to sleep with a false sense of security because He seems to have delayed His coming so long.

We may think that we have it all under control. But..we do not, when it is time, nothing can stop him. It is the wise person who will be ready.

Some may say this morning. I believe in God. I don't necessarily worship Him the way the Bible probably wants me to. I'm not like some of those radical religious freaks who get so serious about God. I believe that God exists and is a powerful entity. I'm a pretty good person...so I think that should be enough to escape any kind of wrath that God feels He has to pour out on this earth. Some say, I have other things right now that are taking up my time. Read hear. I have other things that are a higher priority than God. My career, my family, my sports, my hobbies, my friends. Get serious about God?...maybe later.

I think there are far too many people in this camp. But merely recognizing there is a God. Merely affirming that He is powerful..that doesn't make you a believer. In fact it puts you on the same level as the demons. What? James 2:19. "You believe that God is one, you do well, (nice try pal) the demons also believe and they shutter in fear." The demons do one better than most. Not only do they believe that God exists and is powerful...they fear God as in frightened." But does that mean they trust God and follow His leadership and love and serve Him with their whole hearts. Absolutely not. God wants far more from us than a tip of the hat, a nod of recognition. He desires us to worship Him. To follow Him. To live out the example He gave us in His son Jesus Christ. To place God as the supreme and incomparable love in our life above all the others loves in our life. To worship God and God alone. It's not a game, for one day, some day, all wrath will break loose and Christ will return. One day, some day soon, it will be too late.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Revelation. Revelation means the apocalypse or unveiling of God's plan for the end. Here we read of what will happen in the end times. Chapter 16 of Revelation details the final outpouring of God's judgment, the bowls of wrath, coming in rapid succession just prior to Christ's return, the second coming of Jesus Christ. Read with me chapter 16 of Revelation. (READ)

Verse 1 John hears a loud voice, a mega phone like voice, coming from the temple. Remember that the verse prior tells us smoke has filled the temple and no one is able to enter the temple until the final seven plagues are carried out. So we must assume this is the voice of God

saying to the seven angels carrying the seven bowls of wrath. Go and pour them out on the earth.

Verse 2 we read of the 1st bowl of God's wrath. It is poured out and produces ugly and painful sores or boils on all those who had taken the mark of the beast and worshipped His image. There are striking similarities between the plagues of the bowls and the plagues of the trumpets we studied earlier in Revelation, as well as similarities between the plagues God sent down on Egypt when they held the Israelites as slaves. The 6th plagues God sent down on Egypt was painful boils. Moses later prophesied when receiving the law in Duet 28:27,35 that those who refused to follow the laws of God and seek after other Gods instead would pay the penalty of Egypt and receive painful boils. This may have been the curse levied upon the Israelites who built the golden cow and worshipped it. But it may well be this same curse lived out for those who in the final day chose to worship the Beast and follow Satan and all his lies. All those who have identified themselves with Satan and the beast by taking the mark, the 666 number on their forehead or hand will be marked by God with painful boils. Of course those who are believers in Christ will avoid this mark, its only fro those loyal to the beast. Interesting that Boils are an outward sign of an inward infection, or problem or corruption. The boils expresses the outward puss of inward decay they refuse to do anything about. The boil expresses an inward spiritual deadness toward God.

The second bowl is poured out in verse 3. This affects the sea just like the second trumpet affected 1/3 of the sea turning it to blood, or a blood like substance. Here the bowl affects all of the salt water seas making them blood like that of a dead man. All living things in the seas were killed because of this plague. This is also similar to the Egyptian plague in Ex 7 that turned the Nile river to blood. Blood is the very symbol of life, a life sustaining substance has become here the symbol of death. The smell of death, the loss of fish and marine animals, the disease. Terrible, terrible plague. No more fish..very sad verse.

The third bowl of God's wrath is poured out in verse 4. Here all the fresh water is affected by the plague. It too turns to blood. There fresh drinking water is contaminated, they become blood, or possibly blood like. Either way it has the same effect. No fresh drinking water. This

brings us to our first point this morning. Point number 1. Sometimes God's judgment is in giving us exactly what we crave after. Here the tribulation people who worship Satan have been thirsty for the blood of the saints. They were tired of being confronted with God's truth. They wanted to live life by their own truth. They thought that if they could only get rid of the Christians that their world utopia would usher in peace. This is mans greatest attempt to make life work on their own. Verse 6 says, they poured out the blood of the saints so God gave them blood to drink. God says, You want blood of my people? Here drink all the blood you want and turns the fresh water with blood. He judged them by giving them exactly what they craved after.

What do you crave after that is not of God? Do you crave for revenge on someone who has hurt you? Are you out to get them, out for blood and violence against them? When you sew a life of revenge and violence you will reap a life of revenge and violence against yourself. For what a man sows that shall he also reap. Do you crave that juicy bit of gossip, that word that exposes another persons weakness? So also will you be exposed. Do you crave after the sensual and lustful things. You will be addicted and never satisfied. Always craving and never able to know the delights of love the way God designed and intended. You will grow numb to your cravings and lust and it will consume you. Do you crave for escape? For drugs or alcohol? have you convinced yourself that you are its master and you can use it to ease your pain and frustration, to escape from reality. Well it will control you and it is a very destructive master, never satisfied to stop with little. It craves for more and more and more. It is power you crave? ambition? pleasure? popularity? Sometimes God will give exactly what we crave after as a punishment and not a blessing.

I remember a friend of mine in grade school who decided it would be real cool to learn to smoke. Only mom found out. She said, you want to smoke then here is a big fat cigar. You smoke this whole stogie. In a very short time he was vomiting sick. Given more than what He craved it made him sick. Sometimes God will give us over to exactly what we crave as a judgment against us. Here those loyal to Satan, those who crave the downfall and blood of the saints, become downed in blood.

The angel of waters, who must have had some sort of jurisdiction over waters affirms that God is righteous, he is the One who is and who was. He is Holy by judging these things. For it is His judgment that establishes His righteousness. Verse 7 those martyred saints under the altar from Revelation 6:9 say yes! Finally vindication. God is true and make things right. God is just. He is the Almighty One.

In verse 8 we read about the fourth bowl poured out. This one effects the sun. It gets real hot enough to scorch men with fire. Some scientists think this may be due to a depletion in the ozone layer, or from the effects of a nuclear war. Whatever explanation we know it comes from God and the people on the earth all know it comes from God and they are not real happy about it. Verse 9 They curse God and blaspheme his name, who has the power of the plagues. But they did not repent. They did not give Him glory. If you recognize there is a God. If you recognize that God is powerful...that certainly doesn't make you a believer. It puts you on the same agreement as demons, who believe that God is one and shudder. Here are men, who recognize God. They curse Him. One does not curse God who does not believe there is a God. Cursing God when things go bad is a subtle, and vial way of affirming that God is responsible. They are angry at God because He refused to work in that situation the way they wanted to. Cursing God is an admission of God's existence and blatant rebellion against Him. Here the people had no doubt there was a God. They had no doubt as to His power. They had experienced it in full force. Yet they refused to repent. They refused to give God glory. Recognizing there is a God is no great feather in your cap. Even the demons know that God is real and they take it a step further, they fear God. But do not give Him glory or repent. That is what God calls us to do.

I find it interesting that it is nature and physical world that seems to be crushing down on the tribulation Antichrist loyalist. The very nature, creation that man has set about to worship....to put their faith in, instead of the One who created nature, that nature is turning against them. Romans 1:18-23 "...exchanged the glory of an incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and birds and animals" So many people these days believe that God is the outdoors and worship the nature and creation. Nature is not God, Nature is God's artwork. And we

had best be taking good care of God's artwork, good stewards. But we certainly should not worship it. It seems today too many people are willing to worship just about anything as long as it is not God. Do you think the Devil cares what people worship? no. It will probably be something that God has created, but just as long as its not God...Satan doesn't care. Here created turns against the people. The sea turns to blood. The Sun turns up the heat. Later the mountains rock and quake and Islands disappear.

Here I am setting up point number 2. Anything that you worship apart from God will eventually turn on you. Why? Because God and only God is worthy of worship. If you worship ambition and are busily climbing the ladder of success you will be gravely disappointed to discover that you have placed your ladder against the wrong building. I believe this is the reason for many a mid-life crisis. You hit the 40's and 50s and realize that everything I have pursued, craved for, yes...everything I worshipped is vanity, worthless and trivial pursuits. One who worships the family only to have their kids rebel. One who worships his career and then it doesn't matter whether you succeed or fail, if that is what you truly worship it will eventually turn on you and seem very dissatisfying. You could be worshipping power or alcohol or beauty or possessions or relationships or even church. But if it's all apart from God it will eventually turn on you and leave you at the very least very, very empty.

King Solomon one of the wisest and richest man that has ever lived wrote a book called Ecclesiastes. This book outlines every attempt he made to find satisfaction. building programs, power, wealth, women, pleasure, mind-altering substances, you name it Solomon had the ability to try it. His conclusion. It's all worthless, vanity, vanity it's all vanity...except for knowing God, fearing God and keeping His commands. God is the one thing worth worshipping. When we worship anything else apart from God it will eventually turn on you.

In verse 10 we read about the 5th bowl poured out on the throne of the beast and his kingdom in darkened. This plague directly affects the beast. His throne. His power. His kingdom is darkened. No longer is he the bright shining hope for world peace and utopia. The Antichrists kingdom has become a caldron of pain. People loyal to the beast are

gnawing at their tongues in pain. It hurts for them just to speak, but they don't care and yell out their blasphemes and curses against God. Their pains and sores continue. The world has collapsed around them, but they continue to rebel and curse against God. The rebel kingdom sham is ripped off. The darkness in the world now accurately reflects the reality of the darkness of this evil empire. God's power in judgment is obvious and strong and powerful. A blind man could see God's power...but they do not acknowledge and bow the knee in worship. Instead they curse God with the whither tongues they have left.

How many around us, just like those in the last days around the beast will have their world collapse around them...yet they still persist in unbelief. This is point number three. It is wishful thinking to assume that if men could only see the power and righteous judgment of God then they would immediately turn to God in genuine belief and trust and worship. We think today that God is so strangely silent. If only he would pop off a couple of really amazing miracles just like He used to do in the Old Testament days...then, yes then people would believe and trust and change their ways. Problem is amazing miracles never fostered a fervent heart of faith back in the Old Testament. Jesus miracles in the New Testament never nurtured the worship and glory and obedience that God desired. No. Flashy miracles produce big crowds but not all that great of faith. During the time just prior to Christ's return there will be no doubt as to the power and righteous judgment of God...and yet it is wishful thinking to assume they would see this power and turn to God is genuine belief. By this time men have heard a clear gospel message and have rejected it. II Thes 2:7-11 tells us that those who willfully reject the gospel of the truth, God will send a deluding influence so that they will believe that what is false. Nothing will convince them to worship God. They like the demons, know that God is real and powerful, but they no longer care. They are gnawing on their tongues feeding on their own rebellion. Now is the appointed time. Now is the day of Salvation. Do not put it off. All of you here have heard the gospel message for which you are accountable for. Do not assume you will change your mind when the fireworks start to fly. Some day...it may be too late.

Look with me at the 6th bowl. This plague affects the Euphrates river. This river runs down from Turkey through modern day Iraq to the

gulf. It has been the great dividing line between the orient and the middle east. When the bowl is spilled out the river will be dried up to prepare for the kings, nations of the east to cross from the orient to Israel to join the other nations for the final battle on the plains of Esdraelon at the foot of the mountain of Meggido or literally Armageddon.

In verse 13 John sees three frogs coming out of the dragons mouths, Satan, The Beasts mouth, that is the antichrist and the out of the false prophet's mouth. And I thought my breath was bad. Three unclean spirits like demonized frogs. Getting into everything, hopping here and there..similar to the plague of Egypt and the frogs. These evil spirits perform signs and influence the kings of the whole world. These will then gather together for the war to end all wars at Armageddon. It may well be these demonized frogs turn nations against the One World government of the beast and that is why they converge in the middle east. Yet, as they begin fighting each other the beast who seemed to incite rebellion now turns that to gather and fight against God Almighty at Armageddon.

V. 15 Jesus words, Behold I am coming like a thief in the night. This scripture is often misused as referring to the rapture of the church, but it is the Second Coming of Christ. Jesus warns those there still left on the earth to be ready. Be clothed. For Jesus will come unplanned, uninvited..for the unsaved it will seem he comes like a thief to take and destroy when they are vulnerable. The believers are to be ready and expecting his coming. Just like the church age believers are warned in I Thess 4:5 "you brothers are not in darkness so that this day should not surprise you like a thief. Christ will never come as a thief to the saints. For His saints will be clothed in His righteousness anticipating His return. Did you notice these tribulation saints will be blessed for their readiness. Yes, even in the middle of the judgment there is mercy.

Lets look at the last and 7th bowl. Verse 17 The angel pours out the bowl upon the air and shouts in a mega phone voice, It is done. Very similar to the words of Jesus on the cross when His mission was accomplished in absorbing the sins of the whole world. Flashes of lightning, thunder, a great earthquake rips the landscape. The great city which appears to be the rebuilt Babylon headquarters for the One world government is torn apart by this earthquake. There are some major

changes to the topography. Mountains are levels and islands disappear. Huge hailstones weighing a talent, or between 75 and 100 pounds came crashing down. The largest recorded hailstone in America was 17 inches in diameter. How would you like to get hit with that. With water weighing approx. 8-1/5 pounds per gallon about a 10-12 gallon hailstone. That would put a dent in your car.

The judgment is devastating. The plagues are terrible. This is not an easy read. We can thank God for sparing us from His wrath to come. We can be thankful that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, yet one would think such demonstrations of God's power and judgment would change the hearts of men. But it doesn't. The 7th plague it says was extremely severe. And yet men still cursed God. Why? Because it is wishful thinking to assume that if men could only see the power and righteousness of God, they would then turn in genuine faith and belief and trust and worship God. Their hearts are hard as stone. They even know the truth and they don't care. Don't let your heart grow hard toward God. Accept, repent. believe in Him today. For one day will come some day. Some day may be too late.

C.S. Lewis wrote, "When the author walks out on the stage, the play is over. god is going to invade. God will come again without any disguise. There will be no missing His point. No more excuses. No more delay or post-ponements. When god's judgments come it will come in finality. It will be fruitless to say you are on God's side now while you watch the world melt down around you. For by this time you will be either safe and delighting in His love or viewing tragedy deluded from His truth. By this time God has either impressed you with His irresistible love or irresistible horror. It is too late to chose your side. This is a time of discovery as to which side you have chosen, whether you realize it or not. Failure to chose yields no exemption, it simply means your side is already chosen for you. Today we chose a path...tomorrow we find out where that path has taken us. We all here are confronted with a choice, which will it be? Matthew 25:34,41 speaks of the Judgment when Christ returns in His glory. This is not the final Great White Throne judgment but the judgment for those people in the tribulation. In verse 34 Jesus says to those on the right. come you who are blessed of my father inherit the kingdom I have prepared for you. In verse 41 Jesus looks to those on

His left saying " depart from me into eternal fire." Where are you with God today? Are you getting right with God or will you be getting left....left behind.