

• *The angels that pour out the wrath of God are associated with Jesus in doing His work*

The angels that are about to pour out the wrath of God upon an unrepentant world wear clothing similar to that of Jesus in Revelation 1:13. ⁶*They were robed in bright linen, and their chests were girdled with golden girdles.* It means that they are associated with Jesus in doing his work.

⁷*And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever.* The fact that it is one of the living creatures who gave the seven angels seven golden bowls suggests that creation itself (represented by the living creatures) will bring upon itself judgement. Creation itself will be the agent of the anger of God against sin. ⁸*And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.* The language echoes Isaiah chapter 6. Judgement proceeds from God's holiness. The visible glory of God – the shining of God's holy character – is present in the vision but it is obscured by the smoke. No one can see the undiluted glory of God and live. While these plagues are falling on the human race the glory of God is shining so brightly that no one is seen entering the temple. The holy presence of God is so filling the temple (in the vision) that to go within it is impossible.

• *Judgement proceeds from God's holiness*

• *The fifth section – bowls of anger*

We are in a fifth section of the book of Revelation. We have seen:
 Christ in the midst of his churches¹
 Christ opening the scroll of God's purposes²
 Christ sending angels with trumpets of warning³
 Christ giving visions of a spiritual battle⁴.

Now we are looking at another aspect of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 Christ pouring out bowls of anger⁵.

1 1:9-3:22
 2 4:1-8:1
 3 8:2-11:18
 4 11:19-15:4
 5 15:5-16:21

1. Sin is punished within the history of the human race

1. **Sin is punished within the history of the human race.** ¹*Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, telling the seven angels, 'Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God.'* ²*So the first angel went . . .* The 'bowls of wrath' represent things that take place in human history which express God's anger against sin. I emphasize the point that it is **in human history** that these events take place. We are used to the idea that at the end of the world a judgement day will come and sin will be punished. But the point of Revelation 16 is that we do not have to wait until the end of the world to see the anger of God against sin being poured out. Calamities that take place in the here-and-now are a foretaste of the coming anger of God against sin.

2. One punishment that might come against the wickedness of the world is plagues of ugly diseases

2. **One punishment that might come against the wickedness of the world is plagues of ugly diseases.** ²*So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came on the people who carried the mark of the beast and worshipped its image.* Who can read this without thinking of the horrid AIDS-disease that arose in the twentieth century? There is no reason to think it would have come into the human race except for sexual sin. 'The beast' represents hatred of God and persecution of his people. 'The mark of the beast' is (in the vision) animosity against the God of the Bible. It is not a literal mark. Perhaps John sees in the vision some kind of literal mark, but if that is so, we must still remember that the vision represents something spiritual. 'The mark of the beast' is resistance to God.

• *The 'mark of the beast' is resistance to God*

3. Another punishment that might come against the wickedness of the world is the ruination of man's environment

3. **Another punishment that might come against the wickedness of the world is the ruination of man's environment.** ³*The second angel poured his bowl into the sea and it became like the blood of a dead man and everything died that was in the sea.* We have seen in our own times the terrible pollution of our environment. Here John sees the seas being polluted to the point of utter lifelessness. Man's greed and carelessness brings its consequences upon the very world that we live in. John sees how the anger of God falls upon the seas. Tragedies at sea, in the here-and-now of present human history, are a sign of God's anger against sin.

• *In our own times terrible pollution*

• *Man's greed and carelessness brings its consequences upon the very world that we live in*

• *Earth - 1*

• *Sea - 2*

• *Rivers - 3*

• *Heavens - 4*

• *Different angles*

4. The judgements continue to fall upon the world because of its ill-treatment of God's people

• *Jesus is the Saviour because he is worthy*

• *The wicked are punished because they are worthy of it*

• *We need never bother about taking vengeance for ourselves*

• *Forgiveness or protection - only in Jesus*

The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is needed by everyone because we live in a world where 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven'^{□1} against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men and women. We do not have to wait till judgement day. It is all around us.

The third and fourth 'bowls of anger' are also environmental. ⁴*The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and on the springs of water, and they became blood.* There is a similarity between the trumpets and the bowls, between Revelation 8:2–11:18 and 15:5–16:21.

The first trumpet was about judgement on the earth; so is the first bowl^{□1}. The second trumpet was about judgement on the sea; so is the second bowl^{□2}. The third trumpet was about judgement on the rivers; so is the third bowl^{□3}. The fourth trumpet was about judgement in the heavens; so is the fourth bowl^{□4}. This ought to show us again that the various sections of Revelation are not in historical sequence. Rather the various sections go over and over the same ground. They each refer to the gospel-age. The judgements of 8:2–11:18 and the judgements of 15:5–16:21 are the same judgements. They are simply being viewed from different angles.

4. The judgements continue to fall upon the world because of its ill-treatment of God's people. There can never be any blessing upon persecutors. In John's vision, an angel speaks – not the angel pouring out the bowl of wrath but another one who represents and cares for the earth's rivers.

⁵*Then I heard the angel who had authority over the waters say, 'You are righteous, you who are and who were, the Holy One, because you have executed judgement on these things.*

⁶*For they poured out the blood of your saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. They are worthy!'*

⁷*And I heard the altar speaking: 'Yes, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are your judgements.'*

Jesus is the Saviour because he is worthy^{□1}. The wicked are punished because they are worthy of punishment. Although the justice of God is fearful, yet there is something comforting about it. We need never bother about taking vengeance for ourselves because God will execute justice more thoroughly than we could ever do it. When we see God's justice fall upon persecutors we shall be sorry for them. Their sufferings will draw out our compassion for them, and yet their punishment will be just and right. The angels will approve of God's justice – and so shall we. One reason – says the book of Revelation – why the world goes through so many disasters is that it continues to ill-treat God's people. Some way back in the book of Revelation^{□2}, God's people prayed about their persecutions. It was at the altar of incense that they prayed. Now the altar cries out with satisfaction – the same altar that received their prayers and took their prayers to heaven with the incense.

The only place of forgiveness or of protection is the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

□1
Romans 1:18

□1 8:7;
16:2
□2 8:8-9;
16:3
□3 8:10-11; 16:4-7
□4 8:12; 16:8-9

□1 5:9

□2 8:2-4



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