

“THE SEVENTH BOWL OF WRATH AND A VISION OF A HARLOT.”

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Scripture Texts: Revelation 16:17 – 7:6

The Seventh Bowl: The End (16:17-21).

Like the seventh seal and the seventh trumpet, the seventh bowl is a vivid vision of the final judgment. Like the other cycles, this cycle ends with the Second Coming and the final wrath.

It is done. As Jesus cried it is finished when the wrath of God was poured out on Him, so God announces that His wrath is done being poured out on earth.

We were told this in Revelation 15:

Revelation 15:1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.

The reference to *Babylon* is a symbolic word for the world opposed to God. Babylon is all that is evil, dark, satanic, anti-Christian, anti-truth, anti-holy. Babylon is the symbol of Satan's kingdom on earth manifested through wicked men and evil systems of government and religion.

The bowl poured out in the air and on the earth delivers the final crushing blow to everything opposed to God. And even then, they have no repentance, no remorse, only curses and blasphemy.

To press home the gravity of the final judgment every image and symbol imaginable is used.

Flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, a great earthquake and giant hailstones. The final judgment will be cataclysmic effecting all creation. As the creation groans now awaiting the final end of all things, so it will heave up at the last.

All this meteorological imagery is symbolic of a cosmic conclusion, of the cup of God's wrath which has filling up and is now poured out and drained dry, emptied on earth. God will act in such a way at the end that no one will be able to deny He is God.

Ezekiel 38:23 I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord.

These bowls bring us to the end of the final judgment that was predicted by the prophets, announced by Christ and anticipated by the church since Christ's first coming.

Since then God has been sounding trumpets, sending warning after warning, both in the physical world and in the spiritual world through preachers, evangelists and missionaries.

Every calamity, every disaster, every crisis, every death is a warning from God. Every one is a message from Jesus, “Repent, lest you too perish.”

To a great many unbelievers the warnings have been ignored or mocked. To those who ignore the trumpets, they will experience the bowl. Whenever an unbeliever dies that is his final judgment, he has received his final bowl of God’s wrath.

We must marvel at the patience and goodness of God for all His warnings and tremble at the hardness of hearts that ignore so many warnings, so much patience and goodness, even to the very end.

Brothers and sisters, it is cause for the greatest and most heartfelt worship to consider what a great wrath we have been mercifully delivered from. Jesus Christ stands between us and that thunder and lightning, between us and that devastating earthquake and that killing hailstone.

I Thessalonians 1:10 ... Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

I Thessalonians 5:9-10 God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.

The Vision of the Harlot, flashy and foul, Revelation 17:1-6

With Chapter 17 the just judgment continues as we see the unfolding of Christ’s complete victory over all His enemies. We are in that part of Revelation that deals with hard realities and dark providences, but remember John is being shown a vision of what God is going to do.

Chapter 17 through 19:10 is a more detailed look at the seventh bowl which foretold the judgment of Babylon. We aren’t advancing, we are cycling back with more detailed visions of the same events at the end.

Revelation 17:1-3, Introduction to the great harlot of Babylon.

Revelation 17:1-3 introduces 17:1 – 19:10.

First, there is the judgment of the great harlot, the whore of Babylon. But who is this woman?

We are told her name, Babylon the Great. At the end of the seventh bowl we see the end of history with the destruction of the symbolic capital city of all the rebellious nations, Babylon. What follows is a personification of Babylon, from a city to a woman.

Revelation 17:18 The woman that you saw is the great city that has dominion over the kings of the earth.

John sees the ruling city of the world personified as a human female who is a prostitute with the world under her control. This makes the seven messages of judgment on Babylon that follow more personal and real.

When you think about our world in general how do you think of it? What pictures or descriptions would you use? What is this world? Who made it? What was it made for? What should it be doing and what is it doing?

What does Psalm 24 say?

Psalm 24:1-2 The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, 2 for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.

The whole world and everything in it owes its existence to God and therefore owes its allegiance to God. The world should relate to God the way a wife relates to her husband, with devotion, commitment, love and affection. But instead the world has forgotten God and betrayed God and sold herself to someone else, the world has gone whoring after other gods. Every human government or institution or system that doesn't honor Christ is prostituting itself to some else's agenda or worldview or philosophy.

This is the vision, a picture of what the world was created to do and should do, and what the world is doing instead. It is graphic and sobering.

We don't tend to think about our world in such graphic and sobering terms. This is yet another reminder that God's thoughts are not our thoughts and God's ways are not our ways.

In the OT spiritual unfaithfulness is often described as fornication.

Deuteronomy 31:16 And the Lord said to Moses, "This people will rise and whore after the foreign gods among them in the land that they are entering, and they will forsake me and break my covenant that I have made with them."

II Chronicles 21:11 Moreover, he made high places in the hill country of Judah and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom and made Judah go astray.

Babylon stands for all seduction away from God and toward the beast and the world.

"The harlot is any form of religious, moral, and philosophical opposition to the kingdom of Christ, whether late medieval Catholicism, contemporary liberal Protestantism, or New Age heresies" (Sam Storms).

Revelation 17:4-6, a detailed description of the woman.

Then John is led by the angel into the wilderness to see the woman in all her gaudy glory, arrayed in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, precious stones and pearls, holding a beautiful golden cup, sitting on a scarlet beast.

But that beautiful *golden cup* is full of abominations and filth. This is a picture of the contradictory lure and repulsion of immorality and sensuality.

Everything is meant to dazzle, to attract, to suggest pure pleasure. But the cup is deceiving, it is full of filth, full of abominations and impurities, full of poison.

If you live for yourself and disregard God you can pull it off for a little while, but eventually the gig will be up. What looked good will turn to darkness and death. Whatever this world offers, whatever this world entices you with, will not last.

It will burn up and be destroyed and it will destroy you along with it. Do not drink of her pleasures, do not be fooled by the golden cup, it only contains poison.

“What does it profit a man to gain the whole and lose his soul?”

There is only one source of lasting significance, satisfaction, pleasure and hope.

There is a name written on her forehead,

Revelation 17:5 And on her forehead was written a name of mystery: “Babylon the great, mother of prostitutes and of earth's abominations.”

She is the mother, the fountainhead, the source of all that is evil and idolatrous, not just in Babylon or Rome, but in all generations. In the Bible Babylon is the capital city of Satan's realm, the place from which he deceives and oppresses and persecutes.

She is guilty of terrible persecutions, martyring countless thousands of faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

This may be the worst abomination of all, the killings of Christ's followers. The blood of the martyrs cries out. This whore, this Satan, this idolatrous human system is complicit in murder. This world is in a death spiral, in love with darkness and death, slaughter our children at a horrific pace, over a billion children killed. Our sexual immorality is sexual suicide, what is supposed to be life-giving is barren, lifeless, selfish, and destructive.

All who participate are accomplices to murder, accessories to this great crime.

These are offensive images, and so they should be, for the sins and crimes are a great abomination to our holy God. It was a staggering thing for John to behold.

What a contrast to the Lamb of God and His pure bride, the Church, adorned for her husband. What a contrast to the purity and holiness of what we will see in the new Jerusalem.

Next week we will hear the angel's explanation of all John has seen in this vision.

Implications and Application.

Matthew 24:36-37, 44 “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. 37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ... 44 Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

I Thessalonians 5:2-4 For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. 3 While people are saying, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. 4 But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.

No nation every thought it was going to fall or be taken over. Yet it has happened countless times in history. Our nation will fall someday. God will not be mocked, He will judge. And when He does Christians shouldn't be surprised, and we must be prepared to remain faithful to Jesus Christ when it happens.

Scripture is filled with warnings to be ready, to live ready, to have a measure of expectation. Don't be slothful, lazy, neglectful. Wake up, stay awake, stay clothed in your right mind.

What one thing would you do today or tomorrow to show readiness?

Learn to discern the lies and deceptions of the enemy. You may recall long ago in a sermon I said when you listen to a TV or radio commercial ask yourself what is the lie they want you to believe, what are they saying about you and your life that isn't true, what you can't live without this, that your life will be so much better with it, that your happiness depends on this or that.

To discern the counterfeits and lies and deception you have to know the real thing, that is why you need to read your Bible and know your Bible, why you need to be part of a Bible preaching and Bible teaching church. Equip yourself for the coming battle. Attend one of our adult SS classes. Not neglect or waste the opportunity. Put yourself in situations and in opportunities to learn and grow and prepare.

II Peter 3:11-14 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. 14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace.