



FAITH PRINCETON SUNDAY SCHOOL

REVELATION 16:1-11. Seven Bowls of Wrath (part 1)

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2026

REVELATION 16 Observation Worksheet

Chapter Theme _____

16 Bowls of Wrath (part 1)

1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

2 So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

3 The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died.

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

8 The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east..

Enduring Word Commentary: Revelation 16:1-11 The Bowl Judgments

A. Bowls directed against natural phenomenon.

1. (1) A voice from the temple.

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.”

a. Then I heard a loud voice from the temple:

Since no one could enter the temple ([Revelation 15:8](#)), this **loud voice from the temple** must be God Himself, who personally initiates the horrific judgment of the bowls.

b. Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of

God on the earth: These bowls of judgment are the *third woe* described in [Revelation 11:14](#).

Because they are described as **the wrath of God**, they are *chastisements* (with the purpose of bringing repentance) as much as *punishments* (with the purpose of dispensing justice).

i. As such, we usually think of these as occurring at the end of the seven-year period, immediately before Jesus' return.

ii. Images from Israel's Exodus are prominent in the bowl judgments. In the days of Moses, God sent plagues upon Egypt that included plagues of boils ([Exodus 9:8-12](#)), waters turning to blood ([Exodus 7:14-25](#)), and darkness ([Exodus 10:21-29](#)).

iii. Are the plagues described in this chapter symbolic? Perhaps we can envision *all* that these

words mean. However, God's judgment of this world will not be a symbolic judgment. We can remember that the reality behind a symbol is always more real – and in this case therefore more terrifying – than the symbol itself.

c. **On the earth:** Those who believe the Book of Revelation is all fulfilled in history have a hard time with this. In Poole's commentary, his suggestions on what **earth** might mean show how difficult it is to make sense of Revelation this way.

- Poole says **earth** might mean *some parts of the earth*.

- Poole says **earth** might mean *the common people*.

- Poole says **earth** might mean *The Roman Empire*.

- Poole says **earth** might mean *The Roman Catholic clergy*.

i. The point is clear. If **earth** doesn't mean **earth**, then no one can tell what it means, and God may as well not have written it.

2. (2) The first bowl: foul and loathsome sores.

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.

a. **A foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast:** Those who worshipped the beast and received his **mark** are now marked by God with **loathsome** sores.

3. (3) The second bowl: the sea turned to blood.

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.

a. **The sea... became blood:** [Revelation 8:8-9](#) described a partial contamination of the sea. Here the contamination is made complete (**every living creature in the sea died**).

b. **Blood as of a dead man:** The sea doesn't necessarily *become* blood, but **as of** a corpse's blood. It will match the appearance and sickening character of the blood in a dead body.

4. (4) The third bowl: fresh waters polluted.

Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

a. **The rivers and springs of water, and they became blood:** This *complete* contamination is in contrast to the partial (one-third) pollution of fresh waters shown in [Revelation 8:10-11](#).

b. **They became blood:** When these judgments come, the time must be very short until the return of Jesus. With ecological disaster such as this, the human race cannot survive long.

i. "They thirsted after blood and massacred the saints of God; and now they have got blood to drink!" (Clarke)

5. (5-7) The righteousness of God's judgments.

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.
For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink.
For it is their just due."

And I heard another from the altar saying, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments."

a. **You are righteous... For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink:** It is completely fitting that those who delighted in shedding the blood of the saints should now be forced to drink **blood**. They refused the Living Water, and now will be given death to drink.

b. **You are righteous, O Lord:** Even in the midst of judgment, it is right that the angel says this. Not only is God's justice *fair*, it is also *pure* and *appropriate*. There is no "vigilante justice" with God.

c. **I heard another from the altar saying:** This voice is either an angel speaking from the **altar**, or the **altar** personified, representing the corporate testimony of the martyrs ([Revelation 6:9](#)) and the prayers of the saints ([Revelation 8:3-5](#)).

i. This speaking **altar** may be *God's altar* – the cross, where His greatest sacrifice was made, and which here testifies of His righteous judgment, both in the past and soon to come. This is the altar where God in His love offered a way of escape from these judgments.

6. (8-9) The fourth bowl: the sun scorches men.

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

a. **The sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire:** What is normally taken for

granted as a blessing – the warmth of the shining **sun** – is now a curse.

b. They did not repent and give Him glory: The failure of men to respond with repentance shows that knowledge or experience of *judgment* will not change man's sinful condition. Those who are not won by *grace* will never be won.

i. "The wishful thinking of some that men would repent if they only knew the power and righteous judgment of God is shattered by frequent mention in this chapter of the hardness of the human heart in the face of the most stringent and evident divine discipline." (Walvoord)

B. Bowls directed against the beast and his government.

1. (10-11) Fifth bowl: a plague of darkness.

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

a. His kingdom became full of darkness: Some see this as a symbolic **darkness**. Caird called the last three plagues a "triad of political disaster" – internal anarchy, invasion, and irreparable collapse.

i. But it isn't necessary to see this darkness as a symbolic political darkness. The ninth plague on Egypt was a literal darkness, with spiritual overtones. It could be *felt*, as described in [Exodus 10:21-22](#).

b. They gnawed their tongues because of the pain: The darkness of the fifth bowl is a preview of hell itself, which is described by Jesus as *the outer*

darkness ([Matthew 25:30](#)). Those under the judgment of this fifth bowl stand, as it were, on the shores of the lake of fire.

c. And did not repent of their deeds: In man's sinful condition, he *increases* his sin when under God's judgment, the very time he should *forsake* his sin.

i. "Judgment may produce a carnal repentance – a repentance that is of the flesh, and after the manner of the sinful nature of men. In this repentance the depravity of the heart remains the same in essence, though it takes another form of showing itself. Though the man changes, he is not savingly changed: he becomes another man, but not a new man. The same sin rules in him, but it is called by another name, and wears another dress. The stone is carved into a more sightly shape, but it is not turned into flesh. The iron is cast into another image, but it is not transformed into gold. This carnal repentance is caused by fear. Does not every thief repent of robbery when he is convicted and sent to jail? Does not every murderer repent of his crime when he stands under the fatal tree?" (Spurgeon)

ii. "This is real penitence, when the man gives glory to the justice of God, even though it condemns him. O my hearer, do you thus repent? Is sin really sinful to you? Do you see its desert of hell? If not, your repentance needs to be repented of." (Spurgeon)

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