

Lesson 8 – 20 December 2009

The Judgments of God

Lesson Scope: Revelation Chapters 6-11 and 14-16

Lesson Focus

The preceding lesson revealed the heavenly order in its majesty and glorifying glory. While the inhabitants of heaven are worshiping and glorifying God and the Lamb, earth dwellers are worshiping the devil and glorifying man. Their cup of iniquity is full, and God is ready to pour out judgment.

These judgments descend in various waves of natural calamity, unbearable suffering and horrible death. These heavy blows of judgment are inescapable. The mountains, rocks, and dens are not sufficient to hide men from the face of Him who sits on the throne (Revelation 6:15-17).

In some respects this lesson is more informative and less practical. For this reason you may want to spend more time examining the details of the text. So, read the text and the context several times in one sitting. This will give you the overview that is needed to understand the lesson.

An interesting side note in this lesson is the significance of the number seven. In the Scriptures, seven is the number of perfection and completeness. In this light notice that the seven seals cover the entire scene of judgment. The first six seals cover the general happenings that lead up to the seventh. With the opening of the seventh seal there is a sense of conclusion: "The great day of his wrath is come" (6:17). There is a similar sense of conclusion with the sounding of the seventh trumpet: "The mystery of God should be finished" (10:7). (The statement in verse 6 "that there should be time no longer" may mean that there will be no more delay. This statement is made in regard to the pouring out of the vial judgments.) When the seventh vial is poured out, a great voice from the throne declares, "It is done" (16:17).

The testimony of the angel of the waters in 16:5 is "Thou art righteous ... because thou hast judged thus." "And I heard another out of the altar say... true and righteous are thy judgments" (16:7). That is an appropriate conclusion to the lesson.

Although today God's judgment is withheld the great day of wrath will come. In that day the wicked will "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture"

Lesson Aim: To see the unveiling of God's end-time judgments against all ungodliness.

Theme Verse

Revelation 5:6. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

Lesson Text

The Seal Judgments

Rev. 6:1-12

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. ²And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. ³And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. ⁴And there went out another horse *that was* red: and *power* was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. ⁵And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. ⁶And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and *see* thou hurt not the oil and the wine. ⁷And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. ⁸And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. ⁹And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: ¹⁰And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? ¹¹And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they *were*, should be fulfilled.

¹²And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

Rev. 8:1: And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

The Trumpet Judgments

Rev. 8:2: And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

Rev. 8:7-12: The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. ⁸And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; ⁹And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. ¹⁰And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; ¹¹And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. ¹²And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

Rev. 9:1: And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Rev. 9:6: And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

Rev. 9:13: And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

Rev. 11:15: And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The Vial Judgments

Rev. 16:1-4

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

²And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a

noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and *upon* them which worshipped his image. ³And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead *man*: and every living soul died in the sea. ⁴And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

Rev. 16:8-10

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. ⁹And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. ¹⁰And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

Rev. 16:12: And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

Rev. 16:17: And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

Questions for Study

The Seal Judgments

1. What progression toward judgment is seen in the opening of the seals?
2. What can we learn from the half-hour of silence in heaven?

The Trumpet Judgments

3. What different means of judgment are employed in the trumpet Judgments?
4. What factors make the judgment of the fifth trumpet so terrible?
5. Of what significance is the transfer of authority in 11:15?

The Vial Judgments

6. What group of people is especially targeted in the pouring out of the vial judgments? In what ways are the vial judgments more severe?
7. What is meant by the proclamation from heaven in 16:17?

Analyzing the Passage

The record of these end-time judgments covers chapters 6-16. Specific descriptions of the judgments are given in chapters 6, 8, 9, and 16. The intervening chapters are a parenthesis. Three waves of judgment sweep the earth: the seals, the trumpets, and the vials. The seals actually cover the en-

tire judgment scene because the seventh seal discloses the seven trumpet judgments, and the seventh trumpet announces the seven vial judgments.

The opening of the first four seals discloses different colored horses with their riders. The color of the horse fits with the activity of the rider. White fits with the use of diplomacy to bring peace. Red accompanies bloodshed, the peace is taken away. Black corresponds to famine; food becomes scarce. The pale color agrees with death; special mention is made of wild beasts as being the cause of death.

The opening of the fifth seal discloses a heavenly scene of martyrs under the altar who cry out for justice and vengeance. The opening of the sixth seal results in cataclysmic changes in the heaven and the earth. And the opening of the seventh seal brings the intense and severe judgments of the trumpets and vials.

As the events of judgment move forward the magnitude of their destruction and pain increases. The word *great* is frequently used to describe these awful events—a great heat, a great voice, a great earthquake, great hailstones, and a plague exceeding great.

Principles and Applications

The Seal Judgments

1. *God uses oppression, war, famine, and death to bring judgment upon the wicked (6:2, 4-5, 8).*

Some judgments fall directly from God's hands while others are the result of what He allows. Either way, God is in control, and His judgments are just and fair.

2. *God's judgments will avenge the suffering of the righteous (6:9).*

The shedding of innocent blood has accumulated a blood debt that is waiting to be paid (Numbers 35:33). Only the blood bath of end-time judgment will satisfactorily settle the account.

3. *The prospect of terrible judgment brings awe and reverence in heaven (8:1).*

The opening of the seventh seal is especially momentous because of the severity of the judgments that are about to fall upon the earth. These judgments are preceded by voices, thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake. This period of silence is a time of anticipation and suspense. Likewise, our hearts should be stirred in solemn reverence as we ponder these prophecies.

The Trumpet Judgments

4. *God will use the elements of nature to bring,, judgment upon the ungodly (8:7-8, 10, 12).*

God is in control of the forces of nature and will use them to accomplish His will. The sights and experiences will be not only frightening but also destructive. Jesus foretold that "the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

5. *God will release demonic creatures to torment men (9:1, 6).*

Today God is limiting the satanic forces. But in those judgments, Satan is given more rein, and the result is terrifying. Presently many people are fascinated by the occult, but the time is coming when men will be hideously tormented by these forces and unable to escape.

6. *Judgment is the process that God uses to destroy the power and oppression of sin (11:15).*

When Christ reigns, God's will is realized. This is true in the life of an individual. It is also true in the world. Oppression by wicked powers in the world cannot cease until Christ is in total authority.

The Vial Judgments

7. *God will judge those who receive the mark of the beast and worship his image (16:2).*

This judgment will not be without warning. In 14:9-10. men are clearly warned not to receive the mark of the beast. Those who receive the mark of the beast will suffer grievously and in the end be cast grievously into the lake of fire. In contrast, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (14:13).

8. *God will bring His judgment to a full completion (16:17).*

"It is done!" declares a voice from the throne of heaven. This declaration follows the pouring out of the seventh vial. Seven is the number of completion, and the opening of the seventh seal is then completed. Finally, God's wrath will be appeased and His justice satisfied.

Important Teachings

1. God uses oppression, war, famine, and death to bring judgment upon the wicked (6:2, 4-5, 8).

2. God's judgments will avenge the suffering of the righteous (6:9).

3. The prospect of terrible judgment brings awe and reverence in heaven (8:1).

4. God will use the elements of nature to bring judgment upon the ungodly (8:7-8, 10, 12).

5. God will release demonic creatures to torment men (9:1, 6).
6. Judgment is the process that God uses to destroy the power and oppression of sin (11:15).
7. God will judge those who receive the mark of the beast and worship his image (16:2).
8. God will bring His judgment to a full completion (16:17).

Answers to Questions

1. *What progression toward judgment is seen in the opening of the seals?*

There is progression from a time of relative peace to a time of war and bloodshed. The next stage is a time when there is a shortage of natural resources. Famine, violence, and death follow. This is accompanied by religious intolerance and persecution. The last step in the progression includes dramatic and unsettling changes in the realm of nature. By this time men are very conscious that God's wrath is about to fall. The opening of the seventh seal is the pouring out of His wrath (see Luke 21:10-11).

2. *What can we learn from the half-hour of silence in heaven?*

We learn that the pouring out of God's wrath is very awesome. We likewise stand in awe when God moves among us. We learn to approach God reverently and to fear before Him. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31). We learn that the opening of the seventh seal is a moment of suspense and expectation. We listen in silence as God's Word is read and expounded.

3. *What different means of judgment are employed in the trumpet judgments?*

The first four are in the realm of natural disturbances—hail, fire, falling stars and smiting of the sun and moon. The three woes employ demonic creatures that torment with stings and plagues. This is intensified by the fact that men will not be allowed to take their own life for relief.

4. *What factors make the judgment of the fifth trumpet so terrible?*

- a. The duration of the torments will be five months.
- b. It is a form of physical torture.
- c. The torture is not unto death and neither will men be able to find death.

5. *Of what significance is the transfer of authority in 11:15?*

It is the reclaiming of the inheritance of the earth by the Kinsman-redeemer. It signifies the right of ownership and the exercising of the authority associated with that right. Satan is overcome and dethroned; the

time of judgment has come. Rewards will be given to the righteous, and those who destroyed the earth will be destroyed.

6. *What group of people is especially targeted in the pouring out of the vial judgments?*

Special mention is made of the men who receive the mark of the beast. But notice that mention is also made of all those who worship his image. This group represents those who blatantly worship the devil and surrender to his forces.

7. *In what ways are the vial judgments more severe?*

The vial judgments are more severe in that they are universal. All sources of water are turned into blood. The sun scorches men. Darkness causes severe pain, and unclean spirits deceive the whole world. The judgments are final and all-inclusive.

8. *What is meant by the proclamation from heaven in 16:17?*

The judgments are completed. It is all over; it is all accomplished! The inheritance has been reclaimed. The debt is paid. Christ is in charge.

Summarizing the Lesson

The day is nearing when God will pour out His wrath upon those who dwell upon the earth. He will employ His angels in carrying it out. The forces of nature will be brought to bear upon men. God will even use the forces of evil themselves to bring judgment upon those who served them. God will move in judgment until He declares, "It is done!"

Research Guide

1. Compare the plagues upon Egypt with the end-time judgments. Notice how they are similar.
2. The most helpful thing you can do is to read through these chapters several times.