

Rev 26-04-19a

Good morning, welcome to the Sunday morning services here at Grace and Truth Bible Church. It is the 19th of April, 2026, if you can believe it. And we are in the book of Revelation.

We are looking at the bowl judgments in chapter 16 and doing a synthesis of the sevenfold judgments that we have witnessed because they have common threads that contribute to our personal application. Almost every commentary you look at is anxious to parse the metaphorical and symbolic language into perhaps modern day weapons, modern day nations, confederations, and the literal fulfillment, which is certainly going to come. But I personally find less value in terms of how should I then live in looking at those events than as we do when reading them in the same way we read the Old Testament or the New Testament narratives in terms of the way God works, the reactions and responses of people.

Where is the opportunity for becoming aware? Where's the opportunity for repentance? What are the consequences of change of mind? And this affects us where we live. And this is the reason the Lord Jesus gave us this book is for personal application. So this is where we are endeavoring to focus our attention.

Let's ask God's blessing on our time of fellowship and study, and we will begin. Father, what a wonderful privilege it is to be enfolded by your grace and your love, to be secure in the knowledge that you know all about us. You have known about us since eternity past.

You have carefully planned the circumstances of our lives, the provision that is made, the protection that is provided, the opportunities that are given, the training and the insight and the wisdom that is available from your word. We pray that as we look at this portion of your word together, that God the Holy Spirit will enable us to see its pertinence and its application as we live this day and the days ahead, so that in addition to anticipating the fulfillment of your plan, the culmination of your purpose and the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as it unfolds in these pages, we will also see how we can live in a way that pleases you and glorifies the Lord Jesus in the present day. We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

As we have seen in chapter 16, the bowls are pouring out and I'm going to review them very quickly, but watch for the nature of the judgment that is coming from heaven. We've seen that these judgments are contemporaneous, the seals are unfolding on the earth, the trumpets are blowing in the air, in the atmosphere, in the intermediate space between heaven and earth, the thunders are cracking above that space, but below heaven, and then you have these bowls, which are delivered in heaven and poured from heaven on the earth. So these bowl judgments are from God's perspective and we see in chapter 16, that a loud voice from the temple says to the seven angels, go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.

The wrath of God was not mentioned in the seals or the trumpets. It is the bowls that represent

the wrath of God, which tells us that as these events unfold on the earth, in the intermediate area where spiritual forces are at work, principalities and powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, angelic intervention, protection by God's angels, there is this angelic conflict that many of us were introduced to years ago and is absolutely revealed in the scriptures. The book of Job and other places make this very explicit.

If Satan is roaming the earth, seeking whom he may devour, and he is the prince of the power of the air, he is deploying his fallen angel forces to accomplish his purposes. And this can happen in propaganda, in influencing and twisting news coverage, in using susceptible people to damage the structure and the infrastructure that God has set up. So we now come to the bowls, and these are the final judgments, the filling of the temple with the glory of God in heaven, so that there is no approach, there is no appeal, there is no delay.

We saw an angel proclaim a few verses back that there is no more time for delay. God's judgments are going to unfold. And this is what they are.

The first angel went and poured out his bowl upon the earth. A foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. You have two kinds of people on the earth, as we do today.

One perspective, you have the saved and the unsaved. You have those that are children of God, and you have those who are not. At this point in history, those who are not children of God all take the mark of the beast.

Those who are children of God do not take the mark. And you can further subdivide the believers in this time into those who are survivors represented by the woman who escapes the flood issued by the dragon. She goes into the wilderness, and she is secured and protected for a time, times, and half a time.

This is a portion. All believers in this period are Israel. They are heirs of the Old Testament covenant promises.

And as Mark Twain would say, these are no slouch of a covenant. They're not bad promises. They are different than ours.

They have a different timescale. Ultimately, Israel is going to enjoy every single blessing that we do, and we are going to enjoy all of the blessings that they do in the sense of inheritance, possession, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit during time. They are behind us because the elder serves the younger, the last shall be first, and so on.

But in the millennial kingdom, God will pour out his spirit on them just as he has already upon us. So to say, well, this is sort of a lame, secondary, not-so-hot set of promises for Old Testament Israel is to completely misunderstand. There is a different time sequence.

The timing is different, but the fulfillment of the promises, enjoying the ongoing presence of the Holy Spirit, insight into God's word, blessing in time, inheritance in eternity, Old Testament saints are just as capable of laying hold of those promises as we. So in this last seven years of the age of Israel, those who come to faith, they were not yet in the faith at the rapture, or they would have gone with us, and been body of Christ, and gathered to him in the air. They wake up and smell the coffee after we are gone.

There are a minimum of 144,000. These are sort of the first fruits, if you will. They are dedicated.

They follow the lamb wherever he goes, ultimately. They are pure. They are motivated, and so on.

We saw this when we saw the second description of them just a chapter or two back. But you could divide into two or three parts, the people that are on the earth as these judgments unfold. The unbelievers, typically called in the revelation, earth dwellers.

When you see those who dwell on the earth, the earth dwellers, it is always a reference to the unbelieving masses of humanity. The saved recognize like Abraham that they are strangers and pilgrims, and the world is not my home. I'm just a passing through.

My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue. The angels beckon me from heaven's open door, and I can't cope with this world anymore. I can't be at home in this world anymore.

It's the right way to quote it. Wonderful old gospel song. But the saved are in two categories.

There is a fair fraction of the saved who will represent the woman who escapes the dragon and is secured in safety in the wilderness. Those who flee at the first sign of trouble, as Jesus warns in Matthew 24 and on into chapter 25, when you see the signs, don't even go inside to get your coat, flee. If you're a little slow on the uptake, you will fall into the second category of saved, which is the martyrs.

And there are some, they don't get martyred because they were disobedient necessarily. For some, it is their calling. And we go all the way back to Revelation chapter two and three and see that there are some people who are in the church at Smyrna, and they will have tribulation, 10 days.

Be faithful unto death. You will receive the crown of life. It is a calling.

It is an assignment. We know this in our own experience. People have different assignments.

Not everyone has the gift of pastor and teacher. It is assigned, and a lot of those who receive it scratch their heads and say, Lord, I really don't understand why you picked me for this. But God in his wisdom knows what he's doing.

Others have musical gifts, administration gifts, support gifts, prayer gifts, encouragement gifts, gifts that don't even have a name. And it's a calling, and it is not based on merit. It isn't based on talent.

It isn't based on anything other than God's grace, God's wisdom, and God knowing us before we were born. Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you were going to be a prophet, God says, to some of the Old Testament bearded, bald-headed fellows. So we accept our assignment gratefully, and we endeavor to fulfill it faithfully.

Some will be assigned martyrdom as the two witnesses who do a spectacular job of communicating the gospel, sin, righteousness, and judgment, and are untouchable until the time that God says, it is time for your testimony to include the baptism that the Lord Jesus himself was baptized with and the cup that he drank that he mentions in the Garden of Gethsemane. And they have both done a good and faithful job as witnesses, and they then experience martyrdom. And then as the first fruits of all martyrs, they are raised and they are taken into glory.

And as the old song says, it will be worth it all when we see Christ. All sorrow will be erased, and it will be worth it when we run that race. So we should not shrink from a particular assignment that we receive.

Some of us endure hardship, economic, physical, combination of the two. Others of us are stressed in our place of work, our place of business, our responsibilities near and far in various categories. And all of us, all of us, there is nobody that is wafted to heaven on flowery beds of ease.

Jesus said, in this world, you shall have tribulation. Nobody escapes it. Nobody is free from it.

You may look at someone and say, well, I'd love to trade places with them because they are living in flowery beds of ease. No, they're not. You think they are.

All they are doing is either playing a good hand of poker or they have availed themselves of the grace of God and are overcomers, have overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. And some of the people that are most vexed and stressed and tested and taxed, you would never know it because they have found how the power of God comes into the life of the believer and they are asking for it, receiving it and employing it on a moment by moment, hour by hour, day by day basis.

And you'd never know it to look at them, what they're going through. All of us will be tested. All of us will face challenges and all of us should turn immediately to the grace of our father in heaven, mercy and grace to help in time of need.

So during the seven year period, you will have unbelievers, earth dwellers, believers in two categories because a great portion of believers will experience martyrdom. This is the blood

under the altar. This is those who wind up with white robes that they have washed and we'll see them mentioned again in chapter 20 in anticipation of the millennial kingdom.

They are the ones specifically mentioned as representative of all the believers of this time. So as these judgments unfold, unlike the Israelites in Goshen, many of these judgments are gonna fall and believers will be in the vicinity when they fall. Judgments are falling on unbelievers, but there are believers scattered among them.

And unbelievers can't hide behind the believers the way some terrorists wanna hide behind their wives and children. There are some who will experience the judgment. There were faithful believers in Israel who went into captivity when Nebuchadnezzar did his three waves of attack and ultimately destroyed the temple and carried people away.

This includes Hananiah and Mishael and Azariah and Daniel and Ezekiel and many others. They were faithful before Nebuchadnezzar came, but they had to bear up under the judgment that fell on the entire nation. It is a corporate judgment.

There are exceptional individuals who have to live through it. This has ever been true. There were faithful believers like Caleb and Joshua that had to wander in the wilderness 40 years because the rest of the nation was incapable of being faithful and obedient.

Same thing here. This is the age of Israel and there are those who will experience the judgments. So when you see this bowl poured out on the earth and the Fallen Loathsome Sower comes up, this is specifically on those who take the mark.

So Fallen Loathsome Sowers are not going to come up on those who have not taken the mark. And if there is any observation of believers, these that have taken the mark are gonna realize, I made a bad choice. But remember, it is too late to change their mind now.

There is no repentance in this phase from this perspective. The second angel in verse three pours out his bowl on the sea. It becomes blood as of a dead man.

Every living creature in the sea died. The third angel pours out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water and they became blood. I heard the angel of the waters saying, you are righteous, O Lord, the one who is and who was.

And really who is to be, I don't think is there. You got a text note in your New King James there. But 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.

This is the judgment of God on unbelievers. There are believers who will be spared. This place of refuge for those who are not going to be martyred, but are going to survive, evidently has provision of food and water of a special or supernatural nature.

It reminds you of the widow of Zarephath. It reminds you of the widow's crews of oil and a barrel of flour that sustained during a time of famine, which was a judgment on Israel. So there will be exceptional provision as there is today.

Sometimes when you have exceptional suffering or hardship, you also have exceptional provision. And this is the grace of God at work. And you cannot put limits on God and say, well, the earth is falling apart.

There's no way he can sustain believers. Of course he can. No different than the manna, no different than the Lord Jesus feeding the crowd that was faithfully listening to him hour after hour after hour, and they were hungry.

He had compassion and he fed them via the disciples. So in the middle of this, when the third angel has poured out his bowl, remember when we saw the proclamation of the everlasting gospel followed by the centerpiece of the Lord Jesus with his sickle. He has a sickle and reaps the wheat.

The sickle angel comes and reaps the grapes. But you have three and other angels. Then you have the Lord Jesus in the middle.

Notice here, you have three bowl judgments. Then you have the declaration of the righteousness of God right in the center ahead of the fourth angel. And the fourth angel pours out his bowl on the sun and power was given him to scorch men with fire.

Men were scorched with great heat. They blasphemed the name of God who had power over these plagues. And they did not repent and give him glory.

I think the juxtaposition of the declaration of the righteousness and the glory of God, his eternality, his Godhead, his omnipotence, much as you see it declared in the last half of Romans chapter one, immediately precedes the fourth bowl because one of the primary alternatives throughout history has been worship of the sun. In Egypt, I think it was Ra, the sun God, goes all the way back to the Tower of Babel. It goes back to other ancient worship places.

And if you look at them, they are oriented to the sun, the solstices and the peaks of the sun. The peaks of movement of the sun. Sun worship is as old as history.

And it is historically the primary alternative. The sun today, when you look at the stars and you think about astrophysics and microbiology and the rest of it, science can be summed up as basically sun worship. Somehow energy from the sun, the stars, the galaxy, the furnaces of young stars producing elements.

And man believes that the stars, i.e. the suns, produced the elements that came together in an accidental fashion to produce life. And they essentially worship the astrophysical world. The sun

represents all of that.

You can either worship God or you can worship the sun. The things that you rely on are going to turn and tear you to pieces. This is what we saw in the seal judgments.

Man with man's government and man's ability to exercise leverage and force, whether militarily or economically or socially, is going to turn back on him and create a catastrophic environment. Endeavoring to be in league with the forces of darkness, to align with the propaganda and the evil worldview that these spirits perpetrate, that is going to come back on people in the trumpet judgments. The bowl judgments are the fundamental, there is no coming back from this because when they knew him as God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened.

Notice darkened. There is a judgment of darkness and there is a judge of, if you think this is your source of light, this source of light is going to burn you and burn you up. Scorch men with fire, they're scorched with great heat and they blaspheme the name of God.

Anybody who was going to turn has already turned by this point. These are the earth dwellers who will never turn. And God is demonstrating by turning these judgments up to 11, that not only is there no amount of grace, patience, expressed love, self-sacrificial, going more than halfway to meet people, they didn't respond to that.

You say, well, someone could stand at the final judgment and say, well, if you had just shown me your power, if you had just shown me what the consequences would be and how painful it would be, I would have turned. There is not going to be any would have at the judgment. These experiences demonstrate that there is no amount of grace and patience and expressed love.

And there is no amount of judgment and pain that will get these people or by extension, the angels that follow Satan to turn. Their decision is fixed. They hate God.

You can look around in the world today and see people who have hate for various individuals or various causes or various policies. There's no talking to them. You cannot persuade, you cannot cajole, you cannot demonstrate with facts, logic, reason.

There is no reasoning with these people. It is an unreasonable abiding hatred and nothing will put out that fire. They're incorrigible.

They're irretrievably committed to this cause. That's what we see here. So the fifth angel in verse 10 pours out his bowl on the throne of the beast and his kingdom became full of darkness.

First, you have the scorching heat, then you have darkness. Turn the light up until you're blind and then turn it out. You know what it's like when you've been in a bright room and suddenly the lights go out and you've got no night vision at all.

You're completely and utterly blind. More about that shortly. So they gnaw their tongues because of the pain.

There is pain from the preceding scorching judgment and now they're in the darkness, meaning they can't find any way to ameliorate the pain that has been stacking up. Darkness doesn't cause pain. The scorching heat of the preceding judgment did and they are still, you know how long it takes to heal up from a burn? They are still experiencing that, whether it is physical or metaphorical, that pain has not gone away, but now there's no way to find a cure.

And they did not repent of their deeds. And notice, they blaspheme the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores. First judgment, painful sores.

You have the second judgment where everything turns to blood and you've got no sources of life or quenching your thirst. The third judgment, you have this blood in the fresh water. The seawater, sources of food dry up.

Fresh water, sources of quenching your thirst dry up. Then you have the sun scorching. So you've got boils, you've got thirst, you've got hunger.

Now you're burned and these people are still, like the little mouse shaking their fist at the swooping eagle, you know, last act of defiance. They are defiant, rebellious. They will never repent.

If they were to have that inkling, they would have done it earlier on. So, and this concentration, even though these overlap with the preceding judgments and they are in this last three and a half year period from a different perspective, they tend to clump toward the close of that period. The seals sort of emerge and are most visible at the beginning of the time of Jacob's trouble, which is that last three and a half years.

The trumpets span the whole thing and the bold judgments are grouped more or less at the end because everything is affected. Everything is judged. Everything is destroyed.

So it's not like there is a continuation after these. So you have a grayscale, if you will. The seals seem survivable and there is an opportunity there.

The trumpets are intensification. The bowls are the ultimate final, there is no coming back judgments. So then the sixth angel pours out his bowl on the great river Euphrates.

Its water is dried up and the way of the kings from the East might be prepared. This is the prelude to Armageddon, of course. And whatever obstacle there is at the Euphrates, there are spiritual forces tied up in the Euphrates as we saw earlier.

And both physically and spiritually and metaphorically, the last restraint that has prevented this ultimate conflict is removed. So the Euphrates pours as a result of the sixth bowl is dried up and

the way the kings from the East is prepared. And that's the purpose of pouring out this bowl.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out, one from the dragon, one from the beast and one from the false prophet. They're spirits of demons performing signs. They go out to the kings of the earth and the whole world to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Notice they come out of the mouths. So this is a form of persuasion. This is a case that is made and it's dire.

It's going to gather them to their destruction. Behold, I'm coming as a thief. And here right in the middle, lest you think that this is just completely dark and dire, the Lord Jesus speaks.

One oasis of red ink in your red letter Bible. Jesus says, behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments lest he walk naked and they see his shame.

Who's he talking to? The martyrs are martyred, but there are survivors. The woman who is kept and provided for for a time, times and half a time and escapes the wrath of the dragon. They've got decisions to make because these are global judgments and there is supernatural provision made for these people, but it is important for them not to lose heart.

So the Lord Jesus speaks specifically and pronounces blessing on those who are alert, who watch. We did a special years ago, watch and pray. These are Old Testament believers.

They are alive. They are watching and undergoing the effects of much of these judgments, but they are protected. But it's a scary time.

One almost thinks maybe it's a mercy to have been martyred and not undergo these awful days. But they are to watch and keep their garments, preserve their garments, ensure that they don't give into fear, to confusion, to worry. Remember the Israelites after they left Egypt, having seen the plagues, got out there a little ways and got scared.

I think we're going to die of thirst. We're going to die of hunger. We need to go.

Remember the leeks and garlies of Egypt. We should go back. There will be temptation for these survivors.

And this is another form of demonstration, another form of illustration of how believers are to live, even in the face of severe judgments. Our nation may come under severe judgment with the number of undocumented people that are now lurking in the shadows of our country. There could be coordinated terror attacks.

There could be, I'm not saying there will be, I'm saying it is potential. To what extent do faithful, knowledgeable believers get rattled and fall prey to fear and worry, either by that potential or its

fulfillment? Many of us were fully aware and awake when 9-11 happened and there was rampant panic in the country. Airlines halted, people looking around.

Is it going to happen somewhere else? Imagine what these individuals who are believers are going to be experiencing and how their faith will be tested. And the Lord Jesus speaks. And this is a lesson for us.

We can find ourselves surprised by testing, blindsided by a change in circumstances that we may or may not have seen coming, but when it hits, the reality of it jolts us until our teeth rattle. What is our response? Look at what the Lord Jesus says to people who are in the midst of such an experience. I'm coming as a thief.

He doesn't say I'm coming as a shepherd to gather you up just before the wolves get you. I'm coming as a thief. I am coming and when I come, there are people who are going to experience loss.

If you're ready for a thief, you've got your important stuff in a safe. You've got an alarm system. You've got security cameras.

You've got your stuff, you know, 9-11 on speed dial. And if a thief comes and you're prepared, you don't lose anything because you expect, you act as though I need to be ready as though the thief could come tonight. Thief comes tonight, I've got whatever form of protection.

It might be, you know, Smith & Wesson Security Company. It might be an actual alarm from Brinks or whoever. It might just be that you have secured your things that you don't want to lose in a place where they can't be found.

But the Lord Jesus says, I am coming as a thief. You need to be more concerned about my evaluation of your life and whether you are going to experience loss at my hands than any loss that happens in this world. It shifts the focus.

It reminds us that we should be most concerned about what the Lord Jesus thinks of our life, not did I end up winning the game and I had the most pieces, you know, in Monopoly, I had the most cash, who has the most toys at the end. What is the measure? And Jesus, He doesn't say count on me for deliverance. He says, remember that there will be loss at the judgment seat if you are not focused on stewardship of what you have.

Don't be distracted by what's going on in the world. Pay attention to your own stewardship of time, relationships, material goods, whatever it is. If you're going to worry, worry about loss at the judgment that Christ super intends.

I am coming as a thief. If you are prepared, you won't lose anything. If you're not prepared, if you didn't think ahead, you will suffer loss.

Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments. When he says I'm coming as a thief, he's sort of a clothing thief. And if he comes and you're not prepared, you're going to end up walking into the next phase of God's plan with no clothes.

That's what he's saying. It's not so much the jewelry or the electronics or the expensive items, it's your clothes. There's a lot you can think about when someone asks you for your coat and you give them your cloak also.

Are you well enough provisioned and a good enough steward that you've got one to spare? God doesn't say give these things away and walk naked. If you're a good steward, that's okay. As Foghorn Leghorn says, I always keep a spare in my locker.

And you can give and still have. So this is the idea. Blessed is he who watches and keeps his garments.

If the thief is coming, but you're watching, you're not surprised and he doesn't take your clothes. If you don't watch and you are surprised, you will walk naked and others will see your shame. Shame on you for not listening to the Lord Jesus and being ready.

That's the idea. So they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Har Megiddo, Armageddon. So what is our takeaway here from this first session? The judgments of God will fall.

In many cases, they can be corporate judgments where believers are involved. We live in a society and in an age where there are consequences of bad decisions and perpetration of evil in the world. How do we survive? We watch and we keep our garments.

When we recognize sin in our lives, we fix it. We repent, we change our minds. We become those who are aligned with the perfect plan of God.

If it calls for faithfulness unto death, we are faithful unto death. We are going to receive the crown of life. The momentary light affliction works an eternal weight of glory.

And we keep that foremost in our mind. We don't fade, we don't bend, we don't bow. Reminds me of another old gospel song about Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

They didn't bend, they didn't bow, they didn't burn. And when that's our calling, we remain faithful. If we are going to be preserved so that we can be a witness and a testimony, it is required of a steward that a man be found faithful.

And to be a witness and a testimony, we've got to be faithful. So in whatever state we find ourselves, we are content and we are watchful and we keep our garments. Let's pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we're gonna see an interesting alignment between several of these sevenfold judgments that speaks to our situation today. We'll see that when we come back.