

Text: Revelation 16:8-21

Title: "Man's response to God's bowl judgments"

Time: 4/15/2018 am

Place: NBBC

Intro: We are in a chapter that describes the final judgments of God upon man during the Great Tribulation period. They are described as seven bowls of God's wrath that shall be poured out upon man in that day. Last week we saw from the first seven verses that the first bowl judgment brought severe sores to those who shall receive the mark of the beast and worship his image. The second and third bowl judgments are poured out on the oceans and rivers turning the water in them to blood.

We also reflected a bit last week on what a marvelous gift water is from our Creator. One of the tremendous properties of water is its heat-absorption property. It can absorb a lot of heat without changing temperature, and so the water on our planet is critical to the moderate temperatures we enjoy which sustain life here. We could not have had that beautiful weekend weather without the planet's water.

So it is not surprising, then, that after the loss of water on the earth, the fourth bowl of wrath is poured out on the sun so that people on the earth are scorched by its heat and radiation. Isa. 24:5-6, "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore, hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left."

The fifth bowl brings darkness to the kingdom of the anti-christ and the darkness brings a condition that causes peo-

ple to bite their tongues, perhaps widespread seizures of some kind. Mark 13:24-26, "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory."

The sixth bowl dries up the River Euphrates to ease passage for the kings of the Orient to make their way to Armageddon. Zech. 10:11-12, "And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away. And I will strengthen them in the Lord; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the Lord."

And finally the seventh bowl brings Armageddon to a conclusion with mega-earthquakes and mega-hailstones. Isa. 2:19-22, "And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats; to go into the clefts of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth. Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

While all this is going on, those executing these judgments from heaven obey the counsel of the prophet Isaiah. They see that man is worthy of these judgments and that Jesus Christ is worthy to pronounce them upon man. They fear the Lord and the glory of His majesty. They see the glory of

the ruling and judging King. We noticed that last week from the chapter's first seven verses.

For those who shall experience these judgments on the earth, however, their response contrasts that of heaven, and that is what we want to consider prayerfully this morning. As we do so, I think it is important that we recognize that the response to God's judgments we read about here will be nothing new for mankind. He responds in the same way today to the prospect of God's coming judgment, and we have to search our own hearts to consider what our response to that same prospect has been.

I want us to consider from the chapter two categories in this regard this morning: (1) the things men readily embrace in spite of God's judgment; and (2) the things man violently rejects in spite of God's judgment. God's judgment causes men who are judged to readily embrace some things, and readily reject others. We will take these one at a time.

I. Consider the things men readily embrace in spite of God's judgment (vv. 13-14).

Ill: Arguably, the most wicked King of Israel's history was Ahab, the husband of Jezebel. You may remember that the good king Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab for the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, but he did so asking that they inquire with a true prophet of the Lord about their fortune in the battle. Many false prophets had already predicted their glorious success.

That true prophet, Micaiah, had a different message to deliver. He explained that heaven had held court and the Lord had asked, "Who is going to go persuade Ahab to do

battle at Ramoth-Gilead so that he can there fall?" One spirit stood forth and said he could get the job done. "How so?" asked the Lord. The spirit explained that he would become a false/lying spirit in the mouth of all of Ahab's prophets, and that would convince him to go.

Appl: That Micaiah told Ahab and Jehoshaphat all this was an act of great mercy and grace from the Lord to them. Ahab thought a clever disguise would mean that Jehoshaphat was killed rather than him. He tried to out-manuever God. That was the real lie that he fell for. He, of course, went up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle and was killed there.

Our passage tells us that in spite of the judgments of God upon them, men who live at this point of the Great Tribulation period will readily embrace the guidance and instructions of lying spirits. Lying spirits always come to man in the form of false prophets (1 John 4:1). We are told that they look to John like frogs.

Seis: "They come forth out of the pestiferous quagmires of the universe, do their work amid the world's evening shadows, and creep, and croak, and defile, and fill the ears of the nations with their noisy demonstrations" (p. 378).

The problem is that none of the kings of the earth are going to see frogs. Only John could see the evil spirits this way. Instead, the kings of the earth are going to hear convincing argumentation (the frogs come out of the mouths of the unholy trinity) and they are going to see convincing supernatural miracles (v. 14).

Ill: Min and I had a nice conversation Thursday night about her Bible lesson. She commented as we all have that it must have been something special to see the miracles that were active in Moses's day but are not in our day. Imagine if God

gave our church its own pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.

I saw a pastoral opportunity in that common observation, so I asked Min if she knew the miraculously powerful thing that we have today that Moses did not have. She could not solve the riddle, so I explained to her that we have the Bible, God's Word. Moses had far less.

Appl: It was God's Word that spoke the universe into existence. We have the book that has that kind of power, because it too is God's Word. Heb. 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

It is more powerful for us to have God's Word tell us about the appearance of a pillar of fire or of an angel than for us actually to see it appear ourselves, because God's Word can tell us what it means, whether it is real or not, and whether it is good or evil.

In the face of God's judgment, sinful man has always embraced anything but God's Word. This explains the poor attendance at the services and Sunday schools of Bible-preaching and Bible-teaching churches like ours. It explains why so many think the message too long or too detailed. It explains why it is so hard to find someone willing to read the Bible with you. It explains why people cannot endure sound doctrine anymore.

Paul puts this sad fact this way: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of dev-

ils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1-2).

What is more, the seduction of these spirits often consists in the demonic doctrine that the Bible is not enough for our faith and practice – we need supernatural signs and wonders too. Jesus described this problem for the church age this way: "For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect" (Mark 13:22).

How should we be different? Listen to how Psalm 1:2 describes the blessed man, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

Because God's judgments are real, we need to be Word-empowered, spiritually prosperous and fruitful believers.

II. Consider the things men violently reject in spite of God's judgment (vv. 8-12, 15-21).

1. They violently reject the glory of the name of the God of heaven (vv. 9, 21). Instead, they blaspheme God. Is it your life's desire to glorify the name of the God of heaven this morning? Or must it be said instead that we love the possessions, pleasures, and pride of the world more?

2. They violently reject the humility of repentance from sin (vv. 9, 11). Is our disposition in worship this morning one that reflects the humility of repentance? Do we see that we are worthy of God's judgments, or do we find the whole idea somehow entirely unreasonable?

3. They violently reject the promise of the Second Coming of Christ (v. 13). Are we living a life that watches for that return, careful that we are clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Or like those who received the doom of Peter, do we live under the godless paradigm he condemns:

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.”

Jesus said when He comes, there is going to be a lot of care-free spiritual apathy around like the days of Noah. No one listened to Noah. Only eight were saved in the ark.

Conclusion: How is it that so many people try to do what Ahab tried to do? Why do we think we can outmaneuver the God of just judgments?

Kathy authored a good gospel tract called “Stairway to Heaven or Highway to Hell.” On the cover she has a picture of a car of people driving on a highway into hell, and the passenger asks the driver, “Are we going just keep driving?”

That is the question for us this morning. The Apostle John has done for us what the Prophet Micaiah did for Ahab – he told us God’s judgment is coming. Will we keep going on as though it is not?

Rather than violently rejecting the glory of the name of the God of heaven, let us worship Him faithfully.

Rather than violently rejecting the humility of repentance, let's confess our need for salvation from our sin and trust the Lamb to save us by the shed blood of His sacrifice for those sins.

Rather than violently rejecting the promise of Christ's coming, let's live every day prepared for what will be a thief in the night to most.

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*