

NOON BIBLE STUDY: REVELATION 16 (PART 3)

THE MAIN TAKEAWAY FROM REVELATION 16 IS CALLED THE "WRATH OF GOD." THE CHAPTER DESCRIBES THE ENACTING OF GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON THE EARTH AS DEPICTED THROUGH SEVEN ANGELS POURING SEVEN BOWLS ON THE EARTH. THE IMAGERY OF THE BOWLS BEING POURED OUT IS USED TO ILLUSTRATE THAT THESE ACTIONS ARE INTENTIONAL (THEY AREN'T CUPS ACCIDENTALLY KNOCKED OVER) AND THAT THEY ARE PERVASIVE (LIQUID POURED OUT OF LARGE BOWLS WOULD FLOW EVERYWHERE AND FILL EVERY CRACK AND CREVICE). BUT HOW DOES THE STORY OF HUMAN HISTORY ARRIVE AT THIS TERRIFYING POINT? WHY IS GOD POURING OUT HIS WRATH UPON HIS CREATION? THAT IS THE QUESTION THAT WILL BE ANSWERED IN THIS PART OF OUR STUDY. THERE ARE MANY IMPORTANT OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES WHICH SPEAK OF THE WRATH OF GOD, BUT I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HELPFUL AND IMPORTANT TO SEE THE NEW TESTAMENT'S TEACHING ON THIS SUBJECT. OUTSIDE OBSERVERS HAVE OFTEN WRONGLY PROPOSED THAT THERE IS A "WRATHFUL GOD OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND A LOVING GOD OF THE NEW TESTAMENT." THE TRUTH IS, THERE IS ONLY ONE GOD - AND HIS NATURE AND CHARACTER IS CONSISTENTLY REVEALED FROM GENESIS TO REVELATION. HE IS THE GOD OF LOVE, BUT BEING A GOD OF LOVE, DOESN'T MEAN THERE IS NO WRATH OR JUDGMENT.

"THE WRATH OF GOD IS GOD'S STRONG AND SETTLED OPPOSITION TO ALL THAT IS EVIL THAT ARISES OUT OF GOD'S VERY NATURE. GOD'S WRATH IS A BURNING ZEAL FOR THE RIGHT, COUPLED WITH A PERFECT HATRED FOR EVERYTHING THAT IS EVIL." (LEON MORRIS, "THE APOSTOLIC PREACHING OF THE CROSS", PAGE 180)

WE WILL BEGIN IN PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME WHICH GIVES US SOME CLEAR UNDERSTANDING AT WHY AND HOW THE END OF GOD'S STORY INCLUDES THIS IMPORTANT MOMENT OF THE WRATH OF GOD.

ROMANS 1:16-19 - THE GOSPEL MAKES KNOWN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

ROMANS 1:20-23 - BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHAT HUMANS DID

ROMANS 1:24-32 - HOW GOD RESPONDED, AND THE RESULTING ACTIONS OF HUMANS

GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF KNOWN AND HUMANITY HAS SAID "NO." WHEN HUMANITY FEELS SHAME BECAUSE OF THEIR SIN, INSTEAD OF TAKING IT TO GOD, THEY SUPPRESS IT (V. 18). ADDITIONAL SIN IS THEN COMMITTED BY ACTIONS THAT HELP "SUPPRESS" OR IGNORE THE BROKENNESS.

ROMANS 1 DESCRIBES THE DEPRAVITY OF HUMANITY IN GENERAL. ROMANS 2 SPEAKS TO A SECOND GROUP.

ROMANS 2:1-6 - BEFORE YOU THINK OF THE "WORLD" OUT THERE AS TERRIBLE AND DESERVING JUDGMENT, GOD SPEAKS ABOUT THOSE WHO KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT AND HAVE STILL FALLEN SHORT OF HIS GLORIOUS STANDARD.

ROMANS 2:6-11 - ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUNDS AREN'T RELEVANT, DOING WHAT IS RIGHT BEFORE GOD IS WHAT MATTERS

ROMANS 2:16 (NLT) - AND THIS IS THE MESSAGE I PROCLAIM-- THAT THE DAY IS COMING WHEN GOD, THROUGH CHRIST JESUS, WILL JUDGE EVERYONE'S SECRET LIFE.

ROMANS 3:9-18, 23 - FINAL RESUME OF HUMANITY

SO, IF EVERY HUMAN IS GUILTY OF SIN, HOW DOES THAT RELATE TO THE WRATH OF GOD IN REVELATION? WELL, THE CONSEQUENCE FOR SIN OR BETTER SAID, THE PENALTY FOR THOSE GIVEN A GUILTY VERDICT IN THE COURTROOM OF GOD'S JUSTICE IS A DEATH SENTENCE (MORE ON THAT IN A BIT). PAUL CONCISELY SAYS IN **ROMANS 6:23**:

"FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD."

BUT THIS ISN'T THE KIND OF TRIAL WHERE THE ACCUSED COULD SAY "OH YOUR HONOR, I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS ACTUALLY A 25MPH SCHOOL ZONE I WAS DRIVING 75 MPH IN", FOR THERE ARE SIGNS POSTED ALL OVER. AS WE HAVE ALREADY READ IN ROMANS AND THE BIBLE SUPPORTS ELSEWHERE, THE "LAWS" OF GOD HAVE BEEN POSTED IN A VARIETY OF PLACES. HERE'S A REFRESHER:

1 - GOD TOLD THE FIRST HUMANS THE FACTS FROM THE VERY START:

GENESIS 2:15-17 - THEN THE LORD GOD TOOK THE MAN AND PUT HIM INTO THE GARDEN OF EDEN TO CULTIVATE IT AND KEEP IT. 16 THE LORD GOD COMMANDED THE MAN, SAYING, "FROM ANY TREE OF THE GARDEN YOU MAY EAT FREELY; 17 BUT FROM THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL YOU SHALL NOT EAT, FOR IN THE DAY THAT YOU EAT FROM IT YOU WILL SURELY DIE."

2 - GOD HAS HARDWIRED INTO EVERY HUMAN A CONSCIENCE, WHICH IS THAT INNER PLACE OF A MAN OR WOMAN'S HEART THAT DIRECTS THEM IN RIGHT/WRONG, GOOD/EVIL, HELPFUL/HURTFUL WAYS. WHILE HUMANS CAN EVENTUALLY IGNORE OR DISABLE THEIR CONSCIENCE OVER TIME, THIS DOESN'T HAPPEN UNTIL THERE IS AMPLE ACTIVITY FROM IT. THE ENGLISH WORD "CONSCIENCE" COMES FROM THE LATIN WORDS *CON* AND *SCIRE* WHICH MEAN "WITH" "KNOWLEDGE OR AWARENESS"

ROMANS 2:14-15 (NLT) - EVEN GENTILES, WHO DO NOT HAVE GOD'S WRITTEN LAW, SHOW THAT THEY KNOW HIS LAW WHEN THEY INSTINCTIVELY OBEY IT, EVEN WITHOUT HAVING HEARD IT. 15 THEY DEMONSTRATE THAT GOD'S **LAW IS WRITTEN IN THEIR HEARTS**, FOR THEIR OWN **CONSCIENCE** AND THOUGHTS EITHER ACCUSE THEM OR TELL THEM THEY ARE DOING RIGHT.

3 - GOD HAS EMBEDDED HIS EXISTENCE AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS INTO THE CREATION. THIS "EVIDENCE" WORKS IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE HUMAN CONSCIENCE.

PSALM 19:1-4 (NLT) - THE HEAVENS PROCLAIM THE GLORY OF GOD. THE SKIES DISPLAY HIS CRAFTSMANSHIP. 2 DAY AFTER DAY THEY CONTINUE TO SPEAK; NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THEY MAKE HIM KNOWN. 3 THEY SPEAK WITHOUT A SOUND OR WORD; THEIR VOICE IS NEVER HEARD. 4 YET THEIR MESSAGE HAS GONE THROUGHOUT THE EARTH, AND THEIR WORDS TO ALL THE WORLD. GOD HAS MADE A HOME IN THE HEAVENS FOR THE SUN.

4 - GOD HAS SENT OUT HIS WORD THROUGH HIS PEOPLE. FIRST THROUGH THE LAW OF MOSES AND ISRAEL AND THEN THROUGH JESUS AND THE CHURCH.

1 KINGS 8:41-43 (NLT) - (SOLOMON PRAYED TO THE LORD) "IN THE FUTURE, FOREIGNERS WHO DO NOT BELONG TO YOUR PEOPLE ISRAEL WILL HEAR OF YOU (YAHWEH). THEY WILL COME FROM DISTANT LANDS BECAUSE OF YOUR NAME, 42 FOR THEY WILL HEAR OF YOUR GREAT NAME AND YOUR STRONG HAND AND YOUR POWERFUL ARM. AND WHEN THEY PRAY TOWARD THIS TEMPLE, 43 THEN HEAR FROM HEAVEN WHERE YOU LIVE, AND GRANT WHAT THEY ASK OF YOU. IN THIS WAY, ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE EARTH WILL COME TO KNOW AND FEAR YOU (YAHWEH), JUST AS YOUR OWN PEOPLE ISRAEL DO..."

PSALM 67:1-2 - GOD BE GRACIOUS TO US AND BLESS US, AND CAUSE HIS FACE TO SHINE UPON US-- SELAH. 2 THAT YOUR WAY MAY BE KNOWN ON THE EARTH, YOUR SALVATION AMONG ALL NATIONS.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 - "GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL THE NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND THE SON AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, 20 TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I COMMANDED YOU; AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE."

ACTS 1:8 - BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU; AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH."

IN OTHER WORDS, THERE ARE 4 CLEAR WAYS THAT GOD HAS COMMUNICATED HIS TERMS AND CONDITIONS ON HUMAN LIFE AND EVERY PERSON IS "WITHOUT EXCUSE" (ROMANS 1:20). AND EVEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THESE UNAMBIGUOUS COMMUNICATORS OF RIGHT AND WRONG AND LIFE AND DEATH, GOD DOES NOT JUST STAND HIGH AND ALOOF AS AN UNMOVED JUDGE EAGER TO HAMMER HIS GAVEL. THROUGHOUT HISTORY, AND RECORDED IN SCRIPTURE, THE CREATOR IS COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, LONGSUFFERING AND KIND - WORKING AND ACTING TO GRANT PARDON, FORGIVENESS AND MERCY. THIS DEVOTION TO MERCY CULMINATES IN THE MINISTRY OF HIS OWN SON WHO DECLARED THAT:

JOHN 3:16 - "...GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

NOTICE JESUS SAYS THAT THE DEFAULT SETTING IS "PERISHING" AND THAT BECAUSE OF GOD'S LOVE AND THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST, A PERSON CAN "NOT PERISH". THAT'S A PRETTY SOBERING TRUTH PLANTED RIGHT IN THE MOST FAMOUS BIBLE VERSE. BUT SO THAT WE DON'T MOVE AWAY FROM OUR TOPIC ON THE WRATH OF GOD, LET'S READ WHAT JESUS CONTINUES TO TEACH AFTER JOHN 3:16.

JOHN 3:17-21, 36 - "FOR GOD DID NOT SEND THE SON INTO THE WORLD TO JUDGE THE WORLD, BUT THAT THE WORLD MIGHT BE SAVED THROUGH HIM. 18 "HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM IS NOT JUDGED; HE WHO DOES NOT BELIEVE HAS BEEN JUDGED ALREADY, BECAUSE HE HAS NOT BELIEVED IN THE NAME OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD. 19 "THIS IS THE JUDGMENT, THAT THE LIGHT HAS COME INTO THE WORLD, AND MEN LOVED THE DARKNESS RATHER THAN THE LIGHT, FOR THEIR DEEDS WERE EVIL. 20 "FOR EVERYONE WHO DOES EVIL HATES THE LIGHT, AND DOES NOT COME TO THE LIGHT FOR FEAR THAT HIS DEEDS WILL BE EXPOSED. 21 "BUT HE WHO PRACTICES THE TRUTH COMES TO THE LIGHT, SO THAT HIS DEEDS MAY BE MANIFESTED AS HAVING BEEN WROUGHT IN GOD."

36 - "HE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON HAS ETERNAL LIFE; BUT HE WHO DOES NOT OBEY THE SON WILL NOT SEE LIFE, BUT THE WRATH OF GOD ABIDES ON HIM."

SO JESUS HIMSELF SPEAKS OF THIS REALITY IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE REASON HE HAS BEEN SENT BY THE FATHER. HE PREACHES AND TEACHES THAT THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING, AND JESUS IS HERE AS GOD'S RESCUE PLAN FROM THE WRATH FOR ALL THOSE WHO WILL BELIEVE. THE WORLD IS ALREADY UNDER JUDGMENT - BUT ON THE CROSS, JESUS TAKES THE WRATH OF GOD AS A PUNISHMENT - THOUGH HE WAS NOT GUILTY OF THAT PUNISHMENT! THE GOSPEL DECLARES THAT THE JUDGE OF THE UNIVERSE IS ACCEPTING CHRIST'S PAYMENT ON BEHALF OF ANY AND ALL WHO HAVE FAITH IN JESUS! THAT IS AN UNBELIEVABLE REALITY!

ROMANS 5:6-9 - FOR WHILE WE WERE STILL HELPLESS, AT THE RIGHT TIME CHRIST DIED FOR THE UNGODLY. 7 FOR ONE WILL HARDLY DIE FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN; THOUGH PERHAPS FOR THE GOOD MAN SOMEONE WOULD DARE EVEN TO DIE. 8 BUT GOD DEMONSTRATES HIS OWN LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US. 9 MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE **SAVED FROM THE WRATH OF GOD** THROUGH HIM.

MAKE NO MISTAKE, THE WRATH OF GOD IS COMING AND WILL BE METED OUT APPROPRIATELY FOR EACH MAN AND WOMAN. SOMEONE WHO HAS FAITH IN JESUS DOESN'T "ESCAPE" THE WRATH OF GOD AS IF IT SUDDENLY IS NO LONGER RELEVANT OR EXISTING. NO, THE WRATH OF GOD IS STILL REAL AND RIGHT AND JUST - BUT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S WONDERFUL AND PERFECT AND LOVING SON, THE WRATH OF GOD FALLS ON ~~HIM~~ INSTEAD OF ~~US~~.

GALATIANS 2:20 - "I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST; AND IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME; AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY FAITH IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR ME.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 - HE MADE HIM WHO KNEW NO SIN TO BE SIN ON OUR BEHALF, SO THAT WE MIGHT BECOME THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD IN HIM.

OH THE GREAT LOVE OF OUR GOD AND OUR KING. NO WONDER THE ANGELIC HOST SING:

REVELATION 5:9 - AND THEY SANG A NEW SONG, SAYING, "WORTHY ARE YOU TO TAKE THE BOOK AND TO BREAK ITS SEALS; FOR YOU WERE SLAIN, AND PURCHASED FOR GOD WITH YOUR BLOOD MEN FROM EVERY TRIBE AND TONGUE AND PEOPLE AND NATION.

IN CONCLUSION, THE WRATH OF GOD DESCRIBED IN REVELATION 16 (AND ELSEWHERE) IS REAL AND IS RIGHTEOUS AND IS COMING UPON THE CREATION - AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE REBELLION OF EACH PERSON AGAINST THEIR CREATOR. BUT TODAY, THERE IS A WINDOW OPEN CALLED THE MERCY OF GOD - AND THAT OPEN WINDOW IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR MEN AND WOMEN TO BE FORGIVEN OF THEIR SIN AND ESCAPE THE COMING PUNISHMENT THAT THEY DESERVE. THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT MERCY IS - UNDESERVED KINDNESS SHOWN TO ONE WHO DESERVES JUDGMENT! THE OPEN WINDOW IS ANNOUNCED THROUGH THE GOSPEL WHICH PROCLAIMS THE INVITATION TO ALL THE WORLD THAT THERE IS MERCY FROM GOD FOR YOU TODAY. THERE IS MERCY! THERE IS MERCY! THERE IS MERCY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST! THERE IS MERCY TODAY! RECEIVE IT AND BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH TO COME.