***The Second and Third Bowls: Water Changes to Blood

RV200-02***

Please open your Bibles once more to Revelation 16:1-21. Our subject is "The Seven Bowls."

We have learned that God will be justified in punishing tribulation humanity with the nightmarish plagues of the bowl judgments. The more we get into the bowl judgments, there's no other word to describe it except "nightmarish." Mankind in the tribulation, you must remember, will have reached a level of maximum rebellion against God, and of maximum contempt for His Scriptures. There will be at this time total disregard for the moral laws of God, and this will be worldwide. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will be hounded, persecuted, and murdered. God Himself will be blasphemed by the claims of mankind under the New Age doctrine that they are all potential gods. Satan himself will actually be the one that people are worshiping when they worship the antichrist, for the antichrist is the one who is behind Satan. Thus, the Creator God will be dishonored.

The whole world today is rapidly moving to the status of being opponents of the God who made us. So, we Biblical Christians are all that the world has to hold back the tide of moral filth and of humanism. Our spiritual gifts should be exercised at maximum level. Our time should include God's work in Christian service, which includes those moments when you may speak to people who need to hear the gospel, or who need to be introduced to the full counsel of the Word of God and the grace doctrines of the church. Our money should be put into God's service at this critical and final stage of the angelic warfare.

I remind you again that we are now at the intensified stage of the angelic conflict. Things are heating up very rapidly, and the conflict between the forces of God and the forces of Satan are going to mount with great fury. This is the time when we need maximum logistical support to do the work of the Lord. If God has placed in your hands, in one way or another, the means to do that, and you should seriously consider doing it.

**The First Bowl**

The first bowl judgment that we studied caused malignant sores to break out on the bodies of those who worship the antichrist.

**The Second Bowl: The Seas become Blood**

Coming now to Revelation 16:3, we have the second judgment and, we read, "And 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." The second angel now steps forward; he pours out his bowl; and, the contents of the bowl are poured into the sea. This refers to the saltwater ocean areas on earth. About 70% of the surface of the earth is covered with bodies of water, and a large part of that water is saltwater area. This is a reference now to an environmental effect upon the earth's oceans. The effect of the second bowl will be worldwide, and it will furthermore be clearly visible to everyone.

The result of the bowl's contents being poured out will be that it causes the saltwater areas on earth (all over the earth) to turn into blood – into literal blood. The composition of seawater is, as a matter of fact, almost identical to blood. So, this will be a very easy chemical change on the part of God to suddenly change the saltwater areas into blood.

**The Exodus Plague**

This, of course, is a repeat, on a much larger scale, of what God has done in the past. That, for example, was in the time of Moses at the Nile River, which Exodus 7:20-21 record for us: "So, Moses and Aaron did even as the Lord had commanded. And he lifted up the staff and struck the water that was in the Nile, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the side of his servants, and all the water that was in the Nile was turned to blood. And the fish that were in the Nile died, and the Nile became foul, so the Egyptians could not drink water from the Nile. And the blood was throughout all the land of Egypt."

The Nile, of course, was the river of life for the Egyptians. When it changed to blood, it was an enormous environmental disaster. The only water then that they could find to drink was what they could dig in wells back away from the river itself. That is the only source that they had of water, which was very minimal and not easy to find.

**The Grace of God**

Under the earlier judgment of the trumpets, you may remember that at the second trumpet, we had a similar judgment where one-third of the seawater areas were turned into blood. You read about that in Revelation 8:8-9. So, what you have earlier on in the tribulation, God shows what He is going to do in judgment upon tribulation humanity that does not turn from the antichrist and turn to Him. One-third, at that time, of seawater areas were turned to blood. This, again, is a demonstration of the grace of God. He ratchets up the tension one notch at a time, always leaving the door open for people to change their minds. That's what is so great about the grace of God. No matter how far you have drifted, no matter how much you have played the fool; and, no matter how, in some foolish, stupid moment of indignation, you have cut yourself off from a real source of divine blessing, and God's care and prospering and guidance of you, and your knowledge of the Word of God, you can always come back.

However, what God is going to do to you is pull down that lever one notch at a time, and things are going to get tougher: more attention; more conflicts; and, more disasters. He's going to keep pulling you down until you break and admit that He is right and you are wrong.

This is what is happening here to mankind in the final days of the earth. God showed them what He could do by turning one-third of the saltwater areas, but they did not pay attention, even though God is striking at water, the most essential element in man's environment for survival.

Every now and then, off the coast of California, and sometimes off the coast of Florida, you may have had the occasion of seeing what is referred to as "the red tide," where the ocean actually has turned red almost overnight. This is due to microorganisms that have come along that are coloring the water red, and they are poisonous to the fish. And suddenly, you find hundreds and thousands of fish washed up on the shores of the ocean, where the red tide kills the fish. If you eat the fish, you will get sick. You might even die because they have been poisoned. And just like that, in come these organisms, and it destroys the sea life. So, this is not something that's inconceivable. It's just: who has the power to be able to do this? And God does.

**Like that of a Dead Man**

He tells us that the water becomes like that of a dead man, which means that it congeals into a condition as blood congeals in the body of a human corpse. So, the seawater becomes a deadly solution for all the marine life which is in the seawater, because now it cannot carry oxygen. So, the marine life cannot live. The result is, we're told that every living thing dies. Interestingly enough, it says in the Greek text: "Every soul" (every soul of life), because animals, in a way, may be considered as having souls, just as human beings do. It is the soul that constitutes your capacity to think. My dog can think. It gives the capacity to feel. My dog is very emotional. And it gives you the capacity to make decisions. My dog makes decisions (bad ones, sometimes), but she is fully capable of doing all those things. That's what a soul is.

However, the difference between me and Aslan is that I have a human spirit made in the image of God, and she doesn't. That's what makes the difference. But don't be upset if somebody says that your little goldfish has a soul, because that's exactly what the Scripture says here: "the soul of life." In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word for "soul," which is "nephesh," is used to 754 times. 22 times it is used to apply to animal life. So, even in the Old Testament, you have that concept.

So, whatever was living (is what they're saying) in the saltwater areas, end up dead. They die. All the marine life dies in this congealed blood, that's understandable. This is a repeat of what happened to Moses in the Nile River. The psalmist referred to that in Psalm 105:29 where, reviewing this event, he says, "And He (that is, God) turned their waters into blood, and caused their fish to die." So, God is repeating a past judgment, but on a much larger scale now.

Well, you can understand that the seashores of the world will be piled up with the dead rotting carcasses of marine life. Of course, if you've ever smelled a decaying fish, you can imagine what that's going to be like, especially when the wind is blowing in your direction. It'll be an enormous source of disease as well, as the antichrist's world will desperately seek, in some way or another, to take care of stopping the disease, and doing something with all this dead life on the seashore. But I suspect that they're not going to be able to do very much, because they're going to have plenty of problems of their own with the sores that are on their bodies that are sapping off their capacity and their life. This will be such an ecological disaster that even Vice President Gore could not help us. There will simply be no recovery from this thing.

You must remember that the sea organisms are the basis of all the world's food chains, and this is going to be permanently disrupted. Even if that water were turned back to normal seawater the next day, you wouldn't have anything living in it at all. It would be like the Dead Sea – devoid of life. So, the food chain is going to be permanently interrupted. This will probably not cause a great deal of problem, because I think what we're reading about here in these bowl judgments is down within the last few weeks or couple of months of the tribulation era. It's down near the very end, because these are so disastrous, there's no way that human beings could continue on the face of the earth without the interruption of the return of Christ to resolve all of this.

Thus, the Creator is going to judge, in fact, today's ecological freaks who worship mother earth above Father God, and that is exactly what is happening. It is Gaia, as the New Age people like to call her (the mother goddess of nature) who is the one whom they worship, and who they will see has no power over the ecology at all.

The Word of God tells us in the Old Testament that life resides in the blood of a creature, and we all understand that. You can only lose so much blood and stay alive. And beyond a certain point, even if you have a certain amount of blood, it has to be at a certain level. Otherwise, it begins to do destructive effects to the other organs of the body. So, here life, which resides in the blood, is, for the people of the tribulation, going to become not a source of life, but a source of death, as the second vote is poured out upon them.

It is, of course, the blood of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed to give us eternal life to those who believe in Him, but the blood of the second bowl is only going to bring death to the people of the tribulation who do not trust and do not believe in Christ.

**The Third Bowl: The Freshwaters become Blood**

Well, no sooner is this judgment completed than God gives a nod to the third angel to step forward with his bold, which he does, and he pours the contents out on the earth: "And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood." Here the angel pours out his bowl, and his bowl goes into (of all things) the freshwater bodies. Up to now, only saltwater areas have been destroyed. They at least had water to drink. They at least have whatever fish life would live in freshwater. Now this bowl is emptied into the freshwater bodies of the planet, specifically into the rivers and into the source of the rivers (often): the springs. The result is, again, that the water becomes blood. So, now all the freshwater sources become the congealed blood of a human corpse. This, again, is a repetition of the plague of the Nile River found in Exodus 7:20-21.

However, the difference is that now it's worldwide. It is very hard to try to imagine something as staggering as this happening to people. The world will very quickly be desperate for water to sustain life. This is why this cannot be early on in the tribulation. It has to be near the end, because you can live only for maybe three or four days without water, and then you die. Perhaps they can, in some areas, dig for water, but they're going to find that the springs (the underground water) has been contaminated and turned into blood. So, all they get in their wells is blood. There will, of course, be some short-term solutions. There will be a run at Sam's wholesale warehouse for the soft drinks that are left, and whatever else is there left to drink. And when that's gone, that's it. There will be no other source of water, and no more natural sources of crystal clear water on earth to be found.

Soon, people, in desperation, will no doubt turn to trying to drain the blood water. And they're going to find, as Psalm 78:44 tells, us that the Egyptians tried that, and they couldn't do it. You can't do that. It doesn't work.

In verses 5-7, God the Holy Spirit almost interrupts Himself to make something very clear. I think this is extremely important for you to observe. What do you think Phil Donahue would say about this if he were here now listening to us? I mean, get the picture. Here is God. He puts malignant sores on everybody on the face of the earth. He turns all the seawater into the congealed blood of the human corpse. He turns all the freshwater areas into congealed blood that kills all the sea life. There are nations in the Orient who depend enormously upon marine life for their food supply. I can tell you that Donahue would say, "Oh, I can't believe that God would do that. That is so cruel. That is so harsh. That is so mean. I can't believe that God would do that to people. Can you imagine what turmoil that would greet on the face of the earth? Where people are going to go? No, this isn't like God. This is not what God is like.

Well, God the Holy Spirit knew that that's exactly what people who read this were going to try to say. This is how they're going to refute. This, in fact, is why most churches; most theological institutions; and, most Christian people in liberal churches, and churches in general, hold that the book of the Revelation has nothing to say about the future, because it is not a literal book. It is not a book which you are to interpret literally. So, they simply deal with these horrendous, nightmarish plagues by saying that it's never going to happen. It's only poetic language. Or they say that it all happened before 70 A.D. That is the reformed theology position. That is the position of groups like the Southern Baptists, who take the Bible seriously. But the book of the Revelation all is in the past. They are amillennialists.

So, God the Holy Spirit wants to make something very clear. Verse 5 says, "And I heard (John speaking) the angel of the waters." This expression "angel of the waters" is a phrase which means an angel which has special jurisdiction over the freshwater areas on the earth. It is probably the angel who had the third bowl. In Revelation 7:1, we find that there are angels of the wind who have control over the wind. In Revelation 14:18, there is the angel of fire who has control over fire. These are angels who act in special specific missions. The Peretti books, that are novels that are so fascinating, refer to demons who are the demons of cancer; the demons of this disease and that disease; and, the demons of this disaster and that disaster. That is not justified in the Bible. There are not special demon angels who have power over certain things of that nature.

However, on occasion, God appoints an angel to be in charge of some action. Therefore, he's called "the angel of the waters" because he's dealing with this water plague. But this is not angels who are like spirits, like the people of the primitive Indian tribes who believed that there are spirit gods who control these various forces of nature. What this angel says, however, is that he proceeds to describe and remind us of somethings about the character of God. This is very important. It is important, especially if you come into a time of crisis in your life. That's when you better be very clear that you understand the essence of God; that you have a perspective; and, you have a frame of reference into which you may put your particular trauma at that moment. You must know who it is that you are dealing with, and who is dealing with you, so that you know how He is going to act.

What this angel says, in describing God, is that God is "dikaios." This word "dikaios" refers to the righteousness of God, and in God's case, to his absolute righteousness. This is the meaning in reference, in Psalm 145:17. In the first part of that verse, he is describing God. It says, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways." So, here we see that "dikaios" means something about God in the way He acts. What this means is that God Himself is the standard of what is right and wrong. God, in His own character, determines what is right and what is wrong to do. You cannot talk about moral laws on the basis of making a 51% agreement with a group you're discussing some issue with. You cannot determine what is right or wrong based upon the majority vote. That is determined by a higher standard, and that standard is the character of God Himself.

You can see that to say that God is righteous, that He never does what is wrong, that He does only that which is right as per His character, then everything that we find about God is attractive. This is not the way the gods of the pagans are. When people make up their own gods, their frame of reference is themselves. They just take a human being, and they expand and extend what human beings can do, and their characteristics. And at the heart of that is the sin nature of man. That's why pagan gods are always mean. They're always crude. They're always ugly. And people conceive of them as ugly because they're not creatures of love, and they are not people who are fair to you. They will do all kinds of terrible things to you.

So, what this statement about God is saying is that God, in His character, can never do anything that He classifies as evil. Therefore, what God is doing to these people in the tribulation cannot be classified as evil, or vindictive, or cruel, or mean-spirited. It cannot be classified as something that God would not do. What God is doing is something that is actually coming out of His character – out of what He is.

**God is Absolute Righteousness**

First of all, the Holy Spirit reminds us that God is righteousness, absolute righteousness. Psalm 40:8:10 says, "As is Your name, O God, so is Your praise to the ends of the earth. You right hand is full of righteousness." There is nothing else about God except absolute righteousness.

Psalm 119:137: "You are righteous, O Lord; and, upright are Your judgments.

1 John 2:29 in the New Testament gives us this same declaration: "If you know that He (God, in the form of the Son) is righteous, you know that everyone else who practices righteousness is born of Him." So, we are told that God is absolute righteousness. When we act in terms of righteousness, it is because we are reflecting this characteristic of God, and we can't do that on our own. It takes the fact that God brings us to the new birth. He regenerates us, then we can do what is righteous. This is why we tell you that unbelievers cannot do any divine good works at all. This is why all of the people who are in positions of power, such as in government, who are doing these good works, are doing them under the motivations of the sin nature, because many of them are unbelievers themselves, and they cannot do what is righteous. God calls it human good.

People only possess relative righteousness, which is based on comparing themselves to each other to determine which is the least evil person. People compare themselves to one another, and they have a relative righteousness. They do not have absolutely bottom-line righteousness. Only God has that.

2 Corinthians 10:12: "For we are not bold to compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measured themselves by themselves, and compared themselves with themselves, they're without understanding. Paul was under attack by these Corinthian churches, and he is saying, "I'm not going to get into this game of comparing myself with you, and proving how much better I am than you are." He says, "That's nonsense. Even if I am better than you, all that tells is that I have relative righteousness. It does not prove that I am right. That takes something more than myself as the standard to compare us to each other.

The reason that what Paul says is true is that Romans 3:10-12 say, "As it is written, 'There is none righteous; no, not one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside. Together they have become useless. There is none who does good. There is not even one." So, no one in the race has any righteousness that is a standard for us to exalt and to seek to emulate.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned, and they fall short of the glory of God." What is the glory of God? Absolute righteousness. That's the standard. Unless you have absolute righteousness, you cannot go to heaven. The only way we secure absolute righteousness is by having it imputed to us when we are placed in Christ.

**Relative Righteousness**

So, the result in society of this contrast between man's human viewpoint and God's divine viewpoint is expressed for us very aptly in Isaiah 5:20-21: "Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who substitute darkness for light, and light for darkness; who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight." What a tremendous insight that is. This is what happens with relative righteousness. This is when you use man as a standard of right and wrong. You end up finding that man and his sin nature ends up calling what is evil good, and actually calls what is good evil. He substitutes light for dark. He calls darkness light, and he calls light darkness. He substitutes what is bitter for what is really sweet, and he calls what is sweet bitter.

If you understand this passage, just this gives you the insight of why we see people in positions of power in the institutions of our society who are doing things that make us shake our heads, and who are doing the things that were so aptly summarized by Dr. Dobson's letter in the previous session. We can't believe that this is happening. Are these people deliberately trying to be destructive? No, they don't understand the principle of absolute righteousness. They have no frame of reference for it. So, they actually call what is evil as something that is good.

So, the point of this is that God is not acting vindictively or capriciously, in sending these horrendous plagues against tribulation unbelievers who are worshiping the antichrist. He is acting in absolute righteousness, because that's the only way He can function. Tribulation society, please remember, is in rebellion against God and the Bible. They don't want God, and they don't want His Word. So, they're going to label as cruel the sending of these bowl judgments upon them. But remember that these are the same people who will have been persecuting believers, and who will have, without legitimacy, shed their innocent blood for refusing to worship the antichrist and to take his mark.

**God is Righteous to Punish Blasphemers**

So, God is righteous to punish those who blaspheme him. But he also has made a way of escape, even for those people, through faith in Jesus Christ. I don't think there's any place in the Bible that can justify what you may have heard some preachers say – that if you do not accept Christ now, and the rapture takes place, and you go into the tribulation, that you will not be able to accept Him then. That's wrong. There are a lot of people who will go into the tribulation who are going to get their heads screwed on straight, suddenly in a moment of time. It would really be a person who has little discernment, who sees what is taking place in the world, who would not say, "The Christians were right," and who would not flee to the Savior. If Christ is rejected, there is no escape then from the righteous judgments of God; and, they are righteous.

Hebrews 10:26 says, "There's no escape but the fiery judgment to come." As a matter of fact, we can without hesitation say, whether Donahue likes it or not, that the lake of fire, in which people will spend all eternity, is the final testimony to the absolute righteousness of God. That is what a righteous God would do. For Him to do anything else with those who have been in rebellion against Him, and who have rejected the Savior, would be for God to be unrighteous. And when you argue that God can't do that because He's love, you must remember that God is consistent with Himself, and His love is governed by His righteousness.

**There are some Things that God cannot do**

So, there are some things that God cannot do. He cannot violate His own righteousness. He can do no wrong.

**The Eternality of God**

Then the third angel says something more. That in itself clarifies a great deal concerning why it is right for God to bring these judgments upon people in this way. The angel says, "You are righteous." Then he says, "You who are, and who was. You, who have been in the past; You, who are now;" and, obviously, God who is going out into the future. He is referring to the eternity of God – the eternality of God. This is an important point for us to realize – that we now enter a realm that we cannot comprehend with the human mind.

**Eternal Life**

Deuteronomy 33:27 taught this to the Jewish people. The eternal God is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And He drove out the enemy from before you, and said, 'Destroy.'" The eternal God is a dwelling place. This is what the angel is referring to – that God has eternal life. What is eternal life? It is a life which had no beginning, and life without any end. We can understand like that has no end, but life with no beginning? This is from eternity past to eternity future.

Here's the way Psalm 90:2 puts it: "Before the mountains were born, or You did give birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting (eternity past) to everlasting (eternity future), You are God." So, we're dealing with somebody who has been on the scene forever. There never was a time when God was not there. Therefore, we are dealing with someone that we cannot just pass off indifferently. We cannot just simply ignore what He has said. At a point in history, some 2,000 years ago, Jesus Christ came as the God-man for the explicit purpose of making it possible, wonder of wonders, for us as human beings and sinners to have the eternal life of God.

You must understand that it's just not that you're going to live forever. You're going to do that, but so are the people in hell. It's not just that you're going to live in heaven forever. It's not just eternal existence. It is eternal life that God gives you. He gives you His own life.

In John 10:27-28, the Lord says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give eternal life to them. They shall never perish. And no one shall snatch them out of My hand." That's an explicit statement that those whom God has chosen for eternal life will hear the voice of Christ. They will respond. They will follow. They will trust in Him a Savior, and He will give to them eternal life. He will give them God's own life. Once they have that, they can never be taken out of the hands of God.

Should you believe Kenneth Copeland, and say that you should now consider yourself a god? No. The eternal life that God gives you is a position of classification that you have for all eternity. But you do not become a god, and you do not become just another god with the Creator God. But the life you have is indeed eternal life.

Go to the end of the New Testament, in 1 John 5:11-13. This same point is made: "And the witness is this: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The only way you can get this life is as a gift from God. It comes by faith in Christ because the life is in Him. This eternal life is in Him because he is God: "He who has the Son has the life (the eternal life). He does not have the Son of God does not have the eternal life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life." You may know you have eternal life. Why? Because you invite Jesus into your heart? You invited him into your life? You make promises? No, it's because you believed in what He stands for as represented by His name: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. You believed in His name. And because of that, He gives you His life which is eternal life.

I can't explain to you what that's going to do to us as human beings, but it's going to have an impact. It already has an impact upon us as human beings now. It transforms the lowest kind of human being into a princely character. Simply becoming born-again does marvelous things for a human being. It is transforming. But in eternity, the full impact of eternal life is going to be marvelous. Yes, we are going to have some characteristics; some quality; and, some abilities that we would now call God-like.

I still wish I could figure out a way to awe the kids in summer camp, some evening at sunset, to come walking on the lake toward them. Maybe we could have some big pontoons on your feet such that you could walk along. I think it would impress them. One little girl who got in trouble in summer camp who had a little complaint was asked, "Why didn't you talk to Dr. Danish about this?" And she said, "Oh, everybody's afraid of Dr. Danish." Could you imagine the awe if they saw me walking on water? I'd never have another problem with any of them. The little girls who heard her say that laughed in her face, because they said, "Nobody's afraid of him." So, I need to get some respect in certain circles there. But maybe that's what it's going to be.

I'm sure we're going to be like Christ. We know that. We're going to walk through the walls. We're going to take off, and with the speed of light, we're going to move from one place to the other in the universe. We're just going to have what I can only describe as God-like qualities, characteristics, and abilities. I think it's because we're going to have eternal life turned on full blast.

The third angel identifies God then as the eternal God, the one with eternal life. And because He is eternal life, and because he is the only God, it is His prerogative to make the decisions on how to punish the people in the tribulation that have turned their back on Him, and have been thumbing their nose at Him. Because He is absolute righteousness, He will not do anything wrong. Because He is the eternal God, He has the right. That's His privilege, and that's His authority. What he was subjected to is absolutely proper. God must be true to Himself, and we should remember that He must be true to himself in how we deal with Him as well. Do you do good? Do you do Holy Spirit goodness? Do you do Holy Spirit right things? He says, "God will reward you." If you do sin nature evil and sin nature human good, it says, "God will judge and punish you." That's the way we are related to Him.

I think that we should take great advantage of that. Avoid the sin nature human good, and just immerse yourself in the new nature divine good that the Holy Spirit will crank out through you. You will be so glad in eternity that you did it. Remember that God is absolute righteousness, and that He these imputed that to you; that He is eternal life, and that He has placed that life in you; and, that He has done the most magnificent thing for you already, and the best is yet ahead.

Well, the angel doesn't stop there. He continues with more observations on the character of God in order to establish very clearly that this God is absolutely justified, and acting fully (in full propriety) to the judgments that He's bringing on these who have rebelled against Him in such a horrendous way in the era of the tribulation. And we shall look at those characteristics next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1992

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