***The Fifth Bowl: Darkness

RV204-01***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 16:1-21. Our subject is "The Seven Bowls," and this is segment number ten.

The tribulation judgments of God against unbelieving humanity will cause, as we have seen, widespread death all over the world during that seven-year period. By the end of the first three-and-a-half years, half the world's population will be dead. That's probably about 3 billion people. The final bowl judgments will come in the final weeks of the tribulation. They will be so destructive of human life that we are actually told on one occasion by the Lord Jesus that God is going to have to shorten the timetable of the tribulation in order to preserve some humanity alive on the face of the earth. If you had trouble understanding that before, I'm sure you don't at this point, now that you have been through these judgments thus far. You can see that once the water turns to blood; the sun is increased seven times in intensity; and, the events that come crashing in, one after another upon mankind, that humanity could not survive unless that period were very quickly brought to an end.

In Matthew 24:21-22, we read, "For then (the tribulation – specifically the final weeks), there shall be great tribulation." The word "great tribulation" indicates that we're talking about the last half of the tribulation. The first half of the seven years is called the tribulation; and, the last three-and-a-half years is called the great tribulation. That is the period when things begin to speed up dramatically: "For them, there shall be great tribulation which has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved. But for the sake of the elect, those days shall be cut short." This tells us that even Christians are going to suffer when all the freshwater areas are coagulated in the human blood, as well as the sea areas. Now they will come together and be saved by this act of God, at least for the sake of the believers.

Tribulation humanity actually takes on the evil character of its national leaders, the antichrist, who will, at that time, be the ruler of a world government. And they will also reflect the character and the viewpoints of their great teacher of religions, the false prophet. At that time, God is not honored at all on the earth, but the antichrist very definitely is. The nation which does not respect the moral principles of Scripture will eventually come to the point where we read about Zedekiah in the previous session, where a nation comes to the point of no remedy.

You may not be aware of the fact, or should be reminded, that we are coming to an election here in the city of Irving. Political elections always have very specific, definitive biblical relationships. This is the time when Christians have to start salting to society to keep it from self-destruction. One of the things on the school board election that you find interesting is that one of the grossest curriculums interjected into the public school systems of this nation is a social studies curriculum called "The Children of the Rainbow." The Children of the Rainbow is an attempt to get children from kindergarten on up to be tolerant of other races, ethnic groups, and sexual lifestyles. A considerable portion of the children of the rainbow has to do with teaching children that homosexuality and lesbianism are acceptable alternate lifestyles. And the battle is warming up.

Well, of the candidates who are running for the Irving School Board, only one says, "I am opposed to bringing Children of the Rainbow into the Irving school systems. The rest of them waffle on it by saying, "Well, whatever the people want." Since when is God's moral base subject to the 51% majority approval of our society? Since when do we pass approval upon what God says are the laws of legitimate conduct, and those that are not? In the city of New York, this battle blew up. I want to read you a little portion here from a publication form "Focus on the Family" called "The Citizen." It describes the results of trying to impose the Children of the Rainbow (which is really quite gross), into, of all things, New York City, where you would think that nobody would care. We don't think of New York City as one of the spiritual lighthouses of the nation.

I watched two lesbians on a TV interview program. They were brought into one of the public schools to explain what they do. They had a little girl that they had secured through artificial insemination, and they had been teaching this child about lesbianism as an alternative lifestyle. So, she had two mommies. These women sat there speaking to these children. I mean they were like our little first grade and kindergarten children, with their little innocent faces looking up, while these women are describing to them their lifestyle sexually. I don't think I was imagining it, but I said to Mrs. Danish, "Don't those faces of those women look evil?" And they were. They were grossly evil. There was the stamp of the vileness of what they were doing. Then they finally turned to their little daughter and said, "Is there anything wrong with being in love with a lady? I don't see anything wrong with it." Had they gotten the message through?

What is that little girl going to be like when she grows up? God condemns homosexuality and lesbianism. And I mention this because this is background for why God could act with such severity on a society as these bowl judgments. You're not born that way. This is not a genetic thing. It's a great lie. You should understand that that's a lie. You're not born this way. You're born with a sin nature. And sometimes that sin nature likes to fornicate, or to be an adulteress or an adulterer. That sin nature likes to steal and lie and cheat and deceive.

However, you are not born with a compulsion that you must do those things. While somebody indeed may be attracted improperly to the same gender, the Word of God does not say that this is something that you have no control over. Do you know why? You should understand this clearly, and be prepared to answer that question). This is why: The Bible never says something is a sin over which you have no control. The Bible would not tell you that your blue eyes are a sin. The Bible only says that something is a sin that you have control over, and that you can do something about it.

This article is entitled "Beating the Big City Bureaucrats:" "Parents in New York City have put up with a lot in the last few years. In 1991, for example, the New York City schools became the first school district in the country to distribute condoms to students. As if that wasn't enough, city schools have passed out material, some of it provided by the Gay Men's Health Crisis, that graphically describes all manner of aberrant sexual behavior. But when the New York City schools tried to teach first graders that homosexual behavior is normal and acceptable, some parents and local school officials said, 'Enough is enough.' Their protests not only kill the offending curriculum, but led to the ouster of New York City school chancellor Joseph Fernandez, the highly paid head of an enormous and entrenched bureaucracy.

"The controversy centered on the city's Children of the Rainbow curriculum (the same thing we're talking about here in the Irving schools), which was created primarily to ease racial tensions in the wake of highly publicized incidents in which blacks were killed by white gangs in Bensonhurst and Howard Beach. The first volume of the curriculum written for first graders was introduced by Fernandez last spring. The 443-page curriculum guide is a collection of relatively innocuous games and activities designed to teach children about other cultures. Rainbow probably with little stir, but for a 15-page section entitled 'Fostering Positive Attitudes toward Sexuality.' The section was written at the request of the Gay and Lesbian Teachers' Association. That controversial portion, authored by a Bronx first grade teacher ..., stated that teachers of first graders will have an opportunity to give children a healthy sense of identity at an early age. Classes should include references to lesbian / gay people in all curricular areas, and should avoid exclusionary practices by presuming the person's sexual orientation; reinforcing stereotypes; or, speaking of lesbian / gays as 'they' or 'other.'

"Children need actual experiences via creative play, books, visitors, etc. in order for them to view lesbian / gays as real people to be respected and appreciated. The section continued: 'Educators have the potential to help increase the tolerance and the acceptance of the lesbian / gay community. Suggested reading for the curriculum included: Heather has Two Mommies; Daddy's Roommate; and, Gloria Goes to Gay Pride. The first book features a three-year-old girl who was conceived through artificial insemination, and who lives with her two lesbian parents. The second book (Daddy's Roommate) centers on a happy young boy whose divorced father has a gay lover. The child concludes that being gay is just one more kind of love. In the third volume (Gloria Goes to Gay Pride), a little girl accompanies her mother and her mother's female lover to a Gay Pride march.

"Some of the city's 32 community based schools, which are supposed to control the curriculum for elementary and junior high schools, quietly ignored that section of the curriculum. But many parents didn't like what they saw. Willie Alfonzo, a print shop worker and Staten Island parents, had previously sued the public schools in an unsuccessful effort to stop them from distributing condoms to students. Early in 1992, he ran across the curriculum, and saw that it mandated teaching how to celebrate, validate, and affirm this lifestyle: 'regardless of what my beliefs were. They wanted to teach my children something that directly contradicted what I'm trying to teach at home.' Alfonso formed an organization called "Parents for the Restoration of Morals in Education." He began agitating against Rainbow at PTA meetings, and made calls to Fernandez.

"Meanwhile, in Middle Village, Queens, an even greater battle was brewing, led by Mary Cummings, a feisty 61-year-old grandmother, and president of District 24 school board. According to a report by "The American Spectator." Cummings accused Fernandez and New York City Mayor David Dinkins of promoting the idea that sodomy is acceptable while virginity is weird." ...

I hope that you understand that sodomy is a horrendous practice. You must understand that that is what homosexuals do. And that is what these children are being taught. Continuing:

"She also told Fernandez that: 'We are not going to teach our children to treat all types of human behavior as equally safe, wholesome, or acceptable. On the contrary, we're going to teach them that they should never engage in conduct that would cause harm to others or to themselves. When it is age appropriate, we will also tell them that is extremely dangerous to engage in anal intercourse.

"In March of that year, District 24 voted to reject the curriculum, and sent letters to the other local districts telling them about the offending section, and urging them to reject it too. Theoretically, that move should not have caused any problems since each local district is free to choose its own curriculum. But Joseph Fernandez is not the kind of person to take 'No' for an answer. In 1990, he had come to New York from Miami, where he had earned a reputation for turning around ailing schools. A darling of the education elite, this $195,000-a-year bureaucrat had already won a bruising battle over condom distribution in the public schools. Fernandez told all the local school districts, including District 24, that they must implement the curriculum by October 31st, or provide an acceptable alternative.

"According to a "News Day" report, a spokesman for New York City schools said that Fernandez would run some multicultural programs himself if the local districts did not comply. Fernandez was not the only one lining up against District 24. Even before Fernandez had sent his letter, New York Human Rights Commissioner Dennis de Leon had written the District 24 board, asking to meet with. The commissioner wanted to tell the board about the impact of violence against gays and lesbians, and urge them to reconsider their rejection of the Rainbow curriculum.

"In a letter of reply, Cummings rebuffed the commissioner: 'We are well aware of horrendous verbal and physical abuse in our city,' wrote Cummings. 'Where was your voice against such abuses when gay activists trashed St. Patrick's Cathedral, desecrating the church, and thereby insulting every member of the Catholic religion?' Cummings did not back down from Fernandez either. In August, she sent out letters to 22,000 parents detailing her concerns about the curriculum, and inviting them to an October 6th rally in front of the New York City Board of Education headquarters in Brooklyn.

"Responding to her plea were roughly 2,000 supporters from all over New York City gathered in front of 110 Livingston streets, many of them bearing signs demanding the resignation of both Dinkins and Fernandez. Significantly, the protesters formed their own rainbow. The speakers were Black; Hispanic; Muslims; Hasidic Jews; Catholics; and, Baptists, as were their listeners. The protesters were encouraged by people like Reverend Michael Faulkner of Calvary Baptist church in Manhattan. 'My support of this gave a lot of other people of color the feeling that they could step out as well without feeling that they were throwing the baby out with the bathwater,' said Reverend Faulkner.

"If that did not convince Fernandez of minority opposition to the Rainbow curriculum, the next demonstration should. On October 21st, hundreds of Hispanics gathered at the city's Board of Education headquarters to express their dismay and repudiate Fernandez for betraying the Hispanic community. 'As a Hispanic,' they said, 'Fernandez should appreciate the religious and moral objections that Hispanics have over against programs like Children of the Rainbow.' 'I do not want them to have that kind of education,' as Demaris Ortiz, a Brooklyn mother of two, told 'News Day.' 'As a Hispanic, Fernandez should know better.'

"The October 31st deadline came and went. Other district boards had worked out compromises with Fernandez, many of them moving the offending material to fifth and sixth grade. But Cummings and District 24 remained resolute. On November 9th, Fernandez fired off an angry letter, telling them that if they did not submit a plan for teaching tolerance toward gays by November 13, he would: 'do everything in my power to pursue into law to ensure compliance.'

"In a responding letter, Cummings reiterated her defiance, saying that she and the other board members of District 24 would oppose Fernandez: 'using every legal means at our disposal.' Finally, on December 1st, Fernandez made good on his threat, and suspended Cummings and her fellow District 24 board members. In their place, he appointed three of his staff members to take over the board's duties, and to help devise a curriculum that included lessons about homosexuals. Accusing them in a letter of bizarre behavior, he notified District 24 board members that they would remain suspended until the new curriculum was in place, and until they assured him they would not sabotage it.

"That did not sit well with others, however. The New York City Board of Education has never been solidly behind Fernandez's agenda on social issues. When Fernandez suspended the local board of District 24, most of New York City's board members thought that he had overreacted. It also didn't help Fernandez when pre-released copies of his new autobiography, Tales out of School: Joseph Fernandez's Crusade to Rescue American Education hit the streets. In his book, Fernandez wrote that the New York City Board of Education is so politicized, and its actions so meddlesome, that on more than one occasion I have openly challenged its character. Fernandez even called one central board member a political prostitute.

"Thus, when the District 24 board appealed their suspension, conditions were ripe for a major upset. That upset came in the form of a six-nothing vote in favor of restoring Cummings and her fellow board members. Smarting from this loss, Fernandez complied with the Board of Education decision, but threatens to carry on his battle with District 24. Two months later, his plans unraveled when the Board of Education voted not to renew his contract. Board members said that Fernandez's autobiography was a factor in that vote. His contract expires in June.

"As of this writing, the Rainbow curriculum is effectively dead. In addition, District 24's success has emboldened districts across the country to drop Fernandez's explicit AIDS curriculum. Still, Cummings is wary. She notes that the ideas that spawned Rainbow are still alive, and they extend far beyond her home city. 'The problem is not only in New York. It's across the country,' said Cummings. 'So, people are forming their own little armies all over. The gay agenda must be stopped.' Reverend Faulkner, the Baptist pastor from Manhattan, agrees, but he's also encouraged by what happened in New York. Parents are becoming awakened and empowered to change the educators’ agenda."

The city of Irving, where are the grandmothers? If you look at the materials in "Children of the Rainbow," you will recoil with horror. This is no little thing. But the New York City experience demonstrates what citizens with a moral perspective can do. But it is because of things exactly like that, being shoved down the throats of biblical people, that God finally comes to the point where He's had enough.

**The Fifth Bowl: Darkness**

In Revelation 16:10-11, we have the fifth bowl of the wrath of God, and we read in verse 10: "And the fifth angels poured out his bowl." These angels are standing with bowls, and there is a content in each bowl. And this time, this angel does not pour out his bowl upon an area of the natural world. It doesn't hit the earth. This is not a strike against nature or the environment. This time, it's against what is called the "thronos." The "thronos" refers to the word "throne:" The fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast." The "throne" here refers to a government center. Now something very dramatic is going to take place at that point in time in the tribulation. The headquarters of the kingdom of man on earth, during the tribulation, under the leadership of the antichrist, is going to be struck directly by this fifth bowl judgment. The judgment is against the throne, specifically, of the antichrist.

We have heard the word "therion" so many times. This is a word which refers to the first beast of Revelation 13. In Revelation 13, you may remember that there are two beasts. The first is the beast that we refer to as the antichrist. The second is the beast that we refer to as a religious leader, the false prophet. The first is a political leader. So, this refers to the first beast of Revelation 13:1-10, who, in fact, claims himself to be God.

This man is identified elsewhere in Scripture by the term "antichrist." In 1 John 2:18, John says, "Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen. From this we know that it is the last hour." The spirit of antichrist was already alive in John's day, but there is a specific person coming who is called the antichrist. This is the man of sin – the ruler here in the tribulation era.

Also, see 1 John 2:22: "Who is the liar, but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son." Of course, this is exactly what antichrist will do. He will deny the reality of God as the true Supreme Being: the reality of the Father; the reality of the Son; and, the reality of the Holy Spirit. He will deny that Jesus Christ is actually a God-man, the second person of the Trinity, who has come to the earth. This is one of the marks of the antichrist – the denial that God Himself, through the Son, entered the human sphere in order to deal with the sin problem.

Thessalonians 2:4 describes this man as the antichrist. He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called God or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God." This is again a reference to the man that John called the antichrist.

**Babylon**

So, this plague out of the fifth bowl strikes directly at the capital of antichrist, and at his whole empire. We have good reason to believe that the capital at that time will be in the restored city of Babylon. Babylon on the Euphrates was the origin of all false religion, and interestingly enough, a city which has been under reconstruction by Saddam Hussein. I found it extremely fascinating that General Schwarzkopf said, "We were on our way to Baghdad. We could have gone straight through for another 150 miles. There was nothing to stop us. We could have put Saddam Hussein completely out of operation. Instead, it didn't happen. Strangely enough, it didn't happen. He's in full control. And do you know what he's doing? He's working on the city of Babylon. Money that they need for a lot of things is going to that restoration.

I mentioned something to our teachers in our prayer meeting one morning. A few years ago, I was touring the capitals of Eastern Europe. It was just a few months after the Berlin Wall had started to come down. We were in East Berlin, and we pulled up to a museum. When I saw it, a bell rang in my head because I realized that this museum was where the temple of Zeus was, out of Pergamum. And sure enough, we walked in. I remember my number two son, Steven, telling me that that's where that temple was now preserved, and there it was. It was a magnificent structure, with several steps up, just like the pictures. And directly across from it (which I didn't realize fully at the time), under reconstruction, was a section of Babylon called the Gate of Ishtar, which is the main entrance to Babylon. It is the main entrance to the ancient city of Babylon, and there it was – reconstructed. We couldn't go into it because they were doing work on it. And I really regret that.

In any case, I think that the city of Babylon is, in all likelihood, going to come full circle (of all the evil that it has thrust on humanity). From its false religion of Nimrod, it's going to come right back to that false center again. It will become a commerce center; a religious center; and, a governmental headquarters during the tribulation. That can happen overnight – very easily and very quickly. The city is being restored as a tourist center now, with all kinds of accommodations. It doesn't take too much for Satan to say, "This is my city," as God says that Jerusalem is His city.

Throughout history, Babylon has been associated as a center of evil, and of all rebellion against God and against His Word. The antichrist will, at this point in time, still be unrepentant toward God, and his full confidence in his master Satan will enable him to feel that all is not lost, even though the first four bowls have been so devastating. Yet antichrist will believe that his master Satan can still whip God, and that all will come out well.

Well, what God will be doing at this time is tightening the noose on the antichrist with this fifth plague, because now it strikes against the government itself. Satan's demon angels, you will remember, at this point in time, have already been defeated by Michael and the angels of God in the great battle that took place at mid-tribulation out in space. With the defeat of Satan's forces, Satan is permanently cast out of heaven. He can no longer enter heaven as he can today. He now is able to come and to accuse you and me before the throne of God of our sins. He will then be not only cast out of heaven, as Scripture said, but also he will be restricted in his activities to the earth.

When that happens, at mid-tribulation, he will know that he has 42 months (three-and-a-half years) of freedom left, and he will then move into a mode of maximum rage. God now moves against Satan's power base here on the earth, which will be Babylon, the headquarters of the antichrist's government. The antichrist himself probably has not felt the full impact really of those plagues, because of who he is. He will have made provision for himself to ease the effect of the plagues.

Down in Waco, David Koresh, we're told, has the only air-conditioned room in all that big complex. Everybody else sweats it out. He has all the facilities that he needs for maximum comfort and care because he is (supposedly) the Messiah. When he says that, please remember that he's not saying that he is Jesus Christ. What he is saying is that the Lord Jesus Christ blew it because He was sinless. I finally have heard the explanation for that. Christ Himself was sinless, and therefore, was not able to relate to humanity. And God has now sent David Koresh as the opener of the seven seals, because the Bible says that only the Messiah could do that. David Koresh says that he, because he understands sin, and has experienced sin, will be able to relate to humanity and to solve the problem. Well, he certainly has experienced sin. There's no question about that. And this is his claim. But he has minimized the physical discomfort upon himself.

Babylon, as the government center, and Jerusalem, as the worship center, will be above flood tide if the polar caps should melt, so they won't be hit by that 200-foot rise in sea level. The antichrist will probably enjoy the best of human and of demonic medical care for his running sores, and the medication for his pain from those sores, which he will suffer along with all of his followers, which was the first place. And he will have a supply of water in spite of the fact that freshwater and seawater has been turned to blood. There will be water supplied to him, and he will enjoy air-conditioning in his palace and in the government buildings. And he will be protected by an army which is increasingly going to face the restless heads of nations. At this point in time, the leaders of other nations are going to be fed up. And you will find, in the bowls that follow, that these nations begin to decide to rebel against the world government, and that is what propels them into a battle on the field of Armageddon against the antichrist, and at which point Christ returns, and they turn upon the Lord.

So, there are rumbles of dissatisfaction in the nations. But in the meantime, the antichrist, like I suspect David Koresh down at Waco, is free to live out the lust pattern of his old sin nature to the limit. But eventually, the bowl judgments are going to hit him as well. The antichrist will probably still think that his master Satan can duplicate the plagues in order to neutralize the effects of them. But they're going to discover, as Pharaoh did, that they can only go so far with Satan's powers. Pharaoh thought that his magicians could reproduce everything that Moses was doing under God's power, and they soon found that they could not do that.

So, the fifth bowl is poured upon the governmental center, the throne of the beast, and that (being bad enough), goes throughout the whole world. His kingdom is also included (the "basileia"). This word refers at this point to the Roman Empire, which has now been restored under the antichrist. Nations which fragment it off are brought together under one order and one authority again. The plague strikes the capital of the kingdom, and spreads out from there. This is the kingdom of man, built on the principle of humanism, centered in the concept that man himself is a god.

The specific effect of this plague hits the governmental headquarters; spread to the whole nation; and, the whole nation comes under darkness. The Greek word is "skotoo." "Skotoo" indicates a total blackout on this earth. This is, of course, reminiscent of the ninth plague against Egypt, which was which is recorded for us in Exodus 10:21-23. In that passage, we're told that the darkness was so intense that one could almost have the impression that they were feeling it. God is giving a repeat performance: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt. So Moses stretched out his hands toward the sky, and there was thick darkness in all the land of Egypt for three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days. But all the sons of Israel had light in their dwellings," which may be an indication to us that, in the believers homes, there may not be this kind of total darkness in the tribulation. But the darkness will be intense. It will be total, impenetrable darkness.

Some of you have been to Carlsbad Caverns. I don't know if the rangers still do this, but you used to eventually get down deep into one of the great caverns, and they had a place where you sat down. And after the ranger described the stalactites and stalagmites, ... he would say, "Now I'm going to turn the lights out, and for one minute, I'm going to ask you not to make a sound, and I'm going to show you what total blackness and darkness is." Everybody would get set, and the chicken livers would grab somebody's hand next to them, and the ranger would turn the lights out. And you cannot imagine what an experience that is. You get the feel of a darkness. You can sense it. It just covers you all over. You look at the person next to you, and you know that there is some blue-eyed, blond-haired dame that is sitting next to you, but you can't see them. You can see nothing. You reach out, and, yeah, you can feel that that person is still there. You try to look at your hands, and you can't see your hands. You look all over this cavern for some little crack, but there's not a bit of light. And that 60 seconds becomes an enormous, long time. And you start to think to yourself, "What if they can't get the lights back on? What if something goes wrong?" Well, eventually, they turn the lights back on, and everybody gives a sigh of relief.

You can go to Alcatraz Island, and you can take the tour where you can go into the cells that the prisoners were in. They used to shut the thing, and it would make that big, loud clank as the door slammed shut. That's where the word "slammer comes" from. Then they would let you sit in the cell for a while. And then they would touch the electrical button, and all the doors would fly open again. So, they would show you how they used to open and close the doors for the prisoners. Then, one day, the doors wouldn't open. They had this whole tour group all trapped in these cells, and they all thought it was so great to hear the doors slam shut. Then the guy pushed the button, and the doors wouldn't open. They sat there for hours. They don't let you do that anymore because people got panicky. They couldn't get out of the cells with the bars. How could they get out?

Well, this is what they're going to face with this horrible condition of blackness that God is going to put all over the earth. Even now, as we have sat here, we've gone form daylight to darkness, and there has been a dramatic change out the windows. However, there are still little points of light (probably 1,000 of them out there) that we can all see in one way or another. But it is not that oppressive blackness.

The interesting thing about this is that the Old Testament prophets had been told by God that this is one of the things He's going to do to that tribulation humanity that has done the kind of vile things in that article I read you earlier, and that have been pressing things that are beyond our imagination of evil.

Incidentally, Donahue had this program at Fort Worth, in which he was strongly defending people learning about things. People taking him to task that his programs are sleaze, and that they deal with every kind of human perversion and disgusting, degrading things. He was arguing that: "If we don't do this, people won't know what people are doing out there, and about these things." I just wished that some Christian would have been well enough taught to stand up and read the passage from Romans where Paul talks about being innocent of evil, and knowledgeable concerning good. That's the answer to Geraldo; Oprah Winfrey; Donahue; and, all these programs that deal in vile subject matter. The answer is that God forbids for you to teach people about evil of any kind. You don't need to have your sin nature trained in evil. You know enough about that on your own. Those programs are not just bad, but they're a serious violations of the order of God.

However, the Old Testament, such as in Isaiah 60:2, for example, says, "For, behold, darkness will cover the earth (with the fifth bowl of the tribulation), and deep darkness the people, but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you."

Joel 2:2: "A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, as the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people. There has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations. He's talking about this bowl.

Amos 5:18: "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord." "The day the Lord" is a technical term. You should know that the day of the Lord has a dark side and a light side. The day of the Lord is made up of the seven years of the tribulation (the dark side); and the light side is the 1,000 years of the millennium. Those two segments are called the day of the Lord. So, he is identifying this in the dark side of the tribulation: "Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord (that is the light side – the millennium), for what purpose will the day of the Lord be to you? It will be darkness, and not light." Here, God is warning people who are evil where they are going to end up.

Nahum 1:8: "But with an overflowing flood, He will make a complete end of its site, and will pursue His enemies into darkness."

Zephaniah 1:15: "That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of destruction and desolation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness." He is talking very specifically about that fifth bowl plague, as indeed, on one occasion, the Lord Jesus referred to it Himself.

We have that recorded in Mark 13:24-25: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened; the moon will not give its light; and, the stars will be falling from heaven. And the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken." Here He is talking about that very thing.

So, the fifth plague of darkness is indeed going to be a dramatic change, because you remember what the fourth plague was. The fourth plague was the intensity of the sun's illumination to probably seven times the heat intensity. Now, suddenly, from searing brightness, they go to total, impenetrable darkness. This condition all over the earth is indeed a fitting judgment on those who were determined to follow the spiritual darkness of the antichrist. The whole kingdom of man is in the blackest, impenetrable darkness. It is a symbolic reflection upon what God thinks of it. It does indeed reflect a spiritual darkness which is being taught to mankind by their religious teacher, the false prophet, who leads in the worship of the antichrist. It is only the doctrines of the Word of God that orient a person to the truth. And those who don't have that are easily led into darkness.

The false prophet, with his Satan-empowered miracles, convinces people that he speaks the truth. In Revelation 13:13-14, we read about some of the miracles of the false prophet. Never forget that one of the all-time great miracle workers is the devil. Charismatics have not learned this. Experience of their miracles that they know so much about is never the source of truth over against doctrine. The Lord Jesus Christ came to earth in a time of great spiritual darkness, just to contrast Him with the antichrist.

Isaiah 9:2: "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light. Those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." This is connected directly to Jesus Christ. So, when the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world, it was a place of spiritual darkness. But when He appeared, what He brought with Him was great spiritual enlightenment.

Matthew 4:16 ties it back to Him: "The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light, and those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them, the light dawned." Here, Jesus in His public ministry is being connected with that very passage in Isaiah. So, when Jesus came, He brought spiritual enlightenment.

Well, when the antichrist comes, all he does is bring more spiritual darkness from Satan, who parades as a source of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14: "He parades as an angel of light." This is the great contrast between the true Christ and the antichrist. When Jesus came, the world was a spiritually dark place. But He brought enlightenment. When the antichrist comes, it is still a place of great spiritual darkness, and the antichrist only adds to that darkness. The followers of the antichrist have deliberately turned away from the dull truth of Bible doctrine to the brilliant, scintillating deceptions of their experience and their emotions. Those who rush to embrace the deceptive rays of light from Satan now find themselves groping in bewilderment in total darkness that they can't do anything about.

Satan, at that point, will clearly have been demonstrated to be a false leader who has failed them all as an emissary of light as he claims to be. With this plague, he is symbolically shown to be a fraud, and his influence is greatly dissipated.

Well, this darkness permeates every nook and cranny of the antichrist's realm worldwide. It is a maddening condition. John 3:19 tells us that men, simply by nature, love darkness rather than light because they want to hide their evil. Isn't it ironic that they who love darkness to hide their evil, God socks it to them and really gives them the darkness?

This darkness, of course, will be a great blow to the world's environmentalist freaks who worship mother nature, because I needn't tell you how devastating this would be to vegetation, where the photosynthesis process will not be able to function to keep the plant life alive. So, this is going to be a terrible, terrible blow.

**They Gnawed their Tongues**

These people are in great agony. It is interesting what the Bible has to say about how they react. He pours the bowl upon the governmental headquarters of the beast. It permeates the whole kingdom. And then it says that: "They gnawed their tongues." The word "gnawed" in the Greek is "massaomai," from which we get the English word "masticate." You chew on your tongue. These people are already in great pain from the running sores on their bodies. They're revolted by the stench of the dead marine life on the seashores, and the disease from that decaying marine life. They are under the pain of sunburn and sunstroke. They're desperate to get drinks of water. And now comes this total blackness (this darkness), to add to their previous physical and absolutely psychological agonies. And no doubt, some go over the edge.

This maddening combination of pain and darkness causes them to chew on their tongues. It's not unusual, when you're in a deep fever, or you are in pain, to roll your tongue around in your mouth, and even perhaps to bite down on it. They are actually literally going to be chewing their tongues. This word, "massaomai" (chewing) is in the Greek imperfect tense. The Greek imperfect tense indicates doing something repeatedly. They just chew and chew. Their tongues are bloody and torn. It's in the middle voice, which indicates they do it to themselves. And it's a statement of fact.

What they do is chew the "glossa" (the tongue), the organ of speech in the mouth. And why do they do it? It says, "Because of the pain." The Greek word for "pain" is "ponos." This refers to the physical pain they're going through, and they're rolling the tongue around in the mouth, and tribulation unbelievers are going to experience such a nightmarish terror that they are driven mad in their agony. The tongues which had blasphemed God are now chewed upon, as if God were saying (as my mother used to say to me, when she didn't think I should say certain things), "Bite your tongue." Some of you may have heard that expression: "Bite your tongue." What she meant was, "Don't say that. Just keep it to yourself." Now God is saying, "Do you want to blaspheme me with your tongue? Bite your tongue. Don't talk against Almighty Creator God that way." And He gives them a good reason to do that, and they just do that just like that.

This will be so humiliating for the antichrist. He will indeed be a brilliant and a sophisticated man of the world, and for his devoted followers, he will be highly esteemed. They idolize him. And what has happened? They're all reduced to a bunch of whimpering, helpless creatures, chewing on their own tongues, in the desperation of their agony.

Is it right for God to drive people to such madness? Is that an expression of love? Well, put it back into the context of what these people are doing. That's the frame of reference. Put it back to the things that are being done to our children.

In the previous session, I told you about the attorney general saying that the problem in this country is how we treat our children – not the family, as if the children were not part of the family. When I heard her say that, I flipped, because that is the very thing that is being abused. It is the way evil is being imposed upon our children, who then grow up, and this is their lifestyle. May God help us if we (the Christians) cannot bring salt to permeate this society before it comes to where Zedekiah's society came to when there was no remedy.

God is on His throne. While the antichrist and his followers will come to feel that they are invincible, they're going to be whimpering and helpless when this bowl hits. But this is not the worst. There's even something greater than that coming which will finish them off. We should look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1993

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