

Revelation 16:1 *And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the seven bowls of the wrath of God into the earth."*

2 And the first angel went and poured out his bowl into the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore upon the men who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

3 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.

4 And the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; 6 for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7 And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments."

8 And the fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun; and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues; and they did not repent, so as to give Him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his bowl upon the throne of the beast; and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his bowl upon the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, that the way might be prepared for the kings from the east.

13 And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to

the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 ("Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments, lest he walk about naked and men see his shame.") 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called HarMagedon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air; and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. 19 And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe.

Hell fire and brimstone preachers are passé. They have fallen into dis-repute. We are weary of and wary of anyone who would tamper with our emotions.

Men like Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield who paralyzed crowds of people with fear of hell and caused widespread repentance and revival in America . . we're over that.

It's a trick, a cheap trick and we are above it. We're too sophisticated for such trifling.

Yet, I would submit to you that these words have been written by a gracious and loving God, who never ceases to lovingly warn us, and who claims that He takes no joy in the death of the wicked, for the express purpose to incite fear.

When did we get so callous? When and how did we learn NOT to be moved by words like these in this chapter.

Let me give you 2 scenario's. When my children were very small, we didn't do many things right, but one thing we did do, with near 100% consistency, was this; If we gave a command to the child, and we did it so that there was no possibility that the child did not understand what parental authority had decreed, and the child decided in their mind to dis-obey whatever it was we asked, we never failed, as far as I can remember, to issue some corporal punishment on their little bottoms, that caused some real, however temporary, pain. We had a spanking stick, and that was the rule. And we were consistent, the kids knew they could count on it like clockwork.

Now some of the kids, not all, would mentally calculate the amount of pain, and approximately how long it would last, and decide the dis-obedience was worth the inevitable cost. Maybe once. Usually not twice.

So a very real promise of pain, faithfully rendered, was a sufficient force in our house for general good behaviour. And I would add, it was nice with 3 very young children to be sitting at a fine restaurant, and occasionally have some older person come up and compliment us on our beautiful well behaved children.

Of course this plan of action requires a reciprocal amount of very real familial love to work. Punishment and pain are always met with welcoming tenderness. The kids never associated pain with hatred. They knew mom and dad honestly loved them.

Then there's the other scenario. You're in Walmart and some parent is screaming at some kid; "I'm going to pull off your arm and beat you with it!" and alas, the kids are somewhat smarter than their parents, and can count to 2. Which arm?, I still seem to have 2 in spite of all the times I've heard this threat?

Or my personal favorite; "No ice cream for you! You've been very bad! And the kid cries louder, and the mom buys him a double scoop to shut him up. Hello? Anyone wonder why an entire generation is paying absolutely no

attention to a toothless old God who is trying to frighten them?

So these words have limited effect on a generation who doesn't believe there even is a God, let alone one who requires payment for evil.

We're in a really bad place. All the warnings and revivals have come and gone, and an entire generation has taken the argument given in 2Peter 3: 3 *Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."*

Not only that, but see the final word in that sentence. *all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation*

We've gone a step further and eliminated that problem. As long as the world believed in the back of their minds that there must be a God, because, well, pinch yourself, here we are.

Creation was the final and universal apologetic. The fact that life is complex and there is no other explanation for anything except a supreme intelligent being that created all of this. In our generation, the world is so wicked, that even that is swept away, with the most incredulous of explanations!

Walk onto a college campus and start at the first person and go to the last and tell them that the world was spoken into existence, much as we see it even still, over a 6 day period 6 - 8,000 years ago, by a benevolent and merciful God who is also a Righteous God who requires full repayment for unrighteousness, and tell me how many times the eyes roll back into their heads and glaze over and they look at you as the most ridiculous bumkin they've ever seen.

Even the apologetic of creation has become laughable. Passé. No one is moved. We are post-modernists and being told that postmodernism is already dead. Nihilism reigns. We've heard all the 'stories' and none of them are real.

Richard Stearns in his new book has a quote from a write in newspaper columnest in answer to someone's question and from memory, at least part of it goes something like; *you are just a hunk of meat flying through space on a blue rock going nowhere for absolutely no reason.* Nothingism, I guess.

Turn back the clock to 1741. July 8th. Enfield Connecticut. Jonathan Edwards was making the application of a sermon titled: **Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.** Hear [his words](#);

This that you have heard is the Case of every one of you that are out of Christ. That World of Misery, that Lake of burning Brimstone is extended abroad under you. There is the dreadful Pit of the glowing Flames of the Wrath of God; there is Hell's wide gaping Mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, not any Thing to take hold of:

there is nothing between you and Hell but the Air; 'tis only the Power and meer Pleasure of God that holds you up. You probably are not sensible of this; you find you are kept out of Hell, but don't see the Hand of God in it, but look at other Things, as the good State of your bodily Constitution, your Care of your own Life, and the Means you use for your own Preservation. But indeed these Things are nothing; if God should withdraw his Hand, they would avail no more to keep you from falling, than the thin Air to hold up a Person that is suspended in it.

Your Wickedness makes you as it were heavy as Lead, and to tend downwards with great Weight and Pressure towards Hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend & plunge into the bottomless Gulf, and your healthy Constitution, and your own Care and Prudence, and best Contrivance, and all your Righteousness, would have no more Influence to uphold you and keep you out of Hell, than a Spider's Web would have to stop a falling Rock.

Were it not that so is the sovereign Pleasure of God, the Earth would not bear you one Moment; for you are a Burden to it; the Creation groans with you; the Creation is made Subject to the Bondage of your Corruption, not willingly; the Sun doesn't willingly shine upon you to give you Light to serve Sin and Satan; the Earth doesn't willingly yield her Increase to satisfy your Lusts; nor is it willingly a Stage for your Wickedness to be acted upon; the Air doesn't willingly serve you for Breath to maintain the Flame of Life in your Vitals, while you spend your Life in the Service of God's Enemies. God's Creation is Good, and was made for Men to serve God with, and doesn't willingly subserve to any other Purpose, and groans when it is abused to Purposes so directly contrary to their Nature and End. And the World would spue you out, were it not for the sovereign Hand of him who hath subjected it in Hope.

There are the black Clouds of God's Wrath now hanging directly over your Heads, full of the dreadful Storm, and big with Thunder; and were it not for the restraining Hand of God it would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign Pleasure of God for the present stays his rough Wind; otherwise it would come with Fury, and your Destruction would come like a Whirlwind, and you would be like the Chaff of the Summer threshing Floor.

That was how men preached 270 years ago. Listen to a snippet of George Whitefield; Sermon #26 Titled "**The Eternity of Hell Torments**" given at Savanah Georgia in 1738;

The First argument I shall advance to prove that the torments reserved for the wicked hereafter, are eternal, is, That the word of God himself assures us, in line upon line, that it will be so.

To quote all the texts that might be produced in proof of this, would be endless. Let it suffice to instance only in a few. In the Old Testament, in the book of Daniel, chap. 12, ver. 2 we are told, that "some shall wake to everlasting life, and others to everlasting contempt." In the book of Isaiah, it is said, that "the worm of those that have transgressed God's law, and die

impenitently, shall not die, nor their fire be quenched." And in another place the holy Prophet, struck, no doubt, with astonishment and horror at the prospect of the continuance of the torments of the damned, breaks out into this moving expostulation, "Who can dwell with everlasting burnings?"

The New Testament is still fuller as to this point, it being a revelation which brought this and such-like particulars to a clear light. The Apostle Jude tells us of the profane despisers of dignities in his days, that "for them was reserved the blackness of darkness forever." And in the book of the Revelation, it is written, that "the smoke of the torments of the wicked ascendeth for ever and ever." And if we believe the witness of men inspired, the witness of the Son of God, who had the Spirit given him, as Mediator, without measure, is still far greater: and in St. Mark's gospel, He repeats this solemn declaration three several times, "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed;" that is, it is better to forego the gratification of thy lust, or incur the displeasure of a friend, which may be as dear to thee as a hand, or as useful as a foot, "than having two hands and feet, (that is, for indulging the one, or disobeying God to oblige the other) to be cast into hell, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

Those are just 2 snippets of how men preached during the framing of our nation.

The word of God is intended to inspire fear, and those men made no apology for it!

Our generation not only has no tolerance for this, they dismiss it entirely. Just one of many "Stories" that were told, believed, didn't happen, and now we know better. Oh really!

This is a long introduction, but I want to fully explain my mindset on the interpretation of Revelation 16.

In my Bible, in the last page, I have a little piece of paper, taped in there, just about exactly 30 years ago with the title; Hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics is a big word and it means principles of interpretation. How do we interpret what Revelation 16 means. I've never added to or changed these brief principles because they have stood me perfectly for 43 years that I have used them. Simple enough and short enough to share them just now.

But beware. These men that I have quoted did not deviate - at all - from these principals of interpretation. Here they are;

1. Literal Principle

a. the scripture is to be understood in it's natural normal sense. (The basic customary meaning of the words.)

2. Historical Principle

a. re-create the historical setting in which the passage was penned.
(where was the first guy that read it, and what was going on around him.)

3. Grammar Principle

- a. let it really say what it says in terms of the words and grammar.
- b. words - what do they mean?
- c. sentence order and structure
- d. word tenses
- e. context. (It only means something in relation to what else the writer has said before, and what he will say after.)

4. Synthesis Principle

- a. no one part of the Bible contradicts any other part of the Bible.

5. Practical Principle

- a. So What?? How does it apply to me? What does it say to us here and now?

6. Illuminating Holy Spirit Principle

a. Even with the first 5 principles in practice, no one can properly interpret the Bible without God's help through the Holy Spirit's teaching

ministry to christians.

Now then, with all of that in place, the interpretation of tonights passage is really fairly simple.

These bowls full of wrath are perfectly awful, frightening, terrifying truths, and they mean exactly what they say.

16:1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

GO! verb. Present Imperative Active. 2nd person plural.

Sometimes, in the kitchen, Pam will get in a situation that needs 3 hands, and she needs that other hand NOW. She'll say "HELP! Now!" I understand that as a Present Imperative Active! It means MOVE! NOW!

Now here we have also that this is a 2nd person - plural. The loud voice is not telling just one of the seven angels to GO! He's telling ALL of the angels to Go.

See how that works. Don't worry, I'm not going to torment you with word breakdowns.

2So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image.

By the way. These people on earth may not have believed in the God of heaven before these bowl judgements, but by the time they are finished, they know exactly who has sent them and from where they come.

This is a festering open sore. An ulcer. Foul. Rotten. Vile. No doubt painful! An open festering wound with no cure.

Notice that the plague is selective. It is expressly for the people who worship the image of the beast and have the mark of the beast.

3The 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.

This is almost beyond imagination. All of the water in the sea, turned into blood. Everything in the sea dies.

All land surrounded by death. Blood, with dead creatures floating. The sea is dead, like a dead corpse of a man.

Just a note to all the self-righteous green peace earth worshippers; Get over yourselves. This earth belongs to God, and when it pleases him to turn the sea into blood to punish men, that's exactly what He will do.

4Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood.

This is all the fresh water. Turned into dead corpse blood. Vile. Useless.

How long can men live without fresh water? A few days? This is frightening. Terrifying!

So now we've got ulcerated sores, the sea is a fowl stench of death, and all of the fresh water from the earth is fowl, dead, blood. And someone will say, a righteous God would never do this. This is too much.

We have this idea of "cruel and unusual punishment" which is to say, that some punishment goes too far, and therefore the administrator of the punishment is chargeable. God this is too much. You are evil to press men this far.

But listen to the angel who pours out this 3rd bowl of God's wrath. There's a conversation in heaven for all to hear;

5And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One,

Stop! right there! Notice something different about the title? The name of God here; *Righteous are You, who are and who were.....*

Usually it says who are and were, and are to come. Past, present, future. But not here. The reason is because these bowls are co-incidental with the return of Jesus. No more future tense needed. The second coming and the bowls of wrath are all mixed up together.

Notice also the angel says that God almighty is Righteous. In answer to the world who no doubt is saying He is NOT. Righteous are You, oh Holy One.

God is altogether righteous and Holy, even in His wrath. Righteous and Holy **requires** wrath. If wrath never came, then God is not righteous, not Holy...

*"Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, **because** You judged these things; 6for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." 7And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.*

The angel cries it, the altar in heaven, the voice that sent these angels, agrees and confirms. God is altogether True, and Righteous, and Holy to judge these, His enemies.

Well, guess what. Men have festering sores, they're surrounded by the stench of death, there is no more water to wash or to drink, - and God turns up the heat.

"8The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. 9Men were scorched with fierce heat;

Scorch is the same word that Jesus used in his parable of the sower. Remember, some of the seeds fell on rocky soil.

Mt. 13:5 *“Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. 6“But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.*

When the sun comes out and scorches these plants it's because where their roots are, there is no water. The same seed with the same sun that is in good moist earth, survives the scorching sun, and brings forth fruit.

Scorched means dried up. Withered. Scorching, here, causes death.

All the fresh water is turned to blood, and God turns up the heat, and multiply's the problem. No water to drink. Intense heat.

Notice also, no one's bowing down to Darwin any more. All the evolutionists are gone. These folks know exactly where their pain is coming from;

and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory.

They recognize, correctly, that it is the God of creation who has turned the creation into punishment for them.

So, they see their own wickedness and that God is Righteous Altogether to send these plagues, and they repent, right? Wrong.

Now this is a curious thing, and I think I'll spend a couple of minutes right here, and then pick up angels 5 - 7 next time.

How is it that these folks do not recognize a Holy God at this point and repent?

That seems sort of bizarre to us, right? So I want to look at this for a minute. First I want to look at 3 verses in the 2 letters to Timothy that have to do with knowing God. An intimate personal father-son, father-daughter relationship with the God of creation.

1 Tim2:1 First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, 2for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. 3This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

This is especially appropriate for us in 2013 America. There is a looming threat that the days of quietly leading a Godly life may come in direct conflict with the authority of the state. We should pray for this!

But I included that for context. I want you to look at vs. 4.. OK, end of 3; *God, our Savior, who desires ALL men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*

God desires to have this intimate relationship with . . . all men! Knowledge of the truth, is what we're talking about. Knowing God. Sin removed. An intimate personal relationship with the Father of lights. OK, that's settled.

Knowing God, Knowledge of the Truth, is what all 3 of the passages in Timothy's letters have in common, but we'll see a progression regarding that possibility.

Now flip a couple of pages to 2Tim2:25

with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth,

There's that same 'knowledge of the truth'. Knowing God. But I want you to see something important here;

God uses his slaves, you and me, to give correct information to people who do not yet know God, they're in opposition. And look carefully. Paul says, we tell them about the true way, correcting their error, whatever different billion kind it is, *if perhaps God may **grant** them repentance*

God, is who '**grants**' repentance. Repentance, a mind quickened from the dead, begins with God. He grants that! And it leads to the Knowledge of the Truth. Knowing God.

OK, let's keep digging here a bit.

So God desires All men to be saved and come to that knowledge, but some men are not granted repentance. Like the ones here who know enough about God to blaspheme His name. So where's the disconnect?

3rd vs. in Timothy. 2Tim3:7

7always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

There's that 'knowledge of the truth' again. Knowing God. These men are big into 'learning' but it doesn't lead them to Knowing God. This is very interesting, and the context really helps with our question. It's worth looking at;

*1But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. 2For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3unloving, **irreconcilable**, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, 4treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. 6For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, 7always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. 8Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also **oppose the truth**, men of depraved mind, **rejected** in regard to the faith.*

I suppose we could spend weeks in there, but quickly, look at a couple of things - this is formulaic;

lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, OK, all you free choice people, I'm also a *free will* believer. Here it is. *lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*

7always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth

Busy learning . . . everything that's wrong. Whatever is aligned with their first choice. Pleasure. They learn learn learn but never know God. They are irreconcilable.

Then ultimately, in vs. 8 you get to a logical and frightening conclusion.

these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected in regard to the faith

They oppose the truth because they've chosen the pleasures of sin. They become depraved in their minds. And most scary, they are rejected in regard to "the Faith"

God wants all men to be saved and Know Him. God grants repentance to some. God rejects some others. One of the words up in vs. 3;
irreconcilable.

Here's how I believe it works. And you can go to Romans 1 and study this out. We won't take the time tonight.

Our God is a God who Reveals Himself. In the beginning was the Logos. The revelation. God reveals Himself to men. That starts with creation.

What men do with that revelation, at every point, either leads them to further revelation or blindness. Read Romans 1 at home. It says over and over, God

gave them over. God gave them over. God gave them over. Men reject the revelation at the level, whatever it is, that God provides, and choose wickedness, and God gives them over. More revelation comes, and it's harder the next time to make the right choice....and so it goes.

There are some ultimate examples in the New Testament. Like the pharisee's. They got to see God's creation in a beautiful place, they got the privilege of not only that, but they were the caretakers of His revelation to them in many special ways. They were the 'chosen' people. They had the written word of God already revealed. They got to witness God in the flesh. They saw the miracles. They heard God incarnate teach in their countryside and in their temple. They witnessed a ton of fulfilled prophecy in Him. And they still managed to come up with the wrong answer. They attributed ALL of the revelation that the Holy Spirit had given them . . to Satan. Game over.

Think about Judas. Same thing exactly, on steroids. He spent every day for 3 years with Jesus and sold Him for 30 pieces of silver.

Those are extreme examples. But in every case, I believe that's how it works.

Think about the whole homo-sexual phenomenon so prevalent right now.

This is a rejection of God's revelation at the most basic level. This isn't rocket science people. God made male and female. God made some with innies and some with outies. So you take God's revelation at it's most basic basic level and you shake your little fist at God and say, I'm rejecting the most obvious building block of your creation, God.

And God gave them over. He wants even these to be saved, but He gives them over.

So when you get to these folks in our study, who are scorched with fire, and blaspheme the God of creation.

Notice a couple of things. They've reconsidered creation. They're not

blaming the bowls of wrath on evolution, are they? All of a sudden they have a correct theology of both creation and God.

There's no repentance possible for these folks at this point. They both know Who God is, and they blaspheme His name. They have chosen to worship the Devil, and they stick with their choice. Free will. I'm totally into it.