God will Make All Things New

Revelation 16

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Natural Divisions** | * Revelation 16:1-9 God dispatched His angels to pour out the bowls containing God’s final wrath on this fallen world, and the first four bowls brought destruction on the earth and rebellions humanity
* Revelation 16:10-16 The fifth and sixth bowls of God’s wrath enabled the demonic influence of the dragon to deceive the nations and bring God’s enemies to gather for the final war against God and God’s people
* Revelation 16:17-21 The outpouring of the seventh bowl brings ultimate destruction to the fallen earth—the realm of Satan’s influence—as God proceeds to make all things new.
 |
| **Summary Sentence** | God brings destruction to the earth as He pours out His bowls of wrath |
| **Central Idea** |  God will make all things new |

I have a girlfriend named JoAnn who has complained for years that her kitchen was just not the way a modern kitchen is supposed to be. The cabinets in JoAnn’s kitchen were ugly and they were dirty. The drawers and the cabinet doors didn’t operate smoothly.

The appliances in her kitchen were old and unreliable. And then there was the problem of dirt. There was dirt where she couldn’t reach it; there was dirt where she couldn’t see it. My friend’s kitchen had been nothing but a headache for her for many years.

JoAnn had several options for what to do about her kitchen. She could replace her old appliances with new ones that would fit in the same old spots. She could just sand and stain the existing cabinets. But JoAnn decided not to do that. JoAnn decided to demolish her old kitchen and *make all things new* in there. JoAnn decided to tear it all out down to the studs and to design for herself a new kitchen—a kitchen that would serve her well—a kitchen that would enable her to be the cook she wants to be, and to be the hostess she wants to be.

JoAnn had her entire kitchen demolished and she is making everything new in there.

In the same way, God has revealed in His Word that our world today is not the way it’s supposed to be, but **one day God will make all things new**. Our world is *not* the way it’s supposed to be. Our world has been corrupted by sin; our world is in bondage to decay and death. The powers of this world reject the authority of God; the philosophies of this world stand in opposition to the truth of God.

But God has revealed that **one day God will make all things new**. One day God will demolish this earth and in that day, God will establish His eternal kingdom. God’s eternal kingdom will not be *here*; it will not be on this *fallen* earth; God’s eternal kingdom will be on a *new* earth—a re-created earth. **One day God will make all things new**, and what we’re going to see in the final chapters of Revelation is the fulfillment of God’s promise to establish His Kingdom and **to make all things new**.

Open your Bibles to Revelation chapter 16.

What we see in chapter 16 is God’s judgment of the earth. God will destroy this earth and replace it with a new earth. God will destroy everything that rejects the righteousness of God in order to establish a kingdom where everything reveals the righteousness of God. God will eliminate all that is evil in order to establish a kingdom where everything is good. **God is going to make all things new**.

Last week, as we studied chapter 15, we saw John’s vision of seven angels’ coming out from the temple of God in heaven. These seven angels were given seven bowls full of the wrath of God, and as these bowls of wrath are poured out from heaven, seven plagues will afflict the earth.

For those first readers of the book of Revelation back in the first century, this image of plagues sent by God would have brought to mind that central event of Old Testament history—the account in the book of Exodus of God’s deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt.

Think back on what the Bible teaches about that event. In the very first book of the Bible, in Genesis, God chose one man, Abraham, and God gave Abraham promises about how God intended to bring blessing to the entire world through Abraham and through Abraham’s offspring. But along with the good promises that God gave to Abraham, God also gave a chilling prophecy. In Genesis 15, verse 13, God said this: *“Know for certain, Abraham, that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years.”*

Why would God allow that to happen to His people? The answer to that question is given in verse 16: God said, *“Then in the fourth generation, your descendants will return here* (to the land of promise)*, for the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure.”*

The Amorites are the people who would be occupying the land of promise while God’s people were enslaved in Egypt. God plans to *delay* the deliverance of His people—God plans to *delay* their entrance into the Promised Land until such time as the bad people who were then living in the land would become as bad as God knows they will one day become. God’s people will not be given the Land of Promise until the iniquity of the Amorites reaches its full measure.

We understand from this account that although God is just, and although God will surely punish sin; nevertheless, God is patient; God is longsuffering. God allows the wicked to become hardened in their wickedness before He visits His just judgment upon them.

So here is what we have. In the Old Testament, God announced beforehand that God’s people would suffer slavery in Egypt for 400 years. At the end of that time God sent Moses to deliver His people from their slavery. God sent plagues on the Egyptians and the Egyptians let God’s people go.

But God was not yet ready to bring final destruction on the evil Amorites living in the Promised Land, and so God brought His people into the wilderness of the Sinai desert, where God was with His people and protected them from their enemies. When the iniquity of the Amorites was full, God brought His people to the border of the Promised Land and sent them in to destroy the wicked people who lived there.

In the same way, we learn in the New Testament that as a result of the Fall, all of mankind lives in slavery to sin. But God sent Jesus to live a sinless life, so that His death on the cross would pay the penalty for our sin. Jesus is our Moses. Jesus is our Deliver.

In the first century, Jesus was raised from the dead and Jesus now sits at the right hand of God, but God was not yet ready in the first century to bring final judgment on the earth and to establish the fullness of His Promised Kingdom. And so God has allowed the wicked to remain on this earth.

Even though Jesus has come and Jesus has delivered us from our slavery to sin; nevertheless, God has not yet brought His people of faith into the promised Kingdom. Apparently the iniquity of the godless ones is not yet full.

We learned in Revelation chapter 12 that God’s people—those who hold to the testimony of Jesus—are presently being protected by God in a desert place. God’s people on earth—Christians—do not yet enjoy the promised Kingdom of righteousness. We’re still living our lives on a world that is not the way it’s supposed to be; but nevertheless, we are in a place where God protects us.

Evil has not yet been eliminated. The fullness of God’s Promised Kingdom has not yet come, but God is with us and God provides for us. Just as God was with His people for over 40 years in the wilderness of the Sinai desert; even so, God has been with the people of faith for over 2000 years—protecting them and providing for them until the day when He brings them into the Promised eternal Kingdom.

For over 2000 years, God has restrained His judgment against those who reject His authority. How much longer will God delay? How much longer will it be until Jesus returns to judge the wicked and to establish the fullness of the promised Kingdom? We don’t know how long it will be. It could be another 2000 years.

God delays His judgment on the earth until the iniquity of the godless has become full. God has delayed His final destruction of this earth until the wickedness of the godless ones has reached its full measure.

But now in Revelation chapter 16 we see a vision of that future day when the time of final judgment has come. In chapter 16, God brings His final destruction on this fallen earth so that He may establish His Kingdom. God brings His judgment on this corrupt world in preparation for His provision of a new world. The remodeling and replacement process has begun. God’s Promised Kingdom will come. **God will make all things new**.

Look at verses 1-4 of chapter 16. *“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God." So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth, and harmful and painful sores came upon the people who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image. The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea. The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood.”*

With the first bowl, the servants of the beast will be afflicted with painful sores. This judgment event reminds us of the sixth plague against the land of Egypt. When ruler of Egypt refused to let God’s people go, Moses took soot from a furnace and he tossed it in the air, and the soot became a fine dust that brought severe boils and sores on the skin of the people of Egypt.

Now, in the day of God’s final judgment, those who have chosen to reject God and to pursue instead the pleasures of this world will find that they cannot avoid the pain that comes with God’s judgment on this world.

The second and third bowls turn the waters of the world into blood. The first plague against the land of Egypt was a temporary turning of the waters of the Nile into blood. For Egypt, the source of their prosperity—the river Nile—was changed by God’s hand from a source of life to a product of death. In the same way, in Revelation 16, those on earth who have willingly persecuted God’s people even unto death will find that just as they have spilled the blood of the righteous and polluted the earth with it; even so, God will take that agent of pollution—blood—and God will use it to poison the waters of the earth. It’s an appropriate judgment. It’s a righteous judgment.

Look at verses 5-7: *“And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,*

*and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" And I heard the altar saying,*

*"Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"”*

It’s what they deserve; God’s judgments are just. **God is in the process of making all things new**.

Now look at verses 8-9. *“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. They were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.”*

This plague demonstrates God’s sovereignty over all creation. God created the sun as the life-giver. The sun is necessary for sustaining life on this planet. Our sun is a glorious gift from God, but God has the right to use even the magnificent power of the sun as an instrument of God’s judgment. In that day of the destruction of this earth, the fire of the sun will be a fire of God’s judgment.

Notice the response of the godless in that day. Those who have rejected God and who have rejected God’s salvation will continue in their rebellion. They will continue to blaspheme the God of heaven. Verse 9 says that *“they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.”*

The judgment they will receive is the judgment they deserve. God’s judgments are just.

Look at verse 10. *“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness.”* This bowl is poured on the throne of the beast. What is the throne of the beast? It is the kingdom of the beast; it is the realm over which the beast has influence and authority. Those who have rejected God’s authority live their lives, whether they know it or not, under the influence and the authority of Satan. Satan’s realm is referred to in Scripture as the kingdom of darkness—the domain of darkness.

But we Christians are not a part of this realm. We Christians are *not* citizens of the kingdom of darkness. We’re citizens of the Kingdom of Christ. In Colossians 1:13, we learn that through Christ, *“God has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.”* We have been *delivered* from the domain of darkness. God’s people are not the people on whom this judgment falls.

I believe that this plague of darkness represents an intensity of the activity of Satan in the world. The term *darkness* is a metaphor for the deceptive power of Satan. We see that in the book of Acts. In Acts 26:18, Jesus spoke to Paul and said, “I am sending you (to the Gentiles) *“to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God…”*

The term *darkness* is a metaphor for the deceptive power of Satan. Revelation 16 speaks of a future day when God will judge the earth by plunging the realm of the beast into deeper darkness. Satan will be permitted to intensify his deception of the ungodly. Satan will be permitted to deceive the nations in a way that he was restrained from doing in the past.

The fifth bowl represents an escalation of Satan’s influence in the world—an escalation that did not come as a result of any increase in Satan’s inherent power; this escalation comes by the permission of God. Satan’s increased influence in the world in that day is a judgment on the ungodly of the earth. They have refused to believe the truth, and so God has allowed them to hear and believe Satan’s lie. The judgment they will receive is the judgment they deserve. God’s judgments are just.

It’s in this future day of judgment that God will judge and destroy this fallen earth, and **God will make all things new**.

Now look at verse 12. *“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.”* What is the significance of the river Euphrates? What is it about the Euphrates River that brings about this focused judgment on this particular place? How are we to understand this judgment?

We’ve seen a pattern of increasing intensity in the seven seals and in the seven trumpet judgments and so far, we’ve seen increasing intensity in the bowl judgments…until this one. The previous judgment was a terrifying increase of Satan’s power in the world. This sixth bowl judgment seems to be just the drying up of a river—important though that river may be. What is the meaning of this judgment?

Look again at verse 12. *“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.”*

Let’s consider: what is the significance of the river Euphrates? In the Old Testament, God brought His judgment on His people Israel by bringing first Assyria, and later Babylon, to defeat His people and to carry them into captivity. Assyria and Babylon were God’s instruments of judgment against His people, and both nations lay beyond the Euphrates.

The Euphrates River represents the boundary between the realm of God’s *people* and the realm of God’s *enemies*. To speak of drying up the Euphrates is to picture God’s removal of His restraint of those who oppose God and His people. It’s to picture the removal of God’s protection and to speak of a day when God opens the way for a final confrontation between the people of God and the people who hate God. In this day of judgment, God is in the process of destroying evil, and His ultimate goal is that **God will make all things new**.

Verse 12 speaks of the *“kings of the east,”* and according to my understanding, we’re not talking about China here. In verse 14 these same kings are called *“the kings of the whole world.”*

I believe that the term *“kings of the east”* is a figurative expression for all human *authorities* that harbor resentment against God, and all human *philosophies* that stand in opposition to God. I believe that the *“kings of the east”* refers to all of those who reject the authority of God whether they live in China, in Eastern Europe, in the Middle East, in Israel, or in America. In that future day of judgment, all the peoples who have chosen to reject God’s salvation in Christ will rise up to wage war against God.

In the present—in our day—the rejection of God that we see is usually expressed as disdain for God and contempt for God’s people. But in that future day godless defiance will erupt into violent opposition to God. In that future day Satan will be permitted to gather the nations to wage war against the people of God. It is on this day of war that God will complete the destruction of this fallen earth, and **God will make all things new**.

Look at verses 14-16. *“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. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for the war of the great day of God the Almighty.”*

When the world’s rulers gather together for the war of the great day of God, they do so because the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet have deceived them. These godless rulers have fallen prey to the arguments and the logic of demons. In that future day of judgment, demonic powers will manipulate the beast (which represents godless governmental authorities), and the false prophet (which represents godless philosophies), and together these demonic persuasive forces will gather the nations to wage this war against the people of God.

It is in this day of this war that God will complete the destruction of this fallen earth, and **God will make all things new**.

Look at verse 16: *“And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.”*

The Hebrew word *Har* means *mountain*. The Hebrew word *Magedone* means *a gathering, an assembly*, and specifically, sometimes, *a gathering of troops*. I believe that this term is not referring to a particular geographical location; it’s referring to the nature of this future event. In that day, the nations will gather for this war at a place which will be referred to as *Har-Megedone*—*“the Mountain of Gathering”*, and the nations will gather in that day for the purpose of war against God.

In Revelation 16, in the midst of this revelation of a coming day of the final war between the enemies of God and the people of God, Jesus inserts a specific promise. Look at verse 15. Jesus says this, *“Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!”*

This image brings to mind a soldier’s faithful service. The soldier is ready to defend his king. When a soldier is on duty he wears his uniform. There’s no questions about which side he’s on. He’s wearing the garments—he’s wearing the uniform—of a servant of the king.

In the same way, we don’t know the day of our Lord’s return, but we live our lives as faithful servants of Christ. Our garment should be the character of Christ. Our garments should be love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, patience, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. Our lives should show forth our testimony of our allegiance to our Lord.

We do not know the day of our Lord’s return, but we do know that one day Jesus *will* return; Jesus *will* establish His eternal kingdom, and **God will make all things new**.

Now look at verses 17-21. *“The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered Babylon the great, to make her drain the cup of the wine of the fury of his wrath. And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. And great hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, fell from heaven on people; and they cursed God for the plague of the hail, because the plague was so severe.”*

In these verses we see that the wrath of God is completed. The seventh bowl is poured into the air, and in other places in Scripture, the *“the air”* is a figurative image of the realm of Satan’s influence. In Ephesians 2:2, Satan is said to be the prince of the power of *“the air”*. But God’s ultimate judgment will eliminate this power. **God will make all things new**.

Here at the end of our passage we begin to see descriptions of God’s judgment against Babylon. The name *Babylon* is a metaphor for every human city that opposes the authority of God, and every earthly philosophy that that refuses to worship God’s Son.

But look again at verse 18. Revelation 16:18 says, *“And there were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth, so great was that earthquake.”*

We’ve seen this earthquake event previously in the book of Revelation. We’ve seen this same great earthquake previously as the immediate precursor to the return of Christ. This earthquake accompanied the dismantling of this present earth in Revelation chapter six. This earthquake was described in Revelation chapter 8, and again along with the seventh trumpet judgment in Revelation chapter 11. Now again in Revelation chapter 16, we have this great earthquake as the final event in God’s ultimate judgment on this fallen world.

The voice of God declares, *“It is done.”* God’s judgment on this earth is complete. God has promised that He will destroy evil and establish righteousness. Our world is not the way it’s supposed to be, but one day **God will make all things new**.

Let’s close with prayer.