

A graphic featuring a large, gnarled tree trunk in the center, with two glowing circular openings. The background is a dark, atmospheric scene of a city at night with lights reflecting on water. The word "GENESIS" is written in small, gold, uppercase letters above the tree, and "REVELATION" is written in small, gold, uppercase letters below it. The word "BOOKENDS" is written in large, white, serif, uppercase letters across the middle of the tree trunk.

GENESIS BOOKENDS REVELATION

THE SEVEN BOWLS

REVELATION 15:5-16:21

SYNOPSIS

In Revelation 16, John sees seven bowls of God's wrath poured out on the earth. Unlike the trumpets, which serve as warnings calling sinners to repentance, the bowls represent God's judgment against those who repeatedly harden their hearts against Him. The same trials and catastrophes that soften one heart can harden another. Christians are reminded that Christ has already borne God's wrath on their behalf, so their suffering is never punitive judgment. Instead, trials may come from living in a fallen world, persecution, discipline, or the effects of God's dealings with nations. Ultimately, to an unbelieving world, the trumpet you ignore becomes the bowl you endure.

SERMON OUTLINE

Main Idea: The trumpet you ignore, becomes the bowl you endure.

1. Seven Angels with Seven Bowls

- a. Angel 1 (Judgment through Sickness)
- b. Angel 2 (Judgment through Catastrophe on the Seas)
- c. Angel 3 (Judgment through Catastrophe on the Inland Waterways)
- d. Angel 4 (Judgment through Catastrophe with the Sun)
- e. Angel 5 (Judgment through Catastrophe on the Kingdom of the Beast)
- f. Angel 6 (Judgment upon Satan's Last Stand at Armageddon)
- g. Angel 7 (The Ultimate Judgment at Christ's Return)

2. Applications

- a. We must understand the overlap of God's providence and God's judgment.
- b. We must discern between God's discipline and God's judgment.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Special Leader's Note: *Please remember that we are getting into heavily debated passages of scripture. Some will likely disagree with Pastor Raef's choice of interpretation on various symbols in this and coming chapters. That is okay! But be careful to not let the group discussion become a debate on symbol interpretation. Get to the practical heart level discussions around the principles of the text.*

GROUP REFLECTION & APPLICATION

1. **Observing the Text:** First, make sure to have your group spend time looking at the text, and observing the text without reflecting on the sermon. You want the group to get familiar with the text, and the words, and the flow of thought. Keep making observations until you feel the group has a solid grasp of the entire text.
2. The sermon began by comparing two possible responses to suffering. The same cancer diagnosis can lead one person to humility, repentance, and deeper faith, while another becomes bitter and hardened toward God.
 - a. Have you ever seen a difficult circumstance draw one person closer to God while pushing another further away? What do you think explains the difference?
 - b. When you face suffering, what is your natural tendency: trust, fear, anger, self-reliance, or something else?
 - c. What practical habits help keep a heart soft toward God during trials?
3. One of the key ideas of the sermon was: "The trumpet you ignore becomes the bowl you endure." God often warns before He judges.
 - a. Why do you think God gives warnings before bringing judgment?
 - b. Can you think of times in your own life when God used difficulty, consequences, or conviction to get your attention?
 - c. What are some warning signs that a person may be resisting God's voice rather than responding to it?
4. The sermon argued that Christians should learn to view world events through the lens of God's providence rather than seeing them as merely random or natural occurrences.
 - a. What are some dangers of viewing the world as though God is absent from history?
 - b. How can Christians acknowledge God's sovereignty without becoming arrogant or claiming certainty about things God has not revealed?
 - c. What does it mean practically to be like the men of Issachar who "understood the times" (1 Chronicles 12:32)?

5. A major distinction in the sermon was that Christians never experience God's condemning judgment because Christ has already borne it on the cross. However, believers may still experience God's loving discipline.
 - a. Why is the difference between discipline and judgment so important for the Christian life?
 - b. How does knowing that Christ has fully paid for your sins change the way you view hardship?
 - c. When facing a trial, how can a believer wisely examine whether God may be using it as loving discipline?

6. The sermon concluded by arguing that Christians should not passively watch their communities drift from God's ways. Love for God and love for neighbor should move us to call people to repentance.
 - a. Why is warning people about sin and judgment often viewed as unloving in our culture?
 - b. How can Christians speak clearly about sin while still demonstrating genuine compassion and humility?
 - c. Who in your life may need to hear the hope of the Gospel, and what is one step you could take this week to engage them with truth and love?

FOR FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP

Question: "When something hard happens to you, like getting hurt, losing something important, getting in trouble, or not getting your way, what does it usually make you want to do: move closer to God or pull away from God? Why?"

You can then follow up with one of the following questions:

- What would moving closer to God look like in that situation?
- Can you think of a time when something hard happened and God used it to teach you something?
- How can we help each other have soft hearts when life is difficult?

Tip for Parents: This question takes the central theme of the sermon and translates it into a child's world. It helps children see that the issue is not merely understanding Revelation 16, but recognizing that trials reveal the condition of our hearts.