

UNDERSTANDING THAT WEIRD BOOK OF REVELATION - Part eighteen

Sunday, March 11th, 2018 - 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #2034

Pastor Don Horban, Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON

THE FINAL OUTPOURING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH

Revelation 15:1-16:21 - "Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished. [2] And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. [3] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations!" [4] Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed." [5] After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, [6] and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. [7] And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, [8] and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. [16:1] 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." [2] 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. [3] 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. [4] The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. [5] 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. [6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!" [7] And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!" [8] The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. [9] 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. [10] The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish [11] and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds. [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. [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 demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. [15] ("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!") [16] And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. [17] 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!" [18] 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. [19] 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. [20] And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found. [21] 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."

We come now to what is the ***beginning of the conclusion*** of the book of Revelation. Chapter 15 will introduce us to the final manifestation of the wrath of God being poured out in judgment on the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon, and those who align themselves with them against Christ and His church.

I say this is the ***beginning*** of the conclusion because, while the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath is the end in terms of God's dealings with all earthly opposition, we have yet to see the ***final state*** where Satan, the beast and the false prophet and those who reject Christ are cast into the lake of fire, described in **Revelation chapter 20**.

All of the judgments described in chapters 15 and 16 are very specifically directed. It is at this point in the book that we really begin to appreciate the blessing of earlier visions, such as the ***marking and separating of the people of God to keep them from divine wrath along with the wicked***:

Revelation 9:1-4 - "And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key to the shaft of the bottomless pit. [2] He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. [3] Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions

of the earth. [4] They were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green plant or any tree, but only those people who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.”

This marking does **not** spare the children of God from the persecution of the antichrist. It doesn't spare them from the persecution of those who would strike out against God and His Church. But it **does** keep them from the dreadful, final outpouring of God's wrath on the powers of darkness.

The passage we just read from Revelation chapter nine deals with the **beginning phase** of God's wrath as it is expressed in the sounding of the seven trumpets. But the pouring out of God's wrath in the seven bowls is different in intensity. During the sounding of the trumpets there was the constant symbolic reference to the effect of God's wrath on **one third** of the earth and its inhabitants. As you will see in chapters 15 and 16, God's wrath, in its **concluding** phase, is much more intense and all-encompassing in its power and scope.

The pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath is actually the contents of the seventh trumpet. These judgements bring a speedy end to all that is opposed to Christ and His kingdom. Also, as we saw last week, the pouring out of the seven bowls of God's wrath was anticipated very briefly in the last part of the **preview vision** John was given in **chapter 14:18-20**:

“And another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has authority over the fire, and he called with a loud voice to the one who had the sharp sickle, “Put in your sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe.” [19] So the angel swung his sickle across the earth and gathered the grape harvest of the earth and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. [20] And the winepress was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the winepress, as high as a horse's bridle, for 1,600 stadia.”

1) THE WRATH OF GOD PICTURED AS BOTH DELIVERANCE AND VICTORY FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

Revelation 15:1-4 - “Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and amazing, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is finished.[2] And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire—and also those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands. [3] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, “Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! [4] Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

There is something very important for all of us to understand in these verses. They tell us something about **how** John and the early church **saw** and **understood** this message of divine deliverance and judgment. The whole message of these two chapters is framed in the language of the **exodus** from Egypt. In other words, John is, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, seeing these final plagues as a kind of fulfillment of the plagues poured out on Pharaoh in Egypt. You'll see that even more clearly in our last point.

The whole point of these chapters is that just as God both delivered Israel and punished Egypt, He will again avenge the ungodly aligned with the person and empire of antichrist, while, at the same time, preserve and deliver His faithful followers.

This is why the redeemed around the throne are pictured singing, not only the song of redemption (the song only the redeemed could sing - **Revelation 14:3**), but also the song of God's **“mighty works”** over the nations of the earth (**15:3**). In short, John says they sing **“the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb”**(15:3a).

They sing both songs because the song of Moses has become **fulfilled** for them, in richer and deeper ways, in the song of the Lamb. God has worked, finally, not only in their **hearts** bringing salvation and redemption, but has now worked in their **circumstances** bringing deliverance and vengeance upon their enemies and captors.

Now, what are these singers around the throne of God seeing? What is causing this burst of praise and rejoicing in heaven? John is about to pull back the curtain again:

2) THE PREPARATION OF THE FINAL WRATH OF GOD

Revelation 15:5-16:1 - “After this I looked, and the sanctuary of the tent of witness in heaven was opened, [6] and out of the sanctuary came the seven angels with the seven plagues, clothed in pure, bright linen, with golden sashes around their chests. [7] And one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels

seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives forever and ever, [8] and the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished. [16:1] 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."

John's reference to the "*sanctuary of the tent of witness*" (15:5) is once again a throw-back to the time of the exodus and the dwelling place of God in the *Tabernacle* in the wilderness. The single important point of these verses is the fact that once God sets His hand to this final work, there will be no stopping Him - "...no one could enter the sanctuary until the seven plagues of the seven angels were finished...." (15:8). Such is the inevitability of God's just dealing with all sin and rebellion. This is what the saints around the throne are witnessing as they sing God's praise.

3) THE FIRST SIX BOWLS Poured OUT

Revelation 16:2-12 - "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. [3] 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.[4] The third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. [5] 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. [6] For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"[7] And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments!"[8] The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch people with fire. [9] 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. [10] The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness. People gnawed their tongues in anguish [11] and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds.[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."

If you took the time to study it, you would see that many of these plagues are similar in nature to the plagues poured out on Pharaoh and Egypt. In fact, several are exact duplicates, though on a much wider scale. Also, we've seen some of the very same kinds of plagues revealed partially in the final stages of the seals and the trumpets. The big difference here is that the plagues are now poured out *without measure or mercy*. There is nothing *partial* about these plagues. There is nothing *restrained* in their manifestation.

Also, note the effect these plagues have on the ungodly who receive them:

Revelation 16:9 - "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....16:11....and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores. They did not repent of their deeds....16:21....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."

Notice, it's not that these people didn't *recognize* the hand of God behind these events. They knew the *source* of these plagues. They knew the *meaning* and *intention* behind them. But they still *refused to repent*.

This too is framed in the description of Pharaoh and the exodus from Egypt. Over and over again he stubbornly refused to turn and acknowledge God. Look at what happened:

Exodus 8:15 - "But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said."

Exodus 8:32 - "But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go."

Exodus 9:34 - "But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants."

Exodus 10:1 - "Then the Lord said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them...."

This is the critical pattern of self-destruction. We read it again and again - "*Pharaoh hardened his heart....*"

“Pharaoh hardened his heart....”, Pharaoh hardened his heart....” Then, without warning, ***“God hardened Pharaoh’s heart....”***

John sees in his visions that this kind of suicidal stubbornness will find its ultimate expression in the last days. People will, ***in the face of all the best evidence***, turn their mind against God. They will harden their hearts until God takes the process over, far beyond their own control or good sense. They will ***never*** repent.

Paul gives the most detailed description of ***how*** this process will unfold in the last days: **2 Thessalonians 2:8-12** - ***“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming. [9] The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, [10] and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. [11] Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, [12] in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”***