

UNDERSTANDING THAT WEIRD BOOK OF REVELATION - Part nineteen

Sunday, March 18th, 2018 - 6:00 p.m. - Teaching #2036

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THE FINAL OUTPOURING OF THE SEVEN BOWLS OF GOD'S WRATH (Pt. 2)

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."

In our last study we looked at three important truths from this passage. First, we saw that the outpouring of God's wrath is viewed as both a victory and a deliverance for the righteous. And second, we saw that the outpouring of the final wrath of God is preceded by a time of advanced preparation. Then we saw the beginning of the outpouring first for the six bowls in action. Now we continue with two more important truths:

4) **STAYING AWAKE WHEN THE REST OF THE WORLD SLEEPS TOWARD DESTRUCTION**

Revelation 16:13-16 - "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. [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."

These verses are important for the way in which they link together the involvement of the kings and leaders of the world and the demonic spirits from Satan, antichrist and the false prophet. In other words, though there will come this great final battle between the *kings of the earth* who war against the cause of Christ (see **verse 14** - "...to assemble them for battle

on the great day of God the Almighty), this will not be an *ordinary* war.

The exact nature of this coalition against Christ is not precisely clear. Opinions vary greatly because we're simply not given many details. Somehow, the sixth bowl, drying up the Euphrates river bed, seems to open up the door for greater coalition and mobility. Some further details are given in **17:12-14** - "**And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast. [13] These are of one mind and hand over their power and authority to the beast. [14] They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful.**"

Right in the center of the warning of John's vision about the battle of Armageddon, there is a call to spiritual alertness to the church: **Revelation 16:15** - ("**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!**")"

These special times will call for special alertness on the part of the church. To be *asleep* is to miss the significance of the events unfolding around us. To be *asleep* is to assume peace and safety in the delights and pursuits of this present, fallen world: **1 Thessalonians 5:3** - "**While people are saying, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.**"

To be asleep is to be *absorbed* in worldly affairs to the extent that one is blinded to bigger, eternal issues. It is to be numbed by pleasure to the point where one doesn't see the end approaching - **Matthew 24:37-39** - "**As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. [38] For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, [39] and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.**"

The call to not be found "*naked*" finds its interpretation in verses we've already studied. Jesus used this very picture in his words of caution to the church at Laodicea - **Revelation 3:18** - "**I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see.**"

It's striking that these words are addressed to a *church*. It's one thing to *profess* Christ. It's another thing entirely to be *clothed* with Christ. This image is frequently picked up by the New Testament writers to describe the *application* of Christ and His righteousness to our actions and priorities:

Galatians 3:27 - "**For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.**"

Romans 13:14 - "**But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.**"

Ephesians 4:22-24 - "**...to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [23] and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, [24] and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.**"

This, and nothing less than this, is what is required to be found prepared and unashamed when Jesus comes again.

5) THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON AND THE POWERS OF THIS PRESENT AGE

Revelation 16:17-21 - "**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!' [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.**"

There are several things to note quickly here:

- a) *The events of the seventh bowl are strikingly similar (as we would expect) to the events accompanying the*

seventh trumpet - Revelation 11:19 - "Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple. There were flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail."

This substantiates the idea that each of the sevens leads right up to the end of the age. The ***details*** become greater and more emphasized, but the events are the same.

- b) ***It becomes increasingly clear that Babylon is more than any one city or region. John clearly identifies her with the "cities of the nations" - Revelation 16:19*** - "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." This fits in with the way John sees the ***"kings of the earth"*** forming the coalition of Babylon in Revelation chapter 17.

Revelation 17 and 18 are the chapters where the details of the destruction of Babylon are fleshed out in much greater detail. Notice finally that even at this late stage, the people of the world ***refuse to repent*** or ***turn to God***. Their hearts have become set against God and cannot be reached. He who has ears, let him hear - while there is still time.