

Revelation 16:1-21

"Heaven's Final Fury"

Ch 15 (of the book of Rev) is the *preparation* of God's final judgment upon the earth. Ch 16 is the *application* of God's final judgment upon the earth. We've noted how these judgments have become more *intensive* & *extensive* as the time of the 2nd coming of Christ approaches. Now it's T-7, time for the last 7 plagues to be poured out at the command of God (or Christ) Himself then the Lord will return, put down the remaining rebellion against God & establish His kingdom by which He will rule & reign upon the earth in righteousness for 1,000 yrs & the earth will be filled w/the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea...

As it pertains to these final 7 plagues, they seem to fall w/what one commentator referred to as "trip hammer rapidity" on a world that's already reeling under the seal judgments, the trumpet judgments & (though previously found itself under a false sense of peace) is currently at war. **These bowl judgments being poured out at the end of the Great Tribulation come down in rapid fire succession. Be they a day, or week apart or whatever we know they can't be too far apart because once the fresh water supply on the earth is completely contaminated humanity can't survive long.**

It's a Ch (like Ch 15) that is still cram packed w/images familiar from the Exodus account (water to blood, incurable sores, darkness over the kingdom of the beast, deadly hail falling from the sky). It's a "great" Ch in that it displays God's "great" voice, *great* heat, the *great* river, the *great* day of God Almighty. It speaks of a *great* city, *great* Babylon & *great* hail.

The storm of God's judgment, w/all its pent-up fury will crash from Vs to Vs in this Ch... the good news is that it will leave the skies sunny & clear for 1,000 yrs! ☺

Vs1

We noted last week that John saw the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven opened; & 7 angels came forth from the temple in pure bright linen & chests girded w/golden bands. **Then 1 of the 4 living creatures gave to the 7 angels 7 golden bowls full of the wrath of God (the 7 final plagues to be poured out upon the earth). The temple was filled w/smoke from the glory & the power of God & no one was able to enter until these 7 plagues had been poured out.**

Now John hears a "loud" or more accurately "great" voice from the temple saying, "Go & pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

Question: since no one could enter the temple, whose voice do you suppose John heard? This is the voice of God Himself, God personally (probably through the 2nd Person of the Trinity) initiates this final outpouring of the bowl judgments.

Why do I believe it's the voice of Christ (probably, but not dogmatically)? What did Jesus say? *"For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son,"*¹ & again, *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man."*² Which is to say that since Jesus Himself (though being fully God) is fully Man, God has caused Him to sit in judgment over man.

Now, we've spoken before of those who take a historical (or preterist, meaning *fulfilled in the past w/regard to end times prophecy*) perspective on the book of Rev have a real hard time w/this particular portion. Because God tells them to pour out these plagues, His wrath upon the earth, yet when has the entire unbelieving world been stricken w/sores that can't be cured, or when has the entire sea had every living thing die in it? When has the fresh water supply of the earth become blood? **When has the earth quaked so violently that every mountain was leveled & every island sank? Yet that's what Rev 16 declares will happen. & Should you start placing symbolic meaning on that I'd remind you of 2 things.** #1 The literal fulfillment of something symbolized is always greater than the symbol itself (symbols are a means of communicating something so everyone can understand, they aren't meant to complicate matters, but to simplify them). #2 **Once you begin to speculate (or guess) at what the symbols mean, anyone's opinion is as good as the next. What becomes the grounds of interpretation? What does John really mean by "the earth"?**

One particular commentator w/a historical perspective said this, "earth, might mean some parts of the earth", "earth might mean the common people", "earth might mean the Roman Empire", "earth might mean the Roman Catholic clergy". (Poole)

Now, I am of the opinion (& I realize it's just my opinion) that by "the earth", John means "the earth"! If not, than who can know *what* it means & God may as well not even have written it...

The bible is clear that before Christ comes again to establish His kingdom upon the earth that this planet will be pulverized in judgment.

What a great reminder to lay up for ourselves treasures in *heaven*...

¹ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jn 5:22). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Jn 5:26-27). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and thieves don't break in & steal. As it pertains to this world, it's all going to burn & you aren't going to take *any of it w/you*.

You release everything you have in death; you turn it all loose & move on. We've all had loved ones who have left this world, & when they do they leave everything that they had *of this world in this world...* You guys, this world, & the ruler *of this world will be judged*. We seem to have this misguided notion, we can't quite seem to get it through our skulls that God is not an all sweet, ooie gooie God who would never judge anyone. God gives it to us straight in His word; the time is coming when He will say to the 7 angels that proceed from His temple, "Go & pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth."

Good reminder to set our affections on things above & not on things of the earth (where Christ is). The bible is always exhorting us to an eternal perspective.

Vs2

Of course this reminds us of the boils that God plagued the Egyptians w/as He was preparing Israel for the Exodus. Notice also that God is making a distinction here. It's a judgment that is calculated and precise & comes only upon those who had taken the mark of the beast &/or worshipped his image.

God warned mankind not to take the mark. Yet in defiant rebellion so many chose the easy, go w/the flow broad path that leads to destruction even in the face of a supernatural warning not to. It's as if God is saying, "You wanted a mark, here's a mark that corresponds to the reality of what you've done. It's foul, it's evil, it's loathsome & it's irreparable."

I could be wrong (it could be sores all over their bodies) but it wouldn't surprise me if God caused these sores to break out at the place where they'd received the mark. But it's a staggering thought to think of nearly the entire planet's worth of people suffering from an incredibly painful disease (or condition of sorts) for which there is no cure. A pandemic of global proportions; & there's something about being in constant physical pain that affects a person's disposition so that they find it difficult to get along w/other people. Human relations at this point will be undoubtedly, globally/historically at their worst.

But think about this; this is just like the nature of sin. Initially (from a logical rationale), taking the mark would seem like the thing to do, it's technologically advanced, it's the only way to have commerce or make a living, it keeps my currency safe (going cashless).

But ultimately that decision (that seemed so right initially) will deliver painful affliction ultimately. They're warned not to do it, (just as the Holy Spirit warns you & me, says "don't *do* it, turn *from* it") yet they choose to move forward in it & the very thing you thought would brighten your day winds up *burning* you!

Could be a bad business deal, a wrong relationship; sin wears all kinds of suits. We could think of Eve & the promise of hidden wisdom or greater godliness, Lot making his move to Sodom thinking the pastures would be greener, Moses thinking murder would give him a platform of greatness, Samson & Delilah, David & Bathsheba, Solomon thinking he could find satisfaction in one more project, a little more money, one more woman. On & on the scriptures go in illustrating for us the deceitful nature of sin.

& As we sow to the flesh, we reap corruption, these people have sown rebellion against God, rejection of J.C. & the reaping corruption. Foul & loathsome sores for which there will be no healing.

Now for those of us who've received J.C. we thank God that we *can* find healing, through confession & repentance. Oh, there's still the reaping of what we've done. But we cling to the precious promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."³ But for those who take the mark, they have sealed their own fate & for them forgiveness is no longer an option. (Rev 14:9-11)

Vs3

Now does the sea actually become the same chemical composition as human blood as from a dead corpse? Or does it have the same appearance as a thick coagulated blood that kills everything in the sea? My response to that would be, "Does it really matter?" Do you understand that over 70% of the earth's surface is covered by the sea? In the 2nd trumpet judgment 1/3 of the sea was contaminated, now the whole thing is corrupt. Do realize that over 3.5 billion people depend directly upon the sea for their primary source of food? The ocean provides the single greatest source of protein consumed by man.

When this judgment hits that all goes away in an instant. The entire world will be instantly impacted in a grave manner. People will begin to drop & die like flies from 1 single judgment from God's hand. You guys, I don't think we really realize exactly how much we depend upon God today. We think we depend upon the water company, or the electric company, or the gas company.

³ The New King James Version, 1982 (1 Jn 1:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We forget that God is the One who created those resources. When is the last time God sent you a bill for using the sunlight? Or for the water you drink, or the air you breathe? He's never sent me a bill for any of those things & trust me when I say we couldn't pay it if He did! **God has been so gracious to this world that has rebelled against Him & rejected His Son. How many people breathe His air, then use it to curse Him, or to lead people astray through deceitful means & perverted perspectives? But the day is coming when He will pour out His wrath & mankind will wail because of the resources they've taken for granted. The Sea will become blood as of a dead man.**

Vs 4-7

Again in trumpet #3 we saw 1/3 of the freshwater supply contaminated, now it's all completely polluted, even as the Nile River became blood in the days of the Exodus we're seeing that happen here on a global scale. Now the earth is reduced (at best) to whatever water that's perhaps in bottles at the grocery store (if that).

So you can see whereby these plagues will happen fast because if not mankind would all be dead in a week or 2. All the fish in the lakes & rivers & ponds, they're all dead, people are starving, they're dying of thirst. And the angel of the waters... now we've seen the angels over the 4 winds, the angel over fire, here we have the angel over the waters. & We note that he declares the righteousness & the justice of God in His judgment. Like we mentioned last week, if you don't think God is right, you're wrong. Everything He does is great & marvelous, righteous & true.

God (I have discovered) is into what we call "poetic justice" the punishment fits the crime. Pharaoh tried to drown all the Jewish baby boys, in the end his own army drowned in the Red Sea. Haman planned the extermination of the Jews & wanted Mordecai on the gallows but wound up swinging on them himself & his family was executed. Saul wouldn't slay all the Amalekites & in the end it was an Amalekite that killed him.

Here we read, "They have shed blood & You have given them blood to drink." They've refused Living Waters, now they only have death "to drink".

This is the principle that Abe exalted in the Lord when the Lord told him of His plan to destroy Sodom. It's the same principle when people try to justify their rebellion against God by presenting these hypothetical cases in judgment. "Well, what about the native in south America, or the little baby that dies?" Or whatever. When Abe was seeking to get God to spare Sodom on the basis of finding even 10 righteous people there (which there weren't). He spoke to God & said, **"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25)**

It's a rhetorical question. The answer is, "Of course the Judge of all the earth will do right." So at the end of the day there are a lot of things that I don't understand concerning how God will handle this situation or that one, but what I do know is that He will do what's right. God will always do what's right, "Even so Lord God Almighty, true & righteous are Your judgments."

Vs 8-9

Talk about "global warming" here it is! But notice the progression, we go from no water supply to intense, searing heat; instant burning of the skin (kind of a thing). People will be suffering from thirst & searing heat, yet they will not repent, they rebel, harden their hearts & blaspheme the name of God. They're suffering from an acute case of "Pharaohitis".

In reality it simply demonstrates the incurable sickness/wickedness of the human heart. It's not punishment that purifies the human heart, it's the blood of Christ. **Now judgment (or chastisement) can change the believer's heart & bring them back to that place of repentance. But we don't see that in the unbeliever, perhaps superficially at times, but not ultimately. God's judgment really isn't designed reveal His grace, but rather to reveal His holiness & to vindicate His righteousness.**

The bible speaks quite a bit about the searing heat of God's judgment in the last days; I'll give you just a couple. *"Therefore the curse has devoured the earth, And those who dwell in it are desolate. Therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, And few men are left."*⁴ 1 more, *"For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,' Says the Lord of hosts, 'That will leave them neither root nor branch.'"*⁵

Vs 10-11

Again we're taken back to the plague of darkness that covered Egypt (Ex 10). & Again we note that rather than repent of their sin, man increases & hardens himself in his sin. Now keep in mind that God is distinguishing between those who are His & those who are not.

There's no indication that the 144,000 or other believers on the earth are subjected to these plagues that inflict bodily pain. We say that because the net affect is that men blaspheme & refuse to repent. The believers wouldn't do that & have already repented.

⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Is 24:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁵ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Mal 4:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But some see this as a preview of hell, the burning heat, the total darkness, writhing pain, people gnawing their tongues because of the pain & blaspheming God in the hardness of their heart.

& As w/the burning heat, the bible speaks again & again about the darkness that will cover the earth before great & terrible day of the Lord; how the sun will be turned to darkness & the moon as blood. Jesus Himself said, *"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light,"*⁶

Vs 12-16

God is wrapping up & winding down world history. He makes a road way for the kings of the east (nations like China, India & Japan) to move west into the valley of Meggido. Even as the Euphrates river served in many ways as the cradle of human civilization it will serve in many ways as it's grave.

3 Demonic spirits will be dispatched (talk about having a frog in your throat 😊!) (Why they look like frogs I'm not certain, it's reminiscent of the Exodus account but I'm not sure that's a direct connection). & Even though I'm sure that they believe they're coming to Meggido for political reasons ultimately Satan has deceived them because he wants them to join him in a final attempt to thwart the Son of God. *He knows that Christ will be coming at any moment so he gathers the armies of the earth to this place nearby the place prophesied of the return of Christ. They use signs & lying wonders to lure them to the battle of the great day of God Almighty. Notice it's not the great day of man, or the great day of the dragon or the A.C. it's the great day of God Almighty (You might jot down Psalm 2 & look it up later).*

The battle of Armageddon; again those who see these things fulfilled in history have real problems w/this, when exactly has this happened? ...

Then Jesus issues both a word of warning & a word of encouragement. It'll all be over soon, "I'm coming quickly, as a thief", unexpected by the world. But blessed is the one who watches, & keeps his garments.

What does that mean? The scriptures picture garments as both a spiritual & practical righteousness. The righteousness of Christ covers us as a garment. Eph 4 tells us to "put off" concerning our former conduct & "put on" the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness & holiness.

⁶ The New King James Version. 1982 (Mt 24:29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But above all (Jesus says) you don't want to be found naked, that is, w/out His righteousness covering you, or having tried to cover yourself. The bible tells us the righteous deeds of man are like filthy rags before the Lord. The exhortation is to watch & be ready, your Lord could come for you at any moment.

Vs 17-21

The 7th angel poured out his bowl into the air (perhaps to show judgment against the prince of the power of the air [Eph 2]) & those who belong to him. But the ramifications are devastatingly destructive to place it mildly.

The great voice once again comes from the temple "It is done!" There will be no more delay Christ is coming. Then the earth begins to quake in a manner that has never before happened in the history of humanity. Jerusalem (it seems) is divided into 3 sections, every major city on the planet crumbles, every Mt range is leveled & every island sinks into the sea (don't be found on Hawaii).

Added to that (again in Exodus fashion) great hail stones to the tune of about 100lbs each (give or take a few lbs) pummel the planet killing people in droves & just like Egypt the people will not repent, they'll blaspheme God.

Which again brings poetic justice back in play since the scripture stated that the penalty for blasphemy is death by stoning (Lev 24:16).

Now chronologically we would jump to Ch 19, but John will take us more thoroughly through the destruction of Babylon 1st in Ch's 17-18.

But despite all the suffering, men only blaspheme. Charles Spurgeon said this, "Sickness and sorrow of themselves are no helps to salvation. Pain and poverty are not evangelists; disease and despair are not apostles. There is nothing in pain and suffering that, by their own natural operation, will tend to purification."

It's by grace that we're saved, through faith, & that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God lest any man should boast. God reaches out to man in the Person of J.C. In Him is salvation, apart from Him is condemnation; the choice is yours... God pleads w/man on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to Him... Duet Ch 30, *"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life..."*⁷

⁷ The New King James Version, 1982 (Dt 30:19). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Prayer Points:

Lord we thank You that You are for us & not against us, have thoughts of peace & not of evil, to give us a future & a hope. Yet we also recognize that You are holy & righteous & that Your Spirit won't always strived w/man. May areas of Your word like we've looked at today place the urgency in our hearts to bring hope to a hurting world. To get the message of Your gospel to the otherwise unsaved.

If that's you, & you know in your heart that you're not saved. That you've not given your life to Christ than I would encourage you not to put it off so much as another single day. God allows you to make the choice, it's His heart that you would choose life, turn from your sin & surrender to J.C. who has loved you & given Himself for you.