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<sup>15</sup> "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

<sup>16</sup> And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

<sup>17</sup> Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup> And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. <sup>19</sup> Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. <sup>20</sup> Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup> And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

Well, we are done with Advent and we begin 2016 by going back into our brief survey of the last book of the Bible. New Years is always a time of year that is spent on reflection and re-determined focus, and so I thought, while looking at today's text that this fit very nicely into a New Year's message. When we last left off, we had gone through the first five of the bowl judgments. These judgments, as we discussed were judgments poured out

upon Israel, specifically Jerusalem, and on those nations who had been most influenced by Israel's unfaithfulness. It is an appropriate time to remind ourselves exactly what they, and by extension on that, what we are called to be.

All the way back in Exodus the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter, right before Moses ascends Mt. Sinai to receive the commandments from the Lord God the Lord tells Moses, what the nation of Israel is supposed to be.

<sup>3</sup>And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: <sup>4</sup>'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and *how* I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. <sup>5</sup>Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. <sup>6</sup>And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These *are* the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel."

The Lord is letting Moses know that Israel is to be Him a nation of priests and holy before Him. Holy, as we have discussed in the past means, something separate and devoted. But what exactly are they to be devoted to? Deuteronomy Chapter 4 gives a great answer to this question. We will only look at this briefly today, but Deuteronomy 4 begins like this:

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you. <sup>2</sup>You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. <sup>3</sup>Your eyes have seen what the LORD did at Baal Peor; for the LORD your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. <sup>4</sup>But you who held fast to the LORD your God *are* alive today, every one of you. <sup>5</sup>"Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should act

according to *them* in the land which you go to possess. <sup>6</sup>Therefore be careful to observe *them*; for this *is* your wisdom. and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation *is* a wise and understanding people.'

Israel was to be the recipient of God's law word. They were a nation set apart by God, a nation holy unto the Lord to be the vessel that was to carry His law word to the nations. The nations were expected to be a people that looked at Israel and ask the question, "What is it that makes this nation different?" Well, sadly they did not appear that different from the nations around them? The reason for this, in general, can be narrowed down to the idea that they took the many blessings that God had bestowed upon them, and rather than using them to bless the nations, they used them to advance their own agenda. And all the while they did this, they claimed that they were a special people chosen by God. Well, remember God is not mocked.

I would encourage you in your private reading time to read Deuteronomy 4. Read there the mission that God gave to His people, but also make sure you take in the warnings and cautions that are given to them. And realize that in 1 Peter 2, we the Church of Jesus Christ are told that we have been given the same mission. The sad thing about all of this, is we find in our passage today, that Israel was meant to be a light to the surrounding nations, but in truth, the nation that could of led these pagan nations out of darkness only introduced them to new kinds of darkness, and as I said earlier God would not be mocked. We saw in our last message that the Lord even pours out His judgment on the throne of power of the beast. The beast, who we have already identified as the Roman Empire in the Book of Revelation, is now receiving the judgments of God. But what I find interesting here, and I would love to spend a little more time

discussing this, maybe we will at a later day is that the beast was in a way propped up by the unfaithfulness of Israel.

God had called them to trust in Him, and they went to the beast. Remember the cry of unfaithful Israel, "We have no King but Caesar." And now, the place that went to instead of Christ is not being blessed because of the people who were to be a light, they are being judged. Remember people, we are called to be ambassadors of Christ. The Apostle Paul at the end of the Book of Ephesians tells us:

as for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

We are called to be ambassador's of Christ's Kingdom and His Gospel, and when we are unfaithful in this commission, God's judgment will be poured out not only on us, but also upon those who have come between us and our mission.

The last judgment we spoke about in Revelation 16 was the bowl of judgment poured out upon the throne of the beast. This judgment caused the recipients of the judgment to blaspheme God.

Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. <sup>13</sup> And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and <sup>[f]</sup> of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

<sup>15</sup> "Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed *is* he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame."

<sup>16</sup> And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

This passage is probably somewhat shocking to many people. Revelation is 22 chapters long and here in the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter we get our first reference to Armageddon. I have talked to a lot of people about this book over the years, and you would think that some people think the entire Book of Revelation is about the "Battle of Armageddon." Well, I have a little bit of news for you, this might be shocking, it might not. This is it. This is the only direct reference to Armageddon in the Book of Revelation, and further more, this is the only reference to it in the entire Bible. More about that in a moment.

Let's look at this judgment for a moment. The sixth bowl is poured out on the Great River Euphrates and dries up its water. This is done to prepare the way for the "Kings of the East." The River Euphrates was at the extreme North of the Land that belonged to Israel at its height. It represented the Northern Border of Israel. The Euphrates is one of the ancient world's most important rivers. It is over 1700 miles in length. For comparison sake, the mighty Mississippi is 2300 miles long. The Mighty Sacramento is 447. This river acted as a buffer between Israel and the armies that could invade them from the North. In Jeremiah 50 and 51 we see similar prophecies to this one here in Revelation 16. The event which is the fulfillment of this Jeremiah prophecy is detailed by the Greek historian Herodotus. Herodotus was given the title, the 'Father of History' by Cicero. The drying up of the Euphrates for a conquering army to move through took place when Cyrus the Persian conquered the city of ancient Babylon by diverting the waters of the great Euphrates and then marched his army through and took the city by complete surprise.

This prophecy here in Revelation 16 should make us focus on this event, but as always we should also be prepared to see earlier

Biblical themes when studying New Testament prophecy. In Exodus 14, one of the most well known events in the Scripture, the parting of the Red Sea, and of course before Israel's crossing into the promised land, the drying up of the Jordan detailed in Joshua 3 and 4. Now we see this judgment, the drying up of the great river, an event which had previously been used to save and deliver Israel, is now opening the way, for her enemies to bring God's judgment upon them. In Philip Carrington's 1931 book, "The Meaning of Revelation" he identifies the fulfillment of this prophecy as the return of Titus's army to lay siege to and destroy the city of Jerusalem. The well known Jewish Historian Josephus tells us that when Titus returned that several thousand soldiers of the Roman Army did in fact come from the North, from the Great River Euphrates.

But remember this conquest of Jerusalem and Israel is more than just militarily:

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. <sup>14</sup> For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, *which* go out to the kings of the earth and<sup>[f]</sup> of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

Again we see some very vivid Biblical imagery. Remember one of our most important rules when interpreting Scripture is that "Scripture interprets Scripture."

Here we see three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. And we are told they are demons, performing signs for the purposes of gathering the nations to the battle of the great day of God Almighty.

Most of our modern day prophecy experts want to tell us that this Battle of Armageddon is the day when all the nations of the world resist the Lord at His second coming. But, this does not fit the context of the passage at all. They tell us that this battle of Armageddon will take place on the Mountain of Megiddo. Harm Meggido. The problem with this, is that this mountain does not

exist. Meggido, is not a mountain, but rather it is a valley. A more accurate translation of the word Armageddon is Mountain of Assembly. This is a portrait of the people, from all over the land assembling in Jerusalem after the siege of Vespasian was lifted.

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<sup>17</sup> Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, "It is done!" <sup>18</sup> And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. <sup>19</sup> Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. <sup>20</sup> Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup> And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

This seventh and final bowl judgment, details many of the specific events that took place during the destruction of Jerusalem. This bowl is poured specifically into the air. One of the questions people ask about this, is why the air? Some have thought this has to do with the Scripture in Ephesians where Satan is called, "the prince of the power of the air." Looking at the passage though it does not seem that this is what is being talked about. This bowl, it seems to me is poured into the air, because we see judgments not only coming from the land, which is spewing out these people, we also see the heavens joining in this war. Specifically these are, "noises, thundering, and lightning." Also attached to this bowl is a great and a mighty earthquake, this earthquake is said to be greater than any that had ever occurred. It is interesting that this is the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, also final earthquake mentioned in the Book of Revelation. As we have discussed in the past, earthquakes in the Scripture, often take place signifying a changing of the order of the earth. I am not denying that there was a physical earthquake, many historians from this period do indicate large quakes, but the significance of this quake is

primarily meant to indicate a change in the governmental and covenantal status of the entire region. The temple, which was the center of Jewish life, was being destroyed, and a new temple, a heavenly temple was now very visibly in place. Significantly though immediately before these events, we also hear a voice from the temple, from the throne, in heaven, showing the Lord's agreement with these judgments and the word, it is one word in the Greek, Γέγονεν (**Ghgonen**) and it means "It is done."

The proclamation from the throne is that the judgment of God upon Jerusalem is complete. It is very close in meaning to the word that our Lord uttered from the cross Τετέλεσται, meaning that the debt was paid.

These judgments are followed by a vivid description of the events that took place during the fall of the city.

Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. <sup>20</sup> Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. <sup>21</sup> And great hail from heaven fell upon men, *each hailstone* about the weight of a talent. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great.

This prophecy is similar to the prophecy of Ezekiel in Ezekiel 5:1-12

"And you, son of man, take a sharp sword, take it as a barber's razor, and pass *it* over your head and your beard; then take scales to weigh and divide the *hair*. <sup>2</sup> You shall burn with fire one-third in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are finished; then you shall take one-third and strike around *it* with the sword, and one-third you shall scatter in the wind: I will draw out a sword after them. <sup>3</sup> You shall also take a small number of them and bind them in the edge of your *garment*. <sup>4</sup> Then take some of them again and throw them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire. From there a fire will go out into all the house of Israel.



<sup>5</sup>“Thus says the Lord GOD: ‘This *is* Jerusalem; I have set her in the midst of the nations and the countries all around her. <sup>6</sup>She has rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations, and against My statutes more than the countries that *are* all around her; for they have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in My statutes.’ <sup>7</sup>Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Because you have multiplied *disobedience* more than the nations that *are* all around you, have not walked in My statutes nor kept My judgments, nor even done<sup>[a]</sup> according to the judgments of the nations that *are* all around you’—

<sup>8</sup>therefore thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Indeed I, even I, *am* against you and will execute judgments in your midst in the sight of the nations. <sup>9</sup>And I will do among you what I have never done, and the like of which I will never do again, because of all your abominations. <sup>10</sup>Therefore fathers shall eat *their* sons in your midst, and sons shall eat their fathers; and I will execute judgments among you, and all of you who remain I will scatter to all the winds.

<sup>11</sup>‘Therefore, *as* I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘surely, because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your detestable things and with all your abominations, therefore I will also diminish *you*; My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity. <sup>12</sup>One-third of you shall die of the pestilence, and be consumed with famine in your midst; and one-third shall fall by the sword all around you; and I will scatter another third to all the winds, and I will draw out a sword after them.

<sup>13</sup>‘Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause My fury to rest upon them, and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken *it* in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them.

To go into detail about the conquest of Jerusalem and the way it took place would take quite a detailed explanation, While St. John's image of the City's division into three parts is clearly taken from Ezekiel, the specific reference seems to be what is discussed by Carrington when he says: *"This refers to the division into three factions, which became acute after the return of Titus. While Titus was besieging it from*

*without, the three leaders of rival factions were fighting fiercely within: but for this the city might have staved off defeat for a long time, even perhaps indefinitely, for no great army could support itself for long in those days in the neighborhood of Jerusalem; there was no water and no supplies. This fighting within the city delivered it quickly into the hands of Titus; 'the days were shortened.'* "

While the city was being laid siege to members of differing factions within the city, to "strengthen the resolve of those within, burnt food supplies, this bringing about much of the famine that ravished Jerusalem in these days.

In the Book of Joel, a prophecy is made regarding the great and terrible day of the Lord.

"And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:  
Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

<sup>31</sup> The sun shall be turned into darkness,  
And the moon into blood,  
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of  
the LORD.

According to the Apostle Peter this event was fulfilled in Acts 2 at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Church of Jesus Christ. We now see the conclusion of these events here in Revelation 16. This language is commonly used language in the Scripture for God's judgment or of huge changing conditions in the created order. In Hebrews 12 we read about the events that must take place to bring in the New Covenant order:

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, <sup>26</sup> whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake<sup>[a]</sup> not only the earth, but also heaven." <sup>27</sup> Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.

<sup>28</sup> Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may<sup>[c]</sup> serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. <sup>29</sup> For our God *is* a consuming fire.

We are told that the heavens and the earth would be shaken, and before the New Covenant comes in the Old, the shadows, all must be removed, and this prophecy in Revelation 16 is showing us these events taken place.

I have said many times in this series that the vast majority of the prophecy in this Book is about the destruction of Jerusalem. Here we are seeing, the final blasts of God's judgment against the city, but the thing that has to be made clear is that one of the clear reasons for this judgment is to bring in the new and the everlasting Kingdom. Earlier in today's message I pointed out the problems that Israel had. They were to be ambassadors of God's Kingdom and His law word, and because of their failing in that regard, they ended up sowing God's wrath. We are also warned here, that today we serve God with reverence and Godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire.