

"The Fullness of God's Wrath (Part 2)"

Let's open our Bibles to Revelation chapter 16:10. Back in chapter 9, if you've been with us, going through this final book of God's revelation of His Son, we came to the sixth trumpet judgment, and it sounded, and yet the response of many upon the earth was still an unwillingness to follow the Lord and repent of their ways.

But before the seventh trumpet sounded, bringing forth these last seven bowls that we are looking at tonight, followed immediately by Jesus' return chronologically, we were given by the Lord, from that chapter 9 forward, several parenthetical chapters that fill in a lot of the information of what takes place during the *Great Tribulation*, as far as judgment. And it doesn't really move the story forward; the chronology of the book of Revelation runs with the judgments.

And so John is encouraged in chapter 10. He has seen a lot of stuff, and it's really hard on him, and he's faint over what he has seen. An angel of the Lord comes to tell him it's about over, it's about there, it's about to be finished; and in fact, he said at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the mysteries of God that had been spoken by the prophets for so many generations will be fulfilled, and the wrath of God will be complete. And John is told that when it sounds, all will be over, so "eat of the book" that is left. Preach, speak to the people, hang in there, the end is coming soon.

In chapter 11, the two witnesses were set before us - who fiercely witness before the people with great power and ability, to even be able to call plagues down from heaven whenever they like. And for 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  years they minister, and the world rejoices when they are killed. But then, to their chagrin, three days later the Lord raises them from the dead, and He brings them up into glory.

In chapter 12, we saw the birth of Israel and then the birth of the Messiah to the nation whom the dragon (or the devil) sought to destroy when he was first brought forth; and then John, jumping way ahead to the time of the end, sees the hatred of Satan still in those days, who goes after Israel. He wants to destroy them; he

has been barred from heaven for good. We read there that he knows his time is short, and God protects Israel. We talked about them being taken to Petra, to that rock city in Jordan, where the Lord will protect His people for some  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, and the enemy, seeing that he can't get to them, then turns against the saints.

In chapter 13, we looked at the Antichrist (the beast from the sea), as well as the dragon and the false prophet (the beast from the earth); and again, their work and their power, and their timeframe (42 months), and it is during that last  $3\frac{1}{2}$  year period we will see these judgments poured out.

In chapter 14, God gave to us a picture of the 144,000 Jewish witnesses, who had been sealed by the Lord seven chapters earlier, standing with Him in glory, their work finished as we get near the end of the Great Tribulation. And all of them made it. Their ministries are finished, they're all victorious, singing praises to the Lord and then singing of his longsuffering and mercy. We find at the end of the chapter, God sending forth three angels to warn of the need for salvation in Christ, to warn of the danger of taking the mark and the eternal consequences that, if you take it, it will indeed be sealing your fate forever and that the judgment of the Lord is coming soon.

This brought us to chapter 15 because, at the end of chapter 14, the Lord's patience, as far as His grace, is over. Whoever has had opportunity has made a decision, and the Lord now brings this final judgment. And chapter 15 and 16 go together - chapter 15 is in heaven, the preparation for this outpouring of God's judgment, the final bowls, the worship of those who are there, the declaration that God has been fair and just and merciful and gracious.

And then last week, as we began chapter 16, the final outpouring of God's wrath upon the earth: the first bowl bringing tremendous sores upon men's bodies, their physical bodies suffering; the second bowl turned the seas into the blood of a dead man, coagulated and thick; the third bowl brought the same to drinking water; and then the fourth bowl turned up the sun's heat. And God, as He was bringing these last judgments, was really shutting down life-giving systems that spell the end to this way of life. The reaction of the people in verse 9, that we saw last week, was remarkable. They cursed the Lord and blasphemed God, and they didn't repent, they didn't give Him glory; because really all that we have left now are those that

God has secured, those who may be in hiding and seeking to survive, and unbelievers - there are going to be many of those now, obviously facing the judgment of the Lord.

And we mentioned last week from verse 9 that it ought to teach us a little bit about the fact that supernatural things don't save. I know you've probably heard someone say, "Well if they could see a miracle! Oh then!" Well, there are a lot of miracles here through 16 chapters, and look at the response of those who are hard in heart toward the Lord. God's Word, applied to the heart and when responded to, saves. Miracles certainly bear witness to the truth, but they, in and of themselves just because they're miracles, don't even mean they're of the Lord. The enemy has done some pretty weird stuff that the Lord has allowed him to get away with here, but yet man has to decide who he's going to follow.

So, we come tonight to the end of these bowl judgments. And we mentioned to you last week they are somewhat of a mirror of the earlier seven trumpet judgments except they are more severe, they come very quickly - one upon the other - and they lead immediately to the return of Jesus to the earth. At the end of verse 21 tonight, the very next verse - if we were going to go chronologically - would be chapter 19:11. It immediately brings the heavens opening and Jesus returning. It is the intermediate two chapters after tonight that are solely God's intention of teaching us how He feels about the world and its ways - religiously, politically, commercially and where that leads man if he doesn't serve the Lord while being involved, maybe, in all of those things.

We mentioned to you also last week that these final plagues upon man - His final judgment upon man - mirror a lot of the earlier judgments that you find in Egypt when the Lord went after Pharaoh and sought to have him let His people go, and He eventually hardened his heart, and no he wouldn't, he wouldn't, he couldn't any longer. So the first bowl judgment was just like the sixth plague of Exodus chapter 9; and the second and the third bowl judgments were like the first plague of Exodus chapter 8; and the fourth one was like the fourth trumpet, only in reverse.

Well, tonight we'd like to conclude these bowl judgments but, more importantly, watch the Lord set the stage for the battle of Armageddon, which really covers

most of the chapter. And then we will look at the chronological things beginning again in chapter 19.

So, let's start in verse 10 tonight. John continues. He said, "Then he saw the fifth angel pour out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became filled with darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and they did not repent of their deeds." These last three bowls that the Lord pours out are poured out directly upon the Antichrist, filled with the dragon or the devil (Satan incarnate, in many ways), the false prophet, and then the dragon himself (the power behind the throne). And all of these last three are designed to bring to and end the government of man, the world dominance of the devil, and to just say - this is it, this is enough, this is the end. The fifth bowl brings darkness upon the throne of the beast. Since his kingdom, at this point, is worldwide, we assume that the darkness is as well, though his headquarters, according to the Scriptures, are in Jerusalem. Now you've seen this before, and remember, we keep going back to the plagues because God is consistent in His judgment. You remember that the ninth plague in Egypt (Exodus chapter 10) brought three days of such darkness upon Egypt that men couldn't move around, they couldn't see the hand in front of their face. It wasn't dusk, it was dark; pitch black. And it was a darkness that Exodus describes as you could feel it; it was oppressive darkness. Now notice that the darkness follows the scorching sun, the loss of drinking water and these terrible sores; and so there's no relief, and all that man can concentrate on now is his pain. He's in absolute agony, no visual diversion. It's almost that private hell, isn't it? And they gnaw their tongues for the pain. When Jesus, in Matthew, spoke of Gehenna (not Hades, that place where the dead await judgment, but Gehenna), the final place of the devil and his angels and of men who rejected the Lord are to one day spend eternity, He said in chapter 25:30, "You will cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The sun is very hot at this point; there is tremendous darkness and great pain. And that is exactly the way the Lord describes an eternity, in similar terms, that one day will await those who don't want to walk with God. Jude, in describing the false prophets, said in verse 13, "They are like raging waves upon the sea; they foam out of their shame; they're like wandering stars. God has reserved the blackness of darkness forever for them." And so, this is almost a foretaste of the judgment that now awaits men, and the Lord has been warning about this for centuries.

We have been reading - and maybe because we're skeptical people because everything in the world you have to kind of take with a grain of salt; and people say things and you go, "Yeah, what does he really mean by that?" It's so good you can now TiVo things, you can print and actually read the little print at the bottom. So we're not very trusting people anyway; but the Lord, for generations, has been speaking about the judgment that is coming.

Zephaniah was a prophet that wrote in 630 B.C. This is what he said in chapter 1:15-18, "There is a day of wrath, of trouble and distress, a day of devastation and desolation, of darkness and gloominess, of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpets and alarms against the cities and the high towers. When I will bring distress upon men, they shall walk like blind men, because they have sinned against the Lord; and their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like refuse. By the fire of His jealousy, He will make speedy riddance of all those who dwell in the land."

Ninety years earlier, Nahum writes this in chapter 1:1-9, "The burden against Nineveh. God is jealous, and the Lord will avenge; the Lord is furious and will take vengeance upon His adversaries; He has reserved wrath for His enemies; though He is slow to anger and great in power, He will not at all acquit the wicked. The Lord has His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, the clouds are the dust of His feet. He will rebuke the sea and make it dry, He will dry up rivers. Bashan and Carmel will wither, and the flower of Lebanon will wilt. As mountains quake before Him, the hills will melt, and the earth will heave at His presence, the world, and all who dwell in it. Who can stand against His indignation? Who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury will be poured out like fire, and rocks thrown down by Him. The Lord is good. He is a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who trust in Him. But with an overflowing flood He will make an utter end of its place; darkness will pursue His enemies. What do you conspire against the Lord? He will make an utter end of it, and affliction will not have to rise a second time." That's what we're reading tonight. Nahum wrote that in 540 B.C.

Again notice, in verse 11, the response of the people. They blame God for their suffering, not themselves. That's pretty typical, isn't it, of man? "If God is so good.....I don't believe there's a God.....how could He ever let these things happen?" But these who have taken the mark of the beast, they've sealed their own fate; and isn't it good to know that you're not going to be here for this.

Verse 12 says, "And then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates. Its waters dried up, so that the way of the kings from the East might be prepared." Now, the sixth bowl is poured out upon the Euphrates River, and we read it dries up to make a way for the kings from the East. You might remember that we have seen this river back in chapter 9 at the sixth trumpet, when four demonic angels were released from this river. They quickly went and gathered an innumerable number of demons to their side, and they proceeded to put an end to the lives of one-third of those who were still on the planet. This now begins the preparation, from the Lord, for the battle of Armageddon.

The Euphrates is one of those prominent rivers in the Bible; it's one of the four that ran through the Garden of Eden. It is mentioned by name way back then - the cradle of civilization. And since man came to the earth, it has been always the natural border between the West and the East. Today it originates in Turkey, where it gets 94% of its water, runs through Syria, runs through Iraq, and then dumps into the Persian Gulf. But the land between the Tigris and the Euphrates is called Mesopotamia; it's a Greek word that literally means "between the rivers." But this is the river that the Lord is going to use to bring armies and nations down towards Jerusalem for this final confrontation between man and God.

If you follow the Euphrates through the Scriptures, the Euphrates was the eastern boundary of Israel's land when God made the promise of it to Abraham. And if you read Genesis 15:18, He defines that being the boundary of the land. When Joshua later stands before the people and repeats God's promise of land in chapter 1, it is that same boundary that God mentions. It is also, interestingly enough, the frontier border of the old Roman Empire that, in the days of the Antichrist, will be revived. So, it is the dividing line between the Roman Empire of then, as it will be today.

The Euphrates is a huge river - it's about 1800 miles long; it is, in many places, one-half mile wide, sometimes a mile wide; most of the time 30 feet deep. It is the sixth angel that will cause it to dry up; seems impossible - 1800 miles of 30-foot-deep-3/4 mile wide, and you go, "Yeah, right. How's He going to do that?" And believe me, there are people who'll tell you how He's going to do that. Here's my answer - the Lord will do it! I don't really need much more than that. And God has done it before. You remember when the children of Israel came into the promised land He rolled the Jordan back - 30 miles upstream during flood season. If you

don't believe that, go read Joshua chapter 3:13-17; and all of the bordering cities, for those 30 miles upstream, were left with a fear of the God of the Hebrews. In fact Rahab, years later, would say, "We've heard all about you" because she lived near that river, and she had heard the stories; and she had talked to the citizens, and she was convinced that this was some God that they were dealing with. But to give them their inheritance, God left a mark upon the people, and they were moved by it for generations to come. Here, at the end of time, the Lord will not do that to make Himself known in the sense of bringing people in; He's going to bring people to judgment. He's providing a way for those east of the Euphrates to come and meet with God in that final battle.

In Isaiah, we find a prophecy regarding the drying up of the Euphrates. It's in chapter 11:15-16, and this is what it says, "The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Sea of Egypt; with His mighty wind He will shake His fist over the River and strike it in the seven streams, and make men cross over dry land; and there will be a highway for the remnant of His people who will be left from Assyria, as it was for Israel in the day that they came out of the land of Egypt." As I said, there are plenty of Bible commentators who want to try to give you natural explanations for the prophecies of John; yet, like in Egypt, God didn't need our help. And interestingly enough, the same commentators that have great ideas now do not use those ideas when they teach Exodus. They just say this, "And then the Lord.....rolled back the river." And you go, "Yeah, that's what He did." But now they go, "Oh, here's what's happening." And a lot of folks point to the dam that today is in Syria, which is right on the headwaters of the Euphrates, and folks are talking about they can actually keep the water back. Well, there wasn't a dam on the Jordan in flood season when God rolled it back. I've never run into one thing that the Lord said He would do that actually required our help. So, I don't know how He's going to pull this off, but I trust that you'll believe that He will.

Now, here's the deal. It's already been turned to blood, right? It was already turned to blood in the judgments of the waterways. Now it is dried up, and, notice, we read - "for the kings of the East." And the word "kings" is plural. According to Daniel chapter 11 (and you can read there if you like in chapter 12 for more information), these kings from the East of the Euphrates will join with the kings of the North, all of them heading down to Israel. So China, Russia, those lands and others, all of them will be convinced that they need to come immediately to confront an enemy that, once defeated, will give them freedom once and for all.

And they will end up at a place called Megiddo or the Valley of Megiddo, but Daniel chapter 11 and 12 (we have studies in depth if you'd like to go through them) will give you all of that information about the kings of the East and this Euphrates River. There is a road that was completed 10 or 15 years ago, from mainland China through the Himalayas through Kashmir and Pakistan that, for years, India complained about to the UN because they said that's a threat to peace in Asia. But they built it anyway. However, as much as they're worried about that road, it seems to me the Lord is going to use the river, not going to use the road. So, if the UN reads the Bible, they'll be better off.

Verse 13 - "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon" (that's Satan), "out of the mouth of the beast" (the Antichrist filled with Satan), "and out of the mouth of the false prophet" (his sidekick). Here's an unholy trinity, and they send forth three demons with miracle-working powers.

Verse 14 - "They are spirits of demons, they perform signs which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. And then the Lord says, '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.' And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon."

Now, the purpose of these three demons that come forth out of the mouths of this demonic trinity, this blasphemy that mocks God, is only to do one thing - lure, convince, captivate and draw every nation and every king to this battlefield that they might stand before God Almighty; and Armageddon is the place that God has chosen for this final confrontation. These three frogs obviously represent people - maybe they're secretaries of state, maybe they're heads of state, who knows how that will work. But the idea is there will be great deception, and they will be brought by the fact that they see in these men (or these women) great power. And so they're convinced this is an important issue. We are also told here that it is the will of God that they will be brought together for judgment. So the Lord uses the enemy for His own purposes; and to the extent that he serves the Lord and does as the Lord intends, certainly God will do that. You might remember reading in 2 Kings 19 or in 1 Kings 22 about the Lord using a lying spirit coming out of the mouth of one of Ahab's false prophets to lead him to his death. God has a way of judging, and man wants to believe a lie; sometimes it is that very lie that



takes him out. So, in the gospels these unclean spirits that showed up oftentimes, you remember, always showed up so that Jesus might show His power over them. He delivered men from them, He shut them up, He sent them off, He told them who He was, He told them He didn't need their help. But it was the evil demons in the gospels that made Jesus shine all the brighter as people saw His true power and gave testimony to who He was.

Here, in the last days, they are mostly used and allowed to deceive unbelieving men. And so, whether they come out of anger at the Antichrist, whether they come out of an anti-Semitic attitude towards Israel, whether they just come out of blasphemy towards God - they are going to come. And according to Daniel chapter 11, the Antichrist, at that time, will be invading Africa, and he will hear of the gathering of the nations and turn in anger to come and confront them. And the Lord will actually be just dragging everybody from all four corners to one place.

Here's what Daniel writes of him in chapter 11:40-45: "At the time of the end, the king of the South will attack him; and the king of the North will come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and horsemen and many ships; and he will enter the country, to overwhelm them, and pass through. And he will enter into the Glorious Land, and many countries will be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom and Moab and the prominent people of Ammon. And he will stretch out his hand against the countries, and the land of Egypt will not escape. He will have power over the treasures of gold and silver, and the precious things of Egypt; the Libyans and the Ethiopians will follow at his heels. But news from the East and from the North will trouble him; and he will go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many. And he shall plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and no one will help him."

So the Lord, with this sixth bowl judgment, prepares the way - the dried up Euphrates River, the announcement to the Antichrist that he is being invaded from the North and from the East, his fury to come back - "Who is usurping my authority?!" - and all are gathered together so that the Lord might come and confront them.

The important truth is found in the next verse because we read, "Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven." That's the place that the Lord had put Himself alone back in verse 8 of

chapter 15; He wouldn't allow anyone in until the judgments were finished. But from that place, a loud voice comes from the temple - from the throne - and the words are, "It is done." This is it. *Tetelestai*. It's the same word "finished" that Jesus used there at the cross.

The Lord had spoken about this final battle for generations; in fact, all of the prophets speak of it at some point or another. Here's what Joel (3:12-14) writes about the Battle of Armageddon, "Let the nations wake up and come to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, the harvest is ripe. Come and go down; the winepress is full. And the vats are overflowing; the wickedness is great. Multitudes in the valley of decision. The day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."

In Psalm 2:2-6, we read the Psalmist writing, "The kings of the earth have set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us break through Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.' "He who sits in heaven will laugh; and the Lord will hold them in His derision. And He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure." And then the Psalmist says, "I have set My King on My holy hill in Zion."

Zechariah writes this in chapter 12:9-11, "It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all of the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; they will look on Me whom they have pierced. They will mourn for Him as one who mourns for his only son, they will grieve for Him as one who grieves for a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of *Hadad Rimmon* in the plains of Megiddo."

And it was these armies of the world that are gathered there that Jesus will return and defeat. Here's what Zechariah (14:1-4) says of that, "Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, your spoil will be divided in your midst. I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, the women ravaged. Half of the city will go into captivity, but the remnant of My people shall not be cut off. And the Lord will go forth and fight those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand upon the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives will be split

in two, from east to west, to make a very large valley; so that half the mountain will move toward the north and half of that mountain shall move towards the south." And the outcome of this battle (you jump from verse 16 and 17 and 21 right through chapter 19:11 - because at this point, the Lord returns) begins in chapter 19:17-18 where the Lord says to the angel, "Gather the birds together and have them come and feast on the flesh of all men." And so it's not going to be good to be on the wrong side of this battle.

Now notice the declaration of the Lord here as John is writing in verse 15. It's the third of seven beatitudes. I know we're towards the end of the book - most of them come late. But the beatitudes - the "Blessed be's" - "Blessed is he," and this is the third one with a promise of blessing for those who, at this time, are watching and standing in faith lest their sin is revealed. No doubt it would primarily be a word that the Lord speaks to the Jews there in Petra, and it's similar to that Matthew 22 parable where the Lord says, "When he saw his guests coming in, he saw a man who didn't have a wedding garment, and he said, 'Friend, how did you come here without a wedding garment?' He was speechless, and the king said to the servants, 'You bind him hand and foot and take him away and cast him into outer darkness, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' " So the Lord speaks now to His people about watching and being ready and being prepared in the Lord for what is coming.

We know from the Bible that Jesus only comes as a thief to those who are not watching. Revelation 3:3, "Remember therefore and watch so that I don't come to you as a thief and you don't know that hour in which I'm coming." So He warns the church to be ready, and hopefully you're ready tonight; if the Lord came tonight, you'd be ready to go. But the saints, at this time, are also told to be ready and watching, for this is the very end.

Now in verse 16, the word Armageddon is a Hebrew word that really means "the hills of" Armageddon. It's also known in the Bible as the place of slaughter, the Plains of *Esdraelon*, the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the Valley of Jezreel - it is a 14x20 mile plot of land that separates Samaria in the middle of the country from Galilee in the North. So if you divide Israel into Galilee, Samaria and Judea (where Jerusalem and Bethlehem and the desert are), it is the dividing point between the top and the middle portion, between Galilee and Samaria. We know from chapter 14:20 that the battlefield will stretch through Jerusalem down to *Bozrah*, which is

180 miles south of this valley out into the Sinai, almost; so directly south on a map. I kind of want you to see it in your mind. It's not a big area, but certainly it will extend a long way. In this valley, or in this plain, is where Barak defeated the Canaanites, where Gideon defeated the Midianites, where Saul and Jonathan died. It was through this valley that Titus brought his Roman Legion for the three years - 68, 69 and 70 A.D. - before they overthrew Jerusalem. It was through the same valley that the British General Allenby, in 1917, overthrew the Turks. And it will be through this valley and down to the Euphrates that will come many of the folks to take a stand against God for the last time.

Remember, all that's left upon the earth are people that have just refused to walk with God, those that God has secured, and the few that we may not know about that aren't mentioned. But it's an awesome place. When we take our groups to Israel, it is our next-to-last stop on day one of our tour because we go up the coast first. And in Mt. Carmel it is nearly always windy because it's a rift valley that comes down from the Mediterranean, and it is often so clear that you can see 50 miles in every direction. It's a phenomenal place to have a Bible study, and it's one of our stops. If the Lord tarries, we're going back in 2013. You should save now - \$5 a day, you can go to Israel. I'm pretty sure that's the way it works, but it's worth going. You're going to get to go once free, so don't worry if you can't make it. You get to go with the Lord - best trip you'll ever have is the one He hosts. But until then, we're filling in.

So, two crucial events take place in the Holy Land, and they're both of God's choosing. One is on a mountain, and the other one is on a plain. On the mountain, Jesus gives His life for the sins of the world; at Megiddo, those who have refused His love die in judgment. God's two portions. And on both occasions God declares, "It is finished." He says the exact same words. It's your choice. The stage is set, and now all that remains is the confrontation.

So, here's what verse 17 says, "Then the seventh angel poured out the bowl into the air, and a loud voice says in heaven - from the temple God Himself declares, 'It is done.' " And unfortunately it's not in red letters because whoever decided this wasn't Jesus' words didn't read chapter 15; but if you have a red pen, just fill that in. I'm sure that's going to be all right. But I love the thought of the Lord from that temple, where He has sealed Himself in, in heaven - brokenhearted that judgment has come to this, waiting as long as He could, isolated from any kind of

interruption until it is completed - He thunders the words, "It is done." And this last bowl will bring the immediate return of Jesus, and it is quite possible that what we read in verses 18-21 take place because the Lord brings His foot and lands on the Mount of Olives and shakes the world as the world as not been shaken.

So verse 19 of chapter 11 and Zechariah 14:4 that we read, and these verses here, are probably happening simultaneously. Notice in verse 18, "There were noises and thunderings and lightnings and a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were upon the earth." So, whenever you read the words "noises, thunder and lightning" in the Bible, you can bet God is speaking, or God is moving. We saw it in chapter 4:5 when John first saw the Lord; we saw it with Moses at Mt. Sinai when all of creation responded to the Lord; you saw it in chapter 8:5 at the seventh seal; you saw it again in chapter 11:19 at the seventh trumpet; and you see it again here at the seventh bowl judgment. The Lord just speaks. He waits, and the seventh of all of those, God waits. It's like the day of rest. He waits, waits, waits. He can't wait any longer.

So, then follows the earthquake. There's been a lot of earthquakes - even in Revelation - of various intensities, but this one is the big one. I know we think we're waiting for the big one; no, no, no, you're gone for the big one. This is off the Richter scale, right? Haggai says in chapter 2:6-7, "For thus saith the Lord of hosts, 'Once more and a little while I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and the dry land; and every nation and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations and I will fill this temple with glory.' "

Isaiah writes, chapter 24:18-21, "And it shall be that he who flees from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit, and he who comes up from the midst of the pit shall be caught by the snare. For the windows from on high are open, the foundations of the earth are shaken. The earth is violently broken and split open, the earth is shaken exceedingly and shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, shall totter like a hut; its transgression shall be heavy upon it, it will fall and not rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day that the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones and on the earth the kings of the earth."

In Hebrews 12:25-29, we read this, "See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke upon the earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice

then shook the earth; but has promised saying, 'Yet once more I shall shake not only the earth but also heaven.' Know now this, 'Yet once more,' indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of those things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, then let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire."

So God will, in this return, shake the earth with such an earthquake that He will remove everything that man's hands have made. Nothing really will remain, and there's no way to protect yourself. Dams will break, buildings will collapse, fires will start, no water to put them out; the loss of life will be staggering.

Jeremiah writes in chapter 4:23-28, "I beheld the earth, and it was without form, and void; and the heavens, they had no light. I beheld the mountains, they trembled, the hills moved back and forth. I beheld, indeed there was no man. The birds of the heavens had fled. I beheld, and indeed the fruitful land was a wilderness, cities broken down at the presence of the Lord and His fierce anger. For thus saith the Lord, 'The whole land will be desolate. I will *not* make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black, because I have spoken. I have purposed, I will not relent, nor will I turn back from it.' " And the saints will know.

Here's what Psalm 46:1-2,6 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. We won't fear, even though the earth is removed, the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea, the nations razed, the kingdoms removed. He uttered His voice and the earth melted." But those whom the Lord has His hands on, they know that the Lord is a very present help to them. So, there's going to be a big earthquake - before He comes or probably as He comes and places His foot on the Mount of Olives. But I'll tell you what - if you read the whole Bible and you come to this point, then you ought to say to yourself, "Well, that ought to convince you how to spend your life." Putting all your time and energy into stuff that can be shaken - not good. "We lost everything!" "Really?!" "Yeah, it all fell down. We lost everything!" "Well, really you lost nothing, right?" You know where you're headed; you know who saved you. But look, it's quite a challenge to our materialistic culture that somehow when everything is said and done, every earthly treasure falls over, breaks down and is destroyed. Everything you worked for,

saved to buy, longed to have, coveted or desired - more than it's all going to burn, it's all going to fall over! So remember that this Christmas.

If you follow Jesus, you can take it all with you by sending it all ahead. If you just serve the Lord in your flesh, it's not going to last, it's going to leave you lost. In fact, in chapter 18, when the merchants stand around and watch all this take place - because the Lord gives us His reaction to it - they begin to weep, saying, "Everything's gone; everything that matters is lost. Our merchants are gone, our money is gone, our commercial ways are gone, we're dying." Horrible when you can have your life shaken from you. But all will be made certain by this seventh bowl.

Verse 19 says, "Now the great city Jerusalem 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. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found." So the great city (chapter 11:8, 21:10) - Jerusalem is divided into three parts. Now according to Zechariah (14:4), when Jesus returns, they'll bring great topographical changes to the region. Certainly that earthquake would do that. The Mount of Olives will be split to produce three pieces of the city, and we are told that there will be a subterranean river that will flow towards the Mediterranean and towards the Dead Sea.

Now if you go to the Dead Sea today - and again, on our Israel stop we stay down in that area in a hotel on the Dead Sea in the desert, and nothing grows in the Dead Sea - it's dead for a reason. There's no outflow, it's very salty, and there are even signs along the way in English that you shouldn't dive in because of the viscosity. You could just hurt yourself. We had a fellow on one of our trips and we said, "Don't dive in." And he was so excited to see it, he dove in, and he couldn't see for three hours; he had to wash his eyes out. "Don't dive in!" "Yeaaaah!!" That's when I realized I have no influence whatsoever. If you've talked to folks who have gone, you can sit upright in the water and read a newspaper, and you won't tip over. It's ridiculous. They sell the sediment for medicinal purposes. I don't know if it works or not, but I do know if you have a cut and you get in the water, you know, "Oh, I got a cut!" It hurts like the dickens. We stay at one of the hotels there - the *Meridien*. They built it right on the sea, and then they bring the Dead Sea water into the hotel as a pool so you can have showers there; but then you can just sit and try it out without having to crawl over the rocks. It's pretty interesting.

But according to Ezekiel 47:1-12, it says that there will be a river that goes from the Mount of Olives down to the Dead Sea, and it will heal the Sea and that there will be fishing industry in En Gedi, which is kind of along the way.

Also we read, the cities of the nations will fall - London, Moscow, Tokyo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York, Cairo, Riyadh - you name it, it's going. And every island and mountain will disappear. Now, back in the sixth seal, back in chapter 6:14, they were all moved out of their place, you might remember. Here, they're just removed. Hawaii is gone; Philippines are gone; England is gone; the Bahamas are gone; the Rocky Mountains are no more; the Himalayas are no more. Isaiah 13:13 says this, "I will shake the heavens and the earth out of their place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts and in the day of His fierce anger."

And then we read in Revelation 16:19, "The great Babylon will be remembered." Now, I know that this is a reference to the next two chapters where we will get particular insights into this; but what we are getting after this chapter is God's final word on man's ways as exemplified by Babylon, where false religion was born which is, throughout the Bible, used as an analogy or simile to man and his ways - man without God, life without God. It was Israel who went to Babylon in captivity, and they learned to love commerce in the city and leave agriculture and leave the land and fell in love with the ways of man, so that only 50,000 went back when they finally got a chance to go back in 536 B.C. So, Babylon becomes that symbol in the Scriptures of everything that is man apart from God.

And in a moment, all of the world, and everything that the world hopes for, comes crashing down. Here's what it says in chapter 18:9-10, "The kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her" (speaking about Babylon or that spirit of Babylon) "will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, 'Alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! In one hour your judgment has come.' And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys her merchandise anymore." So, Babylon (not a literal city at this point although it was a city one time; it was also a kingdom, a world empire but in the end, it becomes a full representation of the Lord's judgment) - notice what God mentions here - Babylon comes to remembrance. This is the Lord's final judgment, the cup of the fierceness of His wrath is being poured out upon her.



Finally, verse 21, "And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent. And men blaspheming God because of the plagues of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great." Back in Exodus chapter 9, the hail that fell upon Egypt killed the cattle, killed the trees, and you read the words, "And fire ran along the ground." In Job chapter 38, the Lord stopped Job; and Job had gotten to the point where he was almost willing to question God's goodness because he thought there was no way I deserve any of this, and the Lord called him into account and said, "Where were you when I made the heavens and the earth?" And then He said in Job 38, "Have you entered into the treasuries of the snow or have you seen the treasury of the hail which I have reserved for the time of trouble and the day of battle and war?" "Have you seen where I put the big hail??!" "No!" "No, no, Lord!" And every one of those questions through those chapters, Job says, "No, Lord, I don't know!"

Here the hail weighs a talent, which is roughly 100 pounds. Think about 100-pound hail. We once got stuck in golf-ball-sized hail in Dallas, and it hurt. And windows on cars out in the parking lot were broken, and they tore through umbrellas, and 50 or 55 commercial jets were damaged, and they couldn't fly until they were inspected. But 100 pounds! I don't know. Hail is made by the updraft of moisture into thunder clouds. They usually go up 40,000 or 50,000 feet, and then they hit minus 50 degrees Fahrenheit; and they form blocks of ice, and they get too heavy, so they come back down. But this reminds me a little bit of Leviticus 24 where it said that, "He who blasphemes the name of the Lord will be put to death. And all of the congregation will take him out and stone him when he blasphemes the Lord." And I thought, "This is almost like getting stoned." Right? The whole earth is now getting stoned by the Lord upon the earth because of their blasphemy. And the response is - they blasphemed God. So I put in my little margin here - Leviticus 24:16 - because it just fits. You get what you pay for, I guess. And then you might want to put a note for yourself that you can go right to Revelation 19:11, chronologically, to the return of Jesus. And you, riding on a horse. Do you ride a horse? You should probably practice although, like everything else miraculous in your life, you'll be all right.

Today the world is ruined by man and his rebellion, and everything he touches corrupts it. But then, when the Lord comes, it will be much like the Garden of Eden, and you'll be able to play with lion cubs.

So, "Do not love the world nor the things that are of the world. If anyone loves the world," John will write in his little epistle (1 John 1:15), "the love of the Father is not in him." But I love this word. Jesus said to them in Matthew 19:28-29, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."

You really want to spend your life well? Don't cash it in here. Take it with you. Cash it in there. Because eventually it's either going to get shaken, or you're going to have unshakable stuff. So the Lord's coming. You ready? Maybe before Christmas. Maybe ON Christmas - that's what I'm saying! Go ahead, put that on the radio, "The Lord is coming on Christmas!" I have no idea. I hope.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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