

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

"The Seven last Plagues" (3)

Revelation 16:12-21

Review

1. The temple previously mentioned (15:5, 8) is also the sanctuary where the redeemed multitude serve the Lord day and night (7:15). Now that place intended as a place of prayer becomes the court of judgment upon God's enemies.

2. That the temple is mentioned shows that when grace and mercy are refused, judgment is justified. Think of it, God's holiness has been aroused into action. His infinite holiness will burn with intensity against apostasy and sin.

3. The "great voice" is evidently that of God (16:1). How astonishing that Almighty God gives His angels power over natural resources and they execute the judgment written (cf. 7 angels 15:1, 6, 6-8). Remarkably, these angels are commanded to act. "Go your way" is a present tense imperative while "pour out" is an aorist imperative. Sovereignty uses angelic messengers!

4. God having issued His divine directive, the bowls hallowed by use in the temple of heaven are now devoted to awful divine wrath (v. 1). Note it is "upon the earth" which is guilty before God. Consider with deep burden this solemn apocalyptic judgment (cf. Ps. 79:12).

5. God is vindicated in pouring out (ἐξέχεε exechee) His judgments (vv. 5-7). Judgment is consistent with the character of God. Sinners are "worthy" (v. 6) of such "wrath of God (cf. John 3:36 use of ὀργή orge)

6. There is no doubt that the vial (bowl) judgments have a purpose similar to the events of the Exodus from Egypt (cf. Ex. 7-12). In the O.T. God delivered Israel from bondage. In the N.T., the Tribulation is designed, in part, to deliver the nation (Ro. 11:25, 26) and to bring in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24).

7. Systematically God deals with every aspect of human life with the bowls: a. Sores. b. Sea water. c. Fresh water. d. Sun. e. Government. f. Geo Politics. g. Air. What a display of the wrath of God exhibited in the vials!

1. SIXTH VIAL v. 12

a. Where?

Just as everything else in this passage is literal, so the 1800 mile river mentioned is real. It is referred to as the "great river" in Revelation (9:13-15; here). Twenty-one times it is mentioned in Scripture. The river was a dividing factor between east and west. Abraham came from the other side to come to Canaan.

Remember: God's land covenant with the Nation is clear and uncompromising (Gen. 15). While there are divergent views, it appears that the boundary of Israel's possession is Euphrates on the east and the Nile on the west. Both David and Solomon pushed their territorial conquests on the east to the borders of the Euphrates, but were unable to maintain them. David (2 Sam. 8:1-18; 10:1-19; 12:26-31; Solomon (1 Kings 3:11; 4:21). Mark that the Bible affirms the land contract is at once future and permanent. This should settle who is to occupy the present Israel.

b. What?

The aorist passive verb points to divine intervention to dry up and parch the Euphrates (ἐξηράνθη exeranthe). God dried up the Red Sea (Ex. 14) and the Jordan (Joshua 3). Hence, it will be no difficulty for God to do the same with the Euphrates in the Tribulation.

c. Why?

The purpose clause (ἵνα hina) points to the reason for the drying up of the Euphrates. It is not just for making the river bed dry, but to prepare for the kings of the east to move on the land of Israel. God has His time table and the hour of Armageddon has come. The parenthesis (vv. 13-16) takes up this important battle (cf. Dan. 11:36-45; Ezek. 38, 39).

2. SEVENTH VIAL v. 17, 18

a. The Place v. 17. Two different prepositions are suggested for the "air." Whether one takes "upon" (ἐπί ,majority text) or "unto" (εἰς eis), the idea is utterly devastating. Everyone must breathe air to live, so this vial is worse than smiting the earth (v. 2). the salt water (v. 3), the fresh water (v. 4), and the sun (v. 8). Every avenue of life has been touched by God.

b. The Program vv. 17, 20, 21

As with the seals (6:12-17) and the trumpets (11:15-19), so now with the seventh vial, there is a spectacular display of the presence of God. Consider:

1) Great Voice This comes from (ἀπό apo) the temple of heaven (cf. 15:5, 8; 16:1). It is also from (ἀπό apo) the very throne of God (ch. 4). Make no mistake, God is not a deist detached from His creation. Actually theism is taught here.

2) Great Disturbances These take place in the atmosphere and on earth. The Bible says there "became" voices, thunders, lightning' s, and an unusual earthquake. The latter is so universal that nothing like it has come to earth before now. There is no parallel.

3) Great Changes Think of it, islands and mountains do not cease to exist, but they do recede from their present places. Desolations come and chaotic confusion to the whole face of the earth.

4) Great Destructions The hail spoken of here weighs at least 100 lbs. Such masses falling from the sky would crash the strongest buildings, ships, etc. and leave few, if any, retreats of safety for human life on the earth.

c. The Pronouncement v. 17

The perfect active indicative (ἸΓεγόνε Gegone) announces the end of the vials and plagues (cf. 21:6). Thank God there was another such cry from the Cross: it is finished (τετέλεσται tetelestai). Amazing contrast!

Conclusion The vials are linked with every facet of human life and dependence thereon. Three times it is recorded that the vials resulted in blasphemy. Initially, it was His Name (v. 9), then as the God of heaven (v. 11) and finally just as the God Who poured out hail (v. 21, His work). It is strange that there is no repentance (metanoew metaneo), neither in the mind nor in deeds. Surely, the depraved heart, apart from the Holy Spirit, is hopelessly antagonistic to God (Eph. 2:1-3; John 16:7-11). Oh, dear friend, run with all your sin and guilt to the One Who will forgive you now. Amen.