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Revelation 16

Have you ever noticed that even people who don't know much about the Bible seem to know at least some of the things that we have recorded in the book of Revelation? And sometimes they even have their own opinions about those things. Just mention the word Rapture, and many people will have an opinion. Mention the Antichrist, and they will have an opinion about him. Mention the number 666, and you'll almost certainly get a reaction.

I read some time ago that Highway 666, which ran through Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico, was eventually renamed Highway 491. Why? Was it because they somehow thought the number 666 was somehow a curse or an unlucky number?

No! It was because the highway department couldn't replace fast enough the highway signs that were being stolen! People wanted those Highway 666 signs as a collector's item.

There is another word in Revelation that captures the attention of the world, and that is the term Armageddon. Even though many people do not know what the Bible says about Armageddon, they know it has something to do with a final battle and the end of the world as we know it.

And as we delve into Revelation chapter 16, the Apostle John is going to begin to give us the details about many of cataclysmic events that will

wrap up the final days of civilization, and of course culminate in that last great battle called Armageddon.

Revelation 16:1, Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth.”

2 So the first went and poured out his bowl upon the earth, and a foul and loathsome sore came upon the men who had the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image.

3 Then the second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood as of a dead man; and every living creature in the sea died.

4 Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water, and they became blood.

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

**“You are righteous, O Lord,
The One who is and who was and who is to be,
Because You have judged these things.**

**6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.”**

7 And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

8 Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and they blasphemed the name of God who has power over these plagues; and they did not repent and give Him glory.

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

12 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.

13 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.

14 For they are spirits of demons, performing 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.

15 “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.”

16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

17 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!”

18 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.

19 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.

20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 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.

Now, as we come this chapter in the Bible, we have to realize that God has certain attributes and while He is who He is; He cannot be what He cannot be. He cannot be a God of love and a God of hate. That said, because He loves what is good and righteous, and because He is a God who is faithful and true; He must also hate what is not good and righteous. And He must hate sin, and hate lying, and hate unfaithfulness, because He cannot be both at the same time. He is either or, which means He is also a God who must punish. If He is a God who rewards, then He must also be a God who punishes. And so these verses we just read are about the punishment and the judgment which will come upon the wicked.

Now, the scene opens in verse one when John hears a loud voice from the temple. And we know here that this voice has to be the voice of God, because there's no one else in the temple.

We're told that back in chapter 15 and verse 8, The temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power, and no one was able to enter the temple till the seven plagues of the seven angels were completed.

And then we're told that this loud voice, who is God says to the seven angels, "Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath, which are the judgments of God; pour them out on the earth."

And so these angels, who we were introduced to back in chapter 15, immediately and without any delay obey. And one by one in rapid succession, they begin to unleash these judgments of God upon the earth and its inhabitants. Which by the way, could be people we know. This could happen as soon as seven years from now; which means that many, if not most of the people we know, and many of the people who we love, if they're not Christians and are left behind at the Rapture, then they could be affected.

And when you think about it in those terms it becomes even more serious and even more disturbing. And that truth should cause us every one of us to pay more attention to those around us. And it should cause us to be more concerned for people's souls and where they will spend eternity.

And so the angels are told by God to pour out these bowls, and begin delivering this judgment upon judgment, and as they do; the intensity of God's wrath increases, and the frequency of these judgments become more regular.

And it's just like Jesus predicted would happen in Matthew chapter 24. It's like the birth pains of a woman who's about to give birth; whose contractions and pain get more and more intense, and more frequent.

And so in verse 2, the first angel obeys and he pours out this first bowl and this first judgment, we're told will bring "foul and loathsome sores" upon those who had the mark of the beast, and those who chose to worship his image.

The Greek word indicates these sores are running or festering sores, like massive blisters on a person's body. And they're painful and incurable. And only if you've had the shingles, could you even imagine what these

sores will be like. And even then, they'll be worse, because they'll not ever heal.

Now, again it will only be those who bear the mark of the Beast and worship his image will be affected by these sores. Those who have become followers of Christ—and have survived to this point in the tribulation—they're spared this painful experience.

The second bowl, in verse 3, is directed toward the sea, which, becomes “like the blood of a corpse,” so that “every living thing” in the sea dies.

It's similar to the plague we read about in the book of Exodus chapter 7, when God was dealing with Pharaoh and the Egyptians. And also the second trumpet judgment back in Revelation chapter 8 was similar. But this time, it will be even more intense and widespread. This time it will be worldwide, because the oceans cover nearly 70% of the face of the earth.

John McArthur wrote this. He said from time to time in California they get something called The Red Tide. And when it occurs it kills millions and millions of fish and also poisons those who eat any contaminated shell fish.

Back in 1949 one of these red tides hit the coast of Florida. And at first the water just turned yellow, but by mid-summer it was thick and viscous with countless billions of these tiny one-celled organisms. And for sixty miles there were stacks of stinking fish lying on the beaches.

Much of the marine life in that area was wiped out. Eventually that red tide subsided only to appear again the following year.

Now, we don't know for sure what means the Lord will use, but whatever the means, we're told that every living creature in the sea is going to die – billions and billions of dead creatures! And when they die, where are they going to go? They're going to rise to the surface, and eventually they're going to pollute the beaches and there's going to be an inconceivable

smell from all this death. And the world's seas are going to become like one big canyon of dead flesh. And finally you'll be able to get a condo at the beach for a price you can afford.

And then the third bowl delivers more of the same. Only this judgment comes upon freshwater sources. It affects "the rivers and the springs," and John says in his vision in verse 4, they **"became blood"**.

Now, note he does not say, **"they became like blood,"** but they **"became [literally] blood."**

And this is exactly what happened in Egypt back in Exodus chapter 7. And in verse 20 it says,

20 And Moses and Aaron did so, just as the Lord commanded. So he lifted up the rod and struck the waters that were in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and in the sight of his servants. And all the waters that were in the river were turned to blood. 21 The fish that were in the river died, the river stank, and the Egyptians could not drink the water of the river. So there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt.

Again, here it doesn't say they were turned to something that looked like blood. It says, they were turned to literal blood. And the same thing's going to happen here, only it's not just going to happen in Egypt, it's going to affect the entire world.

Now, back in Revelation Chapter 11 and verse 6, John tells us that during the time of the ministry of the two witnesses, which will be three and a half years, during the second half of the seven-year period, they're going to shut up the sky in order that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying.

Now, we're not told whether this will be a world-wide drought or just occur where they themselves are located, but if it is worldwide, then water is already going to be in short supply. And so the entire world could possibly experience a drought like it's never before in history experienced.

And then in Revelation Chapter 7 and verse 1 if you'll remember, John tells us about the, **“Four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, and they're holding back the four winds so that no wind should blow on the earth or on the sea or on any tree.”**

That's means even if there were rain clouds, they couldn't move across the land, because there's nothing to move them. The entire world will be like one big stinking and stagnant sauna.

And without water, that means no crops; which means no food. It also means no animals will survive, and so there'll be no meat to eat. And since the rivers and the seas are of no use, there'll be no fish to eat. The only thing left to eat will be each other. And so it's absolutely unimaginable what could go on or will go on during these last days.

Now, in the midst of all these judgments, people are still going to be cursing God and shaking their fists at God and blaming Him for all this death. But an angel is going to remind them that God is just in all He's doing. They had their chance or chances to believe, but they continued to reject God's free gift of salvation. And in verse 5 John says,

5 And I heard the angel of the waters saying:

“You are righteous, O Lord, The One who is and who was and who is to be, Because You have judged these things.

God is righteous! And He's also right and justified in what He's doing. And then we're reminded what these unbelievers have done. In verse 6,

**6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets,
And You have given them blood to drink. For it is their just due.”**

They’ve murdered the preachers that God raised up. They’ve murdered those who have chosen to follow Christ during this time. And so the blood of these martyrs is calling out for judgment against the world. And in verse 7 we have their cry from the altar in heaven to avenge their persecution and deaths.

7 And I heard another from the altar saying, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments.”

And so God is just. They’ve shed the blood of saints and prophets, and now, here God is going to give them what they want; He’s going to give them blood to drink. And it’s what they deserve!”

And if you’re here tonight and you’ve never trusted Christ, then you don’t want to ask God for justice; you want to ask Him for mercy. And you can, by just calling upon the name of the Lord.

And then the fourth judgment involves the sun. Verse 9 says it will scorch people with “fierce heat.” And so all those global warming folks in the world are finally going to be right about the earth warming up. But they’re also going to be wrong, because there’s nothing they’re going to be able to do about it.

For many years now, people have believed that they were somehow in control of the global thermostat. And that it’s up to all of us to save the planet from either freezing or burning up.

Well, if they would just read the Bible and believe what it says, that myth could be put to rest today. Because God and God alone is in control of the weather, and the climate, and the moon, and the sun, and the water, and the icebergs, and the solar system, and the entire universe.

And here, John records the truth that God is controlling His creation—it is His water, this is His planet, this is His sun and moon. And God now is using all the things He's in control of, to deliver His judgement and His sovereign justice.

And then once again, we see how people respond. In verse 9: “They cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues. They did not repent and give him glory.”

As the nineteenth-century pastor Charles Spurgeon often said, “The same sun which melts wax; hardens clay. And it's the same with the Gospel, which melts some persons to repentance, but hardens others in their defiance. And of course it will be the latter during the tribulation.

And then in verse 10 the fifth bowl is poured out.

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain.

11 They blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

So God here intensifies the suffering. He turns the lights out on the universe, which at this moment is the kingdom of Satan and the antichrist. ,

The Greek text implies that whatever gives light no longer will. Even lamps, and candles, and flashlights will emit no light. There will be complete darkness on the entire earth. The prophet Joel in chapters 2 & 3 as well as Zephaniah in chapter 1 describes this time as “a day of darkness and gloom , a day of clouds and thick darkness.”

Jesus Himself in His Olivet discourse in both Mark and Luke says, In those days after the tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will

not give off its light. And so the combination of all these judgments and plaques will be just unimaginable for those who will go through them.

And so the Lord is showing all the unbelievers that the Antichrist is not the light after all and anyone who chooses to follow him is headed for eternal judgment and eternal darkness.

But what does mankind do in the face of all this supernatural demonstration of God's power including His power over all the light in the world?

Well, once again, verse 11 says that they **“cursed the God of heaven . . . and they did not repent”**

And so that brings us to the sixth angel. And John watches again as he pours out his bowl of God's wrath.

12 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.

13 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.

14 For they are spirits of demons, performing 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.

15 “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.”

16 And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.

The great river Euphrates is of course the river which forms the eastern boundary of the land that God promised Israel back in Genesis chapter 15 and elsewhere as well in the Old Testament.

Now, you might ask why would it be necessary for God to dry it up in order for Israel's enemies to cross it.

Well, if you know anything about this river, you know it originates in Mount Ararat and then flows for some 1800 miles before emptying in to the Persian Gulf. And the reason it's holding back the advancing armies from the East is because all the snow on the mountains has suddenly melted from the intense heat on the earth, which has caused a tremendous flood in the land. And all the bridges have been washed away and so there was no route for anyone to cross.

You say well they could fly over it, but chances are there won't be any planes able to fly. Since all the fresh water has been contaminated and turned to blood, and since there's no wind or rain or sunshine, there'll be no way for electricity to be generated. That means oil can't be pumped and or turned into fuel, which means nothing mechanical is going to run.

And since there's no water or food to speak of, there won't even be an animal available to ride. Only the legs and feet of men will be left to get from one place to another. And so the only way for these enemies to reach Israel will be by foot. So God will dry up the waters of this great river, and allow them to march toward Israel and to march toward Armageddon—and to march toward their final resting place.

And in verse 13 John sees three “spirits like frogs” coming from the mouths of the satanic trinity: the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet. And then in verse 14, the apostle explains that these are demonic agents of

Satan sent out to gather “the kings of the whole world . . . for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.”

So, here comes this global army of God haters and Jew haters and they’re following Satan and the Antichrist and the False prophet across the dry riverbed of the Euphrates River and they’re marching toward this place the Bible calls Armageddon.

Most scholars believe this refers to the hill country surrounding the the Plain of Megiddo, which is located some sixty miles north of Jerusalem. More than 200 battles have been fought there already over the course of history.

But this will be the last one. And it’ll be over almost as soon as it begins.

Because in verse 17 when the seventh angel empties the seventh bowl of judgment from God. God utters three words from the throne room of heaven. He says, “**It is done!**” It’s not over just yet, but it might as well be, because the end has already been determined.

Look at verse 18 :

18 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.

19 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.

20 Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

21 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.

It's going to be greater than all the 4th of July fireworks celebrations of all times put together in one show. And there will be flashes of lightning, and roars and rumblings of thunder, along with a great earthquake such as there had never been since man was on the earth. An earthquake so severe that mountains and islands will literally disappear.

And then on top of that, hailstones weighing over a hundred pounds each will fall from the sky and crush men to death. And this vast army of people that Satan has gathered together to fight against God will be defeated and destroyed.

And how will the human race respond as the end of the world draws nigh?

Well, once again, instead of surrendering to God, the Bible says that they will continue to curse God for what is happening.

Now, in our feeble minds, we can't possibly fathom what this time will be like. This kind of devastation, and horror, and fear, and pain and death that the human race will experience I again just unimaginable. But the hardest thing to believe is the fact, that even in the face of all these signs and warnings, people will continue to defy and curse God, rather than call out to Him for mercy and grace and surrender their lives to Him.

That's the greatest tragedy of all.