

REVELATION 16:12-21; 18:1-8

WATER!

WATCH!!

PRAY!!!

Continuing in Revelation, and today I am going to something a bit ODD

I am going to read this last part of Chapter 16, the 6th & 7th bowls

And then I am going to flip AHEAD and read part of Ch. 18

Well, why I am doing that?

Well, because both texts are about the SAME event, the FALL of Babylon, which stands for the kingdoms of THIS WORLD

Ch. 16 is a NARRATIVE description, more or less

And then Ch. 18 CELEBRATES the Fall of Babylon in SONG

And in between these two we find Chapter 17, which is lays our further God's CONTROVERSY with Babylon

WHY it DESERVES God's judgment

but it's a COMPLEX chapter, so we will take it up next week and skip to 18 today

Now, I am only going to read PART of Ch. 18, just to give us an idea of its content, and may take up the rest later

We find that a lot in the Bible → that MAJOR EVENTS in the history of redemption get BOTH a narrative description AND a song

For example → Creation, the Red Sea crossing, the birth of Samuel, the crowing of David, and most notably the birth of Jesus which gets SEVERAL

And so HERE → after all, this is ONLY the END OF THE WORLD as we know it, and God's FINAL VICTORY, so it gets both as well

Introduction

Has there ever been a word which just brought you DREAD?

ILL:

What do you think of when you hear the word, ARMAGEDDON?

Do you think of some CATASTROPHE, some DISASTER?

Like the 1998 movie where a Texas-sized Asteroid is speeding towards earth so Bruce Willis has to go blow it up first

Or more likely, if you know your Bible, you think about the LAST BATTLE

A battle which promises to bring about great FEAR and DREAD and DESTRUCTION

I sort of grew up with that after my parents became Christians and often had a Christian network on Television

And how often some of these TV teachers made various predictions about where & when Armageddon would be

And of course it would CHANGE from year to year, as such predictions always do

But in the meantime viewers had already sent in their MONEY

But it was always with this sense of FEAR and DREAD that disaster was about to strike us

Something to WORRY about

Well, is that how our text presents this battle of Armageddon?

Let's take a look and see

I. The SIXTH Bowl (verses 12-14)

And we begin in **VERSE 12 → READ**

Now, just to review briefly, last week we considered the first FIVE bowls

Which symbolize God bringing His JUST JUDGMENT on this earth

And He does in order to PURIFY it so that He can then transform into the NEW heavens and the NEW earth

Where God Himself will DWELL FOREVER with all those who come to Him by faith through His SON Jesus

And so we saw these bowls of God's wrath first pour out SORES on all flesh, and then turn the OCEAN and RIVERS into blood

And then we saw them make the SUN SCORCHING HOT so that it BURNED people

And then finally, in the FIFTH bowl, plunging the kingdoms of this world into DARKNESS

And you might remember how these bowls were the INTENSIFYING of God's wrath which we had previously seen in the Seven Seals and Trumpets

In fact, you might want to take a look at the OUTLINE in the bulletin

And then you will see how these are similar to one another

So likely therefore, to ALL be taken SYMBOLICALLY to show the SPIRITUAL PERIL this world is in

I don't believe that we should look for most of this to happen PHYSICALLY as it is written here

But, rather, that these are the sorts of judgments which have fallen on the world in EVERY ERA

And actually, the SPIRITUAL peril they represent is actually WORSE if you think about it

Because they symbolize what it is LIKE to be
SEPARATED from God's grace FOREVER

But we also made a couple of OBSERVATIONS →

1) First, that despite these great trials, we see that those outside of Christ
REFUSE TO REPENT

It's like they were LOOKING FOR GOD or asking for forgiveness,
and God won't give it to them

No, they CURSE GOD and WORSHIP THEMSELVES

And so God's judgment upon them is right and just

2) And second, we see that now with the bowls, God's judgment is no longer
partial → it's not ¼ or 1/3rd as with the Seals and Trumpets

God's wrath now is now over ALL the earth → it's complete

With this SEVENTH BOWL, this is now THE END

There is no more waiting → oh, we have some more to go in Revelation

→ Chapter 17 to show us how bad the world is
→ Chapter 18 to celebrate its fall in song

But THEN we get to the MARRIAGE FEAST of the Lamb in Chapter 19

And read about HIS GREAT VICTORY in Chapter 20

And THEN WE ARE IN HEAVEN for the rest of the book → THE END
HAS ARRIVED → it's finally HERE

After tens of thousands of years of human history and 66 books, we
finally find read what God's end plan is → and it's GLORIOUS

So that all sets us up for what we **READ in VERSE 12 → read again**

→ now what is this about?

Well, as you know, the Euphrates River is in ancient Babylon, which is where modern day Iraq is

And the Euphrates River PROTECTED the CITY of Babylon

And in Revelation, Babylon stands for the CITY OF MAN

The world systems set up AGAINST GOD and manipulated by Satan

And so what God is doing here is REMOVING the City's protection, by DRYING UP THE RIVER which protects it

That is what this bit about the KINGS of the EAST is → these were feared invaders from Parthia → where modern day Iran is

And so this is NOT about the literal city of Babylon falling, though some thought so in the 1980s, during the Iran-Iraq War

But it's about God PREPARING TO TAKE DOWN Satan's kingdom in this world → do you see that?

This bowl is PREPARING THE WAY for the FINAL TAKEDOWN which comes in the Seventh Bowl

But now look at how Satan REACTS to this → that is who the Dragon represents in **VERSE 13** → and we see his two BEASTS as well

You might remember, this is Satan's attempt to IMITATE the Holy Trinity, which he can't do of course

But these two Beasts serve the Dragon → the first represent ungodly HUMAN GOVERNMENTS → those that PERSECUTE the church

The second represents FALSE or HERETICAL religion which ALLIGNS itself with the first beast, and deceives people

But look at what happens, and this is supposed to be terrifying, but in the end turns out rather COMICALLY → **READ VERSES 13-14**

Satan realizes he is under attack, so he sends to gathers his armies

And he does so by sending forth THREE demons which come out of his mouth and these two beasts

That is what an UNCLEAN SPIRIT means here → but look at them

Why FROGS? Well, it certainly recalls the PLAGUES upon Egypt as we saw last week

And they are RATHER SLIMY → commentators point out how useless and ANNOYING frogs tend to be → ceaseless CROAKING

→ I mean, have you ever been camping or in a cabin and tried to get to sleep, and there was JUST ONE frog croaking?

But I want to suggest to you there is something else going on

I would think that if Satan were in complete control that when he sent out these three MIGHTY DEMONS, they would be something AWESOME

You know, PHOENIXES, or HUGE HAWKS or CHEETAHS or something COOL and SWIFT and TERRIFYING

Right? But instead what comes out of their mouths → GRIBBIT, GRIBBIT, GRIBBIT

I think that's the best he can do and its comical → Satan is losing and even his spells are becoming LAME

Like that MAGICIAN who pulls a coin out of your EAR

But when we see Christ in Revelation, what does He look like, and what comes out of HIS mouth?

Well, let's remember, because it's been awhile since we have taken a look at this

This is from CHAPTER ONE:

In the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash around his chest. The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like

burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters. ¹⁶ In his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth came a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength.

You see that, out of Christ's MOUTH comes a sharp two-edged SWORD, which is the POWERFUL PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL

It's the GOSPEL which changes the world and SAVES SOULS

And what can the DEVIL do? → Gribbet, gribbet, gribbet

You see how he is trying to be terrifying, but its really just comical?

So why are we SCARED of him? What can the devil do to us?

NOTHING apart from God's PERMISSION → God's LOVING will for us

That's the way I read this

II. The BLESSING (verse 15)

And that then would explain this NEXT VERSE → **VERSE 15 → READ**

Now, WHO is this speaking? Well, it is Jesus → who else comes like a THIEF in the night? → this is RIGHT out of the Gospels

It means that Jesus is coming QUICKLY and in a way that the WORLD IS NOT READY for, so HANG ON → stay awake

ILL: hiking vacation in Staunton → found cool place to stay in downtown → affordable, artsy apartment

→ the problem is that right across the street from the historic CLOCK TOWER, which was fine

EXCEPT that it went off EVERY HOUR on the hour ALL NIGHT long → there was no chance of us NOT staying awake

Somehow, that little tidbit did not make it into this place's advertising

But here in **VERSE 15**, see, you WANT to stay awake → you don't want to fall into a **SPIRITUAL SLUMBER**

You see this is one of **SEVEN BLESSINGS** which are scattered through Revelation, beginning in Chapter One

And perhaps when we reach the last one, we will consider them together and how they relate to one another

But **THIS** one is here → **WHY?** Why here?

Well, for one, this serves as a **BRIEF INTERLUDE** of sorts between the Sixth and Seventh Bowls

You might remember that with the Seals and Trumpets, there were **TWO** quite **LENGTHY INTERLUDES**

And they were given to **ENCOURAGE** the Christians to hang on as things got **TOUGH**

But we **DON'T HAVE TIME** for a lengthy interlude here → judgment is **UPON US** → so there is just time for this

So here, look at what's **ABOUT** to **HAPPEN** → **VERSE 16** → **READ**

Here it is, **ARMAGEDDON** → the place of the final battle

That's where these Frogs have called the armies to **GATHER**

Now, I am sure you know that there is a **LOT** of debate about **WHERE** this may be

In fact, we don't even really know what this word means → it's the only place in Scripture that this word occurs

May scholars think it should be translated as the **MOUNT** of **MEGIDDO**

Now, Megiddo was a place where a couple of important battles took place, especially the one when Deborah was judge

The problem is that there is only a PLAIN at Megiddo,
no real mountain

So other scholars think it should be translated instead as the
MOUNTAIN OF MEETING

So a kind of Satanic IMITATION of Mt. Zion

Either way, in my view, since this is all SYMBOLIC, we do not need
to try to figure out a GEOGRAPHIC location for this place

That's not the point → the POINT is that Satan realizes that his
time is SHORT, and so HE MAKES ONE LAST STAND

And gathers all his forces to DO AS MUCH HARM TO
GOD'S PEOPLE as possible BEFORE going down

Satan WISHES to do us HARM before He is judged

So how does that turn out? → well, we will find out when we look at the
Seventh Bowl

But before that, back to **VERSE 15**, Jesus sees these forces assembling against us,
and so ENCOURAGES US to HANG ON

To NOT FEAR these GATHERING ARMIES

We don't need to FRET and WORRY and somehow feel that
we have to GET ALL OUR PREDICTIONS right

Or SELL all our STUFF and ALL go into MINISTRY or
something

So what do we need to do? I LOVE THIS → just STAY AWAKE

We don't have to DO ANYTHING but stay awake TO THE GOSPEL

That's it is REAL and TRUE and that GOD LOVES US and
WILL TAKE US HOME

You see, I think that is what means to stay clothed → I mean in one sense it means don't get caught off guard, don't fall asleep

So that when the thief comes, you run around with your SCOOBY DOO UNDERWEAR ON , or Star Wars or whatever

ILL: like one of those bad dreams when you find out that you have an EXAM in a course you never knew you were REGISTERED for

And so you show up UNPREPARED, and then realize you are ALSO NAKED and everyone's laughing → those are the worst

And so Jesus is encouraging us to HANG ON IN FAITH → things MAY LOOK BLEAK but He is still entirely in control

And is COMING BACK SOON to make all things right

So STAY AWAKE in your spirit, BELIEVE the Gospel, and you will be FINE

So now let's turn to ARMAGEDDON which we see in the Seventh Bowl

III. The SEVENTH Bowl (verses 16-21)

And we see in this **VERSE 17 → READ**

Now, we don't know WHO this voice is → it may be an Angel or God Himself → I don't suppose it matters

But He tells us that it is DONE → this is the END

And the Bowl is poured on the AIR → why? Well, some have said that the air was thought to be the special realm of demons

In the same way that Paul calls Satan the Prince of the Power of the Air in Ephesians 2

But I think it's THIS → so far, the earth has been affected, the oceans, the rivers, the sun → and now it's THE AIR ITSELF

→ in other words, EVERYTHING is affected by God's wrath

The VERY AIR is cursed and there is NO ESCAPE

And so look what happens → **VERSE 18 → READ**

A great STORM arises → and it has it all

ILL: have you ever been caught in a thunder storm? → it's scary

And can be dangerous → summer soccer → storm in distance

Knew we should not play when HAIL was standing on end

But there were times when I was in the Army when we caught out in the open → heard about one whole platoon HIT BY LIGHTNING

So this storm has thunder and lighting and an EARTHQUAKE and HUGE HAILSTONES

→ perhaps we have all seen hailstorms → some as big as GOLF BALLS, which dent our cars

But look down to **VERSE 21 → READ** → imagine that

We were trying to figure out how BIG those would be in our Friday morning men's prayer meeting

→ I suggested a watermelon

→ others suggested the size of the table we were sitting at

→ Don Weyburn suggested the size of a large Mastiff DOG

→ why he thought of THAT, I don't know

→ that is what makes being part of this church so fun

But the point is that this HAIL is HUGE< and there is no ESCAPING THIS STORM of God's wrath

That is what **VERSE 20** is about → **READ**

→ this may be as a result of the massive earthquake

→ that it RESHAPES the world

→ which symbolizes how God will transform this world into the new heavens and the new earth

OR it may simply mean that there will be NO islands to FLEE TO, and NO mountains to HIDE IN

You are OUT IN THE OPEN when this storm hits

But perhaps the most important aspect of this storm is the EARTHQUAKE

Because look at what it does → **READ VERSE 19**

That's the PURPOSE of all this → to DESTROY Babylon, that city of Man which was full of so much EVIL

And that is why we read part of **Chapter 18**, so we could see that → GREED and VIOLENCE and SEXUAL IMMORALITY

And the earthquake SPLITS Babylon into THREE parts → utterly RUINED

And with Babylon, FALLS the cities of ALL the nations

So, even though John may well have had ROME in mind, this is not directed against JUST one nation

→ it's about the WHOLE WORLD coming into judgment

All of those outside of Christ, those who continue to curse God and refuse to turn to Him for grace

So here is MY QUESTION:

What happens at the Battle of Armageddon?

I mean here it all set up in **VERSE 16** → the ARMIES of the world are GATHERED ready for battle

The picture here is of this HUGE ASSEMBLY of troops ready to go to war against God

ILL: some of you know that I was in the First Gulf War, and I will never forget deploying with my unit to our Battle Positions and convoying up the pipeline road in S.A.

And going past MILE after MILE of armored divisions from the U.S. and G.B. and France and Egypt and EVEN SYRIA

→ troops as FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE

It felt like the whole WORLD had gathered to do battle

And that is the picture here → this HUGE ARMY arrayed against God's people

SO what happens? Where is the battle?

Do you see it in Chapter 16? You don't because there ISN'T ONE

THERE IS NO BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON

Oh, they gather for Battle, but then before they CAN DO ANYTHING

→ God's STORM COMES UPON THEM and DESTROYS THEM

→ God's EARTHQUAKE comes and SWALLOWS them up

This is why we sung **A Mighty Fortress is our GOD**, and why we will sing **Stand Up My Soul, SHAKE OFF YOUR FEARS**

We have nothing to fear → THERE IS NO BATTLE, because God just comes and DEFEATS them before the battle even starts

And some of you say, wait a minute, there is MORE about Armageddon in **Chapter 20**, with a little more detail, with GOG and MAGOG

But it's the SAME thing there → they gather for battle but BEFORE they can do anything, FIRE CONSUMES them from heaven

THERE IS NO BATTLE of ARMAGEDDON → it never gets started

ILL: reminds me of that scene from Indiana Jones when Indiana is fighting all these guys in Cairo with his WHIP

And finally this guy with a BIG SCIMITAR comes out and swishes it around ready for a big fight

But Indiana doesn't have time, so he just pulls out his pistol and shoots him

I know that's a violent image, but its kinda like that → this is IN THE END, JUST COMICAL

Think about it → these FROGS gathers this huge army to do battle

And they don't even get to fight, because the SEVENTH BOWL is unleashed and DOWN THEY GO

And God's people, in the end, WILL BE SAVED

Now, please don't misunderstand me → I am NOT saying that Christians never suffer persecution or never get killed for their faith

→ it's the very OPPOSITE ACTUALLY → just read the N.T.

It's that SPIRITUALLY, NOTHING CAN HARM US → our SOULS are SECURE IN CHRIST and the devil cannot touch it

God's STORM of WRATH will take the Devil down, BUT IT WILL NOT TOUCH us

Conclusion

Why not? How can I say that?

Well, because of what we noticed last week → that in the same way this VOICE in **verse 17 said IT IS DONE,**

SO DID JESUS ON THE CROSS as He died

This storm of wrath never touches us BECAUSE IT FELL ON HIM INSTEAD

He gave His life in our place that we would be SPARED all of this → that IS WHY HE CAME TO EARTH

To GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY

And you might remember another SIMILARITY between this text and Christ's death which Matthew records → we read:

Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.

You see, there was an Earthquake → but did it kill anyone? → Just the OPPOSITE

⁵² The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

⁵⁴ When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

At the end of time, an earthquake is going to come upon this world, and THAT EARTHQUAKE may be VERY LITERAL for all I know

And it will bring JUDGMENT on all those who have not trusted God's MERCY IN CHRIST

But when Christ died, HE ABSORBED that EARTHQUAKE of God's wrath for ALL THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM

SO instead of it bringing DEATH, it brought LIFE

It OPENED UP THE TOMBS of many → signifying how Christ's CROSS BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE to those UNITED to Him by FAITH

So if you are in Christ, you have NOTHING TO FEAR from Armageddon

For Christ has FULLY paid for all your sins and will be your CHAMPION forever