

Revelation  
Ch 16:16-21 pt 3

When people hear or think about the book of Revelation, there are a few words or ideas that come to mind:

RAPTURE – not mentioned in Revelation

Anti- Christ – not mentioned in Revelation

Armageddon – Yes, mentioned ONCE, NOT just once in Revelation, but once in the entire Bible.

It has made headlines since Oct 6<sup>th</sup> when the president made a reference to Armageddon.

v. 16 The word in the news, sermons, charts, and in movies more than it is in the Bible.

True confession.... I've never seen the film Armageddon.

v. 13-15 Demon spirits are going out to gather the kings of the world together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty...

16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

17 Then the seventh *angel* poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." 18 And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake *was it, and so mighty*.

19 The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. 20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, \*came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague \*was extremely severe.

Part of me wants to apologize for doing review, but over the years I've learned that it can be helpful, for me and for the congregation. We never have the same group here two weeks in a row, so somebody is a week or two behind. I don't assume that everyone listens to or reads the sermon notes online when absent.

That said, let's recap...starting with some insights from William Hendriksen

PROPOSITION VI. The seals, trumpets, bowls of wrath and similar symbols refer not to specific events, particular happenings, or details of history, but to principles—of human conduct and of divine moral government—that are operating throughout the history of the world, especially throughout the new dispensation.<sup>2</sup>

PROPOSITION VII. The Apocalypse is rooted in contemporaneous events and circumstances. Its symbols should, be interpreted in the light of conditions which prevailed when the book was written.

PROPOSITION VIII. The Apocalypse is rooted in the sacred Scriptures. It should be interpreted in harmony with the teachings of the entire Bible.

PROPOSITION IX. The Apocalypse is rooted in the mind and revelation of God. God in Christ is the real Author, and this book contains the purpose of God concerning the history of the Church.

The current context. We are in the 7 bowls of wrath. Remember the introduction, “seven angels with the seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is complete” (Rev 15:1).

God’s wrath is finished with the seven bowls, complete, done. It is the end of the world. Yet some point out that there are more chapters in the *Revelation*. How can this be the end of the world here?

What remains are two more parallel visions. Chapters 17-19, 20-22. These depict the same history from a different viewpoint.. We will see a war in Ch. 19, one in Ch. 20 but the same war from different angles. The camera zooms in for close-up action with more clarity. Particularly, in chapter 19, for the destruction of the Beast and False Prophet. Chapter 20, destruction of the Dragon which is followed by the new heavens and New Earth. But these three visions portray the same battle, *the War to end all wars*.

Here we are at the 7th bowl, the last in the series of the bowls of wrath which parallel the seven trumpets (chs. 8-11). Which, in turn, are the outcome of the seven seals (chs. 6-8:1), which seal the scroll of destiny, held in the hand of the Lamb (ch. 5), given to Him by the One who sits on the throne (ch.4).

This may surprise you, but Armageddon gets a bad reputation. In the context of chapter 16, there is a blessing for those who are alert and ready for the coming rescue of Christ. **Armageddon signals that salvation is coming, so believe in Jesus.**

This is a symbolic name. Based on Hebrew, the word means “Mount Megiddo”, but it is problematic because there is no such mountain. Megiddo is a plain that is part of the valley of Jezreel between the Sea of Galilee and the Mediterranean Sea. It was the scene of several famous battles in scripture and in world history.

EX: Judges 4-5 Where God raises up Deborah to lead Israel to do battle with Sisera and all of his iron chariots. God gives them a great victory. The point is NOT geographical, but Theological.

EX: the plain of Megiddo or Megiddo has several OT references, but it is a valley, not a mountain.

**“Armageddon is symbolic of the final overthrow of all the forces of evil by the might and power of God. The great conflict between God and Satan, Christ and Antichrist, good and evil that lies behind the perplexing course of history will in the end result in a final struggle in which God will emerge victorious and take with him all who have placed their faith in him. This is Har-Magedon” (Mounce, 302).**

Unable to abort the birth of Christ and sabotage His earthly ministry, the dragon wages war against the Church. Foiled again, he directs all of his malice and hatred against those who hold to the testimony of Jesus (12:17). In order to wage war against the Church, he recruits into his army the beast and the false prophet. These are God-hating governments and their false news narrative. Two weapons are deployed against Christians; persecution and propaganda. That is how the spiritual war fought in the spiritual realm breaks through into the physical realm. The spiritual battle is manifested as the power brokers of the spirit of the age direct their attacks against God’s foundational values and institutions. Such persecution and propaganda come from outside and inside the church. (Jeff Hamm)

There are many examples from church history, but in our current day one example would be...

EX: Miss Penny Cost – A drag queen who is a CERTIFIED candidate for ministry in a mainline denomination. He communicates in drag or in his normal state and is known for his slam poetry which declares that “God is nothing.”\*

EX: outside a presentation of a documentary that challenges today’s radical gender theory, protesters were tearing up bibles. \*\*

The talk in scripture about persecution sounds alarming to us. But it is not at all shocking to the original audience or to Christian throughout the ages – Puritans, Covenanters of Scotland, the Huguenots of France, and believers in many Muslim, communist, and totalitarian countries around the world.

There is no clear understanding as to why the term Armageddon is used in Revelation other than as a symbol for the last great battle. The word is only used once, here in Revelation 16 so we should be careful about building too much around it.

This valley is not big enough for the armies of multiple nations. It is another symbol for the intensification of evil and judgement seen in the cycles of seven.

The term is used to symbolize the ongoing spiritual battle that was revealed in chapter 12-13 – The Dragon is seeking to destroy the woman and the child i.e. God’s people.

While there are various views on Revelation, one thing seems to be clear – there is bad news before the ultimate good news breaks out. The cycle of visions intensifies as the rulers of the world gather to oppress God’s people in a global way. What will this look like? We don’t know exactly, but we can get clues from how Christians have been treated from the beginning up until today. What is shocking for us is the norm for much of the world in human history.

**While it may seem totally depressing, as believers we must remember that God gave John this Revelation to unveil HOPE and encourage believers to hold fast and not bow to the Beast.**

Here’s the counter-intuitive and counter-cultural reality for believers – “Armageddon” doesn’t signal an existential threat to the world. Sin is the existential threat and the wages of sin is death. The wages of Babylonian sin is the death of Babylon, whenever and wherever she appears.

**One day it will become perfectly clear that God’s wrath was not the problem, but the solution this world is desperate for, the answer to all of those who ask, “Why doesn’t God do something about the evil and suffering in the world?”** Guthrie, Nancy. Blessed (p. 200). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

God is giving repeated warnings through His Word and acts of providence so that men will turn to Him.

Armageddon signals God’s design to rescue his people and brings the fullness of righteousness upon the earth. This may elicit conflicting emotions in our own hearts- sadness for all caught up in the mess created when God turns us over to our own devices. Yet, there is a sense of relief that God is bringing about the righteousness that is promised.

There is a Lamb-Lion tension that exists in the book of Revelation. As we hear and keep the words of this book we need not be embarrassed by them. Nor do we need to play down or disregard the wrath that is indicated. We are to warn those who are vulnerable to it while we also hold up our hands to welcome it.

Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt 6) How does that happen in any full and final way without God defeating all the forces of the evil one? Our deliverance and the coming of His kingdom will entail the destruction of every opposing kingdom.

#### v. 17 the bowl poured out on/in the air

That sounds a bit odd, but it completes the overall paradigm of bowls poured out on the water, earth, sun, and air.

All of creation is under the hand of God. The very air that is breathed will be filled with the wrath of God.

This is also a reminder of judgement on Satan who is the prince of the power of the air. (Eph 2:2)

#### v. 18 Weather abnormalities abound - again in v. 21 hailstones

Combined with the previous bowls that impacted the seas, rivers, and the sun, I think it is valid to ask whether there might be a correlation or connection with the weather and climate alarms we are so familiar with. Given the recurring nature of these seals, trumpets, and bowls during the church age, and given the Providence of God over all things, we can't rule out the possibility the God is trying to get our attention. The QUESTION THAT REMAINS IS, “How will we respond”? With repentance, or will the refrain of v. 11 be true of our age, “But they did not repent.”

**\*\*SIDE ROAD\*\***

Michael Reeves, in [Rejoice and Tremble](#), makes An interesting point, i.e.

**Atheism sold the idea that if you liberate people from belief in God, that will liberate them from fear.** Bertrand Russell argued this in 1927 in his famous address “Why I Am Not a Christian.” I think much of what Russell said was based on a false understanding of the Biblical concept of the “fear of God”, but he used the straw man approach to give his critique. He said, “Religion is based, I think, primarily and mainly upon fear. It is partly the terror of the unknown”

Well before Russell came along, “enlightened” thinkers taught that science would lead the way in solving our problems and getting rid of the unknowns, and thus relieving us of our fears.

Can anyone honestly say that “science” has done that? Actual science has done much good, but has it freed us from fear and from the unknowns? I think the last two years have shown us that things are more complicated than we thought and that “science” itself can fall prey to politics, modern superstitions, and fallacies. How is it that influential players in modern science have bought into an entire agenda that denies the very foundational principles of human procreation and life itself? It sounds Beastly to me.

V. 18 Throughout the Scripture the earthquake is the alarm to announce the coming of the Lord to establish justice (Exo. 19:18; Isa. 13:13; Ezek. 38: 20; Joel. 2:10).

The prophet Zechariah 3 predicts that at the end of the world the nations will be gathered for the final battle, after which the Lord will descend and stand on the Mount of Olives, triggering an earthquake that splits the mountain in two (Zech. 14:2-4). This end of time scenario is what we have in the bowls. The 6th bowl, the final battle, Armageddon and the 7th bowl, an earthquake to signal the end of time.

#### v. 19 -20 the great city splits apart

This is no small tremor, but an eschatological earthquake that shakes the earth so powerfully that the trembling planet is rocked off of its axis. It is. the earthquake that marks the end of the world.

The very same earthquake that was previewed at the end of the seven seals (6). The exact same effect. ... *every mountain and island was removed from its place* (6:14).

The target of God's wrath is the great city, Babylon the Great. We are not to interpret this with a rigid literalism. By the end of the first century, Babylon, the ancient city in Mesopotamia is a pile of ruins. For the Christian living in the first century, Babylon is codename for Rome. Peter uses it at the end of his first letter. *She who is at **Babylon**, who is likewise chosen, send you greetings, and does Mark, my son* (1 Pet. 5:13).

Babylon is a symbol of Rome and all of the world's political, cultural, and economic centers. They will all will fall because they are a part of the great city and world system of Babylon.

In chapter 14, the fall of Babylon is announced because of her role as the great harlot who seduces the nations, making them drunk with the maddening wine of her adulteries. Now here in our text we have a glimpse of her destruction. The city is split into three parts indicating the completeness of her ruin

Babylon is described as drinking the cup filled with wine of the fury of God's wrath. This is the very cup from which Christ drinks on the cross. About which He prayed in the garden, *Father remove this cup from me. Nevertheless not My will be done but yours*. Jesus drinks of the cup of God's wrath on behalf of His people. Yet Jesus' death does not stay God's wrath for Babylon. Babylon shall drink of the cup filled with the wine of the fury of His wrath. As Babylon induced others to drink the wine of her immoralities, so too, she will drink the cup of wine of God's wrath.

## V. 21

**This echoes images of the OT. Throughout the Old Testament we see hail brought from the arsenal of divine retaliation.** In the plagues upon Egypt, during the Conquest of the Promised Land, and as the armies of the five Canaanite kings flee before Joshua, God cast down great hailstones, those killed by the hail are more than those killed by the sword (Josh. 10:11). The prophet Ezekiel predicts at the end of the world, an earthquake to remove mountains, judgments raining upon the land in hailstones, fire, brimstone (Ezek. 38:22).

Most likely, the suffering people blasphemed God during the onslaught of the judgment. It doesn't mean that they survived. There is no mention of them "refusing to repent" (v. 9, 11) because the end has come and there was no time left for repentance.

**The final cry from the throne, (v.17) "it is done" echoes the cry of Jesus from the cross, "It is finished."**

By conquering sin and death through the cross and resurrection, Jesus sets in motion the breaking in of God's kingdom and it leads to the final breaking up of the many Babylons of world history.

The second cry of from the throne in v. 17 confirms the cry of the suffering Christ from the cross.

This is the message of hope for those who stand firm and hold fast to Christ.

**For those in Christ, the righteousness of God is not something we have to hide from, it is something into which we flee. By grace through faith, we are kept safe by the righteousness which is ours in Christ.**

That is the message of Revelation and of the Reformation, which was a rediscovery of grace.  
Happy Reformation Sunday

\*Penny Cost...

<https://juicyecumenism.com/2022/10/07/methodist-drag-queen-ms-penny-cost-returns-in-florida-childrens-sermon/>

<https://www.christianitydaily.com/articles/16060/20220602/united-methodist-church-associate-pastor-drag-queen-gives-blasphemous-speech.htm>

<https://www.dailywire.com/episode/ep-1039-a-drag-queen-at-the-altar-2> 4:08 mark

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<https://www.dailywire.com/news/protesters-outside-matt-walsh-speech-shred-pages-of-bible-eat-them-walsh-responds-your-choice-america>

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