

Revelation  
Ch 16:10-16 pt 2

Graeme Goldsworthy- Gospel in Revelation. p. 126

Let me emphasize again that Revelation was written, not for the arm-chair prophets with their charts of historical events in the twentieth century and their intricate diagrams of the end of the age, but for the harassed subsistence-level first-century Christians of the Asia Minor province. It was written to bring them both warning and reassurance, to encourage them in their struggle and to liberate them from fear of the enemy within and without.

Revelation has multiple camera angles on how we are to see what go is doing:

Seals, Trumpets, Bowls

Multiple angels of how we see reality between Resurrection and return of Christ. We are getting reality from God's perspective, similar to Kings vs Chronicles

Seals – believers and unbelievers

Trumpets – unbelievers

Bowls – Empire of man – Babylon

Revelation is not a code book; it is a picture book. It is a vision.

**REVELATION 16 Babylon is Judged**

**Six Bowls of Wrath**

10 Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, 11 and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.

12 The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.

13 And I saw *coming* out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; 14 for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty. 15 (“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”) 16 And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon.

The fifth, sixth, and seventh bowls focus God's wrath on the evil alliance that the dragon has enlisted to wage its war on God, his Christ, and their faithful witnesses, the church. The fifth plague plunges the beast's throne and kingdom into palpable darkness (like the ninth plague on Egypt, Exod. 10:21–23), and the beast's subjects into anguish (16:10–11).

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v. 10 This fifth bowl corresponds to the fifth trumpet that affected the realm of the Beast. Here it affects the throne of the beast

Where is the throne of the beast?

The throne is the symbol of power, authority, and influence. It is Satan's throne as seen (Rev 2:13) in Pergamum, the center of Roman government and the imperial cult.

The Beastly realm has exerted its influence on earth through various seats of power and influence, but primarily through governmental structures and institutions. They have done so by distorting or disobeying the biblical guidelines for the role of government – to promote what is right and to punish those who do evil – Rom 13. The prayer of 1 Tim 2 is for those in authority so that “we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.

EX: the original audience could certainly identify with distorted government as they were ruled by pagan dictators who took on worship to themselves and persecuted those who didn't bow the knee to Caesar.

EX: God's people during the past 2000 years have experienced persecution in various places around the world.

<https://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-7-number-1/biblical-foundations-limited-government>

EX: HOW DO WE DISCERN “the throne” in our day? Take note of where those in places of cultural power are promoting actions and policies that contradict the clear teaching of God's Word.

You can recognize the cultural power brokers by who is or isn't allowed to speak openly in society. If a group, ideology, or individual can't be criticized then you've found a throne room.

The throne is darkened. There is a deeply experienced and felt darkness. This echoes one of the plagues in Egypt. The plague of Exodus was aimed at Ra, the sun God, of whom Pharaoh was thought to be an incarnation.

Just like disobedient Pharaoh, the rulers at the time of John and today love the darkness more than the light. Those who follow the ones on the throne are led in darkness, i.e. the blind guide leading the blind.

Given the symbolic imagery of Revelation it makes sense that this is a symbolic darkness. Darkened = spiritual darkness and blindness; i.e.. an INABILITY to rule with an enlightened mind and wisdom.

Have you ever been in a place of total darkness, like a cave or closet. It can be unnerving and disorienting. It may cause a sense of great distress and panic. Two key fear factors are at play in darkness- the unknown and lack of control.

EX: a roller coaster or water slide that takes you through a long dark tunnel and you can't see what is coming.

Here in Revelation 16 the fear and anguish are so great that people gnaw their tongues. There is a spiritual and psychological torment that drives people out of their minds. You can imagine how a real or even symbolic darkness would create global madness and hysteria.

Michael Crichton's book, State of Fear was revealing. That is how darkened thrones rule- by creating a state of fear among the people. This is not an accident; it is evidence of the judgement of darkness. (Rom 1)

**v. 11 – they blaspheme instead of repenting**

we saw this last week in v. 9.

CS Lewis – pain is God's megaphone to get our attention. They blasphemed instead of seeking Him.

**v. 12 Euphrates was the eastern boundary of the Roman empire.** The dangerous and much feared Parthian empire was to the East, and they always represented a threat to Rome. The Sixth Trumpet speaks of an armed horseman from the east who brought death to a third of mankind. Here the 6<sup>th</sup> bowl dries up the

great river. Cyrus, the Persian king actually diverted the river to allow an army from the east come and conquer the Babylonians. The vision of Rev 16 is a picture of the destruction of the latter-day “Babylons”.

**Under demonic influence, but ultimately under God’s control, the kings of the earth will gather and God will dry up the protective river in order for Babylon to be defeated so that His eternal kingdom and the reign of His saints will be established. Beale and Campbell**

The Euphrates had always served as a sort of barrier from armies from the east. It was also the historic eastern boundary of the land promised to Abraham. It separated the people of God from the enemies growing in the east

In the days of Rome, they saw no significant threat from the west. The previous ancient empires had been from the east – Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. The first two captured Israel then Judah and scattered them or put them in exile.

Now the great river is dried up so there is no barrier to the armies of the east. The Euphrates is now an apocalyptic autobahn. The symbolic barrier between the Promised land and the place of evil is now dried up and the evil is unleashed – v. 13-14 froglike demonic spirits are seen.

The great river is dried up for the kings of the East, but the text doesn’t tell us what they will do. Would they make war on the people and empire of the west (Rev 17:15-18, or does this refer to the gathering of nations to make war on the Messiah and his hosts, as seen in Revelation 19:19?

#### **v. 13-14 Froglike demonic spirits**

The unholy trinity of the Dragon, Beast, and False prophet of ch 12 shows up again. The Dragon is Satan, the serpent of old and he has recruited the beast and the false prophet. The beast represents the God-hating government of man that seeks total control under the influence of the spirit of anti-christ.

The false prophet from chapter 13 appears like a lamb who seeks to gain followers for the Beast. “False prophets” is typically a term used to describe those within the covenant community of God. He promotes a false worldview, false ideology, a false religion from outside and inside the church. This unholy trinity sends out demonic spirits to deceive. Inherent in this deception is intentional confusion about God, about human life, and about what values are real.

This verse says out loud what many have talked about for years and at times seemed a bit nutty. “It’s demonic” ....YES, IT IS.

Perhaps people are more willing to go there today than ever before.

2 Cor 11:14 Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.”

Demonic spirits are less likely to resemble the little girl from the Exorcist, and more likely to resemble the world’s academic, political, economic, and cultural elites who seek to tear down the God ordained structures and institutions of civilization – marriage, family, church, and government.

Unclean spirits like frogs coming out of their mouths...are the croaking PR spin masters of Satan’s kingdom. They are demonic spirits.

When we hear crazy stuff coming out of people’s mouths, we might wonder, “Where is this coming from?”

When I hear some things proclaimed today, I could easily say, “Are those frogs coming out of their mouth?” The words are so crazy, distorted, confusing, and patently false that they would seem..... demonic. They certainly don’t come from any realm of human history or “science”.

EX: I could point out quite a few, but I think you can identify them when you hear them.

#### **v. 14 The great day of God almighty is the grand finale of human history.**

The demonic spirits of v. 13 go out to gather the kings of the world for the war of the great day of God.

The dragon, beast, and false prophet spew deception to gather the kings of the whole world in a conspiracy against the Lamb and his army. That last battle, which will usher in the destruction of the human conspirators, of the beasts, and of the dragon itself, will appear in complementary visions (19:11–21; 20:7–10).

It is the consummation of every previous “day of the Lord” narrative, and it is the concluding battle between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Goldsworthy p. 124ff)

The ‘day of the Lord’ compresses all the apocalyptic visions of scripture into one great final act of judgement. The ‘last days’ are spread out in the time following the death and resurrection of Christ. God is not boxed into our timelines and end times charts. He is not slow in his coming. With God a 1000 years are as a day. (2 Pet 3:8)

v. 15 Jesus comes like a thief in the night – Matt 24:42-44; 1 thess 5:2.

Those who read the scripture are forewarned so they might be alert. Christ will come to deliver his people from the tragic situation into which the earth dwellers will have plunged.

Remember this insight from Dr. Rayburn from last week: that believers will often be caught up in the judgments visited upon mankind simply because they are part of mankind; they may bear the mark of the Lord and be safe from any ultimate harm, but they live in a world being punished;

v. 15 Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”

The believer is to keep his clothes to be ready and is contrasted with the one unprepared who ends up walking round naked and in shame.

Be ready. Don’t listen to the satanic lullaby that wants to lull us to sleep in our comfort in Babylon.

Perhaps you are ready, but do you know folks who aren’t? Are there people you are praying for and are pursuing with the love and good news of Jesus?

Since this is a blessing, let’s take a moment to linger.

WHO WANTS TO EXPERIENCE A BLESSING FROM God?

Watch, keep your garments, and be ready

There is blessing in the doing, in the obeying. Sometimes God blesses for no apparent reason. He just says, “Here it is, be blessed.” But often there is blessing in the doing or the posture of the heart – Beatitudes:

Matt 5

“Blessed are the poor in spirit.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn,.

5 “Blessed are the gentle,

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

7 “Blessed are the merciful

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers,.

10 “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness,

These words of verse 15 warn, they shake us up, they get us prepared, and they bring blessing and comfort.

Jesus is COMING as a thief, (unexpected and quietly) not to steal, but suddenly without announcement. All the previous warning will have gone unheeded by many, and Jesus will come while they are saying, "Peace and safety."

EX: Have you ever been robbed in your home? We have, and the thief did NOT tell us he was coming. He did come as a thief. It was unnerving, but it did make us more vigilant in the future.

Revelation shows us how Jesus is coming as a king, a judge, an avenger of His saints, and as a Bridegroom.

**Blessed are those who are awake and WATCHING.** (If I could have put this off for another month it would have been a good lead into Advent.)

Awake to the truth of what, in God's providence, is going on in the world around us.

"Watch" is a common refrain in scripture. It is needed because we are naturally disposed to getting distracted and taking it easy. We must watch diligently because Babylon is trying to throw us off guard... "look here, listen to this, buy this and it will make your life complete" etc.

Watch for the unseen Christ who is the lover of our souls.

**Keep your garments -**

Have you ever slept in your clothes because you knew you might get called at any hour of the night and you didn't want to waste time changing? You wanted to be ready.

The world will try to strip you of the clothes of the new man or woman in Christ. The world wants to squeeze you into its mold. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of you mind..."

Watching includes the renewing of our minds by the Word and the Spirit.

**THE WARNING - lest you walk naked, and men see your shame**

This echoes the warning given to the Laodiceans in 3:18, which echoes the OT in Ezek and Nah, Isa, where "uncovering the shame of your nakedness" was God's accusation against those who participated in idolatry. (Beale and Campbell)

Those who are not ready for Christ will meet Him in their shameful nakedness with no covering of righteousness. They will have no benefit of knowing the salvation that is in Jesus.

This is in contrast to those in Sardis who hold fast and are clothed in white garments (3:5) and the Bride of Christ in 19:8-9 who is clothed in fine linen.

\*\*Friends, we are to remember the benefits of knowing Christ. As we prepare for the TABLE, we'll use the response reading from a Valley of Vision prayer, PRIVILEGES. Please read the part in **BOLD** VOV Privileges- RESPONSIVE READING as prep for communion

**How great are my privileges in Christ Jesus!**

**Without him I stand far off, a stranger, an outcast;  
in him I draw near and touch his kingly sceptre.**

**Without him I dare not lift up my guilty eyes;  
in him I gaze upon my Father-God and Friend.**

**Without him I hide my lips in trembling shame;  
in him I open my mouth in petition and praise.**

Without him all is wrath and consuming fire;  
**in him is all love, and the repose of my soul.**

Without him is gaping hell below me, and eternal anguish;  
**in him its gates are barred to me by his precious blood.**

Without him darkness spreads its horrors in front;  
**in him an eternity of glory is my boundless horizon.**

Without him all within me is terror and dismay,  
**in him every accusation is charmed into joy and peace.**

Without him all things external call for my condemnation;  
**in him they minister to my comfort and are to be enjoyed with thanksgiving.**

ALL

Praise be to thee for grace,  
and for the unspeakable gift of Jesus.

COME TO THE TABLE

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