

Vials of Vengeance (Part 2)

Text: Revelation 16:8-21

Introduction:

1. We now reach the final series of judgments – the seven vials. Here the undiluted cup of God's wrath is poured out on the world (Rev. 14:10). A vial is a shallow saucer or bowl, not a glass tube such as those used today in scientific laboratories. The vial judgments resemble God's plagues on Egypt recorded in Exodus but on a much larger scale.
2. These two chapters have to do with the seven vial judgments. Chapter 15 sets the scene and the tone and chapter 16 records the actual pouring out of the vials themselves. It is time for what has been anticipated in the cup of wine (14:10), the harvest (14:14-16) and the winepress (14:17-20).
3. The wrath of God is the key theme of these chapters.
 - Rev. 15:1 "for in them is filled up the wrath of God."
 - Rev. 15:7 "...seven golden vials full of the wrath of God"
 - Rev. 16:1 "...pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth."
 - Rev. 16:19 "...the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath."
4. We will briefly review what we covered in our last lesson and then go through the final four vial judgments.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE VIALS OF WRATH (REV. 15:1-8)

II. THE POURING OUT OF THE VIALS OF WRATH (REV. 16:1-21)

A. Vial 1: Sores (Vs. 1-2)

B. Vial 2: Seas (Vs. 3)

C. Vial 3: Streams (Vs. 4-7)

D. Vial 4: Sun (Vs. 8-9)

1. The Burning of men (Vs. 8-9a)
 - a. Under the fourth trumpet (8:12) the sun's intensity was reduced by a third. Here is increased!
 - b. "scorch men with fire...scorched with great heat" = men will get a little taste of hell on earth. Imagine the heat! Imagine the fires! This is when global warming will really happen!
 - c. Remember, this judgment follows the 3rd vial where the earth's drinking water has been turned to blood. Proper drinking water will be extremely rare, if not non-existent.
 - d. WARNING! Reject Christ and you will burn for all eternity in a real place called hell.
2. The Blasphemy from men (Vs. 9b)
 - a. "blasphemed the name of God...repented not" = rather than repent, they blaspheme God's Name. The desperate depravity of man's heart highlighted. The necessity of repentance for salvation is also highlighted!
 - b. "which hath power over these plagues" = the earth dwellers will be in no doubt as to the source of these judgments and yet they will not repent. Remember! A display of Divine judgment and

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Divine power doesn't mean that men will automatically repent. Men can intrench themselves so deeply in their rebellion that eventually it become impossible for them to repent.

- c. Walvoord: "The wishful thinking of some that men would repent if they only knew the power and righteous judgment of God is shattered by frequent mention in this chapter of the hardness of the human heart in the face of the most stringent and evident Divine discipline."

E. Vial 5: Shadows (Vs. 10-11)

1. The target of the plague (Vs. 10a)
 - a. 'seat' = the throne. The headquarters of Antichrist receives a direct hit from heaven.
 - b. "his kingdom was full of darkness" = Antichrist's kingdom world-wide by this time so beast worshippers all over the world will be impacted by this terrifying plague.
 - c. Note: Men who choose the darkness of their sin rather than Christ the light will eventually spend eternity in a place of "outer darkness" (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30; 2. Peter 2:17; Jude 1:13). Under the fourth and fifth vials the followers of Antichrist receive a little taste of hell on earth.
2. The torment of the plague (Vs. 10b)
 - a. "gnawed their tongues for pain" = reveals the awful severity of their pain.
 - b. It appears the pain of their sores, which they still have from the first vial judgment, is intensified under the plague of darkness.
 - c. It will be like the Egyptian plague where the darkness can be felt (Ex. 10:21-23).
3. The tongues in the plague (Vs. 11)
 - a. For the second time it is recorded that men 'blaspheme' God for the plague and refuse to repent. "The Scriptures plainly refute the notion that evil people will quickly repent when faced with catastrophic warnings of judgment." (Walvoord)
 - b. Note: Unrepentant men won't repent when they are in hell. If the heart is entrenched in its hardness against God, judgment only makes them more determined in their rebellion against God.

F. Vial 6: Slaughter (Vs. 12-16)

1. The Drying up of the River (Vs. 12, 16)
 - a. 'Euphrates' = forms a natural geographical barrier between East and West. 'The Euphrates is roughly 1,700 miles long, flowing from the Armenian mountains to the Persian Gulf.' (Cloud) It is first mentioned in Gen. 2:14 and its last mention is here.
 - b. "kings of the East" = the way is prepared for armies to march from the East of Israel. To the East of Israel are the great Asian nations such as India, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, China and Japan. "It refers to Oriental rulers who will descend upon the Middle East in connection with the final world conflict." (Walvoord)
 - c. 'Armageddon' = located in the great plain of Megiddo southwest of the Sea of Galilee (Cloud). The word means "the hill of Megiddo" and the word 'Megiddo' means "place of troops" or

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“place of slaughter”. It is also called the Valley of Jezreel. The area is about fourteen miles wide and twenty miles long, and forms what Napoleon called “the most natural battlefield of the whole earth.” (Wiersbe) It was at this historic site that:

- i. Barak defeated the armies of Canaan (Jud. 5:19).
 - ii. Gideon met the Midianites.
 - iii. King Saul lost his life (1 Sam. 31)
 - iv. Titus & the Roman army used this natural corridor, as did the Crusaders in the Middle Ages.
 - v. British General Allenby used it when he defeated the Turkish armies in 1917.
- d. Phillips: “The Holy Land has been chosen by God as the stage upon which two crucial events take place, one on a mountain and one on a plain. Mount Calvary and the Plain of Megiddo are the two altars of sacrifice that dominate the history of the world. On Mount Calvary, grace redeemed the world by the sacrifice of God’s Son; on the plains of Megiddo vengeance offers up the armies of the world in a sacrifice of doom. Both are blood baths; both are the descent of wrath upon sin...From each proceeds a supper, one a feast of remembrance for the people of God, and the other a feast of retribution for the carrion. At Calvary there rang up to the gates of heaven a victorious cry, “It is finished!” And at Armageddon there rings down to earth an answering cry from the temple gates in glory, “It is done!”
2. The Stirring up of the Army (Vs. 13-14)
- a. The depiction of the evil spirits (Vs. 13)
 - i. “like frogs” = imagery again similar to the Egyptian plague. A fitting portrayal of evil spirits and their base, evil nature.
 - ii. “out of the mouth” = they are pictured as emerging from the mouths of the unholy, satanic trinity. Perhaps it speaks of the satanically inspired propaganda of the antichrist (See Rev. 13:5).
 - b. The deception of the evil spirits (Vs. 14)
 - i. “working miracles” = miracles form a huge part of the Antichrist’s campaign of deception. WARNING! The performance of a miracle does NOT automatically mean something is of God. Test everything by the Scriptures!
 - ii. “kings of the earth and of the whole world” = reveals that it is not only the kings of the east who come to this battle. The nations of the earth are gathered together for the judgment of Armageddon.
3. The Waking up of the Reader (Vs. 15)
- a. The imminence of the return of Christ is emphasized. The reader is exhorted to be prepared!
 - b. Challenge: Have you been clothed in the righteousness of Christ? Without the garments of salvation, you are not ready to meet Christ.

G. Vial 7: Shaking (Vs. 17-21)

1. The voice from heaven (Vs. 17)

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- a. "a great voice" = the word 'great' appears 7 times in connection with the seventh vial, revealing its climactic nature.
 - b. "out of the temple...from the throne" = the voice of God.
 - c. "It is done" = the tribulation judgments are finished and King Jesus is just about to split the sky galloping on His Heavenly steed and followed by heaven's calvary.
2. The earthquake upon earth (Vs. 18-20)
- a. The declaration of the earthquake (Vs. 18). This earthquake will be unparalleled in human history it will be so great. The Lord is going to give this old wicked world a mighty shaking! "The earth literally convulses as the times of the Gentiles come to an end." (Walvoord)
 - b. The devastation from the earthquake (Vs. 19-20)
 - i. Upon the cities of the world (Vs. 19)
 - Jerusalem – "the great city" (See Rev. 11:8)
 - Nations – "cities of the nations fell"
 - Babylon – "great Babylon came in remembrance"
 - ii. Upon the topography of the world (Vs. 20)
 - Islands
 - Mountains
 - iii. Heb. 12:26-27 *"Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain."* (See also Hag. 2:6)
3. The hailstorm upon earth (Vs. 21)
- a. The weight of the hailstones – "about the weight of a talent". A talent weighed between 108 to 130 pounds or 48-58 kg. So, these hailstones will be about the weight of two 20 kg bags of cement plus some!
 - b. Clearly some survive as they 'blaspheme' God. What staggering blindness and hardness of heart! This is because they passed the point of no return the day they took the mark of the beast and thereby sold their souls to the dragon.

Conclusion:

1. Believer, are you seeking to win the lost for Christ?
2. Friend, are you saved? Will you repent today and receive Christ?